

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jan-15 06:44 AM GMT

On Christmas day, before the festivities began, i went for a morning walk in Hatfield Forest, near Stansted airport. In the Summer, it is great for butterflies but now, it's just nice to be in this working mediaeval forest, well-preserved by the National Trust.

Winter thrushes were feasting on the hawthorn berries, and several bulfinches were seen. A weasel was too quick for the camera. This is the Essex stronghold for mistletoe, and is abundant not only on the trees, but even more on the gnarled, twisted old hawthorns on the open plains.

The last of the autumn leaves were still hanging on, the old mans beard was scrambling over the bushes, and i noticed the first hazel catkins were out—a case of autumn, winter and spring on the same day!



autumn



winter



spring!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jan-15 07:09 AM GMT

WHOOPEES EVERYWHERE!

In early January, I headed up to Lancashire and visited Martin Mere, managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. They have a collection of wildfowl from many countries in the grounds, and with a shop, cafe and facilities, this is a great place to spend a day.

But it was the wild birds that I came to see—and there were plenty of them! V-shape lines of pink-foot geese flew over. Lapwings by the hundred. Every so often, the lapwings and some golden plover, would fly up in spectacular style as a peregrine appeared. Ducks were everywhere, and several little ruffs were beside the mere.

In the morning, hundreds of whooper swans were on the mere, but they all seemed to be at the far end, beyond the reach of my camera. But I needn't have worried. After something to eat and drink in the cafe, it was 3pm—feeding time on the mere.

And most of the swans were now right in front of the hides. For a species that winters in flocks, they don't seem to get on very well! They were biting, pulling each other about, most aggressive. But for me, it was a cracking display!



whooper swans





ruff

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jan-15 07:34 AM GMT

With the mild winter (so far) many snowdrops are out in the garden. On my morning walk last Thursday, hazel catkins were abundant, and the first primroses were in flower in the woods and on the grassy banks.



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 28-Jan-15 05:04 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

I think you have had a milder winter than we have in the midlands, it was mild here up until Christmas but since then we have had loads of frosts with many nights with temperature below zero with me seeing -2 or -3 quite a few times on my way to work at 6.30am.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jan-15 05:43 AM GMT

"Neil Freeman" wrote:

Hi Mark,

I think you have had a milder winter than we have in the midlands, it was mild here up until Christmas but since then we have had loads of frosts with many nights with temperature below zero with me seeing -2 or -3 quite a few times on my way to work at 6.30am.

Cheers,

Neil.

You lucky blighter, Neil. Here in Swansea we've had two mornings at -4c and practically nothing besides.

Here's hoping the next fortnight will provide recompense.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Jan-15 06:51 AM GMT

This mildness is getting me down Essex when I drove past Daffs out in flower last weekend 😊 We need some cold weather 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Feb-15 06:25 AM GMT

BIRDWATCHING ON THE ESSEX COAST

Yesterday, with a welcome sunny day in prospect, I headed off to the Essex coast to see some birds. First over to Two Tree Island near Southend. A good start, with a long-tailed tit and singing song thrush near the car-park. With high tide near, many birds were flying off the mudflats and onto the island scrapes. These produced plenty of avocets, plus oystercatchers, teals, redshanks, godwits and lots of dunlins, among others. A very nice morning. Some of the images have been cropped.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Feb-15 07:03 AM GMT

Then onto Blue House Farm, an Essex Wildlife Trust reserve, and a working farm on the coastal grazing marshes. Hundreds, sometimes thousands of wintering brent geese graze these fields, and lines of geese are a common sight in these skies. Gadwalls, shelducks, wigeons and shovel ducks were seen and, near the sea wall, a pair of stonechats and a male reed bunting were a delight to see. A flock of pintails flew over. Birds of prey were about, too. Kestrel, buzzard, marsh harrier and sparrowhawk were seen.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Feb-15 07:06 AM GMT

Then,an hour before sunset,a ghostly barn owl appeared,eventually passing just yards away,a thrilling sight!



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 19-Feb-15 07:18 AM GMT

Great birdie pics, sounds like a fantastic birding trip!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 19-Feb-15 07:37 AM GMT

Is there anything more glorious in the UK than the sight of a hunting Barn Owl?

Glorious stuff!

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 20-Feb-15 12:59 AM GMT

Glad you enjoyed Martin Mere essex, it's a great place to visit, if you happen up this way again you should visit Mere Sands also near Southport, I saw Bitterns there once and believe their back again. Love the photo of the Barn Owl Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Feb-15 07:06 AM GMT

Fantastic images Essex, the Barn Owl is sublime and the Geese in flight is a wonder 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-15 08:53 AM GMT

SLOW START TO SPRING?

Spring seems to be slow to get going this year. Although there was the temperature touched 16C on 10 Jan,and again on 7 March,cold weather has dominated so far. I did see a Red Admiral a few weeks ago,and my first Comma on Monday.

Today was a familiar story. On my my morning walk today (2 April) despite seaching sunny south facing sites,nothing was seen. By time i got to Reading this afternoon,the sun had gone,and i had given up on butterflies for another day. So imagine my amazement when,while looking at daffodils in Prospect Park,i spotted my first Large cabbage White of the year! After about ten minutes,the sun breifly came out,and i was equally astonished to find when the wings opened it was a female! As males normally emerge first.



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 03-Apr-15 04:02 PM GMT

Hi Essex,

For a Butterfly that some people hate, and we Butterflies tend to take for granted, that Large White was quite a sensational find at this time of year !.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 03-Apr-15 07:01 PM GMT

Great photo Essex, I thought the Butterflies were going to be late this year but your butterfly contradicts this flow, hope fully things will get going this weekend Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by MikeOxon, 03-Apr-15 07:36 PM GMT

Splendid Large White photos, Essex - you've made it look a very beautiful butterfly 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Apr-15 08:10 PM GMT

Lovely image of a lovely butterfly.

Interesting to see it on a daisy. Don't think I've ever seen that before.

Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 04-Apr-15 04:47 AM GMT

Nice shot of the female Large White, EB 😊 I notice that the Large White is not yet listed on Butterfly Conservation first sightings of 2015!

Re: essex buzzard

by Pete Eeles, 04-Apr-15 04:54 AM GMT

"Maximus" wrote:

Nice shot of the female Large White, EB 😊 I notice that the Large White is not yet listed on Butterfly Conservation first sightings of 2015!

That's true. I could have sworn I'd seen one reported. Anyway, will "Tweet" this now so that Richard Fox picks it up, and hope that Mark gets the recognition 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-15 07:06 AM GMT

I agree with the others those are cracking shots of an oft misaligned species 😊🌿 I always thought that the females emerged later than the males so perhaps everything is happening but we humans just aren't out there observing it?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-15 06:02 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments, everyone. And thanks Pete for tweeting it. Who would have thought that a cabbage white would stir up such interest? But that's why the sighting was so unexpected, especially coming during a run of cold, dull weather. I found it by sheer chance and luck—it just happened to be on one of the daffodils I was looking at, notably a white one—I wonder if this is just coincidence? Who knows, it may have been there several days. Either way, I'm delighted! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-15 07:16 AM GMT

AND WE'RE OFF!

After a warm, sunny weekend in many other parts of the country, spring at last arrived in East Anglia today. And many butterflies emerged. Although I was at work, I saw my first Brimstones and Small Tortoiseshells of the year. On some winter heather, 3 Small Torts and a Peacock were feeding, with two other peacocks holding territory nearby. Spring is here! 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 09-Apr-15 03:04 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Good to see you are up and running, nice photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-15 06:20 AM GMT

You're racking them up now Essex, 😊 Any more Large White sightings?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Apr-15 04:31 AM GMT

KEEPING IT LOCAL

A great start to the day (Wednesday),with the lovely,descending song of the willow warbler on my morning walk,soon followed by another,my first of 2015. On the south facing woodland edge,many bee-flies had assembled. The day was already warming up and,by 10 am,most were on the wing,hovering. Several Peacocks were feeding on blackthorn blossom, with a Small Tortoiseshell or two,several Torts were at the nettlebeds. Two male Large Whites were chasing each other and further along was a Green-veined White. In a woodland ride,a Brimstone was patrolling. A sheltered corner had loads of bee-flies, these are as much a sign of spring as swallows,and i love to see them. 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-15 04:52 AM GMT

Lovely description of Spring essex, in my garden it's the Blackbird singing, I could listen to him all day 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Apr-15 04:54 AM GMT

After lunch,a short drive saw me at an oxlip wood. As i have said before,oxlips are a rare Essex treasure, with a very restricted range. Unfortunately,many of the plants' flowers have been eaten by deer,and these pose a very real threat to these rare plants ,preventing from setting seed.

Anemones were abundant here too, and many male Peacocks were holding territory,as well as a Comma or two. Several Green-veined Whites, Large Whites and Brimstones were seen. A nearby green lane produced my first Orange Tip of the year, which didn't stop,while several swallows were flying round the farm builings.

Pictures to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Apr-15 05:09 AM GMT

Photo's from Wednesday:





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-15 07:02 AM GMT

Great Green-veined shot Essex, and I really like the third shot down, nice to see things from a different perspective 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Apr-15 06:17 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel,as always.

Having more problems with my internet provider at the mo,so keeping things brief.

GREETINGS FROM CORNWALL!

Just back from a few days in sunny Cornwall. On Sunday 18th,walked the coast path from Seaton to Looe and back. Soon saw my first Small Coppers, Walls, Speckled Woods and Holly Blues of the year,as well as Peacocks and Orange Tips. Near the Monkey Sanctuary is a colony of Pearl-border Fritillaries. Emerging in April most years,my first this time was a mating pair! Several other male pbf were seen. Spent some time here, enjoying lots of Holly Blues as well. A little further on,a Painted Lady was unexpected,but the next species much more so—a Clouded Yellow male was patrolling the hillside.It was now very warm on this south facing coast,and it was lunch time. So,after a pasty and drink,and spending some time in Looe,it was time to head back.

Soon i was seeing more peacocks and even more Holly Blues—i must have seen 20 or 30 during the day, a species normally i see in ones and twos. Slowly i headed back,seeing raven,buzzard, peregrine and whitethroat in the process. Gorse and blackthorn were replendant,the gorse filling the warm air with scent. Back at the PBF site,a few were landing by late afternoon. Back down to Seaton,a tiring but absolutely fantastic first day!





Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 24-Apr-15 06:29 AM GMT

Thats a fabulous tally , especially the Pearls. I've had a look locally but none seen yet. Well done.

TREVOR.

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-Apr-15 06:36 AM GMT

What a day, Buzzard! Those Pearls alone must have made the walk worthwhile.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Apr-15 07:22 AM GMT

This is usurally the first PBF site in the country, Trevor. Yours shouldn't be long now.

