

Re: Pete Eeles

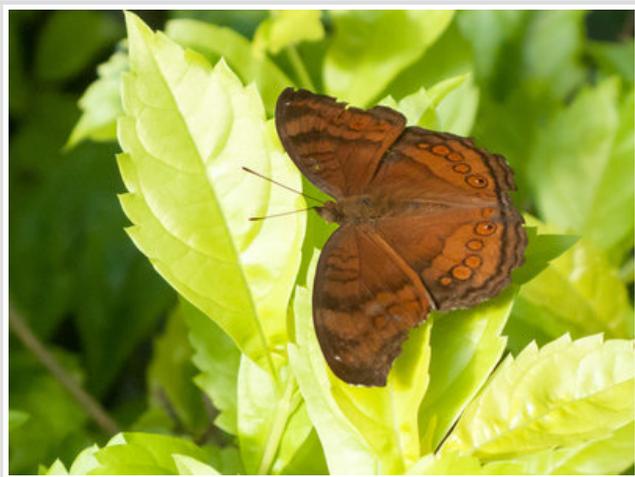
by Pete Eeles, 18-Jan-15 04:40 AM GMT

First Butterflies

I've just returned from my first trip to Singapore (for work, I hasten to add), staying in a hotel with fantastic views over the city, including the characteristic Marina Bay Sands hotel.



Unusually, my first butterflies for the year were seen here – in a local park, and I was pleasantly surprised at just how eco-friendly the entire city seems to be, with green areas appearing to be quite abundant even in the centre of the city. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to go to any of the small areas of rainforest that can still be found here. All in all, a wonderful place, and I hope to return when I have more time for sightseeing! Still, a welcome respite from the British winter.



Chocolate Pansy



Plain Tiger



Ciliate Blue



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 18-Jan-15 05:03 AM GMT

You lucky so-and-so, Pete.

That skyline seems abnormally futuristic.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 18-Jan-15 05:28 AM GMT

Good news that Singapore is increasingly eco-friendly - and what a brilliant time of year to visit, when nothing is on the wing over here.

Your chocolate pansy is confusingly named, as it is *Junonia hedonia*, a different species from *J. iphita*, the one normally called chocolate pansy. Wikipedia calls it the brown pansy. Anyway - a new one for me, and a lovely-looking creature.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 18-Jan-15 07:30 AM GMT

👍 It's freezing here, I haven't seen a butterfly in almost three weeks and you've seen one of the butterflies I've always wanted to see in the wild – if there was such a thing as an envy meter Pete mine would just have exploded 🍋🍋

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Goldie M, 18-Jan-15 11:26 PM GMT

It must have been great just to step out into the warmth and with the added addition of Butterflies fantastic 😊

I went to Hong Kong once and I remember the warmth more than any thing else, sadly didn't see any Butterflies, love the Tiger BF Goldie 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by trevor, 07-Feb-15 03:57 AM GMT

Hi Pete,

Many thanks for your observation on the DGF Ab. I must admit i had noticed the markings on that specimen but failed to note that it was an Ab. When i first started Butterflying i thought the Female DGF's were Ab's! All my DGF images were taken near Birling Gap, East Sussex.

All the best,
TREVOR.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 13-Mar-15 12:15 AM GMT

Wiltshire aurinia

I was in Taunton today and decided to drive home via the Wiltshire countryside, stopping off at a Marsh Fritillary site to see if I could locate any larval webs; I stopped counting at 100 – clearly a good omen for the flight period at this site! The season is kicking off nicely 😊





Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by William, 13-Mar-15 02:03 AM GMT

Great stuff Pete, a lot better developed than the ones down here in Somerset, which are, incidentally, near Taunton 😊

BWs,

William

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 13-Mar-15 05:57 AM GMT

Those larvae look to be in rude health for the time of year. Augurs well for a decent emergence come late May.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 13-Mar-15 07:31 AM GMT

A cracking set of shots Pete that will make waiting for the next two months very difficult – but judging by the web count definitely worth it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by andy brown, 13-Mar-15 03:11 PM GMT

Pete,

Nice set of images and gives a good indication of what to keep an eye out for, I may try to get out myself this weekend to look for some Frit larvae at Bentley

Andy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 09-Apr-15 01:51 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments everyone; unfortunately, I've not been able to return to the Marsh Fritillary site recently due to work pressures. On the bright side, as Vince says in the Notes and Views section, spring officially started on 6th April 😊 Purple Emperor larvae are moving into their post-hibernation positions next to willow buds, as reported by Matthew on the Purple Empire blog:



And, while knocking down our garden shed to make way for a potting shed, I found 3 Large White pupae. They really are quite beautiful (and overlooked!):



And a walk today with the dogs resulted in 16 Peacock, 12 Small Tortoiseshell, just 1 Brimstone (male), my first Green-veined White of the year and nowt / zero / zilch on the Scarce Tortoiseshell front 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 09-Apr-15 06:30 AM GMT

I'm sure the Scarce Tort will be heading your way soon Pete 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 09-Apr-15 06:38 AM GMT

That Large White pupa is truly beautiful and a real find, Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 13-Apr-15 03:37 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, David!

Needles, haystacks, and finding the impossible!

I must admit, I have travelled further to find a caterpillar (Chequered Skipper), but taking a trip to find a Northern Brown Argus larva is probably "right up there" with the acts of lunacy that Eleanor Glanville was accused of, when in "pursuit of butterflies". But some things must, simply, be done 😊 And so it was that I ended up at a site near Eyemouth in the Scottish Borders with yet another haystack before me. Knowing that hundreds, if not thousands, of Northern Brown Argus were on the hillside before me gave me great confidence, but the reality was quite, quite deflating. Having done my research, this was supposedly the best time to find the larvae (post-hibernation), but they would be tiny (around 3mm in length), feeding on the underside of the Rock-rose leaves, and the site is simply carpeted in Rock-rose – hence the "haystack".



I had spent over an hour with my nose buried to the ground, looking at the underside of Rock-rose leaves, when a familiar voice called to me – local resident Ian Campbell, one of the guardians of this precious site and one of a handful of people that can claim to get Northern Brown Argus in their back garden!



The company was much appreciated and Ian reminding me of where the hotspots were, where we found Northern Brown Argus eggs in good numbers in 2014. It wasn't long before we found a discarded egg case and plenty of evidence of feeding – the "grazing" of the caterpillars on the Rock-rose leaves being quite evident all around this one small area.



With hopes running high, and *Papilio* binoculars put to good use, I eventually found, after 2 hours of searching, a "cheeky" larva poking its head around the side of a Rock-rose leaf, not far from the end of a sprig of leaves, as if playing hide-and-peek. Bingo! I knew this chap would fall off the leaf at the slightest disturbance so was particularly careful; placing my hand underneath the leaf in case it fell, which it promptly did. What neither Ian nor I knew was just how quickly the larva would move back towards the food plant – I've never seen anything like it – and certainly not in a Lycaenid larva which are known for their sluggish behaviour! Knowing that this critter was more-than-capable of getting back to its host plant, I popped it in a box (with foodplant) to give it time to settle and allow us a good viewing. A short time later it was released, after a number of record shots were taken.



What could have been a monumental error of judgement turned out to be the start to the year I was hoping for and certainly proved that, once again, persistence pays off. My thanks to Ian for the company, hospitality, and help in searching for the impossible. The only downside was that UK Butterflyer, Iain Cowe (IAC), wasn't there to see the larva for himself (it was Iain who helped me locate NBA in this region in the first place) – I'll have to save that for next year!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by bugboy, 13-Apr-15 03:55 AM GMT

Now THATS dedication! and a great result as well 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 13-Apr-15 04:11 AM GMT

Brilliant work, Pete! I think finding a needle in a haystack is probably easier ...

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 13-Apr-15 04:19 AM GMT

Superb detective work, Pete. Good people normally get their rewards!

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Freeman, 13-Apr-15 06:08 AM GMT

Fascinating report Pete and superb photo of the larva. Just goes to show the dedication and patience that goes in to obtaining some of your images of

early stages. Brilliant stuff 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 13-Apr-15 06:23 AM GMT

Great stuff Pete – that is a cracking little streak of fuzz. Do the hairs have insulating properties or are they for camo or to put off predators?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 03-May-15 04:17 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

Great stuff Pete – that is a cracking little streak of fuzz. Do the hairs have insulating properties or are they for camo or to put off predators?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks all! I'm not sure what value the hairs add, Wurzel.

