

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 01-Jan-16 10:15 PM GMT

Lovely series of shots Neil however my favourite has to be of Durdle Door, my favourite place in the whole world. 😊 Happy New Year!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 02-Jan-16 03:35 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, my favourites are the shots at Arnside and Gait Barrows, they remind me of the summer to come, hope fully better weather too, 😊  
Happy New Year to you Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jan-16 09:54 PM GMT

My apologies David, Wurzel and Goldie...I have just noticed that I didn't respond and thank you for your comments 😊 With not having much to post in my diary during the dull winter months I must have just missed them.

#### Sunday 17th January.

After a mild but very wet and windy start to the new year, the weather returned to more typical conditions during the past week with overnight temperatures dropping to minus figures and those during the daytime struggling to reach 4 or 5 degrees at most. Along with some morning frosts we have had our first snow, with me driving to work through some fairly heavy stuff early Thursday morning and some lighter flurries on Friday morning. The band of snow that passed across the country last night left us with a covering of a couple of centimeters this morning but this was mostly washed away by midday.

There have been plenty of birds visiting the garden with all the species that I usually get showing up with the exception of Blackcaps which I have not seen in the garden since early last year for some reason.

A couple of shots below taken through the window from the comfort of my back room 😊



*Bullfinch with snow still lying on the lawn in the background.*



*There is just something so right about Robins in the garden in winter.*

Looks like the weather is going to be staying cold for a bit so the butterflies should be staying tucked away where they should be at this time of year.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Jan-16 10:13 PM GMT

Great shots Neil, especially that cracking Bullfinch 😄👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 18-Jan-16 12:14 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, your right about the Robin it looks great in the Winter months, we've missed the Gold Finch in our Garden , they've not paid us a visit since October. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jan-16 10:55 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😄 We have at least 2 pairs of Bullfinches visiting the garden regularly which I have confirmed by seeing both pairs there together.

Thanks Goldie 😄 I have Goldfinches visit my garden occasionally but have not seen any myself since the autumn.

After a couple of weeks of colder but brighter weather with overnight temperatures down to -2 or -3 and regular frosty mornings, it has gone back to being a bit milder here but wet and gloomy. I am starting to give some serious thoughts to some plans for the coming season and booking some time off work but as usual will have to take a bit of a flyer with various species in terms of emergence times.

So far around here the first half of the winter was very mild with conditions only returning to something like normal for the past couple of weeks. There is plenty of time yet for a proper cold snap and indeed I can remember a few winters when a mild first half was followed by a colder second half which dragged on into spring...only time will tell what the coming season will turn out like.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 25-Jan-16 02:54 PM GMT

Hi! Neil , I've booked a holiday for June all ready in Sussex 😄 Don't know what I'll find, but can't wait to go Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jan-16 08:23 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, I've not booked anything yet but some thoughts are taking shape in my mind. I'm doing loads of reading up on various species before I make

my final decisions on where to go this year...then I just need to convince the wife 😊

With the wind and rain back again I have been going through some more photos and thought I would post another selection from last season.

Over the past couple of year I have started taking some shots from a distance which show the butterfly as a small subject against the habitat. I had mixed results with this again but managed a few that I was quite pleased with.



*Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015*



*Dingy Skipper – Ryton 13.05.2015*



*Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Wyre Forest 26.05.2015*



*Small Tortoiseshell – Castle Hills Solihull 26.09.2015*



*Comma – Castle Hills Solihull 04.10.2015*

Despite seeing loads of Burnet Moths around again I usually find these difficult to take a good photo of but was happy with these shots of a Six-spot taken at Shadowbrook Meadows near Solihull.



*Six-spot Burnet Moth – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015*



*Six-spot Burnet Moth – Shadowbrook 19.06.2015*

Speaking of Shadowbrook Meadows, whilst I am not that clued up on plants I couldn't help but notice some nice Heath Spotted Orchids there,



*Heath spotted Orchid – Shadowbrook 28.05.2015*

and down in Dorset in early September there were loads of Autumn Lady's-tresses all over the slopes above Durdle Door,



*Autumn Lady's- tresses – Durdle Door*

A bit of a random selection of photos perhaps but looking back through them has certainly brightened up a dismal night.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 26-Jan-16 09:17 PM GMT

Your image of the Pearl Bordered Fritillary works particularly well. I hope the local colony near me does well this year. Good luck with an early Red Admiral !

Trevor..

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 26-Jan-16 09:30 PM GMT

Your images are taking on a new and very impressive dimension, Neil.

I love pictures that show a comprehensive context in the background. Keep 'em coming!

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 26-Jan-16 10:46 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil – are you using a different lens for those or a different setting – they are lush 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 28-Jan-16 10:46 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, I love the Dingy shots, I like the way the Butterfly blends in with the plant, great shots Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jan-16 08:52 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments folks, greatly appreciated 😊

Hi Trevor, that PBF shot is one of my favourites of 2015. Good luck with your Pearls this year.