Thanks David! This is a lovely walk,in a fabulous part of our country,in fabulous weather--what more can i ask? But you're right, those pearls,and the impressive April support cast of other species,turned a very nice walk into a truely great walk, they were the icing on the cake! 😊😊😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 24-Apr-15 01:53 PM GMT

Another great report Buzzard and great shot of the Pearls 📷

Re: essex buzzard

by keving, 24-Apr-15 04:52 PM GMT

Buzzard, I'll add my compliments too for the great SBF photos. Just the type of sighting that turns a great walk into a memorable one (And it's still only April!) 😊

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 25-Apr-15 01:19 AM GMT

Beautiful set of pics. Love the PBF, thats still a species I have yet to see.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-15 03:32 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great report and photos from Cornwall, love the PBFs 😊

I am heading down to that part of the world in a few weeks to spend a week on The Lizard, it has been years since I have been there and it was always later in the year on family holidays. I must admit, your reports over the past couple of years have gone some way to put the idea in my mind.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Apr-15 08:13 AM GMT

Thanks everyone for your comments. Neil,if you are going to the Lizard late May early June,be sure to visit Kynace Cove and walk the coast path to Lizard Point for Small Pearls by the dozen,plus Walls,Coppers,Blues and many others,and lots of lowely wild flowers to enjoy which,to me,are just as good as the butterflies. And you should see the Cornish Chough's!

CORNWALL DAY TWO

Woke up to stunning blue skies!

Today i was in west Cornwall. An early walk near Marazion produced 20-30 whimberels on the deserted beaches,the most i have seen.Oysercatchers were present too, and a sand martin was among the swallows. Some lovely spring squill was nice to see near the coast path.

Then on to Madron. A walk in my old stomping ground, where a close soaring buzzard was a splendid sight. The gorse here was spectacular,both in sight and scent. Soon hunger was gnawing so what else for lunch than a pasty?

After eating it,walked the coast path to Guernrd's Head,a remote and spectacular area. 6 buzzards together,and ravens, stonechats and gannets were

enjoyed. Back to Madron to visit the Carn—my favorite hill-topping site. No surprise that at least 3 Red Admiral and two Painted Lady males were active, chasing each other round. The views from here are outstanding, stretching all the way to Penzance, St. Michael's Mount and Marazion, where i was first thing this morning.

I clocked up a Dartford warbler nearby, then watched the sun go down. A lovely day again. 😊



Marazion view to st. michael mount



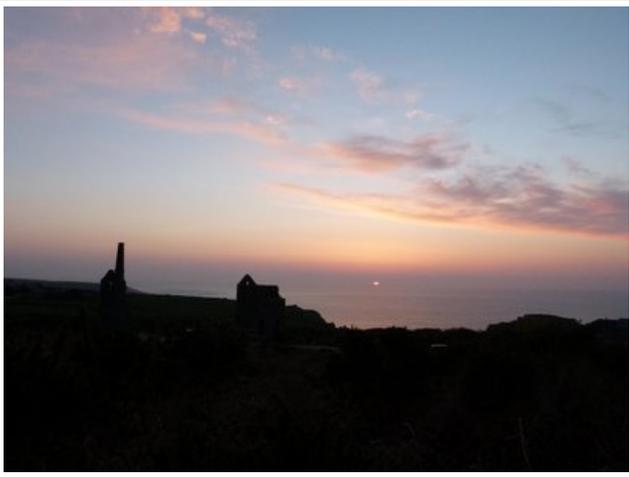
view to guernards head



hill topping red admiral



painted lady, madron



sunset over Rosemergy



Whimbrel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-15 05:59 PM GMT

Love all your photos essex, your landscapes bring lots of lovely memories back of the Cornish coast.

I think the PBF at Gaits Barrow may be out later this year as every thing as been a couple of weeks later than last year up to now, your shots are great of them and very encouraging making me want to go up there right a way Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-15 04:07 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great report and photos again from Cornwall.

Thanks for the pointer 😊. I remember you mentioning the coast path at Kynance Cove in your posts last year, I shall certainly pay a visit, probably more than once. I have been doing a bit of research as I usually do before going anywhere and have a few other spots in mind as well, will probably all

depend on the weather.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Apr-15 05:53 AM GMT

May as well be another country!

Great stuff, Buzzard!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-15 06:57 AM GMT

CORNWALL DAY 3

When i woke to more blue skies,i knew it was going to be a good day. Today i walked part of the south-west coast path i've not done before,on the north Cornwall coast. Walked around Park Head,seeing lots of stonechats,linnets and wheatears,and lovely displaying rock pipits. Took return route just inland. Here fauna was different,with yellowhammer, blackcap and willow warbler singing,and Orangetip,Green-veined White and a couple of spinning Speckled Woods noted. Then on to the spectacular Bedruthan Steps. Stopped for some pictures here,for about half an hour,then continued on to Mawgan Porth, and eventually arrived at Watergate Beach,on the outskirts of Newquay,by 1.30.

Had a break for half an hour,seeing my first Common Blue and three peregrines, then started to head back. Throughout the day,lots of swallows were flying through,and Wall butterflies were by the many stone walls. Got back to Bedruthan cafe by 4PM for a much needed Cornish cream tea,clocking up several Peacocks,Large White and a Painted Lady. Saw a stoat here as well as ravens,then went back down to the Steps. More pictures were taken,and finally arived back at the car at 7PM, worn out but absolutely delighted with another very good day! 😊



wheatear



bedruthan steps



stonechat



wall

Re: essex buzzard

by keving, 28-Apr-15 05:33 PM GMT

Nice photo of the Wall. I didn't see a single one in 2014, so hoping my luck changes this year. I also like the Stonechat, very nice composition.

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Apr-15 06:39 AM GMT

CORNWALL DAY 4-LAST DAY

As it was a spur-of-the-moment thing to come to Cornwall, i was free of any commitments, meaning i was able to enjoy the glorious weather! Another blue start to a super day, and another chance to walk some of the coast path near Looe. Soon found myself at the Pearl-border Frit site, seeing plenty of Walls, Speckled Woods and Holly Blues in the process, plus a few Orangetips, Small Coppers and Peacocks. Already by 9.30, the Pearls were very active, and difficult to photograph on this sunny, breezy day. About an hour further up, found another cleared area, and was surprised to find a mint Pearl, well away from the main colony. A bigger surprise awaited me, however, when a Dingy Skipper landed in front of me - for about two seconds. I managed the quick shot below before it was seen off by a male Small Copper. Despite searching for about an hour, i failed to re-find it. While searching, a worn, faded Painted Lady came through, and laid a few eggs on stingers, choosing single sprigs coming out of bare ground, and avoiding big clumps. A Clouded yellow male was seen.

Above, the first beech leaves were resplendent in pale green, and below the early bluebells added a splash of glorious blue - to match the sky! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Apr-15 07:00 AM GMT

After grabbing a past from Looe for lunch,i headed on to Lansallos,for a walk on the coast path there. The sight and scent of gorse blooms was even better here than elsewhere,and this is Green Hairstreak country. However, it was quite windy by now,and also i havent seen any for a year-it took me quite a long time to get my eye in. But eventually i found some sheltered gorse sprigs and hey presto-there was a Green,and another. Then a Green appeared on the ground,showing different behavior. A female,nectaring on young bluebells. Another sheltered spot produced another Green,probably a female. Several Clouded yellows were here,all appeared to be males. Peacocks were again plentiful,as were Speckled Woods and the odd Small Copper and Orangetip,while ravens,buzzards and a sparrowhawk patrolled the skies above.

It was now evening,so just time to buy a few goodies to take home,shen started the long journey back to East Anglia. But a truely super short break in Cornwall,everything i could have wished for-and more! 😊😊😊



green hairstreak at lansallos



clouded yellow



green hairstreak country

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-15 07:23 AM GMT

TURTLE DOVES

Throughout Europe, the turtle dove is in sad and tragic decline. Essex, along with Kent and Suffolk, now holds most of the British population but even here, numbers have gone through the floor. This is a long distance migrant, wintering in Africa and each year, fewer and fewer are making it back and, each year, even more farms are losing their doves, seemingly for ever.

As recently as the 1980's, when I was growing up, turtle doves were too common to notice. Pairs of doves were a familiar sight on the power lines, running over the Essex cornfields. It seems to be having problems on its wintering grounds, then many are shot on migration through south Europe. Once here, a shortage of food may be a problem, for turtle doves feed on weed seeds, which have declined in cornfields as weedkillers become more efficient. With all these factors, doves are taking longer to get into breeding condition, meaning they only have time for one brood of 2 eggs each summer, which can never be enough to maintain a population. Non-migratory collard doves, in contrast, can fit in four or five broods.

One of my aims for 2015, was to catch up with these lovely birds, before it's too late. Yesterday I achieved this, with two purring males and a probable female in east Essex—some good news at least. In the core range, small weedy areas are being prepared, in the hope that doves will feed and breed nearby. But this cannot be the only problem, as the decline continued even when weeds briefly became more common, during the set-aside era.

I can only hope we find some way to stop the decline of these lovely doves. It is inconceivable that these once common birds could go extinct in my lifetime. It would be a tragedy if they do. 😞😞



turtle dove near colchester

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-May-15 06:43 AM GMT

ORANGE TIPS

Regular readers of my pages may remember that last year I rescued some Orang Tip eggs and caterpillars from a verge that is usually shredded to the ground in late spring. I reared these and they successfully pupated in early summer.

By late April, the first ones had emerged, but most were still at the chrysalis stage. However, the sex of the adults within is pretty obvious...





a female was first to emerge



this male emerged on 24 april

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-15 07:28 AM GMT

With spring now at its peak, and fine weather forecast, it's time for a trip to Denge wood, near Canterbury. So on Wednesday we went down.

Here flies the lovely little Duke of Burgundy. Conditions were perfect, with a chilly sunny morning building into a warm late-spring day. By time we arrived at the old Bonsai Bank site, several male Dukes were already active. Willow warblers were singing, and a turtle dove was purring. A Painted Lady and several Dingy Skippers were seen. After enjoying these, we headed further into Denge Wood, checking the cleared areas. Here more Dukes and Dingies were seen, as were Orange Tips, Green-veined White, Brimstones and Peacocks. A clump of cuckoo flowers contained Orange Tip eggs. By now, it was lunchtime, and after taking a few pictures of the lady orchids, it was time to leave.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-15 07:56 AM GMT

The afternoon found us in Sussex, where we visited Mill Hill. My main aim here was to see the Grizzled Skipper, as I haven't seen any this year. I found just two, but this is a warm site, and this species here may already be on the wane. Not so Dingies, many of which were present. The first Adonis Blues have emerged, I saw a female, and then two males. We also saw Brimstone, Small Copper, Green Hairstreak, Peacock and, in the evening, a male Wall. By now, the dingies were beginning to perch up for the night on dead stems.

A cuckoo was singing in the valley, and a nightingale was in the hedge. A male kestrel was hovering overhead and swifts, swallows, sparrowhawk and buzzard were seen. 😊





mill hill

Re: essex buzzard

by Willrow, 16-May-15 05:03 AM GMT

Several interesting reports and insights Mark, we lost Turtle Doves in Wales a few years back (I believe) the last birds hung on in a corner of Monmouthshire, I would make an annual pilgrimage just to hear them 😞 I understand your concern and can only commiserate...in the words of Bob Dylan...'The times they are a changin' 😊 and not for the better in many ways!

Your Cornwall holiday was very productive and your species list for the year looks very healthy, glad it all went well for you 😊 Great pics to enjoy too, well done!

Best Wishes,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-May-15 07:16 AM GMT

Thanks Bill for your positive comments, hoping to get a few more species of butterflies in the next couple of weeks...