Tour of Asean

I've spent the last 2 weeks travelling around Asia (for work) – from Manila in the Philippines, to Singapore, to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, missing out on all of the action at home! However, I did have one weekend in Singapore and managed to visit the superb Botanic Gardens there – and saw a few butterflies. However, the rain in Singapore seems to be "binary"; it's either on, or off. And when it's on, it's at full pelt – no wimpy drizzle in this part of the world. Suffice to say, I was at the far end of the gardens (away from the Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) system) when the heavens opened and got absolutely soaked – not that you'd really feel it that much in the heat! Some photos below.



Botanic gardens



Plain Tiger (Danaus chrysippus) form alcippoides



Plain Tiger (Danaus chrysippus) form alcippoides, in spider's web – subsequently released!



Plain Tiger (Danaus chrysippus) larva



Plain Tiger (Danaus chrysippus) larva



Plains Cupid (Chilades pandava)



Common Rose (Pachliopta aristolochiae) inflating wings



Chocolate Pansy (Junonia hedonia ida)



Marina Bay Sands in Singapore



Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 03-May-15 05:32 PM GMT

Just seen your report and photos of the NBA larva Pete. Absolutely stunning! I am impressed by your perseverance and persistence and having started to look for larva myself recently I can appreciate first hand just how hard it is. It is also reassuring that there are others who share this particular madness



Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 05-May-15 12:42 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline!

Greenham Common

Ah - it's good to be home and back to local sites. The trio of Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper, often found flying together, put on a show this morning at Greenham Common, despite the overcast conditions for the most part!



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by William, 05-May-15 02:10 AM GMT

Superb Green Hairstreak, Pete 😊

BWs,

William

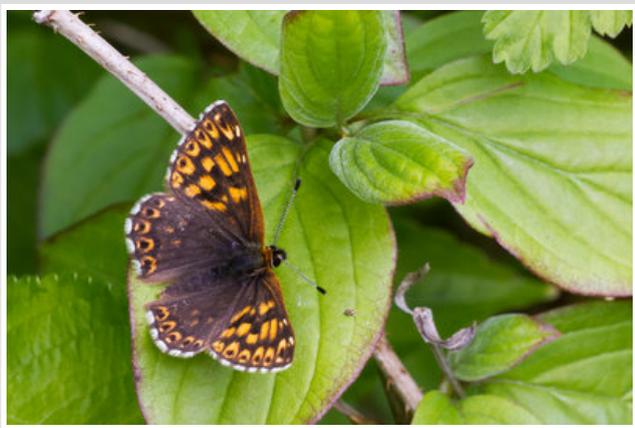
Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 08-May-15 12:35 AM GMT

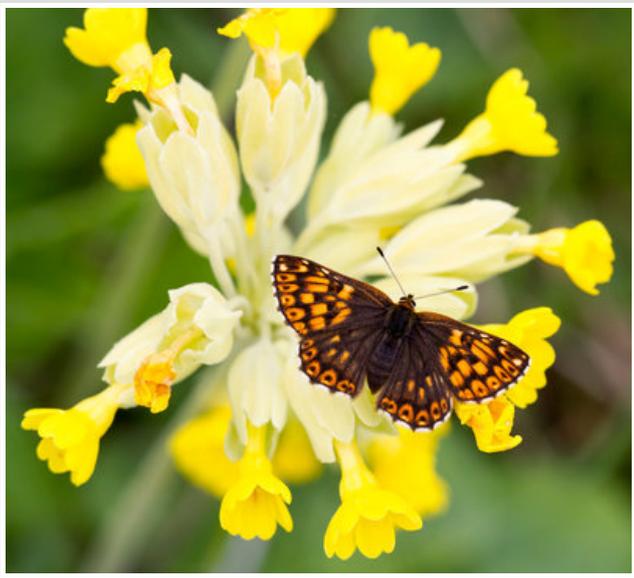
Thanks William!

Noar Hill and Greenham Common

I paid my first visit of the year to Noar Hill in largely-overcast conditions, but with plenty of butterfly activity nonetheless, with over 20 Dukes (and Duchesses) seen, including a mating pair that I saw couple after zero courtship! As well as a few Dingy Skippers I was pleasantly surprised to see my first (male) Common Blue of the year.



Duke

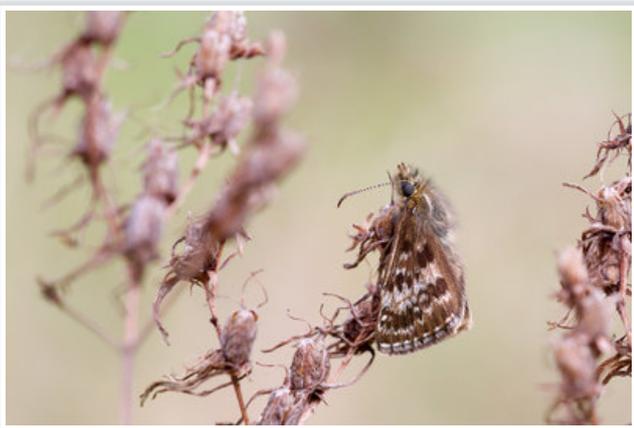


Duchess



Duchess

I also popped into Greenham Common on the way home and, with the cloud cover increasing, spent some time watching the Grizzled and Dingy Skippers going to roost on the various seed heads.



Dingy Skipper (male)

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 08-May-15 04:00 AM GMT

Hi Pete,

That Green Hairstreak on bluebell is fantastic. One of the best images I've seen this year.

BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 08-May-15 04:18 AM GMT

Thanks Neil – appreciated!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Goldie M, 08-May-15 04:39 AM GMT

I love the Dingy Skipper Pete, it's a real little acrobat Goldie 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 08-May-15 07:06 AM GMT

That is a sublime shot of the Greenstreak 🍴🍴

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-15 03:19 AM GMT

Hi Pete,

I love the Green Hairstreak on the bluebell. Also the photos of the Duchess on the cowslip, particularly the underside image. Lovely 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by trevor, 10-May-15 07:00 AM GMT

Thanks Pete, your comment is valued.

Best wishes,
TREVOR.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 13-May-15 06:47 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, Wurzel, Neil!

24 hour butterflying

I took an early morning walk yesterday, and came across 2 Orange-tip eggs laid side-by-side, presumably from the same female. Given that the larvae are cannibalistic, I thought this was worth reporting. I've no idea why a female would intentionally do this!



Orange-tip ova

I then set off for work and, due to work commitments yesterday and today, stayed over at the Holiday Inn next to Magdalen Hill Down. Of course, I made the most of visiting the down as butterflies were going to roost – especially the Brown Argus; a species that MHD is famous for.



Brown Argus



Brown Argus

Following an evening meal, and after the sun had gone down, I headed over to Stockbridge Down, arriving at 9:30pm. I hadn't searched for nocturnal larvae for many a year (the last time was (successfully) looking for Chalk Hill Blue larvae with Tim Norriss in 2004 – 11 years ago!). This time I was looking for Satyrid larvae and was not disappointed since, over the course of the next hour, I found in excess of 60 larvae, almost all Marbled White, with a few Meadow Brown thrown in. The Marbled White larva comes in 2 forms – brown and green, and it is the green form that is very difficult to separate from Meadow Brown. However, the colour of the head capsule (brown in Marbled White, green in Meadow Brown) and hair length (short in Marbled White, long in Meadow Brown) are diagnostic. Thanks to Guy Padfield, Vince Massimo and Mark Colvin for helping with the diagnoses!



Marbled White (brown form)



Marbled White (green form)



Meadow Brown

Of course, being alone at a remote site in the middle of the night is not to be recommended, for obvious reasons. But since I know the site well, and had a good amount of portable light (I have several LED strips which are just amazing!), I felt safe. Apart, that is, from the one instance when a deer decided to show its head from around the side of a bush (probably wondering what was going on) which scared the bejeezus out of me! Of course, this now means that butterflying is no longer confined to daylight hours, adding yet another dimension to an already-enthalling hobby 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 15-May-15 06:13 AM GMT

I'd never thought about looking for butterflies/larvae at night, an interesting idea, now did you get such images you must of had a great flash rig 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 15-May-15 03:08 PM GMT

"Wurzel" wrote:

you must of had a great flash rig 😊

Actually, no flash – which surprised me! The level of light from a strip of LEDs, held quite close to the larva, was sufficient to get the exposure time down to less than 2 seconds, while using a tripod-mounted camera and remote shutter release.

