

## SimonC69

by SimonC69, 03-Aug-15 10:45 PM GMT

First post here will be a bit of an introduction.

Based in north Hertfordshire, I've been interested in Butterflies since an early age – though I'm a birder at heart – and as such the birds have taken most of my time and my butterfly "list" (told you I was a birder!) is still under 30. I've been photographing Butterflies on & off for a few years now, and when I got round to cataloguing them recently, I was surprised to discover that I'd only seen one more species than I'd managed to photograph (Clouded Yellow being the missing one)

Which got me thinking, I might challenge myself to photograph 50 species before my 50th birthday. I've got three summers, and 23 species to get there.

So, I'm hoping this will serve as a record of, and hopefully a bit of personal inspiration to my challenge.

I'll post those photos I have so far here over the next few days and I'm sure I will be asking quite a few questions regarding sites etc over the coming months.

I'll start with the latest "tick" gained yesterday at Whiteleaf Cross, Bucks – Chalkhill Blue

I hope 😊





**Re: SimonC69**

by dilettante, 03-Aug-15 11:58 PM GMT

If you're in North Herts, you should go to Therfield / Royston Heath, although you've already ticked off Chalkhill Blue. See my diary entry from yesterday [url=http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&p=102160#p102160:1tqa8zl9]http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&p=102160#p102160[url:1tqa8zl9] Good luck with your mission!

**Re: SimonC69**

by trevor, 03-Aug-15 11:59 PM GMT

Hi Simon,

Although a relative newcomer to UK Butterflies myself, may i be the first to welcome you. I am sure i won't be the last. These diaries are a good way to learn what's about and where. If you come from North Herts. you can't be far from where half of me comes from, the Biggleswade area. Hope you will be a regular contributor.

Best wishes,  
TREVOR.

**Re: SimonC69**

by SimonC69, 04-Aug-15 12:06 AM GMT

**"dilettante" wrote:**

If you're in North Herts, you should go to Therfield / Royston Heath, although you've already ticked off Chalkhill Blue. See my diary entry from yesterday [url=http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&p=102160#p102160:ljjzitskk]http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5167&p=102160#p102160[url:ljjzitskk] Good luck with your mission!

Thanks. I've not been but I have been told by several people it should be one of my destinations next summer. In fact, looking at your list, the two Frits would be "lifers" for me so definitely worth going when the time is right.

**"trevor" wrote:**

...If you come from North Herts. you can't be far from where half of me comes from, the Biggleswade area...

Born in WGC, raised in Stevenage (it's not *that* bad!) and recently moved to Walkern. I hope to become a regular here too.

**Re: SimonC69**

by MikeOxon, 04-Aug-15 01:09 AM GMT

I think quite a number of birders switch to butterflies during the summer, when bird interest is usually at a low ebb. On the whole, I think butterflies are much easier, since there are only about 58 regular breeding species in UK and seeing them is mainly a case of being in the right place at the right time – both these factors being well-documented. I had the advantage, at the time I was amassing my 'list', in having a very enthusiastic young son, who planned the schedules for me!

Of course, as with birds, there's always the possibility of spotting rare migrants. It also gets a lot more challenging if you aim to record all the life stages – several caterpillars are amazingly elusive.

I look forward to watching your progress through the pages of this diary.

Mike

### Re: SimonC69

by peterc, 04-Aug-15 02:12 AM GMT

Hi Simon,

Welcome to the forum – lots of helpful people here and some of the adventures fellow butterflyers experience encourages you. For example I really only started looking for eggs and larvae after seeing some cracking photos of these immature stages. Next on the list for me is finding a White Admiral larva.

I live in Stevenage so you are not too far away. I take it that you've seen a Purple Emperor then locally? 😊

ATB

Peter

### Re: SimonC69

by Pete Eeles, 04-Aug-15 02:17 AM GMT

Hi Simon – and welcome aboard!

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: SimonC69

by SimonC69, 04-Aug-15 04:28 AM GMT

#### "MikeOxon" wrote:

I think quite a number of birders switch to butterflies during the summer, when bird interest is usually at a low ebb.

Yep, I think that is well documented, and I'm another statistic 😊

#### "MikeOxon" wrote:

...It also gets a lot more challenging if you aim to record all the life stages – several caterpillars are amazingly elusive.

I was trying not to think about that, I'm the sort of person that could easily get fanatical about things like that, if I'm not careful

#### "peterc" wrote:

....I live in Stevenage so you are not too far away. I take it that you've seen a Purple Emperor then locally? 😊....