This morning (Wednesday) was cloudy,windy and cold,but was expected to improve,so lunchtime we headed an hours drive west, to Bison Hill,Whipsnade Downs. Although cold and windy here too,a few blue patches were visible. This is a new site for us,but a sheltered area soon produced a couple of Common Blue and a Grizzled Skipper. Heading down the slopes, sheltered from the cold wind by bushes, Dingy Skippers were seen in good numbers,as well as a Green Hairstreak and my first Brown Argus of 2015. Then,in a small dip,we saw our first Duke of Burgundy. The sun vanished for long periods,but a few more breaks and butterflies suddenly appeared,including a few more Dukes and 3 Greens,spiraling together. By 5 PM, many of the Dingies were perching on old knapweed heads,as well as a few Grizzled.

Despite feeling more like March than May,a short but most successful afternoon. 😊





bison hill,whipsnade

Re: essex buzzard

by keving, 22-May-15 03:50 AM GMT

Buzzard, nice photos from Bison Hill. Your report has reinforced my decision to go there this weekend. If you had that much luck in poor weather, hopefully this weekend will be even better.

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-May-15 04:57 PM GMT

It's been several years since i say Glanville Fritillaries in GB, so this year i decided to put that right. I would love to have seen them on the Isle of Wight, but circumstances were against us, so we went to Hutchinsons Bank, Croydon. The Glanvilles were easy to find- we saw 3 males in the first hundred yards! Working the site a few more were found, but in low numbers, and it remains to be seen whether this site can retain Glanvilles in the future.

Several Small Bles were seen, as were plenty of Dingy Skippers and Brimstones, some of these were laying eggs on buckthorns. After a couple of hours here, it was time to head to Denbies Hillside for the afternoon.

Pic's to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by Willow, 01-Jun-15 12:18 AM GMT

Nice report with good images Mark...I have fond (but fading) memories of **Glanville Fritillary** at Sand Point in Somerset...oh well! 😊

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 01-Jun-15 02:29 AM GMT

Glad you had better luck at Bison Hill than I did a week ago, didn't see a single butterfly! I've made a couple of visits to see those Glanvilles this year. The weathers not been perfect for them this year but apparently they have been seen in good numbers over the past couple of weeks so I'm optimistic

about there future there. On the plus side it is a well managed reserve and there's oodles of Ribwort Plantain for them 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Jun-15 07:30 AM GMT

So onto Denbies. All the expected butterflies were seen. Again,lots of Brimstones, plus Dingy and a few Grizzled Skippers, and plenty of Adonis Blues with a few Brown Argus and Common Blue.

At both sites i saw people with nets. Nothing wrong with that–i've used nets myself on occasion,especially in Europe–but after what hapened with the Long-tailed Blues and Maps, where most of the adults seem to have been scouped up rather quickly,i am a little uneasy and prefer to see people with cameras.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 01-Jun-15 07:07 PM GMT

Lovely Photos essex, the Adonis looks great.

I also saw some one with a net at Gait Barrows, she didn't go near the Dukes so I wasn't too worried but it still gives me the chills to see them. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 01-Jun-15 11:06 PM GMT

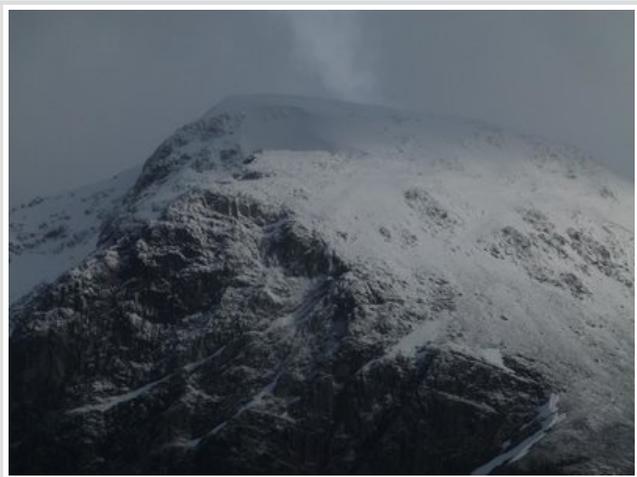
Lovely shots of the Glanvilles Mark, especially the closed wing. I am missing them 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-15 05:21 AM GMT

Thanks for your comments, everyone. Been busy recently but i always read them.

Just back from holiday. We got a morning flight to Glasgow, picked up the hire car and drove up along Loch Lomond, stopping for picture taking, to arrive in Aviemore for an early evening meal. We then headed west, though lots of rain, but arrived at Fort William to clearing skies, revealing the Nevis range glistening in fresh snow!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-15 05:31 AM GMT

It was raining again at Fort William, so we headed east, through the Great Glen, stopping for an hour or two at Fort Augustus, then spent the rest of the day at Inverness, where it was dry with bright spells. A mixture of carrion, hybrid and hooded crows were seen and, by the river, a dipper nest was under a bridge.



inverness



fort augustus

Re: essex buzzard

by Willow, 13-Jun-15 06:45 PM GMT

Ah! your bringing back memories Mark...hope you get to see all you want...enjoy 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 04:06 AM GMT

WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE

The big day. This was the best weather day of our short trip,so there was only one thing to do. Glasdrum. No contest really. We arrived early to sunny spells,and soon found our first Chequered Skipper. Lots of people began to arrive,sme from as far away as Cornwall and Essex-i think we had all been waiting for this day!

Soon more skippers were seen,as well as a few Small Pearl-border Fritillaries,Green-veined Whited and Orange Tips. The Chequered Skippers vere variable,some heavily marked than others. Most were males in good condition,but a few females were seen. Spent the morning here,before heading elsewhere for afternoon.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 04:21 AM GMT

We would love to have spent the rest of the day looking at other Chequered Skipper sites, but with only one good day, we decided to head for Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain. Near the top, a ptarmigan, 2 ring ouzel males and several snow buntings were seen. Unfortunately, the summit was shrouded in cloud and fog, and it even snowed for a while. But it was most enjoyable, and quite a novelty walking through deep snow in summer! Chequered Skippers in morning, snow in afternoon! Not much to see at the top, so I made my way down.



ben nevis summit



ben nevis-view to loch eil

Re: essex buzzard

by Hoggers, 15-Jun-15 04:33 AM GMT

Fascinating reports EB – stunning photos especially of the Skippers– Congratulations!

Best wishes

Hoggers

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 15-Jun-15 04:38 AM GMT

Hi Essex,

That's certainly a bizarre day out, Butterflies and snow in one day. Well done tracking down the Chequered Skipper and some good images too. It's a pity this species is no longer found in England.

Best wishes,

TREVOR.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 04:46 AM GMT

The next day–our last day–dawned with the more familiar rain and leaden skies,which was a shame,as the previous evening had been glorious. We headed for the spectacular Glen Coe,where by luck the rain briefly stopped. The fields beside Loch Creran was blue with wild hyacinths. Then we headed for the Cairngorms and the osprey centre. Guess what? No ospreys! It seems a rival osprey kiked the eggs out of the nest,and they deserted. We did see a crested tit though,and a couple of squirrels. By now,it was becoming increasingly cold and wet,so we headed south,along Loch Tay then Loch Lonond,and down to our hotel at Glasgow airport,happy that we had achieved our main aims,and in readiness for our early flight tomorrow morning.



Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 15-Jun-15 04:59 AM GMT

Slow down Mark, I can't keep up! 😊😂 Great shots of both butterflies and location 🇬🇧

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 05:01 AM GMT

The image below shows a Skipper with different markings to the others. I took it from a distance as others were looking at it. So it is cropped. Thanks Hoggars! It was great to catch up with these again. Thank goodness we got a break in the weather!

Thanks too Trevor. It is truly bizzare, as you say. But it shows what a splended part of the country this is, and i probably wouldn't have gone there if it wasn't for the Chequered Skipper! 😊

Thanks Pauline, i can't keep up with yours and everyone else's diaries either! 😊



Re: essex buzzard

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

Great reports and photos from Scotland Mark, particularly liking the Chequered Skippers, that one is still on my (now very short) to see list, maybe next year.

Seeing that photo from the summit of Ben Nevis puts our rainy day here yesterday into perspective a bit.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 06:26 AM GMT

WELCOME TO NORTHERN IRELAND.

After an early,short (30min) flight from Glasgow,we arrived in Belfast to pouring rain. But the cold front responsible was due to clear late morning. So we had an early lunch and,sure enough,by 11am the rain had eased and the first patches of blue sky were visible.

It was always a mystery why the Wood White was a fairly common,widespread species in Ireland,but a declining rarity in England and Wales. And why was the Wood white in England and Wales restricted to well-managed,sheltered woodland rides yes in Ireland they were common in a wide variety of habitats,including open grassland,railway and road verges? 😊 Then,in 2001 came the answer. They were two different species! The now named Cryptic Wood White is a slightly stronger,tougher insect than our delicate Wood White.

Soon we headed off to Craigavon Lakes and Railway,where Pete Eeles has visited in recent years (thanks Pete!). Soon we found birds foot trefoil near the railway,one of the Cryptic Wood Whites main food plants in one of it's main habitats. As the first sun of the day began to get through,a distant white butterfly began fluttering among the bushes,and there it was. My first ever Cryptic Wood White,and the last of the British and Irish species for me to see! Thats 60 species,including the Long-tailed Blue. As the sun appeared for longer periods,several more were seen along a long stretch of railway and nearby. One was behaving different,frequently settling low on vegetaion.A female,laying eggs on meadow vetchling.

We enjoyed these for some time,as well as Common Blues,Small Heaths,Orange Tips and several other whites,before going off to have a wider look at our surroundings. To my surprise,more Cryptics were found,right around the lake,and even from the car! We found a courting pair of Cryptics. It is said the male Cryptic never claps his wings at the female,and this was our experiance.

So that was the Cryptic Wood White. Seen and photographed-on the first day! And all the British species in the last 14 months! 😊😊😊
Elsewhere,graylag geese were guarding their goslings against the hooded crows-and people with dogs!





Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 15-Jun-15 06:34 AM GMT

Congrats on getting all the British species 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Pete Eeles, 15-Jun-15 06:44 AM GMT

Glad you found your targets, Mark! I thought I was doing too much travelling until I read your report 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 15-Jun-15 06:54 AM GMT

Excellent stuff, Buzzard.

You are now a fully paid up member of a rather exclusive club!!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 07:05 AM GMT

Thaks Pete! Couldn't have done it without you...

Thanks David. Feels great! I'm sorry you are not able to get out as much as you would like at the mo. Hope we are keeping you spirits up with our reports and pictures!

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 15-Jun-15 07:27 AM GMT

You sure are, Buzzard! Reading reports such as these gives me a great lift.

My *annus horribilis* cannot continue forever!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-15 07:01 AM GMT

Congrat Essex, great shots too especially the pair 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-15 07:05 AM GMT

Very pleased to hear that,David!

The main target in Northern Ireland was the Cryptic Wood White. With the early success,we could now relax a little,without worrying about the weather. So the next day was windy and showery,so we took the chance to visit Belfast Not much wildlife today but,having never been there,it was an interesting and enjoyable thing to do. By the river,black guillemots were nesting in the square holes in the concrete riverbank.



belfast



black guillemot



belfast

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-15 07:22 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, i have witnessed this behavior with Wood Whites, so it was a pleasure to see it with Cryptic WW.