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Butterflysaurus rex, 16-May-15 05:03 AM GMT

I expect the locals thought a UFO had landed Pete! 🛸

All the best

James

Re: Pete Eeles

by IAC, 29-May-15 05:13 AM GMT

Hi Pete...sorry to butt into your diary...thought you would appreciate, perhaps the very fellow you traveled so far to see in the spring in larval state now spreading his wings on the Berwickshire coast today.

Iain



Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 07-Jun-15 06:11 PM GMT

The past month has been rather hectic for me, with little opportunity to provide updates, so here's a mega-update which would normally be spread over at least 5 entries!

Bentley Wood

On 12th May I popped into the Eastern Clearing at Bentley Wood to see how the Pearl-bordered Fritillary were doing. At least a dozen males and half a dozen females were seen, with three females ovipositing in one small area that was drenched in sunlight. I'm always fascinated at how many fritillaries are able to "sniff out" the violets that are the larval foodplant before depositing an egg, often on the underside of nearby bracken rather than the food plant itself.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – female



Pearl-bordered Fritillary – ovum



Bentley Wood

Stockbridge Down

On 17th May I revisited Stockbridge Down after dark, once again looking for Satyrid larvae, and this time in the company of Mark Colvin who kindly took some photos of yours truly! We found a few Meadow Brown larvae and, once again, over 50 Marbled White larvae were found, with a roughly 50/50 mix of green and brown form of the larvae.



Yours truly! Photo (c) Mark Colvin



Marbled White - larva



Marbled White - larva

Home

I deliberately left a good number of Garlic Mustard plants grow in the garden this year (or, more correctly, my wife has let me!) and several females (based on the age of the eggs I've found) have found them. Larvae are present in almost all instars and the patterning on the head, when seen close up, still amazes me!



Orange-tip - larva



Orange-tip - larva

I've also searched for nocturnal larvae closer to home and found an area where several Meadow Brown larvae were present and, while looking into a grass tussock where one larva had fallen, came across my first ever Meadow Brown pupa which really is beautifully-patterned and, based on other images I've seen, always seems to pupate with the larval skin left at the end of the pupa.



Meadow Brown - pupa

Noar Hill

I revisited Noar Hill on 2nd June, making a point of looking for Duke of Burgundy ova in an area that is used year after year by ovipositing females. I found several single eggs, and a few pairs. One pair was very close to hatching, where the hairs of the enclosed larvae were clearly visible through the

eggshell. The highlight, however, was finding a pair where one of the larvae had already emerged. Setting up the camera gear, and concocting a makeshift windbreak, I sat for at least 2 hours before, eventually, the second larva emerged; a real privilege to experience!



Duke of Burgundy



Duke of Burgundy



Duke of Burgundy





Duke of Burgundy



Duke of Burgundy

Dorset – Durlston Country Park, Ballard Down, Corfe Castle

I had a meeting at Butterfly Conservation HQ (where I'm helping them with one of the IT projects) on 3rd June and decided to make the most of being in prime Lulworth Skipper territory. I first visited Durlston Country Park and, with good numbers of Common Blue seen in the car park, was hopeful of finding my target. However, the wind had other ideas and the closer I got to the sea, the windier it got. In fact, finding a sheltered spot anywhere was quite a challenge! And so I decided to move to Ballard Down, just the other side of Swanage. The site was more sheltered and several Adonis Blue were seen, but no Lulworths.



Durlston Country Park

On the way to BC HQ, I stopped off at Corfe Castle and there, right in the car park, I found at least 20 Lulworth Skippers (all male) and here, as everywhere, the wind made any photography extremely difficult. However, seeing the freshly-emerged Skippers (judging by their general condition) was a delight!



Corfe Castle



Lulworth Skipper - male



Lulworth Skipper - male



Lulworth Skipper - male



Lulworth Skipper - male

Craigavon Lakes, Northern Ireland

I travelled to Dublin on 4th June and had some time to visit Craigavon Lakes in Northern Ireland, a 90 minute drive from Dublin. The weather wasn't brilliant, but I did bump into "Peter and Danielle" who are conducting a mark-release-recapture (MRR) study of Cryptic Wood White. Of the 30 or so butterflies I saw, I didn't find a single marked-up adult, which would have been nice! However, I did find good numbers of males, especially, and half a dozen females, as well as a mating pair. I also managed to get some shots of the habitat, something I've been doing at every site I've visited so far this year in preparation for the addition of habitat information on UKB this coming winter.



Craigavon Lakes



Cryptic Wood White - male



Cryptic Wood White



Cryptic Wood White - female



Cryptic Wood White - female

The Burren, Ireland

The following day I was able to get to the Burren, but the wind was horrendous! I did find a few Dingy Skipper ssp. baynesi, but there was no way any

photo was going to get taken in this Atlantic-facing habitat! However, I did manage to get a shot of a Wood White from this area – something that might prove useful should any analysis of Wood Whites from different parts of the British Isles be worthy of interest at some point! However, I did get some shots of the spectacular and unique landscape – I'm always amazed at just how rich the flora here is, growing in between the limestone slabs that characterise this part of the world.



The Burren



The Burren



Lough Bunny, The Burren



Wood White – male

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pauline, 07-Jun-15 06:52 PM GMT

You've certainly been busy Pete – it has tired me out just reading your diary 😊😄 ... but some great shots there and unbeatable images of the Duke larva. Fantastic!! 😊😄

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-15 05:28 AM GMT

Cracking reports, shots and species Pete 🇬🇧😊 Corfe Castle is a little known gem of a site – I've seen Lulworths on the Keep itself and it's also good for Wall Browns and Wall Lizards too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jun-15 03:28 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline, Wurzel ... the travels continue!

Magdalen Hill Down

A brief visit to BC's flagship reserve in Hampshire gave me my first Meadow Browns and Large Skippers of the year, but I was here to see the Small Blue, which are doing extremely well in the chalk scrapes at the top of the reserve. I was hoping to find a Small Blue egg or two on the Kidney Vetch and, to be honest, it was harder finding a flowerhead that didn't have at least one egg on it! The record was a flowerhead with 8 eggs on it which, given that the larvae are cannibalistic in their first instar, seems an incredible waste.



Large Skipper (male)



Ovipositing Small Blue



Small Blue ovum



Small Blue ova

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jun-15 03:35 AM GMT

Glen Kinglas

The same evening I travelled up to Glasgow and thought I'd try out my "searching for larvae at night" skills on a Scotch Argus colony that is north north west of Talbot at Glen Kinglas, west of Loch Lomond. To be honest, I just wanted to make the most of my trip! At this time of year, I can't say the sky ever went completely dark while I was there (I arrived on site at 2130 and left at 2300); there was always a bright haze on the horizon.



Glen Kinglas

At 2230, after looking at the Purple Moor-grass for what seemed an age, I diverted my attention to finer grasses (fescues) and almost immediately found a Scotch Argus larva munching the end of a grass blade. I've never seen an adult at this site and so finding my target was extremely rewarding! I'll definitely be returning during the Scotch Argus flight period to see what this site really holds!



Scotch Argus larva

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 16-Jun-15 03:44 AM GMT

Glasdrum Wood and Spean Bridge

The following day I paid my annual visit to Glasdrum Wood, on the banks of Lock Creran, hoping to find an ovipositing female or two. The adults were easy to find, but many were very worn.



Glasdrum Wood

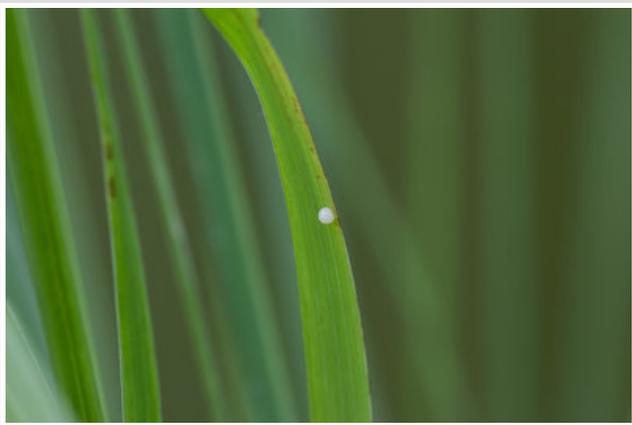


Chequered Skipper (male)



Chequered Skipper (female)

I found several females but none seemed at all interested in laying an egg as they busied themselves with nectaring and basking. And so I waited by one of the favoured egg-laying areas (determined based on the larvae and ova I'd found in 2014) and managed to find a female ovipositing and, after looking at where she had laid, found another egg.