Haha! Yes, in my garden. How did you know? 😊 You may be able to furnish me with some local knowledge in time for next year actually Peter, namely White-letter Hairstreaks on six hills common and SW Frits at Norton Green? The latter would be most helpful as I only know NG as a birding site, and that's the landfill site, not the watery grove end. Of course any info on other local gems would be gratefully received.

### Re: SimonC69

by peterc, 04-Aug-15 03:18 PM GMT

Simon,

Well done on the Purple one. I visit Norton Green regularly, perhaps 2 or 3 times a week in the summer. Silver-washed Fritillary should still be on the wing for a while yet – first female seen last Wednesday. It is often found in the open area west of Watery Grove close to where the power lines are.

ATB

Peter

**Re: SimonC69**

by SimonC69, 04-Aug-15 03:27 PM GMT

Thanks Peter,  
that's encouraging as I've got Friday off work so I might take a trek over there if the weather is ok.

**Re: SimonC69**

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-15 04:32 AM GMT

Hi Simon and welcome.

Looking forward to seeing more as you continue your quest to see 50 species before you are 50.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: SimonC69**

by bugboy, 05-Aug-15 05:49 AM GMT

Good luck Simon, I'm on a similar quest, trying to see and photograph all 59 in 5 years 🤪. It's been a fun first year so far though 😊

**Re: SimonC69**

by millerd, 05-Aug-15 05:55 AM GMT

Good luck with your quest for 50 species, Simon! With help and guidance from all the good folk on this site, you should manage it with time to spare. All 59 is another matter, mind... 😊

Dave

**Re: SimonC69**

by SimonC69, 05-Aug-15 05:30 PM GMT

Thanks all.

I'm sure that with help from you lot I'll at least get close.

And if I don't quite make it I can always switch to 59 by 59 eh? 😊

**Re: SimonC69**

by CJB, 05-Aug-15 07:52 PM GMT

Hi Simon,

Best of luck with your quest!

I have set myself the task of photographing all the species on my iPhone, for some bizarre reason. 😊

The most elusive for me so far are the hairstreaks and I am yet to snaffle a White-letter or a Black and have a very distant shot of a purple, but a decent close-up of a green. I managed to notch up a silver-studded blue and dark green fritillary this year which brings my tally to 48 in the UK, including a monarch which may or may not have been released!?

It is when it becomes a matter of geography that your task becomes more Herculean! The chequered and lulworth skippers, leap to mind!

Best of luck with it all and I will follow your progress with interest.

Flutter on!

CJB

**Re: SimonC69**

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-15 06:48 AM GMT

Welcome and good luck with your challenge Simon 😊 If you need a hand for Lulworth Skipper or Marsh Frits then just send me a PM..

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: SimonC69**

by SimonC69, 06-Aug-15 03:26 PM GMT

"CJB" wrote:

.....I have set myself the task of photographing all the species on my iPhone, for some bizarre reason. 😊 ....

Yeah, that's the sort of thing I'd be likely to hobble myself with (and have done with various photography projects in the past). But as I'm quite keen on finishing this one I gave myself at least a fighting chance. 😊

"Wurzel" wrote:

..Welcome and good luck with your challenge Simon 😊 If you need a hand for Lulworth Skipper or Marsh Frits then just send me a PM..

Thanks, I'm ok on Lulworth Skipper, got them last year (the idea for this project has been bubbling under for a few years – it was a PE in my garden this year that gave me the final kick) but Marsh Frit info would be most useful I reckon.

Cheers  
Simon

## Re: SimonC69

by SimonC69, 06-Aug-15 04:56 PM GMT

Right, I suppose I ought to start making this resemble some sort of diary (albeit a retrospective one for the moment) and post up a few of the species I already have under my belt.