The next day, Sunday 7th, dawned fine, so we decided to visit the spectacular Giant's Causeway and Antrim Coast. We arrived early for, being a Sunday, it was bound to get busy. A very nice couple of hours here, then off, further up the coast to Glencule Castle. Next, we headed down the coast a little. A rope bridge over the sea was good, and lots of seabirds were nesting on the cliffs here, including razorbills, guillemots and kittiwakes. Inland, several buzzards were seen.

We then went back to the Causeway for mid-afternoon refreshments, and for a few more pictures. Then made our way down the lovely Antrim coast and hills, stopping for fish and chips in one of the coastal towns.



giants causeway



glenluce



razorbill



rope bridge



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-15 07:31 AM GMT

MONDAY 8 JUNE

This was our last day in NI,so we headed south,to the Mourne mountains in Ulster–home to Sleive Donard,the highest mountain in NI. On the way,we visited Lough Neagh,the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles i believe. Then south again,we had most of the rest of the day in the mountains,before making our way back to the airport,for our delayed flight home,arriving back 1.30am!



lough neagh



mourne mountains

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-Jun-15 07:49 AM GMT

Some truly beautiful scenery (and wildlife) on show there. Thanks for sharing.

Re: essex buzzard

by Willow, 17-Jun-15 08:54 PM GMT

That really is some holiday Mark, your photo on the summit of Ben Nevis in snow is tremendous, matches your efforts to attain the summit 🤩
fantastic range of images and such interesting reportage!

Oh! I nearly forgot to mention how much I liked your **Chequered Skipper** and Irish whites pics too 😊 super stuff my friend!

Regards,

Bill 😊

"when in doubt – venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jun-15 05:58 AM GMT

Looks like a great holiday Mark, fantastic scenery and butterflies as well 😊 Strangely enough I have just commented in my own diary that Scotland and

Ireland will probably be on my must visit list in the next year or two. Chequered Skipper is now the only UK mainland species I have not yet seen and then of course to complete the full list it means a trip across the water at some point.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jun-15 05:32 AM GMT

Hi David, you are welcome. It's a pleasure. Hope you get your High Browns soon...

So are you,Bill. Cracking shots of your Dark Greens! Glad you are enjoying...

Cheers Neil,looks like you may have to head in the other direction next June. Actually,been thinking of you a lot recently because...

Last week,several family members,including my Father,were in Cornwall, visiting those that live there. So when an opportunity suddenly presented itself for me to join then,just a day after i returned from NI,it was no contest. The only question was,would i be able to get any nature walks in? The answer was-yes!

WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE

Arriving in Cornwall,my first stop was an early lunch-a pasty from Hayle. Then took it to last years' Marsh Fritillary site on the Lizard, and ate it while watching the wildlife! Fritillary numbers were lower than last year,and i noticed most of the scabious leaves had been eaten. So i wonder if the Marsh Frit caterpillars had eaten all their food,and some hadn't made it? This is entirely natural,of course. Also several Small Pearl-bordered Frits were in these fields,plus Common Blue and Speckled Wood. A hobby was hawking dragonflies. Buzzards and,more surprisingly,two kites flew over. Never seen kites in Cornwall until today. Couple of hours here,then off to Kynance Cove...





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-15 07:01 AM GMT

Great Marshies – surely the second one is an aberrant – it reminds me of a Cynthia/Marsh cross? 😊🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-15 05:45 AM GMT

Cynthia's Fritillary. Now you're talking. I would love to see one of those!

So onto Kynance Cove. Couple of hours walking between the car park and Lizard point. A backdrop of the rocky coast and azure blue seas—it doesn't get much better than this! Amongst the many flowers were the lovely white burnet rose. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were common, as were Common Blues and several other species. A rich sulphur Clouded Yellow shot past, a fresh male with glossy black wingtips.

Lots of thrift, or sea pinks, were around, and I found a clump with white flowers. A Marsh Fritillary was here too—my first at Kynance for several years. House martins were nesting on the cliffs, instead of the usual houses. All too soon it was time to head elsewhere...



kynance



burnet rose



small pearl



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-15 06:04 AM GMT

The sun shines longer and brighter in Cornwall than in any other county in Britain, and today was no exception. So there was just time to fit in a late afternoon visit to Upton and Gwithian Towans, near Hayle.

Here flies a colony of Silver-studded Blue. They breed on the abundant birds-foot trefoil that grows in the sand dunes. The flight season here was just starting, and it took a while to get my eye in. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, was a blue. False alarm. It was a Common Blue. However, after a bit more searching, I found what I was looking for. A little group of Silver-studded males. One was already a bit ragged. The others were excellent. Took some pictures here, then found a few more further on. Also saw several Large Skippers, my first on 2015. A short but great visit. Now it was time to meet up with my father, for dinner. It had been a truly super day! 😊😊😊 pics coming up

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-15 06:34 AM GMT

Pictures from Gwithian Towans;



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-15 07:00 AM GMT

After a delicious Cornish meal,it was time for a pint of fine Cornish ale,as we watched the sun set over the ocean. A great end to a truly splendid day.



Re: essex buzzard

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

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

A great end to a truly splendid day. 😊😊😊

Surely was Mark...very enjoyable report (as is usually the case) and great images 😊

Bill 😊

"When in doubt -venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-15 03:49 AM GMT

Ahhh!...having been there so recently those photos from Cornwall bring it all back, I can still hear the surf on the rocks and the Skylarks singing high overhead 😊😊😊

That is some travelling Mark, one end of the country to the other with a detour across the Irish Sea in between 😲

I saw some Silver-studded Blues at Upton Towans on June 5th as reported in my diary and a couple were already looking raggedy. I have no idea how long they had been on the wing but I had seen a couple of reports at the end of May before we went down which put it in my head to go there and look for them.

Great reports and photos 😊

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jun-15 07:29 AM GMT

Thanks Neil. I have now read your reports,and quite splendid they are,together with some excellent images. I thought i was going to miss all that this year,in the short time i had,i managed to see some great stuff in Cornwall.

My second and last day in Cornwall i spent with my father. I don't see him as much as i would like,so it was great to spend a day with him. A Cornishman through and through, we visited family there,as some of our old places from days gone by. Below he is,among the foxgloves on Madron Carn,where Painted Ladies and Red Admirals were active,as usual.

Driving from East Anglia to west Cornwall in one day and back the next is near the limit of what i can do. But no regrets,far from it-i enjoyed every second. 😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jun-15 07:46 AM GMT

THURSDAY 17 JUNE

A morning spent at Hockley Woods. This is one of the Essex Heath Fritillary Woods. This was the first Essex wood to have Fritillaries emerging this year, and some were already showing signs of age. Others were excellent, and a great pleasure to see. Many dog walkers use this wood, quite unaware of the rarity of the butterflies flying around them! 😊

On the downside, a couple of new coppice clearings, where a carpet of perfect cow-wheat has formed, though well intended, are too far away to be colonised by the fritillaries. Perhaps the contractors used simply don't realise what poor powers of dispersal this species has.



hockley wood



cow wheat

Re: essex buzzard

by kevlng, 26-Jun-15 01:39 AM GMT

Hi EssexBuzzard,

Nice shots of the Heath Frits.

What sort of numbers did you encounter at Hockley Woods?

I'm considering a jaunt to that region at the weekend with perhaps a try at Starvelarks Wood too (if there are any there still).

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-15 05:40 AM GMT

A lovely set of reports from Cornwall Essex 😊 Cracking Heaths too!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 26-Jun-15 06:08 AM GMT

I've also been considering an outing to deepest Essex, but the poor showing of Heath Fritillaries in the various woods (Is Hockley the only spot to report any this year?) has put me off. Your photos may cause some reconsideration!

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 27-Jun-15 05:01 AM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

THURSDAY 17 JUNE On the downside, a couple of new coppice clearings, where a carpet of perfect cow-wheat has

formed, though well intended, are too far away to be colonised by the fritillaries. Perhaps the contractors used simply don't realise what poor powers of dispersal this species has.

Could these perhaps be forward planning for future seasons beyond next year? At East Blean Wood this year they are centered around an area of Sweet Chestnut, coppiced around 4 or 5 years ago. Just a thought 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-15 05:38 AM GMT

Hi everyone, thanks for your comments. Anyone thinking of coming a long way to Essex for Heath Frits, in Hockley, only about 20 adults were seen, and that was over a week ago now, so a long trip may be risky. I would definitely check the Cambridge and Essex branch of BC sightings page for more up to date info. If I get the chance, I will check myself and report back.

Unfortunately, when the opportunity arose for an introduction of this rare butterfly into the Essex woods, it is possible owners jumped at the chance to have such a rare beauty in their wood, without realising the considerable and endless management required to maintain a colony, not to mention the great cost which, considering the cut-backs, is becoming harder to justify. Not for me, I love having them! But for the general public.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-15 05:57 AM GMT

Although I saw my last British butterfly species earlier this month (Cryptic Wood White), for Esther there was still one to see, the Black Hairstreak. Perhaps the nearest reliable sight for us is Glapthorn Cow Pasture, so on Wednesday we went up. We were greeted on arrival by verges outside the site packed with cars—wow, it was busy! Lots of people, then, but the Hairstreaks were not co-operative. About 10 were seen, but very few landed, and then, only for a few seconds. A female sat for a longer period, but was tucked in the shade under a leaf. A slight shame, but at least we got to see them, and Esther completed her list.

After heading into Melton Mowbray for a pork pie and a drink in the park there, we headed home, stopping at Newmarket July Racecourse, to see the spectacular lizard orchids there. Several Marbled Whites there, too—my first for 2015.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jun-15 06:23 AM GMT

Dave, just checked the sightings page. Not much there! In 2013, Starvelarks Wood was the best Essex performer. There were hundreds of Heath Frits in there! Although coppice quickly becomes unsuitable, I think this wood should definitely be visited if you come, and Pound Wood has had recent maintenance, too. Both should produce Heaths this weekend, and Hockley should still have a few, too. The added bonus is that these three woods are close to each other. If you, or anyone else go, good luck.

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 27-Jun-15 07:54 AM GMT

Thanks, E.B. 😊 I went to Little Haven (part of Starvelarks I think) last year and saw a dozen or so, but noted a lack of cow-wheat anywhere near where the butterflies were flying. The year before I went to Pound Wood (perversely that's when Little Haven was so good) and again saw only a few. Your theories on the management of these woodlands may well be accurate – it's a tricky butterfly to get it right for. Even the "reliable" colonies in Kent are very variable from year to year. If I do get over there this week and miss out, I may well also take a look at the local WLH hotspots – a butterfly I continually fail to see each year!

(Actually, I've been looking enviously at your splendid postings from Cornwall, and I think a relocation there every spring would work for me! 😊)

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by keving, 28-Jun-15 01:01 AM GMT

Hi EB,

I visited Starvelarks Wood today on my way out of Hadleigh Country Park. Not a single Heath Frit seen unfortunately. Although it is probably late on for them now, I was surprised at how overgrown the coppiced area was compared to the peak I witnessed a couple of years ago. There seemed to be some extensive growth of other trees in the area. Perhaps it's my imagination, but is this area still being maintained with the Heath Frit's survival in mind?