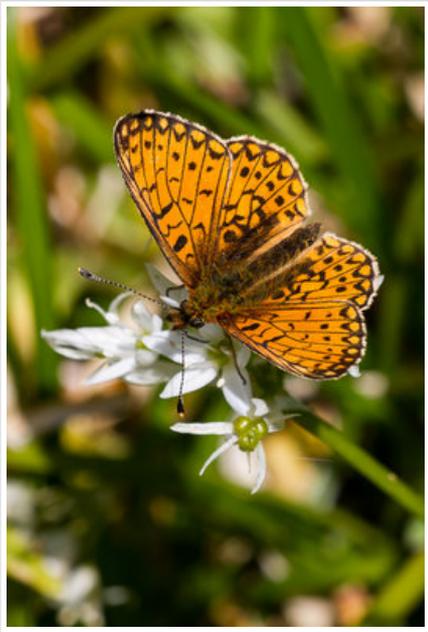


Chequered Skipper ovum



Chequered Skipper ovum

Other species seen included Green-veined White, Pearl-bordered Fritillary (very worn with just a single female seen), Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (half a dozen males), Small Heath and a few Small Copper.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (male)



Small Copper (male)

To wrap things up, I travelled to Spean Bridge, where I found a single Chequered Skipper before paying a visit to the Commando Memorial – the soldier at the front being modelling on Richard Lewington's father!



Commando Memorial

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 16-Jun-15 04:25 AM GMT

They all look like Richard Lewington's father to me!! 😊

I can see chequered skippers 10 minutes from my house here in Switzerland but if ever I visited the UK at the right time of year I would LOVE to see them in Scotland. It would be a completely different experience. Great pictures of a super butterfly.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Jack Harrison, 16-Jun-15 04:50 AM GMT

Commando Memorial - the soldier at the front being modelling on Richard Lewington's father!

Are you sure it wasn't modelled on Ian Lewington's father? 😬

Jack

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 16-Jun-15 06:45 AM GMT

What dedication, Pete! I didn't know you visited Glasdrum that often (it's such a shame it's so far away otherwise I'd be there annually myself).

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 22-Jun-15 07:38 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

They all look like Richard Lewington's father to me!! 😊

I can see chequered skippers 10 minutes from my house here in Switzerland but if ever I visited the UK at the right time of year I would LOVE to see them in Scotland. It would be a completely different experience. Great pictures of a super butterfly.

If you ever need a guided tour, you know where to find me 😊

"Jack Harrison" wrote:

Are you sure it wasn't modelled on Ian Lewington's father? 😬

I think you might be right, Jack 😊

"David M" wrote:

What dedication, Pete! I didn't know you visited Glasdrum that often (it's such a shame it's so far away otherwise I'd be there annually myself).

And not just annually, David - I've gotten into double figures over the last few years and hope to be able to writeup the findings over the winter.

Island Getaway

I've just returned from a weekend on the Isle of Wight ... possibly the most "quality" time I've had here since I cycled from Newbury to the Island in 1992 (or thereabouts) during the Newbury Cycling Club annual outing (which took 3 days, stopping over at the hostel at Burley in the New Forest both there, and on the way back). This time, I made a point of visiting several well-known butterfly sites including those associated with the Glanville Fritillary. One well-known site is the esplanade between Wheeler's Bay and Horseshoe Bay, where (at the Horseshoe Bay end) there is a plaque on a wall dedicated to this super species!



Glanville fritillary



The landslip at Bonchurch, between Wheeler's Bay and Horseshoe Bay, is one of the very few locations in the UK which is home to the Glanville Fritillary butterfly. Historic records show that there were populations existing in Lincolnshire and Kent but these have long become extinct, and severe population declines are reported in many European countries.

Most of the Glanville's life is spent as a black, spiny caterpillar and the beautiful orange patterned butterfly lives only a few weeks. In a "normal" year Glanvilles are usually on the wing by 20th May and the peak flight period is during the last week of May and the first week of June. However, emergence is weather dependent and early warm springs can bring "early fliers"!

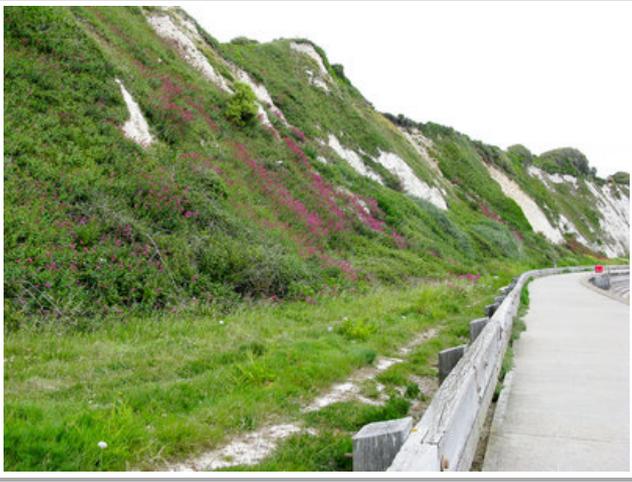
This mosaic of the butterfly was made by the "Ventnor School of Mosaic", which meets and works in the Ventnor Community Café (junction of Pound Lane / Albert Street, Ventnor). A generous financial contribution was given by the "Ventnor Enhancement Fund" for the purchase of materials. It is with great pleasure that the mosaic is presented to the Bonchurch Community Association whose members have arranged to display the mosaic in Bonchurch. Residents have kindly agreed to the mosaic being on show at Horseshoe Bay.

It is hoped that the mosaic will be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike and will popularise one of the last remaining habitats of this beautiful butterfly.

*Ventnor School of Mosaic
13th July 2013*



Horseshoe Bay / Wheeler's Bay esplanade



Horseshoe Bay / Wheeler's Bay esplanade

I managed to find 4 Glanville Fritillary, all past their best, as well as several Hummingbird Hawk-moths. At one point, five were flying on the same Red Valerian in front of me!



Glanville Fritillary male



Hummingbird Hawk-moth

I also visited Compton Bay / Chine and, again, a few worn Glanvilles were seen. Once you get away from the tourist centres, the island is spectacular, and I've already vowed to make a return visit to the island next year.



Compton Chine

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Willow, 22-Jun-15 07:58 PM GMT

Lovely images and most interesting reports from some wonderful locations Pete, your night-hunt for larvae is indeed real dedication, especially after a long day...well done that man 😊

Kind Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 27-Jun-15 05:10 PM GMT

Thanks Bill!

NBA fest

I needed to be in Edinburgh for a meeting and took the opportunity to spend some time at a Northern Brown Argus site near Eyemouth for two reasons. The first was to finally meet Iain Cowe (IAC) who introduced me to this site in the first place (and a pleasure to meet you Iain!). The other was to locate and mark up areas where NBA had oviposited in order to narrow down any potential search for larvae in spring 2016. Interestingly, although the site is carpeted in Rock-rose, there are only a few areas where eggs are laid, seemingly those where there is a good amount of vegetation surrounding the Rock-rose - we even found an egg that was on Rock-rose behind some overhanging grass - so the female must have crawled down to oviposit in that particular spot.

We also made observations regarding the food plant itself, with obvious differences in leaf size, leaf condition and leaf colour (which, I suspect, is an indication of varying levels of nitrates). I need to do some research, but this would be an ideal study site for a student or two and could lead to some valuable data. Specifically, there may be an issue with rabbits overgrazing the site, but until we know the ecological requirements of this species, then it's all guesswork 😊



Northern Brown Argus ssp. artaxerxes - male



Northern Brown Argus ssp. artaxerxes – female



A 60-second old Northern Brown Argus ovum which Iain saw being laid

Another excellent time in the company of Iain and, local resident, Ian Campbell, who must surely be one of the most knowledgeable people on NBA in the British Isles; I think he sees them every day during their flight period and they turn up occasionally in his back garden!



Ian, Iain and Pete – not the best "selfie" in the world!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Jul-15 06:14 AM GMT

Pamber Forest

It's been a while since I posted and it's not because I've nothing to report ... quite the opposite ... having spent a good chunk of time in Scotland! All will be revealed in due course. In the meantime, here's a report from a favourite local site.