I'll start with the the last two to make it onto the list (before the Chalkhill Blues that is)

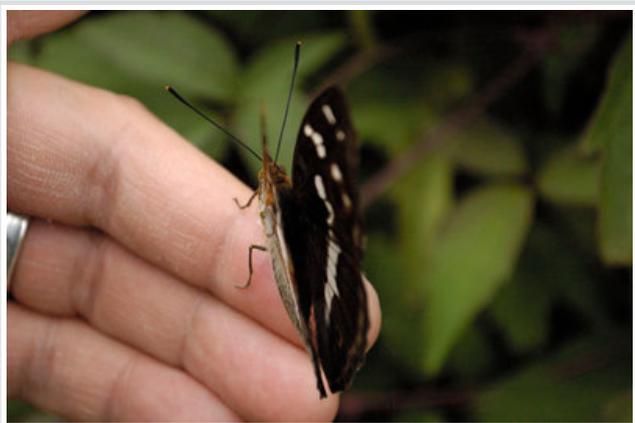
I'd started the year the same as I always seem to: Vaguely thinking about maybe trying to photograph some new butterflies, but not really getting properly motivated (I need a macro lens – definitely – anyone got the winning lotto numbers handy?)

Then, on 16th of July, we found this sitting on the bonnet of my Wife's car (being eyed up by my cat!)

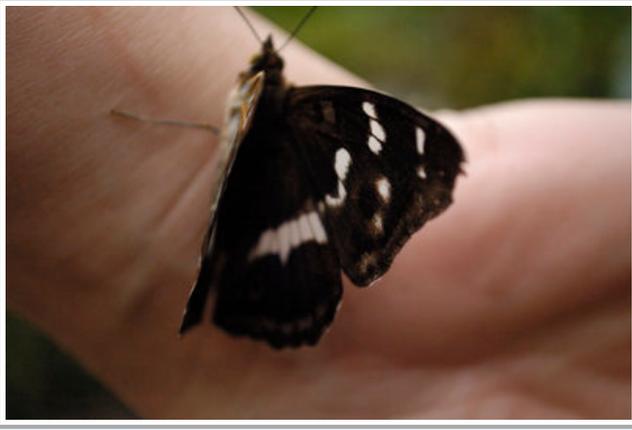
I rescued it from the cat, grabbed my camera (not remembering it was still set to ISO 1600 from an experiment the day before) and got this first photo, operating the camera with my left hand (ever tried that with an old dSLR without live view?)



Then got it to walk onto my left hand where it didn't quite open it's wings far enough....



Then, with a slight flash of purple, it was off..



Not the best photos I know, (1600 ISO really isn't all that much use!) but that encounter has set in motion what I hope will be a brilliant quest (one that I've been meaning to do for years, but never really got around to)

Next post: A long awaited encounter that *nearly* got the ball rolling a year earlier.....

### Re: SimonC69

by SimonC69, 08-Aug-15 02:54 AM GMT

This post was going to be a retrospective one, with a photo of species #25 but I had the day off today and managed a quick visit to get two "lifera", close to home (thanks to info supplied by peterc)

I really wish I had:

**a:** more time to spend chasing a better shot

**b:** A better lens for my camera!!!

But, as I had/have neither of those here are some ropey record shots of species numbers 28:



*Purple Hairstreak*



*Crappy record shot*

and 29:



*another crappy record shot*

These are in the file marked: better shot desired but they still count!

I did manage to get a couple of shots I'm sort of happy with though, of 'flies that are already in the bag (but always nice to see):



**Re: SimonC69**

by peterc, 08-Aug-15 05:57 AM GMT

Sounds like you had a good day at Norton Green today. Well done on that photo of the open-winged Purple Hairstreak in particular.

Fancy looking for a Brown Hairstreak at the site? 😊 I will be there tomorrow before 9 am (if the weather is favourable) looking for it on one of the ash trees.

ATB

Peter

**Re: SimonC69**

by David M, 08-Aug-15 06:25 AM GMT

Nice to see you have managed to get images of some of the UK's most elusive species.

You'll henceforth be on your guard, I'm sure.

## Re: SimonC69

by SimonC69, 11-Aug-15 12:20 AM GMT

First of all, back to that retrospective post that never happened. Species #25, that *nearly* kick-started this project a year earlier:

On my third visit to Durlston Country Park, I finally caught up with the speciality



I'd waited so long to actually see this 'fly that I was a bit panicky that it would leave before I got a decent shot of it.

I needn't have worried, they were seemingly everywhere that day:



*3 Lulworth Skippers on Teasel*

I have to say, for a compact camera that promised so much (and cost a sum to match) the Lumix TZ40s macro mode is rubbish. My favourite camera for this type of close range butterfly shots is still an ancient, 4mp Olympus C-750 UZ.

So that was species #25. All the rest have become jumbled so I couldn't possibly say what order I "got" them in. I may share a few of my favourite images over the quiet months...