Thanks David, I like to vary the type photos I take and will certainly be trying to get some more in a similar style again this year.

Cheers Wurzel, all taken with my FZ200 which has a fixed lens with a focal range of 25–600mm. Most of my photos are taken at the long end of this range with the most variable 'setting' being my distance and position to take the shot. It is all about being aware of what is behind the subject and

trying for a position to get the shot I want. I must admit the variable angle screen on the FZ200 is a great help in this.

Hi Goldie, that was the first time I have ever seen Dingies settling down to roost in the evening which gave me the opportunity for those shots.

Cheers,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Feb-16 07:59 PM GMT

### Specklies in the garden

One last post looking back at 2015 with some photos of a favourite subject of mine that have mostly been posted previously in this PD but I thought I would put them together as a round up.

Anyone who has followed this diary over the past few years will know that I have Speckled Woods breeding regularly in and around my back garden which gives me plenty of opportunity to observe them and take photos. This is a species that is happy to fly in quite cool and cloudy conditions and they seemed to do well locally in 2015 when there was plenty of that kind of weather.

The first one that I saw in the garden was on 8th April, a male whose forewings had not properly developed but was flying about without any obvious ill effects. Throughout the rest of April and May there was a steady succession of fresh males defending different corners of the garden plus the larger and brighter females that would pass through.







I watched a number of courtship attempts by amorous males that often resulted in the females doing the 'play dead' thing that they do to reject the males advances.



I also managed to capture a shot of a female as she was depositing an egg on a blade of grass which I entered into the behaviour section of the UKB annual photo competition and was really chuffed when it was placed second 😊



The first broods disappeared by the first week of June and then there was a slight gap lasting a couple of weeks until their first offspring started to show up. These summer brood examples are noticeably darker looking on average than the spring ones, although all broods can display considerable variation when looked at closely. Numbers then built from the third week of June through July and August when I would often have three or four males squabbling over territories around the garden. I always find it fascinating how the males will pick the same spots, often the very same twigs and branches, as their predecessors in previous years.







As the blackberries began to go overripe in late August and into September they attracted the Specklies to a point where I was seeing half a dozen or more in the garden at a time including one particular pale female that really stood out as looking different to the rest.







After a strong showing in September the numbers dwindled into October with the last one seen in the garden on October 17th.





This means that from early April until mid-October I had the pleasure of seeing Specklies in the garden almost every week through the season apart from the couple of weeks gap in early June. Overall, this is fairly normal for me but with both the first and last sightings in the garden being about a week later than normal and numbers being perhaps slightly higher than usual.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 05-Feb-16 08:06 PM GMT

Love the 2 on the Blackberries Neil. Apologies for my belated congratulations on your photo success. I was really pleased to see the result as I knew that shot was a bit special when you originally posted it. Well done 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Feb-16 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, I remember you commenting on that photo at the time. I don't normally go for photo competitions and only decided to go for it partly as a result of a number of comments that it received 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 05-Feb-16 10:08 PM GMT

Wow! That's a veritable encyclopaedia of Speckled Woods, Neil, in all manner of forms and poses. I particularly like the dark individual, the like of which I haven't seen before.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 06-Feb-16 11:44 AM GMT

Hi! Neil. I love all the photos they're great, the one of the Berries reminds me of autumn at Hall-Lee-Brook, I love watching them flying about the Berries, great photos, I'm ready for Spring now Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Feb-16 10:08 PM GMT

A cracking collection of Specklies Neil – you can really see the variation in the species 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Feb-16 08:16 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Goldie and Wurzel 😊

The variation between individual Specklies is what I use to identify them in my garden and helps me keep an accurate track of the numbers that I get there. Since looking carefully at this species it has also got me looking more closely at other common species and really opened my eyes to how much variation there can be in some of them.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 16-Feb-16 07:54 PM GMT

We have certainly had a bit of a cold snap with frosty mornings around here for the past few days and the temperature on my car display this morning showing -3 at home and -4 out on the A45 between Solihull and Coventry. Still, not quite as cold as the -7 that was forecast.

Loads of bird activity in the garden last weekend with me taking the usual shot or two through the back room window between jobs around the house. I commented a while back about not seeing any Blackcaps and so was pleased to see a pair in the shrubs at the side of the garden with the female making regular trips to the fat block feeder.



*Female Blackcap (Redcap) laying claim to the fat block.*

The Bullfinches have been regular visitors, their preference being the black sunflower seeds to which the male and female take it in turns to visit.



*The male Bullfinch usually has first dibs...*



*followed by the female, then they take it in turns.*

There is also a family of foxes under a neighbours shed which often pass through the garden and one of them wandered into the garden on Sunday morning and just sat there for a while enjoying the sun.