On 18th July I spent an hour looking for (the rather spectacular) White Admiral eggs in Pamber Forest and managed to find 7 in total – far exceeding all previous attempts by quite some margin! The White Admiral seems to be having an extremely good year here and the management of the site is just superb (and I was pleased to be able to tell the warden, Graham Dennis, when I saw him a couple of weeks back). As well as finding an egg on a

partially-eaten leaf (which I thought was interesting in itself), I also found a leaf containing 2 eggs. I was wondering if these had been laid by the same female at the same time. However, I returned today, and one of the eggs had hatched (with the larva feeding at the tip of the leaf, with its characteristic feeding damage), but the other was still unhatched – leading me to believe that the 2 eggs were from separate females. As often occurs in the butterfly world, a small subset of available plants are often used for ovipositing – as is the case here, it would seem.



White Admiral ovum



White Admiral ovum on partially-eaten leaf



2 White Admiral ova

Among the good numbers of Silver-washed Fritillary, were a good number of Comma – and almost all were of the form *hutchinsoni*.



Comma f. hutchinsoni

And on 17th, it was good to brush shoulders with the great and the good of BC, at the launch of the Big Butterfly Count, including Sir David himself! 😊



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 23-Jul-15 06:25 AM GMT

I'll be interested to see what the second white admiral caterpillar does when it hatches. I, too, found a two-egg leaf today, with one hatched, but that first larva seemed to have disappeared, after having left some feeding damage. Although most larvae feed at the tip I have found some leaves in the past where a lateral vein is used. So I guess two larvae could in principle share the same leaf, at least while very small and unable to travel large distances over the very difficult terrain of a honeysuckle leaf.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Jul-15 06:28 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

I'll be interested to see what the second white admiral caterpillar does when it hatches.

Indeed – I shall return to the site and will let you know!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-15 05:53 AM GMT

Not too sure about the selfie Pete – I think you need one of those stick thingies 😊 but those NBAs are sublime 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 27-Jul-15 12:10 AM GMT

Thanks for the advice, Wurzel! 😊

Climb Every Mountain

Over the last few years I've become drawn to our most difficult butterfly fauna to find, observe and record. I'm sure there's some logic in this ... hopefully, that things can only get easier as I get older! If I were to sit down and think about the trip that would be the most testing, then it would be finding the Scottish subspecies of Mountain Ringlet (*Erebia epiphron ssp. scotica*), a species that is considered "only fly in bright sunshine" (more on that, later), that has a very short flight period and that, with regard to this subspecies, is only found in a small number of accessible sites unless you have a predisposition toward mountain climbing. With the delayed start to the 2015 butterfly season, with many species emerging up to 2 weeks later than "normal", then coming up with a date for finding *Erebia epiphron ssp. scotica* was, to be frank, a shot in the dark and highly dependent on luck, as much as judgment. To make things even more difficult, a (not insignificant) financial investment was needed to book a flight from Heathrow to Glasgow as early as possible to keep the cost to a minimum. This wouldn't be the first time that I wished I lived north of the border. However, being joined by Mark Colvin rounded off the trip, since we shared a common purpose of not only finding this subspecies, but also taking the opportunity to visit many areas within central Scotland for the best part of a week.

2 days before our trip, we realised that our luck had held out, with the week of 13th July providing largely unsettled weather in our home locations in the south of England (where both Mark and I live) while a band of good weather passed over Scotland. Game on! Arriving early on the Monday morning and with hire car booked, but with the weather forecast in central Scotland changing to "inclement" for the Monday, we decided to head east, taking in Wester Moss (a BC reserve, near Stirling) for Large Heath ssp. *polydama*, before heading to St. Cyrus (on the east coast) for Northern Brown Argus ssp. *artaxerxes* and Grayling ssp. *scota*. Clearly, the gods were against us, since we failed to locate any of our targets (hardly any butterflies at all were seen), but the weather was less than ideal. The only positive was a couple of interesting roads signs that lifted our spirits; the residents of Dull have a good sense of humour, and the second sign was found during Wimbledon! We eventually checked in at the Killin Hotel (highly recommended!) and, with good weather forecast for the Tuesday, we were raring to go!



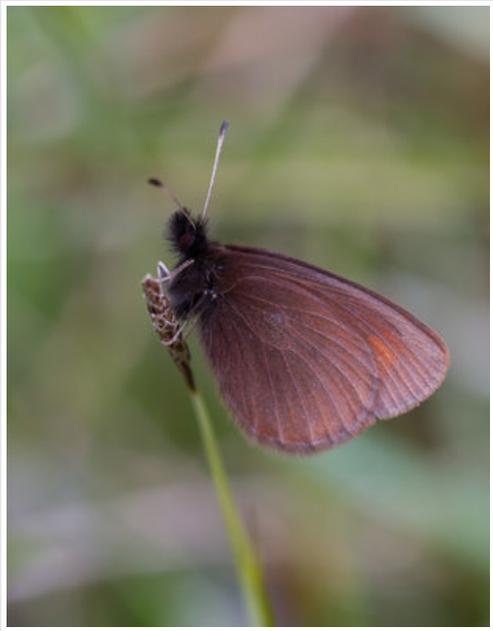
Killin is a small village that just 15 minutes from Ben Lawers, a site known for its Mountain Ringlet colony and a site that we would come to know well. Arriving on site at 0830, the weather was pretty cool and overcast. We took some time to take in the site, driving past the reservoir (Loch na Lairige) and getting a feel for the slopes (both above and below the road) that contained vast quantities of Mat Grass (*Nardus stricta*), the larval foodplant of the Mountain Ringlet.



After parking up at around 0900, we donned our waterproofs and headed up the slope, taking note of various nectar sources as we went. This included good amounts of Wild Thyme, which was even growing in the cracks in the roadside. At 0920, with a 100% covering of light cloud and with a temperature of just 11.5 degrees, the first Mountain Ringlet was seen. Many butterfly books say that this species only flies in bright sunshine, but this is clearly not the case. Mark and I made a similar observation when we visited Irton Fell in Cumbria for this species in 2014. What we didn't realise, at the time, is that this first individual was aberrant, having significantly-reduced orange patches when compared with its brethren, who we were yet to come face-to-antenna with.



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica – male

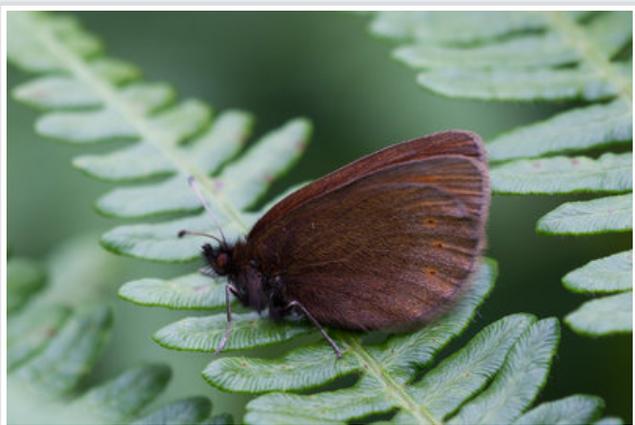


Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - male

It wasn't long before more Mountain Ringlets showed themselves and we estimated that we saw over 50 individuals during the course of the morning (we visited other sites later that day). Only a single female was seen among the males and, despite females being more secretive in nature, this did give us confidence that we had timed the trip to perfection as the adults were clearly still emerging (given the male / female ratio).



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - female



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - female

We visited Ben Lawers on subsequent days, moving to other sites (including Glasdrum Wood) to make the most of our trip. As such, we gathered quite a

few shots of Mountain Ringlet and were in a position to make some general observations regarding appearance. The formal definition of ssp. *scotica* suggests that the red spots are more conspicuous and more elongated than ssp. *mnemon* found in the Lake District. This certainly seemed to be the case since some of the individuals had significant orange/red markings that almost blended with one another. A variety of specimens is shown below, ordered by the amount of orange/red markings.



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica – male



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica – male



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica – male



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - male



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - male

I could also have ordered the specimens based on the prominence of the spots in the orange/red markings and, on that note, we found a couple of more aberrations that lacked these spots completely (or almost completely).



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - male



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica - male

The icing on the cake, however, was when Mark came across a mating pair; a first for both of us and which nicely rounded off this challenging but rewarding trip.



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica



Mountain Ringlet ssp. scotica on a rock :)

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-15 05:01 AM GMT

Because of the difficulty, the fact that I will probably never see this (sub)species and the perseverance these cracking shots have to be worth at least 🍷



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 27-Jul-15 05:23 AM GMT

Some nice variations there, Pete. I'm glad you were rewarded for a trip that is risky to say the least in terms of weather conditions.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 31-Jul-15 04:59 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, David!