In the meantime, you wait 40 odd years for your first, then you get your second just three days later, when you weren't expecting it...



*Still only "record shot" quality, but getting better.....*



*Getting drunk on fermenting Blackberry juice? :)*

Off to Southwold tomorrow, anything worth looking out for nearby? 😊

Cheers

Simon

### **Re: SimonC69**

by David M, 11-Aug-15 01:36 AM GMT

A Purple Hairstreak feeding on anything is a rare sight, Simon. I've seen them high up in trees poking around ripe berries before, but never one like this.

Well done!

### **Re: SimonC69**

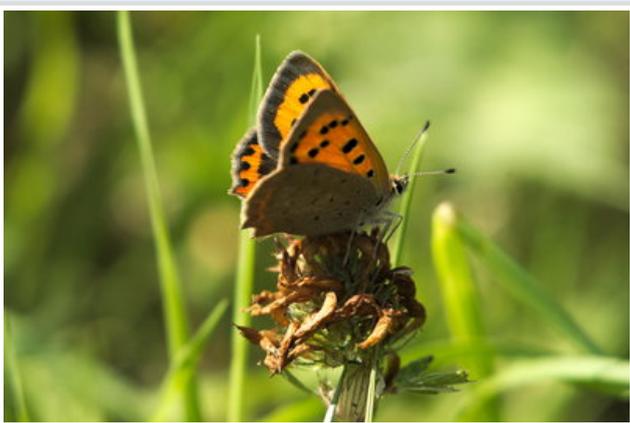
by SimonC69, 23-Aug-15 04:34 AM GMT

Nothing new on the 50/50 quest front but I did get out for an hour or so this morning, to try out a borrowed lens.

Target species was Small Copper (inexplicably(?) my favourite british butterfly) as I've still not managed a shot of one that I'm happy with (still not sure I've got *the* shot.)



*First one I got was this. Contre jour, artsy farty, but still not quite the one...*



*Closely followed by this...*



*and this..getting there...*



*And this one. My favourite so far, but still not quite there yet.*

None of the Gatekeepers or Meadow Browns were playing ball, but one Common Blue stayed still for just long enough.



As did this CV White



Better than that though, I also met a fellow forum-ite, peterc. (and maybe some others? didn't get names for the other two faces, sorry guys!) Somebody I'm certain I'll be bumping into a fair few times before this quest of mine is over, as I'm bound to be calling on his local knowledge fairly regularly.

### Re: SimonC69

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-15 07:04 AM GMT

Great reports recently, any Purple Hairstreak shot is worth it's weight in gold, and the three Lulworths is just brill! 🍷 I'll try and get you that info this week.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: SimonC69

by peterc, 23-Aug-15 03:33 PM GMT

Thanks Simon – great to see you too. The other two guys you met were Don with his bike and Eric, both from Stevenage. Some nice shots of the Small Copper which appears to be more common at the site this year. Last summer I saw the blue-spotted form (ab *caeruleopunctata*) there so maybe something you can try to add to your collection 😊

While the Brown Hairstreak is on the wing I'll be visiting the site quite regularly but the weather forecast is pretty horrendous for the coming week. So see you again soon.

ATB

Peter

### Re: SimonC69

by SimonC69, 23-Aug-15 11:54 PM GMT

#### "Wurzel" wrote:

Great reports recently, any Purple Hairstreak shot is worth it's weight in gold, and the three Lulworths is just brill! 🍷 I'll try and get you that info this week.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel 😊

#### "peterc" wrote:

Last summer I saw the blue-spotted form (ab *caeruleopunctata*) there so maybe something you can try to add to your collection 😊

Yeah, I've seen a few of those this year, but not got a decent shot of one. In fact, one of those I saw on my first visit to Norton Green was one:



I saw one at Fairlands Valley, but the camera missed the focus:



I saw a quite faint one in Bourton-on-the-Water last week, again, the focus is off:



And, looking a bit closer, I think one of yesterdays is a slight ab. too?



But you're right, a decent, full open winged, pin sharp shot of a full on *caeruleopunctata* is high on my "wants" list. 😊

### Re: SimonC69

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-15 01:06 AM GMT

#### "SimonC69" wrote:

...Target species was Small Copper (inexplicably(?) my favourite british butterfly)...

Totally understandable, one of my favourites as well. A lovely little butterfly full of character. Check out Hoggers diary if you haven't already to see where they have all been hiding this year 🤪 :

Cheers,

Neil