*Sneaking through the vegetation.*



*Enjoying the sun.*

It looks like we have rain, sleet and possible snow forecast for the day tomorrow with a snow warning for tomorrow night...in other words a typical February which is often the coldest month of the winter. At least the daylight hours are getting noticeably longer, just a few short weeks now 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 16-Feb-16 10:56 PM GMT

I must say you do get an impressive range of birds in your garden. I only catch a glimpse of Bullfinch once in a blue moon nowadays, usually a fleeting glance as it vanishes into the bushes and I don't think I've ever seen a Blackcap in the winter even though they are all over the place on my local patch during the summer!

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-16 11:06 PM GMT

More great shots of the Bullfinches Neil – what are you putting in your feeders? 😊 Great MP too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 17-Feb-16 09:47 AM GMT

Love the Fox photos Neil, we only see Bull finches at Penn Flash, I was happy to see the Gold Finches back in our garden though, we'd not seen them until the cold snap arrived, roll on Spring, Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-16 07:48 PM GMT

My apologies for the delayed reply to all your comments guys, I was a bit busy last week and then I kept getting kicked out of the website when I tried to log in over the weekend...looks like that is sorted now 😊

Hi Bugboy, the Bullfinches first showed up in the garden three year ago and have been regular visitors ever since. The Blackcaps are more obvious from spring through to autumn but for the past few years have been showing up occasionally all through winter.

Cheers Wurzel, I usually buy whatever bird food I can find on special offer or from the local pound shop, usually a combination of black sunflowers seeds/sunflower hearts, general wild bird mix, peanuts and fat blocks.

Hi Goldie, I don't often get Goldfinches in the garden but often see them around my local sites, especially in the autumn when flocks of them descend on all the seed heads.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Pauline, 23-Feb-16 08:00 PM GMT

How on earth did I miss your wonderful fox photos Neil – must have been whilst I was laid up with flu! 🤒 The bird shots aren't half bad either 📷

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 18-Mar-16 09:53 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, thanks for your comments and my apologies for not responding sooner. I had a nasty head cold for a while and then most of my recent time online has been spent researching and planning some butterflying trips for this year so I have not logged onto UKB much lately and missed your post.

It seems that others are starting to see butterflies but so far I have not got off the mark. Last weekend we had some decent sun but there has still been an underlying chilliness in the air along with a cold wind most days and we are still getting regular frosts around here.

It looks as if this weekend is set to be dry but dull and cloudy with temperatures still well down in single figures so I will probably be doing stuff around the house to keep the brownie points topped up for later use 😊

Wurzel's recent post showing a Lime Hawk Moth reminded me that I had found a caterpillar of this species last September crawling across the pavement just down the road from our house. Like a lot of suburban roads, ours is lined with Lime trees and from the caterpillars appearance and behaviour I reckoned it had just descended from one of these trees and was looking for somewhere to burrow down and pupate. Standing out in plain view on the pavement I guess it was fortunate that it had not been spotted by a hungry bird and I couldn't resist taking it home with me.

I remembered from my experiences of finding and rearing various Hawk Moth caterpillars when I was a youth back in the seventies that Lime Hawks tend to only burrow down a couple of inches at most so I put it into a plastic container with some garden soil and leaf litter. The next morning it had disappeared, presumably to pupate under the soil, so I left it for about a week for the pupa to harden before carefully removing the soil. I then placed the pupa into a tin which I left in the garage to overwinter, checking it occasionally to see if it still looked healthy. Lime Hawks usually start emerging sometime in early May so all being well I will be laying the pupa out in a cage ready for then.



*Leroy(or Lily) the Limey wandering around its plastic box just after being found last September.*



*The pupa about a week ago.*

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 19-Mar-16 01:35 PM GMT

Hi! Neil, Thursday was a cracking day here really hot Sunshine, since then we've gone down hill, it's been really cloudy and cold, not very Spring like at all but at least we saw the Sun, trouble is it makes you want more of it 😊 Hope you get better weather soon. Goldie 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-16 10:22 PM GMT

Looking forward to seeing Leroy later in the year Neil. Bob, Bobette and Bobina are all still in the 'cage' and looking good 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 20-Mar-16 11:01 AM GMT

Hi Goldie, a really dull and drizzly day yesterday and today has started off the same. Oh well, lets hope it bucks up in time for Easter.

Cheers Wurzel, looking forward to seeing your 'Bob derivatives' later in the year too.

#### **Saturday 19th March**

I have seen quite a few butterfly sightings over the past week or so from various parts of the country including well north of me but so far I am not off the mark. I must admit this is mainly because I have not had chance to go out yet with me being at work during the best spells of weather last week and

this weekend being cool, dull and drizzly so far. I have a week off work over Easter and am hoping to be able to get out a bit and kick my season off then.