Back to Pamber

I finally managed to return to Pamber on Tuesday and, again, today, where the White Admiral larvae are ridiculously easy to find on suitable Honeysuckle leaves, with the characteristic feeding damage giving them away. Over the course of 30 minutes this evening, I found no less than 7 larvae, including one in its 2nd instar. Unfortunately, I failed to relocate the leaf that contained 2 eggs; it's either succumbed to the weather (or deer browsing), or I need a new pair of glasses.



1st instar White Admiral larva



1st instar White Admiral larva



1st instar White Admiral larva



1st instar White Admiral larva



1st instar White Admiral larva with remains of egg shell showing



2nd instar White Admiral larva

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Aug-15 02:57 AM GMT

Stockbridge Down

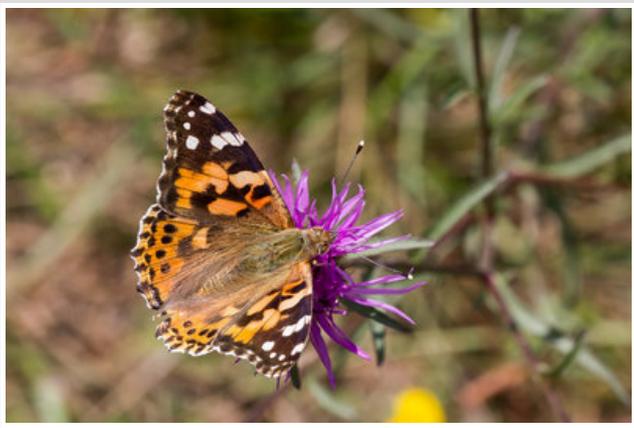
The Chalk Hill Blue are putting on an excellent show at the moment, with several aberrations seen, including a female with some blue scales (see below). Silver-spotted Skipper is also starting to emerge, with several males and 2 females seen. Several Dark Green Fritillary females were ovipositing – absolutely fascinating to watch as they meandered through the scrub to find a suitable site to lay, which was always near (unsurprisingly) some Violets. A few Marbled Whites are also hanging on. The Brimstones are just starting to emerge, and are making the most of the ample nectar sources in the strip next to the road. Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small White, Green-veined White, Small Copper, Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Skipper and Essex Skipper were also seen, along with 4 Painted Lady.



Chalk Hill Blue female aberration



Silver-spotted Skipper female



Painted Lady

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Aug-15 03:16 AM GMT

Pamber Forest

I couldn't resist returning to Pamber for an hour late this afternoon and found another 7 White Admiral larvae, including a pair on the same sprig of Honeysuckle. I'm not sure if the eggs were laid on the same leaf originally (I could only see the remnants of one egg shell) but am trying to figure out what happens to the 2nd larva when the leaf tip is already occupied, since that's where they set up home. Perhaps moving to another leaf is the answer! The larvae are at different stages, so most likely the offspring of 2 separate females, since eggs are laid singly. The youngest larva not only built a platform out of silk and frass, but had also decorated itself in the stuff! It also builds a "latrine" on the leaf, presumably to deter any predators. This (and other phenomena) are beautifully explained in the paper "The larva of the White Admiral butterfly, *Limnitis camilla* (Linnaeus, 1764) – a master builder" (Entomologist's Gazette, Volume 56, Issue 4, page 225–236). I hope to do a precis over the winter using my photos (and those from other contributors) to exemplify the points being made in the paper.



Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 02-Aug-15 07:12 AM GMT

Brilliant stuff, Pete. I'm interested to see the variation in ssp. *scotica*. As I'm sure you know, the species is very variable in the Alps, even on the same mountain, but I had always thought the UK populations were more homogeneous.

Interesting too to see the white admiral larvae. It's a pity you've lost the pair on the same leaf – maybe I'll learn how *camilla* cats get on together tomorrow morning. I imagine the presence of a second caterpillar is evident (to a caterpillar) long before they meet, simply because of the silky tracks they leave. At the very least, the build-up of silk and frass on the leaf side of the tip extension should enable junior to avoid a direct confrontation.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 08-Aug-15 06:59 AM GMT

Pamber update

I think I've been to Pamber 3 days in a row now, and have now mapped out the White Admiral population that I'll be following through the winter and into next year. I'd show a map, but this would give away where I've placed markers so will omit that (for now, at least!) given that undesirables read

these forums 😊 In total, there are 7 separate locations, hosting 22 larvae and 3 eggs as of this morning, giving a population of 25 in total, which seems a nice round-ish number. I know I could increase this (I found 5 more larvae today without even looking) but will leave it at those I've already found.

So – some photos. Guy's photos of a leaf hosting more than one larva are far-superior to mine since the platform that the 2nd larva has formed, at the side of the leaf, has collapsed, so not a brilliant image, but does confirm the behaviour. The egg that I'm monitoring on a separate leaf (that already contains a larva) has yet to hatch. I'll have to catch up with this in a week or so, since I fly out to Brazil (for work) tomorrow night (I'd much rather be in a Hampshire wood!). The first blurry photo sets out the scene on the lower 3 leaves.



Location 3c – 2 larvae, larva + unhatched egg, larva



Location 3c – 1st instar larva on the side of a leaf containing a 2nd instar larva

Some other shots (read the captions for info):



Location 2a – wins a prize for the most beautifully-decorated



Location 5 – the most advanced 2nd instar with a wonderfully-constructed latrine



Location 5 – larva + marker



Location 6 – the intricate pattern of feeding damage

And, finally, I came across a final instar larva that was still alive, with the cocoons of parasites all over it. Poor thing.



Location 4a – final instar parasitised larva



Location 4a – final instar parasitised larva

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 19-Aug-15 11:49 PM GMT

Scottish Specialties

Another trip to Scotland and a chance to visit both Glasdrum Wood and some of the Glens on the way back to Glasgow, including Glen Kinglas, where I found a Scotch Argus larva by torch a while back. Glasdrum was superb, where Scotch Argus *ssp. caledonia* were putting on a great show – I must have seen between 50 and 60 in total. However, Glen Kinglas was just amazing with literally hundreds of Scotch Argus making this a sight to remember. Every footstep would result in 3 or 4 Scotch Argus taking to the air – certainly a memory not to be forgotten! There must have been thousands in the area. The Scotch Argus were also taking minerals from the footpath I followed, which I wasn't expecting to see. Plenty of both males and females were seen, although I failed to find a mating pair.

At Glasdrum, a few other specialties were also seen, notably Green-veined White *ssp. thomsoni* and Speckled Wood *ssp. oblita*, which were in remarkably good nick, possibly representing a 3rd brood in both cases. A few Dark Green Fritillary were also bombing about. But the highlight was re-discovering 5 Chequered Skipper larvae that I've been following through at Glasdrum – and it was a pleasure to show these to Alan, the transect walker, who I met at Glasdrum on a previous occasion. A full report of the Chequered Skipper study will be published in due course (including plenty of photos!).



Scotch Argus *ssp. caledonia* – male



Scotch Argus ssp. caledonia – male (showing the sheen of a newly-emerged adult)



Scotch Argus ssp. caledonia – male underside



Scotch Argus ssp. caledonia – female



Scotch Argus ssp. caledonia – female underside



Green-veined White ssp. thomsoni – female



Speckled Wood ssp. oblita – female



Chequered Skipper – larva

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Aug-15 11:25 PM GMT

Back to Pamber

A quick trip back to Pamber Forest to monitor the White Admiral larvae I'm following. Unfortunately, several have disappeared, although I did find 3 more just 5 feet from another pair I'm following. It had been raining in the morning, and I caught a larva drenched at the base of a leaf. I also found a larva whose latrine seems to have been flushed down its "pier" which must be great for repelling boarders!



Many larvae are preparing to change skin, with a few 3rd instar larvae around – the instar in which they will overwinter in a hibernaculum made from a dried honeysuckle leaf. The larger larvae seemed to prefer resting at the base of the leaf, facing the leaf tip, rather than remaining on their pier.





I managed to find one larva that seemed to be preparing its hibernaculum. It's at the bottom of the leaf in the first shot below, and I've also included a closeup showing the silk strands that attach the leaf to the branch.



And finally, one larva playing peek-a-boo 😊



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 21-Aug-15 03:04 AM GMT

Fascinating images, Pete.