Regards Kev

Re: essex buzzard

by Willow, 04-Jul-15 07:46 PM GMT

Thoroughly enjoying your reports from a broad area of Britain & Ireland Mark, you and Esther are certainly getting around this year...and why not...just enjoy 😊 😊

BW's

Bill

"When in doubt –venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jul-15 06:13 AM GMT

Hi Kev, I have raised my concerns about the Heath Fritillary, and I will raise it again at the branch AGM in Autumn, as lack of management seems to be a problem. Wish me luck!

Thanks Bill, yes we are certainly getting around, much to our pleasure!

WHITE LETTER DAY!

This week, it was time to make my annual trip to Hadleigh Castle Country Park, near Southend. It is a great pleasure to have such a great wildlife site

right here in Essex. Here, elm trees grow as suckering shrubs, dying when they get to a certain size, to be replaced by more suckering regrowth. What all this means is the White Letter Streaks in this colony have very little honeydew to feed on, so always come down to feed on brambles. Despite this, they are not always easy to photograph, and on this hot day, many were feeding in the shade.

The colony is now in full swing. Easily 20–30 adults were seen. Sometimes 2–3, and as at one point as many as 5, spun up together, chasing each other, breaking off, a couple returning to an elm branch. Others were feeding. All were a pleasure to see.

Surprisingly, several late Holly Blues were seen. Hutchinsoni Commas were plentiful, and amongst many Skippers, was my first Essex of the year. Marbled Whites were hyper in the heat, I didn't see one land until 7 PM!

Hadleigh is good for other wildlife, too. The hedges were full of field roses, and whitethroats were singing from the tops of bushes. Depford pinks are a just one of the rare flowers found here.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jul-15 06:17 AM GMT

More pictures from Hadleigh;





depford pink



Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 06-Jul-15 06:30 AM GMT

👍👍👍 right time, right place there I see! Great shots 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-15 06:46 AM GMT

Indeed as Bugboy states 🍷😄 Cracking Whitters Essex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-15 10:08 PM GMT

Lovely Shots of the WH's Essex 🍷🍷 I'm still looking for them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-15 06:16 AM GMT

Just back from our holiday to the French Pyrenees with Naturetrek, brilliantly led by Mark and Jason. A full report will appear on the Naturetrek website, so this is just a summary of my highlights, with maybe a picture or two thrown in! We stayed at the Breche de Roland hotel in Gedre, where great French food and drink is served, just as it was when I visited 11 years ago!

Unlike GB, where the summer weather has been rather mediocre, France and much of Europe has been in the grip of a heatwave, with temps between 35-40C for weeks.

We arrived at Lourdes late afternoon Monday 6 July, and made the 1 hour drive up the increasingly narrow, winding valley up to Gedre, noting black kites and crag martins in the air, and Swallowtail and Black-veined White on the verge flowers. With a temp. of 36C, we opted for cooling drinks after dinner and, as the light faded, a brilliant stag beetle made a great start to the holiday!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-15 06:42 AM GMT

Tuesday. Our first morning in the Pyrenees started bright and blue, and a walk near the village produced buzzard, honey buzzard and two golden eagles, one of which was surprisingly easily seen off by a tiny Kestrel! A grayling on some marjoram caused some ID problems, we opted for Woodland Grayling. Near a waterfall, many butterflies included Wood White and White Admiral.

After a delicious picnic lunch of french cheeses, hams, bread and fruit, it was up to the Cirque de Tromouse. Here were many Pyrenean irises, these were to become very familiar during our week. Many butterflies included our first Apollos, Marbled Skippers and Red-underwing Skippers, while in a stream, a Pyrenean brook salamander was found. Overhead, our first griffon vultures soared, and in the grass, gentians and birds-eye primroses added a splash of colour.

A delicious evening meal was followed by another stag beetle. A great first full day!



woodland grayling



italian shield bug



red underwing skipper



fringed pinks



trumpet gentian



brook salamander stream



pyrenean iris



marbled skipper pair

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Jul-15 07:13 AM GMT

Nice start, Buzzard. If you take a walk near water at relatively low altitudes where there is tree cover keep an eye out for Map Butterflies and Lesser Purple Emperors!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jul-15 07:14 AM GMT

Day 3 Wednesday.

It was misty and foggy as we drove up to the Barrage des Gloriettes. A vast array of flowers, including alpenrose and turks cap lily, were covered in dewdrops, as were several Black-veined Whites. Eventually, the sun started to penetrate and large numbers of griffon vultures took off, powering upwards to try to catch thermals. These are really huge birds, with a wingspan of 8 feet.

Butterflies were starting to be seen, and in the cool air, many were settled, allowing closer views than yesterday. Ringlets seemed to be Yellow Spotted Ringlet—without yellow spots! Also a few Mountain and Piedmont. Several grizzled skippers were seen, including Large, Red—underwing and Olive Skipper. Turquoise Blues showed well, and Silver—studded, Large and Long—tailed Blues were found.

By afternoon, butterflies were more active, with plenty of Apollos flying through, and a few Clouded Yellows. Fritillaries included Heath, Lesser Marbled, Small Pearl—border and Spotted. On the bird front, a nice ring ouzel showed several times and chough and alpine chough were present. Back at the village, nesting black redstart were again seen.



black veined whites



turks cap lily



yellow spotted ringlet



lesser marbled fritillary



turquoise blue



long tailed blue



large grizzled skipper



pearly heath



lac des gloriottes



spotted fritillary

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jul-15 05:42 AM GMT

Pyrenees day 4. Today dawned damp again. A stop at Pont de Nepolian produced the normal black redstarts and crag martins but the, overhead, 3 fabulous black woodpeckers. As the cloud was lifting, we headed higher, seeing short-toed eagle and Egyptian vulture. But as we got higher, we went back into the fog and at the top of a hill, it was clear the damp was going nowhere soon. However, I did find some Piedmont ringlets feeding on Pyrenean thistle, an endemic species. And, while enjoying the flowers and grass covered in water droplets, a male whinchat was seen, my first for many years.

So we headed down to the valley floor for lunch, where it was brighter and warmer. We always intended to do some lowland butterflying, to get the best diversity of species. Our efforts were well rewarded, with Clouded Yellows including a helice female, Common Blues, Small Heath, Painted Lady and Heath Fritillaries all seen. Then, while having lunch, a small butterfly flew past and landed on a riverside Buddlejia—a Map. Unfortunately, it flew off before I got a picture. A small meadow was yellow with trefoil, and both Short tail and Provence Short-tailed blue were present. We spent early afternoon here, enjoying the surroundings including beautiful demoiselles, hummingbird hawkmoth and a cattle egret.

We finished the day with a walk down a country lane, with verges of flowers. Here were several British species— Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Dark Green and Silver-washed Frits and a Purple Emperor. Several Long-tailed Blues were on the flowers, and the day ended with a couple of buzzards seen as we

were leaving.



pedemont ringlet



view from the top



provençal short tailed blue



short tailed blue



long tailed blue

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 21-Jul-15 03:08 PM GMT

Love the Long-tailed Blue shots Mark – very reminiscent of a couple of memorable days here in the UK 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jul-15 06:50 AM GMT

For me too,Pauline. They were fairly common in the Pyrenees,so they are not far away!

More Pyrenees shortly but i've got to say,cycling home this evening,i've just seen my first local Purple Emperor,just half a mile from home! It landed on an ash,about 10 feet above me where i had to do a double take! Then it soared up,over the canopy and was gone. Never seen one here,or any where in Essex,before. I need to pinch myself,i'm dreaming!!! 😊😊😊

Pyrenees day 5- Gavarnie.

Today we spent a hot day in perhaps the most impressive of the cirques-Gavarnie.A pair of red-back shrikes showed well. Heading down the track,it was still cool,and butterflies were settling. First up was Black-veined White,followed by Dark Green and False Heath Frits, Marbled Whites and a White Admiral. Further down,a thistle patch was attracting many butterflies,especially fritillaries. Heath, False Heath, Lesser Marbled and several lovely Silver-washed Fritillaries were active here,as well as Black-veined Whites. In the grass,Silver-studded and Turquoise Blues and Piedmont Ringlets were present. Apollos flew through,and a Wall was on the track. With all the action,it took quite a while to reach the refreshment stop,where cool beers,drinks and ice-cream were available. Here we ate our bagettes,then some of us opted to go right into the Cirque,to the foot of the very impressive waterfall,leaving the others to relax in the shade and search the nearby grassland for butterflies.

I'm glad i went for the longer walk, for the Cirque had lots of alpine flowers,many found nowhere else. Among them,flew black mountain ringlets. Most shot past,but one stopped for a photo,the white veins later identified it as a Gavarnie Ringlet. Found nowhere else,it was a great find. Back near the refreshment stop,a male Brimstone was chasing a female,and a Bright-eyed Ringlet was feeding. Taking the high path back,a high mountain clearing had a splendid show of Pyrenean irises,and a Small Blue was spotted. Firecrest and crested tit were heard before we made our way down,and more Apollos and a Swallowtail caped off a super day.



false heath fritillary



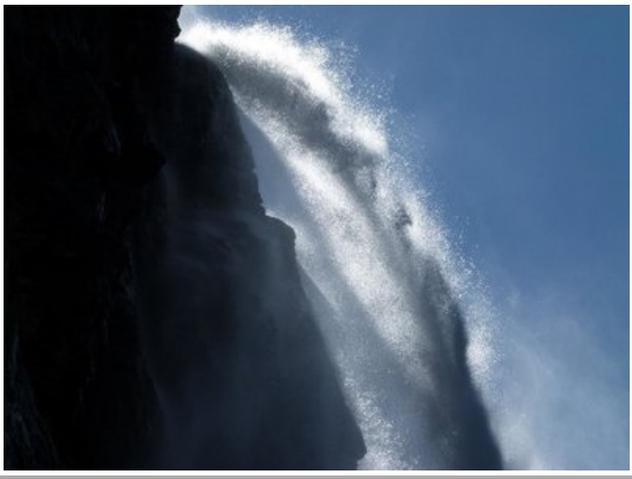
silver washed frit



cirque de gavarnie



gavarnie ringlet



waterfall



bright eyed ringlet



pyrenean columbine



pyrenean irises



turquoise blue

Re: essex buzzard

by Willow, 24-Jul-15 07:38 PM GMT

My goodness Mark, I think you must be on a season long butterflying sabbatical...job to know where you will turn up next 😄😄 Lovely report by the way.

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-15 06:30 AM GMT

Ha ha,thanks Bill. As you know,i like to get about!

Pyrenees day 6, Ossoue Valley.

Everyone wanted to see Apollo's up close,and some wanted photo's as well. We got our chance today. For the lower Ossoue Vallet was foggy,and a grassy bank soon produced a roosting adult,then another was found,wings open,nearby.

Heading higher,we cleared the mist and broke into sun. Here,ring ouzel and rock thrush were seen and a mountain slope had lots of Silver-studded Blues warming up. At the top,near a lake,the now familiar griffon vultures were present,and also a bearded vulture. A pebble stream produced our first Eshers Blue of the trip. This was good,but even better soon followed. For while photo's were taken i just happened to look behind me,and there was-a Gavarnie Blue! Quickly everyone crowded round to get a glimpse-even a picture-of this great rarity. Even the tour leaders were delighted,for none have been seen for several years!