You are starting to give Guy Padfield some serious competition! 😊

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 21-Aug-15 03:06 AM GMT

Let's face it - he needs it 😊 Although I consider this a joint project between a number of collaborators.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 25-Aug-15 03:45 AM GMT

Holly Blue on the Rise!

It looks as if Holly Blue is going to hit one of its cyclic "peaks" this year, if my own counts of ova are anything to go by. I average 5 ova / larva on a small patch of Ivy at the back of my house each year. This year - no less than 14 ova! More of an observation, than a report. Keep yer eyes peeled 😊





Cheers,
- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 25-Aug-15 05:30 AM GMT

I shall keep an eye out for ova this next few weeks, Pete.

I agree that there seems to be a decent number of *agriolus* about right now. I expect them to 'crash' in 2016 as a consequence! 😞

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 30-Aug-15 10:22 PM GMT

Holly Blue Bonanza!

The Holly Blue ova at home have all hatched, with the larvae attaching themselves to the same (or nearby) bud, making them quite easy to find, once you know what you're looking for.





But the biggest surprise was finding a full-grown final instar larva at the local park, while out walking the dogs. Eggs have clearly been laid over a protracted period and this is further evidence that this species is having a great year!



As Matthew Oates says in his book, watching immature stages is a great way for keen butterflyers to get through the winter (and inclement periods of weather!).

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 03:42 AM GMT

Pamber in the Rain

An enjoyable hour spent in the company of Andy Bolton, catching up on the White Admiral larvae I'm following. At least 50% seem to have created (and moved into) their hibernaculum in which they will overwinter, which are surprisingly varied – ranging from complete leaves through to, what would appear to be, the basal portion of a Honeysuckle leaf that has been folded (using silk) in which the larva rests. Whether the latter is actually a hibernaculum or not remains to be seen. As ever, the inclement weather made for some great photographic opportunities 😊



White Admiral larva living life in a raindrop



Head down in a Honeysuckle leaf





A "traditional" hibernaculum, with backside of larva just visible!

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 01-Sep-15 04:31 AM GMT

Very interesting. There's no doubt that hibernaculum activity is going on there – but it's very early by Swiss standrds. I got back from the UK last night and did a quick check in the woods before bed. All the cats were sitting out on their piers exactly as before I left. There was no sign at all of leaf-cutting or other hibernaculum preparation.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 04:37 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

Very interesting. There's no doubt that hibernaculum activity is going on there – but it's very early by Swiss standrds.

We seem to have inherited your weather 😊 I'll be keeping an eye on the remaining larvae, but look forward to your reports on the Swiss *camilla*.

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 04:41 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

There was no sign at all of leaf-cutting or other hibernaculum preparation.

Hi Guy – is "leaf-cutting" a phenomenon you've seen and/or read about? I'd be interested to know more since I'm seeing quite a few examples of leaves appearing to be "cut"! Are there any references you'd recommend? (asking here for the benefit of this wonderful community!).

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by bugboy, 01-Sep-15 04:44 AM GMT

Very interesting. I've not been able to check my ones since the 22nd, I'm planning on going to check on them tomorrow afternoon so I'll give an update

on them in the next day or two. If they are all still alive they should all be 3rd instar by now.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 01-Sep-15 04:52 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Padfield" wrote:

There was no sign at all of leaf-cutting or other hibernaculum preparation.

Hi Guy - is "leaf-cutting" a phenomenon you've seen and/or read about? I'd be interested to know more since I'm seeing quite a few examples of leaves appearing to be "cut"! Are there any references you'd recommend? (asking here for the benefit of this wonderful community!).

Let me quote from the Swiss Bible, <http://shop.fo-publishing.ch/index.php/bucher/natur/les-papillons-et-leurs-biotopes-volume-1.html>, (my bold):

"La chenille hiverne au deuxième stade; elle mesure de 3 à 4 mm et se confectionne une loge (hibernarium): **elle découpe un bout de feuille à la base du limbe** et le plie en tissant quelques fils sur le dessus; en fanant, la feuille tendre s'enroule souvent d'elle même et la chenille ferme les bords au moyen d'un fil en zig-zag."

This is entirely consistent with my experience.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 01-Sep-15 04:56 AM GMT

"Padfield" wrote:

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

"Padfield" wrote:

There was no sign at all of leaf-cutting or other hibernaculum preparation.

Hi Guy - is "leaf-cutting" a phenomenon you've seen and/or read about? I'd be interested to know more since I'm seeing quite a few examples of leaves appearing to be "cut"! Are there any references you'd recommend? (asking here for the benefit of this wonderful community!).

Let me quote from the Swiss Bible (my bold):

"La chenille hiverne au deuxième stade; elle mesure de 3 à 4 mm et se confectionne une loge (hibernarium): **elle découpe un bout de feuille à la base du limbe** et le plie en tissant quelques fils sur le dessus; en fanant, la feuille tendre s'enroule souvent d'elle même et la chenille ferme les bords au moyen d'un fil en zig-zag."

This is entirely consistent with my experience.

Guy

Knowing the French language proves useful occasionally on here!!! 😊

I wonder if the same 'rules' apply in the UK?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 05:31 AM GMT

I think my French O level will help here more than Google translate 😊 But my observation is that this is more "ou" than "et", in that it is an either / or situation - either the larva "cuts" the leaf, or the larva leaves the leaf (!) intact but folds / silks any excess, by attaching it to the main body of the leaf. Not sure of this makes sense, but it seems to me that a variety of hibernacula types exist and they are quite, quite different from one another.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 01-Sep-15 05:54 AM GMT

It looks as if you, me, Bugboy and anyone else who is following *camilla* cats into the winter are at the cutting edge of Lepidopterological research then!!

When I say, 'my experience...', I am in fact referring to last winter only, as that was the first winter I watched hibernaculum construction and followed the cats through to the spring. Some hibernacula were messy, others extremely neat, but all followed very much the same general design, and notch cuts near the base were pretty much universal. They typically used the small pair of leaves inside the terminal leaves of a spray and these did not always require cutting at the apical end of the leaf. A typical hibernaculum was about 1 cm long. Caterpillars used them as retreats or bolt-holes while the autumnal weather was still clement, before retiring definitively for the winter when the leaves withered and the cold arrived.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 06:03 AM GMT

Thanks Guy – excellent input. I'm going to be keeping a real close eye on the hibernacula construction in that case! Unfortunately, it was too wet today to determine whether the leaves I was observing had been "silked" onto the stem (indicating a hibernaculum) or not; all were pretty much under water! But there do seem to be at least 2 construction types to me; one where the leaf is cut above the apex, and one where it is not (and is "folded/silked" onto the main leaf body).

A comparative set of observations between the UK and Switzerland will also make fascinating reading in the fullness of time 😊

[EDIT] And a prize surely awaits the first member that is able to photograph a *camilla* larva deliberately nipping away at the leaf base, and determining whether the silking happens before or after this event!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 06:20 AM GMT

Another interesting question is this: "is a White Admiral larva able to get through to its 3rd (overwintering) instar using a single leaf, or not?". My last photo above would suggest that, on occasion, this is absolutely the case!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 01-Sep-15 06:41 AM GMT

As a parting shot before bed – the repeated references to overwintering in 3rd instar intrigue me and this is also something to check up on. The Swiss Bible says white admirals overwinter in the second instar and I took this for granted when I watched them last year. I thought I observed the transitions to third, fourth and fifth instars this spring. It could be a difference between the UK and Switzerland – or I might have seen what I expected to see rather than what was really there.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 01-Sep-15 07:15 AM GMT

Thanks Guy – interesting! According to Frohawk (the British bible, as far as I'm concerned!) the larvae overwinter in 3rd instar, and this does seem to correlate with my own observations in the south of England. Below are 3 larvae, all from Pamber Forest. If you look at the spines (or lack thereof) and the facial mask then there are, in my opinion, clear differences. I'll need to dig deeper in terms of size differences, but the overwintering larvae seem to be significantly larger than 1st instar larvae, so much so, that I'd expect there to be an intermediate instar 😊 Having said that, I wouldn't rule out the overwintering in either 2nd or 3rd instar and this should be investigated. The first call to action is to distinguish 2nd and 3rd instar larvae! The "face mask" does appear to be different from my own observations and Frohawk seems to concur (thanks Fred!).