Although nothing could beat that,we walked along the lake seeing Marbled Skippers and many blues mud-puddling. These included Common,Chalkhill,Eshers,Silver-studded,Smal and Turquoise Blues. After enjoying these,it was time for another delicious picnic lunch. Pic's to follow!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-15 06:43 AM GMT

Pictures as promised,



apollo



apollo



gavarnie blue





escher's and chalkhill blue



escher's blue



marbled skipper



gavernie blue

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-15 04:36 AM GMT

After lunch, we headed back down the valley. A stream side produced many kinds of butterflies—too many to mention them all, but a nice colony of Scarce Coppers were enjoyed and, as a little patchy cloud came over, a few settled for the photographers. Purple Edge and Purple Shot Coppers were seen by other members of our group. Our first De Prunner's Ringlets of the week were found, and some of the Yellow Spot Ringlets here actually had yellow spots!

Olive and Oburther's Grizzled Skippers were seen, as were more Apollo's. Fritillaries included Heath, False Heath, Lesser Marbled and many Dark Greens, including the 'freak' DGF I posted on a separate post. Too soon, it was time to head back, down the valley and back to the hotel, another super day had come to an end.



yellow spotted ringlet



scarce copper



de prunners ringlet



lesser marbled fritillary



apollo



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-15 05:32 AM GMT

Everyone say ahhhh. Just look at these chubby Marmots. They are remarkably fat for an animal which eats grass and things. Marmots were present in many places we visited, their thin, bird-like calls often heard. But they were plentiful in the Ossoue valley, although Marmots seem to retire to their burrows after lunch so we only saw them in the morning. These handsome animals were a pleasure to see.



adult marmot on watch



baby marmot



adult

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 27-Jul-15 12:22 AM GMT

Ahhhh... cute looking critters 😊

Just catching up on your reports from the Pyrenees Mark. Great descriptions and photos from what looks like a beautiful part of the world.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-15 07:10 AM GMT

Thanks Neil. It IS a fantastic place!

Pyrenees day 7. Today was our last full day. It started with a drive up to the Col des Tentes, from where we walked to the Port de Boucharo, high up on the Spanish border. While the others walked on, i checked the grassy slopes for mountain ringlets. On finding one, i chased it down until it landed, wings open—a Gavarnie Ringlet. Another flickered blue-grey in flight—a Pyrenees Bressy Ringlet. On the Spanish border, flowers included ashy cranesbill and tiny snow gentians. Here, a Mountain Clouded Yellow was seen. Soon, it was time to head back down, for lunch.

The afternoon was spent in the lower Ossoue valley. A stream side was full of mud-puddling butterflies. Essex, Oburthers and Marbled Skippers, several kinds of blue, Wood White, False Heath and Dark Green Fritillaries were all present. We spent some time here, watching with wonder, then checked the streamside fields. Apollos, Swallowtail, Clouded Yellow, Purple-edge Copper, Brown Argus, Yellow Spotted Ringlets, Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and Safflower Skipper were all clocked up. For the birders, a nice family of rock buntings were enjoyed. By 5 pm, it was time to head back to Gedre for the last time.



gavarnie ringlet



snow gentian



french and,behind,spanish pyrenees



ashy cranesbill



pyrenees brassy ringlet on pyrenean thistle



pyrenees brassy



mud puddling



marbled skippers



rock bunting



there's a rock bunting there somewhere...



oburthers grizzled skipper

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-15 07:18 AM GMT

On arriving at the hotel, most of the group wanted to start their packing for tomorrow. But i can do mine in about 10 mins flat, so we took a short walk in the village for a last look. On a verge, this Black Veined White was showing well, oblivious to the nearby traffic...



gedre



black-veined white

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Jul-15 06:20 AM GMT

Some lovely images there, Buzzard. It's a part of the world that I simply **must** revisit fairly soon.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-15 06:38 AM GMT

A mouthwatering set of reports Essex that sent my envy-meter through the roof and in fact the needle spun off 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-15 05:30 AM GMT

Yes Dave,it was great to go back to an area i visited in 2004. But i am very,very impressed with your trip to the Alps. And great pictures,too!

Hi Wurzel, the Pyrenees,as well as the French Alps, will blow the mind of anyone more used to a mere sprinkling of British species!

Pyrenees day 8. Homebound today 😞 . We thanked the hotel staff for their great hospitality and cuisine,then i took one last walk around Gedre,seeing black redstart,honey buzzard and short toed eagle. Then we headed toward Lourdes. But there was still time to take in a couple of mountain passes along the route used by Chris Froome and the Tour de France two days later. At the top of the first pass, Mountain and Piedemont Ringlets and Olive Skippers were seen,and also a colony of Shepherds Fritillarie,the only ones of the trip. The next slightly lower pass had lots of Dark Green Frits feeding on musk thistles,and the odd High Brown Frit,again,the only ones of the trip. We had lunch here,enjoying the scenery one last time and seeing Red Admiral,Apollo and our last griffon vultures soaring nearby. Now it was time to head down to the foothills,and one last stop. Here, British species were seen,including Clouded Yellow, Common Blue, Marbled White and Meadow Brown,and our last new species just as we were leaving—a Dingy Skipper. Buzzards and lots of kites and black kites were seen here,and one kite had a tussle with a black kite. Just before the airport was a field of sunflowers, as if waving us goodbye. Or is that au revoir!



black redstart



one last view,the french pyrenees



shepherds fritillary



dark green frit



high brown frit



clouded yellow

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Aug-15 05:08 AM GMT

So to end, this was a truly great holiday. Huge thanks go to our tour leaders, Mark and Jason, who did a brilliant job throughout the week. Highlights were too many to mention, but include the lovely group of people I shared the week with, the Gavarnie Blue and Ringlet, the griffon vultures and those lovely marmots, also the great scenery and weather!

Strane sighting of the week must be the Dark Green Frit in the Ossoue Valley. I've never seen anything like it. For those who missed it elsewhere, here is the picture again...



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Aug-15 05:23 AM GMT

THURSDAY 23 JULY

Today we spent the morning at Hatfield Forest, Essex. I don't come here for rarities, although Purple Emperors have been seen in recent years and Silver-washed Fritillaries are common. But it is more the sheer number of common butterflies—skippers, whites, Ringlets and Gatekeepers—that I come for, plus it is very close to home! We enjoyed these and other delights, plus lunch at the lake side cafe, then off to Devils Dyke for afternoon.

It was rather cloudy and chilly when we arrived at Devils Dyke near Newmarket, but this perhaps played into our hands. For this is home to a colony of thousands of Chalkhill Blues, and because of the chill, they were quite easy to see and photograph. They made a splendid sight. Other species seen here included Essex Skipper, Dark Green Fritillary and Marbled Whites.

Photo's shortly...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Aug-15 05:51 AM GMT

Pictures as promised...







Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 01-Aug-15 04:08 PM GMT

Great account of your recent trip Mark and your lovely photos of the scenery and wildlife complement it perfectly.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-15 06:26 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline. It's taken me a while to catch up but hopefully better late than never!

ASTON ROWANT.

On Friday, it was time to take my yearly visit to perhaps the best British site I have visited—Aston Rowant. For sheer numbers and variety, this place is hard to beat. We spent the morning on the south side. Here, lots of Peacocks were feeding on marjoram, ahead of hibernation. In the shorter grass were one of the stars of this site—lots of Silver Spotted Skippers. These lovely skippers have so much character, they are a pleasure to watch. One of the males chased down a female, then tried to connect with her, twitching, turning his back end towards hers, but every time she moved just out of reach. After a few minutes, he gave up and flew off. Sometimes, small clusters of skippers would chase each other over the down, all at breakneck speed. There was a lot of cloud, and the skippers loved to bask on chalk chippings, where rabbits have dug them out, during these cloudy spells.

Chalkhill Blues were also seen, though not in high numbers. Brimstones have emerged, and there were still plenty of browns, whites and a few Dark Green Fritillaries. A Holly Blue was on wild basil flowers, too.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-15 06:52 AM GMT

In afternoon,it was time to visit the north end of the site. Here,Chalkhill Blues were more abundant, and Silver-spotted Skippers were again in profusion. A Painted Lady put in an appearance,as did Small Copper and Small Heath.

It's not just the butterflies that make Aston Rowant so special. Clustered bellflower grows abundantly at this northern section. In the recent rabbit diggings grows a plant i always seek out when visiting,as this is the only place i have seen it—the wild candytuft. Each plant lasts just one year,and these rabbit scrapings are essential for the establishment of new seedlings each spring.

In the evening,the sun came out,and many roosting blues opened their wings to give us a late finale to a very good day.

Today's list were;Small Skipper,Essex Skipper,Silver-spotted Skipper,Brimstone,Large White,Small White, Small Copper,Brown Argus,Common Blue,Chalkhill Blue,Holly Blue,Small Tortoiseshell,Peacock,Painted Lady,Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled White, Meadow Brown,Gatekeeper,Ringlet,Small Heath.

21 species. A third of the British list at one site. In one day. 😊



wild candytuft



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 10-Aug-15 07:00 AM GMT

Lovely images from one of my favourite places too, Essex. I always stick to the north side, having failed once to find the way onto the south side and getting lost! It looks just as good, if not better! 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 10-Aug-15 07:05 AM GMT

I realise I must have missed you on Friday – if it was last Friday (7th). I was at Aston Rowant (north side) from five until seven. The sun came out again soon after I left, I think! 😊

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-15 07:15 AM GMT

It's a lot quieter, Dave! And very easy to get to. Simple drive past the north side entrance, on the road towards Christmas Common. Drive over the M40 and the car park is after 1 mile in the beech trees on the left. Park here and cross the road near the large Aston Rowant picture sign. Both north and south side are good as each other, really.

Shame I missed you, were you with anyone? I saw the odd couple, we stayed until about 8pm as the sun was indeed shining!

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 11-Aug-15 04:41 AM GMT

Hi Mark, great report and photos from Aston Rowant, one of my favourite sites as well. I visited the south side for the first time myself last year and like you found fewer Chalkhill Blues but just as many Silver-spotted Skippers. As you say, just as good as the north side and being that bit further away from the M40 it is quieter 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-15 06:23 AM GMT

DORSET 2015!

Just back from our annual adventure to the isle of Purbeck. It was a fine day last Sunday, so our holiday started with a ride on the excellent Swanage Steam Railway. A very enjoyable trip, and it saved us from the often frustrating drive through Swanage at this peak season. We were hungry when we arrived, so we went to the bakers for supplies, then walked to Durlston Country Park.

Plenty of butterflies here, but what we really wanted to see were Lulwothe Skippers, and these were soon located. Some were showing signs of age, as you would expect from a species that has been flying since June. But others were remarkably fresh, including a surprising mint male.

An emperor dragonfly was flying with something flapping in its jaws. Then it dropped the unfortunate victim which, when located, turned out to be an oak eggar moth which had had its head bitten off. Yuck!

We had a few hours here and, apart from Lulworths, we also saw Small Skippers, Large and Small Whites, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Wall. A hummingbird was also seen.