1st instar larva – no spines – 6th August



2nd instar larva – prominent spines and black face mask – 6th August



3rd instar larva – prominent spines and brown face mask – 20th August

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Sep-15 12:37 AM GMT

Pamber Update

The 29 White Admiral ova and larvae that I've been following through are now down to a mere 10, although I expect such losses to be quite normal, since the larvae are now exclusively in their 3rd instar and are extremely lucky to have made it this far! It's fascinating watching each larva build its hibernaculum. The process starts with the larva "silking" the leaf onto the stem so that, when the leaf withers, it does not fall away from the branch; this seems to be the only consistency in the process! Some larvae seem to simply fold an entire leaf so that there is a compartment within which it can overwinter. The majority (based on my own observations, those of Guy, and many authors) seem to cut the leaf into 2, so that only the basal half remains, and which is silked together to form a compact compartment. I'm not yet sure if the leaf is folded and then cut, or cut and then folded, or both! Watch this space!



White Admiral 3rd instar larva



White Admiral 3rd instar larva



Larva inside folded leaf



Larva inside folded and cut leaf



Larva inside folded and cut leaf (closeup)

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 06-Sep-15 01:59 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

I'm not yet sure if the leaf is folded and then cut, or cut and then folded, or both! Watch this space!

If I had only visited this cat on 2nd Sep, as well as 1st and 3rd, I might have had a more complete answer to your question (in one instance, anyway) ...



I think they cut first, even if not always so beautifully and symmetrically as this one did.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 06-Sep-15 02:37 AM GMT

Thanks Guy – I thought that was the case too (and you have some incredible images of sights I've yet to see!) until I saw this chap (whose leaf seems untouched):



Unfortunately, I won't get to revisit for a couple of weeks but shall certainly report back!

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 04-Oct-15 04:33 AM GMT

Update

It's been a while since I last posted, largely due to work and family holiday, so here's an update. First off, the White Admiral saga 😊 On balance, I think there are 3 (at least) different forms of White Admiral hibernacula. Each of these should be given a nice, crisp, characterisation, but I'm not sure what that would be! Anyway, based on my own observations and those of Guy and Wolfgang Wagner, here we go. In all cases, the larva "silks" the leaf onto the stem so that it does not fall from the stem when it dies ...

Cut and seal

In this form, the larva deliberately cuts the leaf so that the half furthest from the stem falls away, leaving quite a small space in which to overwinter. Guy has some great shots of the leaf being cut, and Wolfgang an entire sequence of this behaviour here: http://www.pyrgus.de/Limenitis_camilla.html. The end result is shown below, including (in this case) the complete sealing of the leaf:



Seal and let wither

The second form is where the larva seals (quite neatly) the leaf, aligning most of the edges of the leaf. However, the leaf is not cut, but simply allowed

to wither.



Fold

The final form is the simplest of all; just fold the leaf (which is often the leaf on which the egg was laid).



Of course, there is much more analysis to do, but I find this different behaviour really interesting and may help with the monitoring of the overwintering larvae.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 04-Oct-15 04:52 AM GMT

P.S. I also have a new toy, so expect more of this kind of thing over the winter 😊



Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Padfield, 04-Oct-15 05:07 AM GMT

Nice toy! Amazing picture.

I too have found what seem to be alternative hibernaculum designs but when I can't see the occupant within it's difficult to be certain if that's really what they are. Plenty of cats are still sitting out on their poo-sticks, as if playing dare with the cold weather that must come. What an incredible life these tiny creatures live.

Guy

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 04-Oct-15 09:54 PM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

P.S. I also have a new toy, so expect more of this kind of thing over the winter

I shall certainly look forward to that, Pete.

What is this new toy precisely?

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 05-Oct-15 12:45 AM GMT

Hi David - it's a Canon MP-E 65mm macro lens, that gives up to x 5 magnification (most macro lenses go to x 1). I had one years ago and didn't get on with it, but feel like I now know how to use it, having played around with extension tubes for quite some time to get past the x 1 limitation!

I've come to the (inevitable) conclusion that the best photos for super-macro photography will be a series of stacked images that are then brought together in the final composition, such as the one I posted, which is composed from 6 separate images. Anyway, a Canon MP-E lens came up on eBay for a stupidly-cheap price (at least £150 lower than it could have sold at if auctioned rather than "Buy it Now") and it's as good as new. Here are some areas I need to become expert at:

1. Moving the camera (or subject) in the desired increments for stacking - normal focusing rails are way too coarse and just don't work. I'm currently changing the focus point using the lens, which is clearly not correct since (in this lens) this changes the magnification too. I'm currently looking into the use of a micrometer to move the subject, which is the same technique when applied to the camera in the Cognisys Stackshot product (not cheap!) that automatically captures images by moving the camera (on a rail) in defined steps using a stepper motor. It does look the bee's knees 😊
2. Stacking the images. I think I have this sussed to a large degree, and purchased the Zerene Stacker software specifically for this. Again, this wasn't cheap.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 05-Oct-15 05:00 AM GMT

Looks like money well spent already, Pete. Those are superb close up shots and given your interest in early stages I'm sure you'll get plenty of use out of your new 'toy' over the next few months/years.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 10-Oct-15 08:54 PM GMT

Observing the small stuff

A few Holly Blue larvae are still present on the ivy at the back of my house – the culmination of a superb year for them.



Holly Blue larva

And I've also been playing with my new lens – some shots below. A whole new world has opened up for me 😊



High Brown Fritillary



Brown Hairstreak (redone!)



Black Hairstreak



Black Hairstreak

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-15 04:25 AM GMT

Wow, the structure of the ova is amazing, I'm surprised I haven't seen architects 'getting inspiration' from those 🤖🤖

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 11-Oct-15 05:06 AM GMT

Wow! I think we're all in for a real treat with the results from your new acquisition, Pete.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 20-Nov-15 05:29 PM GMT

And Finally ...

I've managed to make a couple of trips to Glasdrum Wood over the last month where I'm monitoring some Chequered Skipper larvae so this is a wrap-up for 2015. I also took the opportunity to take some scenic shots yesterday to give a sense of the locality; classic Chequered Skipper habitat at the edge of a loch, in this case, Loch Creran which also happens to be a Marine Protected Area.



Glasdrum Wood is at the base of the hill on the left



Location of the car park for Glasdrum Wood



The contrast between June (when Chequered Skipper are flying) and November (now) is quite something, with all of the greens being replaced with browns and yellows.



Glasdrum Wood in June



Glasdrum Wood in November

The Purple Moor-grass, the Chequered Skipper larval food plant, has completely died back, producing a sight that wouldn't look out of place in a hay meadow. Unsurprisingly, the larvae will be a light brown when they re-emerge in the spring and bask on the dead grass leaves before, without feeding further, pupating.



Back in October I spent some time photographing the hibernacula that I could find. In both of these shown below, there is a fully-grown Chequered Skipper larva, nicely wrapped up in silk. Every hibernaculum I found was constructed using two or more leaves, and I've tried to highlight them in the 2nd of each pair of shots below.





I cannot now wait for early spring, when I hope to revisit in search of basking larvae in the Scottish sun 😊

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by David M, 21-Nov-15 05:52 AM GMT

Lovely sequence that, Pete. It's quite striking to see how the glory of early summer descends into the austerity of late autumn. It's quite a contrast!
Good luck with your early stage hunting next year.

Re: Pete Eeles

by Wurzel, 21-Nov-15 06:08 AM GMT

Interesting to put the name of the site into a visual context. I'd love to visit it one day...but it will probably be a fair few years yet 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Pete Eeles

by Neil Hulme, 21-Nov-15 07:04 PM GMT

Fascinating report and yet not so much as a glimpse of the beast. With so many good shots of adult butterflies so widely available these days, I must admit to finding reports of this nature much more interesting.
BWs, Neil

Re: Pete Eeles

by Pete Eeles, 23-Nov-15 06:35 PM GMT

Thanks David, Wurzel, Neil. I must admit that my interests have evolved over the years – taking photos of adult butterflies just isn't enough any more. Fortunately, Mother Nature is very giving, and I find this kind of study fascinating in itself.

I'll be giving a talk in March at a joint Dorset BC / DWT event – "From Photography to Ecology" which will explain this transition in detail – I just need to figure out what to talk about 😊

Cheers,
– Pete

Re: Pete Eeles

by Brian Arnold, 24-Nov-15 06:04 AM GMT

Pete, Being local to me, the date for your talk in March is already in my diary. Looking forward to it and I am sure it will be very interesting no matter what you decide to talk about. Regards, Brian