Ravens and buzzards were present. A kestrel was seen. Swallows and house martins flew overhead. By now it was time to head to our B+B in West Lulworth. With Lulworth Cove just 10 minute walk away! 😊



swanage railway



durlston



lulworth skipper female



lulworth male

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-15 05:23 AM GMT

Great Lulworths Essex 😊 Looking forward to more reports from Dorset 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-15 06:11 AM GMT

It's a great part of the country, Wurzel!

DORSET DAY 2

Stying at West Lulworth was a great advantage,for it meant i could go for a pre-breakfast walk round Bindon Hill on fine days. Today,this walk produced lots of Chalkhill and a few Common Blues warming up in the early morning sunshine—a photographers dream. 😊

Today,we decided to leave the car behind,and explore the area between Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door. Much of this area is dominated by tor grass,and more Lulworth Skippers were seen,though most were showing their age. Many Meadow Browns were still present,one of which had two pupils on its front wings,and lots of Walls were near the bare patches. Graylings were around,especially near Durdle Door where, surprisingly,a Brimstone flew past. A Clouded Yellow male was on the hill,along with a very obliging male kestrel. Nearby,several Marbled Whites were on greater knapweed.

After lunch,we continued to search the area,adding Brown Argus to our day total,as well as Large and Small Whites.This was a leisurely day,enjoying the scenery,the weather and the wildlife.



early morning



chalkhill blue



common blue





durdle door

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Aug-15 06:14 AM GMT

Absolutely love that subtle Chalkhill in the first image.

Great stuff!

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 25-Aug-15 06:26 AM GMT

I really like your Grayling image, for the usual closed wing pose i don't think it could be bettered.
TREVOR.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-15 04:29 AM GMT

Hi Mark, great reports and photos from Dorset 😊

If I remember rightly, for the past couple of years you have been down there a couple of weeks before I have...guess where I will be next week 😊😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-15 06:01 AM GMT

Correct! Maybe one of these days i will see you there! With the season running a little late,i think you will see most of the stuff i saw,Neil.

DORSET DAY 3

A pre-breakfast walk produced more Chalkhill Blues,including females. Brown Argus,Marbled White and Meadow Browns were also seen on Bindon Hill.

Later,we returned to the hill, where three lovely Exmoor ponies were grazing. Lots of Walls,both male and females,were in the bare area's near the top of the hill overlooking the Cove. They were not easy to photograph,the males in particular flying up at anything that passed,including Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns. A Dark Green Fritillary and Small Heaths were present as were whites including,near the hedge at the bottom,my only Green-veined

White of the trip,and a Brimstone.

For afternoon,we went to West Bay,with it's spectacular sandstone cliffs. At the top of these cliffs, Painted Lady and Red Admiral were seen.

Birds today included lots of swallows—they were enjoyed as they will soon be migrating—plus buzzards,kestrels, peregrines and a raven.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-15 10:45 PM GMT

Great shots of lovely Butterflies essex, in your photo of the early morning I recognise the hill there, also there is a narrow passage way along the wall to the next Bay ,I remember going along this path and finding lots of Holly Blues, one of my best photo's of one was taken there , great memories, I will have to go back , the weather looks great too, I envy you being there Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Aug-15 04:47 AM GMT

Nice to see a couple of Wall Browns, EB.

I've only come across a handful thus far in 2015.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-15 05:59 AM GMT

Cracking shot of the Grayling Essex and very Nic Walls too 😊🌿 However the best photo has to be of Durdle Door – my favourite place in the entire world that is 😊🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-15 06:01 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie. It's a lovely part of the country, you really should go back, although I realise it's a long way for you. And I think Neil F is going next week, so keep an eye on his diary too, for more Dorset delights – of torture!!! The weather wasn't always good though...

I like to see the Walls to David, and they are common on this coast. I saw them especially from the South West coast path just east and west of Lulworth Cove, and in lower numbers at most of the sites I visited.

Lovely place Wurzel, I even saw people swimming through the door. Too cold for me though!

DORSET – THE NEXT INSTALLMENT

The next day, an unwelcome warm front appeared on the weather maps, which brought two days of rain, drizzle and fog. This wiped out the butterflies, but every cloud, and all that. This gave us a chance to do a few things we wouldn't have done in good weather.

Visits were made to Gold Hill in Shaftsbury, famed for the Hovis adverts (remember the boy with his bicycle up the hill?), Corfe Castle, where we had a Dorset cream tea and visited a model village, and water gardens near Weymouth – home to the national collection of water lilies, we also saw two kingfishers there!



shaftsbury



model village



west lulworth



waterlily gardens



corfe castle—not november, but an afternoon in august!

Re: essex buzzard

by lee3764, 27-Aug-15 05:38 PM GMT

[color=#800000:8rns17r6]Hi Mark,

All your reports & photos are of outstanding quality!

Hope & trust you had an excellent season.

Cheers,

Lee Slaughter (Cornwall).[/color:8rns17r6] 😊😊😊😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-15 04:24 AM GMT

"essexbuzzard" wrote:

.. And i think Neil F is going next week...

Yep, heading down tomorrow for a week, fingers crossed the weather is looking to be more settled.

Ah yes! those steps on Bindon Hill, I know them well...my legs are aching just looking at them.

Great shot of Corfe Castle shrouded in mist, very atmospheric 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 30-Aug-15 02:49 AM GMT

I'm loving your reports from Lulworth Mark. Only been there once but brings back very happy memories.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pete Eeles, 30-Aug-15 04:32 AM GMT

I agree, great reports and photos; thanks for sharing, Mark!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Aug-15 07:58 AM GMT

Thanks for the positive feedback,guys! I'm just glad people enjoy my postings,and think i have something worthy to contribute. Were it not for this great site,though,we not would have opportunity to share so massive thanks go to you,Pete! Lee,i hope, despite the rain,you have had a good summer and have led some great walks in Cornwall. And keep an eye open for Long-tailed Blues,there are a few around so you never know!

FRIDAY 21 AUG-DORSET LAST DAY

We said our goodbyes to our charming hosts,Lisa and Clive. Then,with a brighter day in prospect,a visit to Ballard Down,near Swanage,was in order.

The emergence of the second generation Adonis Blues signals the end of summer. I hann't seen any elsewhere on this holiday, suggesting a late emergence this year. But with some sunny spells we soon found them at Ballard-not in big numbers but mint fresh males. Quality over quantity. Common Blues and lots of Brown Argus too. At least one male and two female Clouded Yellow,together with the usural Gatekeepers,Meadow Browns and a few Marbled Whites and Speckled Wood and a tiny Holly Blue which i thought was a Small Blue,untill she opened her wings. I was also pleased to see a few Lulworth Skippers,as i don't always find them here.

A short break to Arne reserve,where we saw raft spiders on a pond,and lots of dragonflies Dorset heath,a king of heather, was in the wet areas,too.

It was now mid-afternoon and the cloud had filled in again,so we opted for a last quick look at Ballard. We found a few more Adonis but under cloud,most were roosting by 4.30,and we were about to head for home. But for once,the weather gods smiled,and in early evening,the sun came out to play. We had a great extra couple of hours,photographing the resulting blues,including some great Adonis Blues,wings open,and a Small Copper.







Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 31-Aug-15 02:40 PM GMT

Six lovely images there. The Adonis Blues are stunning, and a bonus Clouded Yellow. Best of all, the Brown Argus threesome.

TREVOR.

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 31-Aug-15 09:27 PM GMT

I agree with Trevor the three some are a winner Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Sep-15 05:51 AM GMT

Thank you both! It was great how the sun suddenly came out when i thought the day was over. This extended the day by some 2 hours, and a great pleasure was had, watching the butterflies open their wings as we all enjoyed the evening sunshine! 😊

Hopefully you will enjoy this next report, Goldie...

LYDDEN DOWNS

On Saturday, before the bank holiday weather set in, we headed off to the excellent Lydden Downs, near Dover. My main target here were Silver-spotted Skippers. Despite it getting late in the season, i'm pleased to report there were still plenty of these lovely skippers on this site, including fresh males, so they should be here for a week or two yet. Great, as i can't get enough of these lovely butterflies!

Looking around, lots of other butterflies were present, and plenty of wild flowers, too. For the blues, Brown Argus, Common Blues, Chalkhill Blues and a few fresh Adonis Blues were enjoyed, and i was pleased to find a Small Tortoiseshell, as these seem to have tailed off this year, though there is still time for a few more to emerge. Lots of Meadow Browns were present, they have long since gone from my local fields, yet here they were still in full swing. A few Small Heaths were seen too.

By early afternoon, the cloud had increased, the first spots of rain were falling and the day was over. But i headed home, delighted i had seen so many butterflies and had such a great time at a great place. 😊



silver spotted skipper male



silver spotted female



silver spotted pair



small white



small tort



adonis blue

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-15 06:00 AM GMT

Those Silver-spots are in very fine fettle Essex 😊 And the trio of Brown Argus is a gorgeous shot 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-15 11:46 PM GMT

Hi! Essex, I missed the Adonis as well 😊 Your photos are super and bring back some happy memories of Kent 😊 I love the two SSS on the Flower Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Sep-15 07:45 AM GMT

Thank you both for your comments, it was such a nice morning I had to go back...

EARLY AUTUMN ON THE DOWNS

I returned to the Downs on Wednesday. In the morning, there was some sunshine, but it rather chilly for September. However, there was plenty of butterfly activity, with Meadow Browns quickly found, soon followed by several Adonis Blues. Although many of the Chalkhill Blues were showing their age by September, there were still a few fresh ones around. After seeing several worn Common Blues, I found the nice fresh one in the picture. Autumn ladies tresses were abundant, with a few autumn gentians.

At this Temple Ewell end of the site, Silver-spotted Skippers, though present, were few in number, so we headed across the top and down the Lydden end. Here, much better numbers of these lovely Skippers were seen. We watch one female as she crawled over a tuft of sheep's fescue, eventually finding the right spot and laying an egg. For a species which seems to be found in Finland, far beyond the Arctic Circle, Silver-spots are surprisingly reliant on warm weather, and today the adults spent long periods of time grounded, trying to warm up. By lunchtime, though, the cloud had returned and with temps of only 15C, the day's butterflying was over. Very enjoyable while it lasted, though! 😊



adonis blue



chalkhill blue



autumn lades tresses



common blue





adonis female

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Sep-15 05:54 AM GMT

EARLY AUTUMN-COPPERS AND COMMAS!

Autumn is here. Although i see Small Coppers at other times of year,i leave this lovely species until now for a closer look. Numbers generally peak at this time of year,and it gives me something to look forward to when the downland and woodland butterfly season is over. Just twenty minutes drive from home is Bedford's Park,where Essex meets London. From these hills,fine views can be had over the capital,with Canary Wharf,the Dome and the Shard clearly visible.

Coppers can be seen all over the site,but especially where there are clumps of devils-bit scabious. Several of the coppers were the form with the lovely blue spots,to a varying extent. Others were clear,and all were a pleasure to see.

Comma's are also common here,and several were seen when we went yesterday,again,mainly on the scabious blooms. These,of course,are of the dark,overwintering form,and were building their reserves,in readiness for hibernation.

The season is clearly on the wane,and the only other butterflies seen were Large White,Small White,Speckled Wood,Meadow Brown and a Small Heath. Today,at work,i saw a Holly Blue and a late Peacock.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-15 06:25 AM GMT

Cracking blue badges on the last Copper Essex 😊🇮🇪 The Coppers don't seem to have emerged round here yet, soon hopefully 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 20-Sep-15 06:36 AM GMT

Lovely *caeruleopunctata*, and two Commas in such close proximity ain't bad either! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 20-Sep-15 05:44 PM GMT

Hi Mark, I love the photo of the two Commas together on the branch...and that last Small Copper is a beauty with a great set of blue spots 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 20-Sep-15 08:11 PM GMT

Lovely shots Mark, still waiting to see them again up North although the weather has been very clement recently still no Coppers Goldie 🇮🇪😊

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 21-Sep-15 06:07 AM GMT

What they all said^^^, excellant imagies showing there's still plenty of live in the season yet 😊!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-15 06:43 AM GMT

MALAGA

Just back from a short break to the Costa Del Sol—the sunshine coast! After the inevitable hot,dry,sunny summer,and the resulting tired,brown vegetation,i wasn't expecting to see an abundance of butterflies in these parts. And i didn't. But of those i did see,there were a couple of real belters. Below is a quick list of butterflies seen,with a more detailed report of my new 'lifers' to follow.

Swallowtail—abundant on several of the hill tops we visited. This is 'hill topping' mating behavior.

Large White—one seen in Malaga,last day.

Small White—one only. Could have been Southern Small White,no picture.

Clouded Yellow—two on last day,Malaga. One was helice.

Long-tailed Blue—again,common on hill tops. All males.

Wall—several hilltopping.

Grayling—a few tired,faded adults hanging on,hill tops.

And now for the gems...

GERANIUM BRONZE

I was hoping,though not expecting, to find these. Seem to be fairly common near habitation.Found at Benalmadena, Fuengirola and Malaga. Surprisingly,didn't see a geranium while i was there. A male found a female in a bush,landed,and stuck his back end onto hers. No elaborate courtship,the whole process took about 5 seconds! A tiny,but rather pretty little butterfly.



geranium bronze pair at Belamadena



geranium bronze,fuengirola

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-15 06:54 AM GMT

AFRICAN GRASS BLUE

I found one only,a female,on the banks of the dried up river bed in the centre of Malaga. A tiny butterfly,smaller than Small Blue.Caterpillar foodplants include medicks,which grow in the river bed. Didn't know what it was,but having checked in a book,seems to confirm id. If it is not African Grass Blue,feel free to correct me! Again,never seen it before.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Sep-15 07:01 AM GMT

What a great find! Proof positive that quality is better than quantity!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-15 07:10 AM GMT

LANGS SHORT TAILED BLUE

Seen only on last day. But where found, it was abundant. There was a colony in a public park/garden, near the Paseo Del Parque, which was spilling out into the surroundings. Similar, but much smaller than the Long Tails on the hill tops, and completely different habitat. Most were males, chasing off everything which flew near, but a few females were seen, too. Probably permanent here, some migrate to central Europe for summer, but either migrate or die away from far south.



lang's female



lang's short tailed blue (cropped) male

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-15 07:39 AM GMT

And last but not least...

DESERT ORANGE TIP

At the top of a hill overlooking Malaga,there is a fortress,with splendid views over the city. It was hot by the time we reached the top,only to find a bus and car park there! So we decided an ice cream was in order. While enjoying it,a small white butterfly flew into view,and landed on the other side of the bus turning circle. I sprung into action,expecting a normal white of some sort. As i got near,i noticed orange and black wingtips,and i instantly knew it was something i had never seen. I ran back for the camera,only to hear Esther shout the worst thing at that moment 'there's a bus comming!' I fired off a few shots quick as possible,nearly getting run over in the process by an angry bus driver no doubt wondering why some idiot was standing in the road taking pictures when a bus is coming!

Meanwhile,the butterfly had gone. Did i manage to get a shot? I looked at the pictures through the viewfinder. Blank blank blank yes! Got one shot out of four! With a broad smile,i finished the ice cream,then saw it come back,to feed on a Bougonvillia flower. When i got back to GB that night,first thing i did was check my books. And there it was,my first,and most unexpected,Desert Orange Tip. An African species,whose range just extends into southern ESP. 😊😊😊😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Pete Eeles, 28-Sep-15 04:06 PM GMT

VERY nice, Mark - well done!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 28-Sep-15 04:11 PM GMT

Dream butterfly. Brilliant.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Hulme, 28-Sep-15 06:03 PM GMT

Nice one Mark! A real beauty.
BWs, Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 28-Sep-15 07:58 PM GMT



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Sep-15 01:48 AM GMT

That's not worthy of a gold star.....a diamond one is more apt.

Superb find and I imagine the first image of this species posted on here?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Sep-15 06:02 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments,everyone. You can imagine my amazement. When i saw it,i thought i would be checking if it was a Small or Southern Small White! Didn't know what it was untill i got back to GB. I was also stunned to see an orange tip flying in autumn,but it seems Desert Orange Tip is repeat brooded. Here is another picture...



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Sep-15 06:07 AM GMT

There was a female present,too. There were a lot of people around,and she was disturbed several times,but she frequently settled,though not with her wings open...





Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 30-Sep-15 06:37 AM GMT

And in immaculate condition as well 🍷🍷

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 01-Oct-15 12:17 AM GMT

Lovely Butterfly Mark, weren't you lucky. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Oct-15 06:03 AM GMT

Stunning stuff Essex that is a real gem of a butterfly and the female is beautifully marked 🍷🍷🍷

Have a Goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Oct-15 06:56 AM GMT

Thanks everyone,yes,they were in mint condition and beautifully marked adults. Yes Goldie,i was incredibly lucky,though i did put a bit of effort in for that one. And to think,most visitors to the Costa Del Sol lie on the beach all day!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Oct-15 06:23 AM GMT

COPPERS AND COMMAS PART TWO!

Last Thursday (8 Oct) and something a little different. I visited New Hall Vineyard,near Danbury in Essex. With 100 acres of vines,this is one of the largest and oldest vineyards in the country. You might think our climate is only marginally suitable for grapes,at best, but it seems the dry,warm weather (well,sometimes) in south East Anglia produces a perfectly good crop. Even in the washout year of 2012,New Hall succeeded at a time when most other English vineyards failed.

At weekends,you can book a guided tour but,having introduced myself,they very kindly allowed me to wander freely throughout the site,making for a most enjoyable couple of hours. A few butterflies were found. Several Small Coppers,a Small Heath,single Large and Small Whites and a flypast Red Admiral. Buzzards were circling,and a kestrel was hovering over the vineyard. Before i left,i thanked them,and,of course,purchased a couple of bottles of their excellent wine.



new hall vineyard



small copper at new hall

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Oct-15 06:31 AM GMT

THEN onto Bedfords Park for another visit. Plenty of Small Coppers here, too—some again with blue scales on their hindwings, to a varying extent. A Comma was feeding on blackberries and, further up, another was on devil's bit scabious. Another enjoyable couple of hours well spent!





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12-Oct-15 09:35 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies essex, I love the Comma on the Berries it shouts of Autumn and the Small Coppers are superb 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Oct-15 06:32 AM GMT

WITH the cold,dull weather,the butterfly season has finished early,apart from Long-tailed Blues in Sussex,of course! Compare this to last year,when i was still seeing Clouded Yellows and Walls,and temperatures reached the 20's!

So it's time for a trip to Brownsea Island,in Poole Harbour. For a change the sun shone,and in sheltered areas it felt quite warm. A Red Admiral,couple of Small Whites and Common Darters were still hanging on. A flock of spoonbills were on the lake,with lots of avocets and black-tailed godwits among others. But the highlights of the day these beauties, abundant on the island in the absence of their grey cousins,and easy to see at this time of year...



red squirrel

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 26-Oct-15 05:55 PM GMT

Hi! essex, great minds think alike 😊 I went to Formby Point on the same mission 😊 No Butterflies though but the Squirrels were great Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-15 02:50 AM GMT

Great stuff Essex 😊 It always wrankles me slightly when nature programs talk about Red Squirrels in Britain and always forget about the Brownsea/Dorset population 😡 Still we might be able to keep em for ourselves 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Nov-15 06:49 AM GMT

NORFOLK

Yesterday (Wednesday) we took a trip up to Horsey Beach, near Great Yarmouth. At this time of year, the grey seals arrive on the beach to have their pups and the sight of a sandy beach, with seals and pups dotted all over, is a strange one.

This breeding colony has only been here for a few years, but has increased rapidly. Already, 330 pups have been born here this year, with more every day. They will continue to be born until the end of February.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Dec-15 06:13 AM GMT

SUCH a shame i couldn't make the UKB winter (late autumn) social-working weekends can be a pain at times. But it looks like everyone had a good time,thanks for posting the pictures.

The Essex Heath Fritillaries are struggling. Two negative things are contributing to this.

Several of the sites are on council owned land. These are times of major cutbacks. Maintaining a coppice cycle costs money. Much of this work is done by contractors. Spending money in this way is becoming harder to justify. You can imagine the public outcry if a hospice closed,or a major road improvement was cancelled,only to discover the council had spent big money 'saving butterflies'. The press would have a field day!

However,at a couple of Essex Wildlife Trust woods,the opposite problem occurred last year. The fritillaries were so abundant,and laid so many eggs,the resulting caterpillars exhausted all the caterpillar foodplant by time they were half grown. A few managed to switch to ribwort plantain,but most starved.

We must remember,these are just my opinions,based on my own observations,and i am in no way blaming anyone. i'm simply bemoaning the current sorry state of affairs.

On Sunday it was our turn to do our bit. We cleared some clearings,where cow-wheat grows,that were becoming smothered in brambles and saplings. We also coppiced a few hornbeam stools to create some bare ground which,hopefully,the cow-wheat will grow onto. But with such limited time,we only scratched the surface. There is so much more that needs to be done.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-15 06:05 AM GMT

You were missed at the Social Essex, but then there's always next year 😊 Hopefully the hard work you put in on Sunday will pay dividends next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Dec-15 01:54 AM GMT

That's quite an image of the seal pups gathered on that beach. I presume not too many people go walking there?

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 03-Dec-15 11:29 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Seal pups essex, I didn't know they arrived on the beach there, I always think of them further North for some reason, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Dec-15 07:08 AM GMT

Hi Goldie,while seals are common in the north,they turn up at several beaches in the south,too. I have also seen grey seals on beaches in Cornwall,though not in such numbers.

David,Horsey Beach is closed while the seal pups are present,with signs asking people to keep to the dunes while walking dogs, for example. For their own safety as much as anything else,as the mothers can be quite defensive of their young.

It may be December,but it's still autumn. November was dominated by dull,mild weather,but today the sun shone for a change,setting of the late autumn colours. While walking this morning,i found the strange earth-star fungus in the picture below.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 05-Dec-15 08:17 PM GMT

The leaves have long gone around here essex, Gone with the wind, you might say, 😊 the storms have been horrid, we woke up this morning and the window sill in the kitchen and top of the unit was full of water, nothing to what Cumbria is supposed to get today 😞 Goldie 😊