In the meantime I have been doing my usual thing of watching the birds in the garden during breaks in the chores and taking the occasional photo through the back room window. Among the usual visitors to the feeders yesterday there was a new face which I have not had in the garden before. I managed a record shot which was just about good enough for me to see that it looks like a female Siskin although not being familiar with this species I am happy to be corrected.



Female Siskin, I think? - Coverdale 19.03.2016

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Mar-16 08:41 PM GMT

I'd agree with that identification Neil - you can see the dark streaks down the flanks and the breast. I too share your misfortune of not being able to get out of work when the weather is conducive to butterflies 😊 but still it has to get better soon!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Mar-16 08:02 PM GMT

Thanks for the confirmation of the Siskin Wurzel 😊

### Friday 25th March

The best weather of the week arrived for Good Friday and guess who had to go to work today. At least it was only half a day as is usual for me on a Friday and I was back home by 12.30 and went straight out into the back garden. Almost immediately I was greeted by my first butterfly of the year, a beautiful Peacock that was flitting about and settling to bask in the glorious sunshine.



Peacock - Coverdale 25.03.2016

As I was pottering about in the garden a Small Tortoiseshell buzzed around my head and then shot off across the neighbours gardens.

Shortly afterwards we went around to my Moms for our regular Friday afternoon visit. By now some clouds had bubbled up but there was still plenty of sun so I went for a short walk around the park just down the road from my moms house. I soon spotted a Small Tortoiseshell and managed a couple of record shots before it took off over some nearby trees.



*Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 25.03.2016*

After circling around I came back along to the same place and spotted what I thought at the time was the same Small Tortoiseshell again and took another couple of record shots.



*Small Tortoiseshell - Langley Hall 25.03.2016*

Looking carefully at the photos afterwards shows that this was in fact a different individual to the first which made it two Small Tortoiseshells seen during my 30 minutes or so here.

The weather for the rest of the bank holiday weekend is looking a bit grim but I have all next week off work so fingers crossed.

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by trevor, 25-Mar-16 09:37 PM GMT

You're off to a great start Neil. Reading through the diaries today it would seem that the hibernators were emerging all over the country. Stunning colours on your Peacock.

Have a great season  
Trevor.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 26-Mar-16 01:06 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, it seems after my early shots nothing was happening at my local spot where a week ago I'd seen a Comma and 3 Small Tort's, if an

explanation can be given for this I'd love to know why, the weather was lovely as well. Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Mar-16 06:23 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, it certainly seems that there were a fair few sightings around the country 😊

Hi Goldie, despite a few sightings around here yesterday it still seems to be early days. It is usual for early April to be when things really get going around my patch so plenty of time yet.

I had a trip up to Nottingham this afternoon to collect my youngest son Danny from Uni for a visit home over Easter. He would have been home a week ago but has spent the past week in Spain with the University Athletics Club, supposedly training (Yeah right!).

It is now absolutely lashing down outside so time for another little report from yesterday.

### Turning to the Dark Side

For the past couple of years I have been thinking of getting a moth trap and had decided that I would go for it this year. The final catalyst for this decision was when I found the Lime Hawk moth caterpillar on the pavement outside my house and realised that I had never seen any adults of this species around my house which got me wondering what else was about at night.

Over the winter months I did loads of researching on the internet on the advantages and disadvantages of the various designs and eventually decided to go for a Robinson type trap with twin 30w actinic tubes. The reasoning behind going for the more expensive Robinson trap was that I had read a few stories of people starting off with other traps and then wanting to upgrade within a year or two once they had got into 'mothing' and I felt sure that knowing what I am like that this would apply to me as well so I might as well jump straight in with what I would probably end up getting sooner or later. I chose actinic tubes because my garden is overlooked by neighbours and a brighter MV lamp would potentially cause a nuisance.

The trap was duly ordered and arrived last Thursday (25th March) and on my arriving home from work I was like a kid with a new toy and quickly checked the weather forecast. That night looked like being the best of the next few nights although still not ideal, being cold and clear with cloud and possible showers later. Still, with bands of heavy rain and strong winds heading in for the Easter weekend I decided to put the trap out in the garden to see if there was anything about.

Next morning (Good Friday) I was working in the morning so I just turned the trap off when I got up at 05.30 and had a quick look and saw a few moths in there. I covered the opening to prevent any escapes until I could have a better look on my return.

Later that afternoon I had a chance to have a proper look at my catch which consisted of five individual moths of what looked like 3 species. I recognised two of them as Hebrew Characters and after taking a few photos and releasing them I went to my bookshelf to try and identify the others. I already have the *Waring Townsend & Lewington Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* so this was my 'go to' reference and after perusing this for a while I reckon that I also had two Common Quakers and a Clouded Drab.



*Clouded Drab - Coverdale 25.03.2016*



*Common Quaker - Coverdale 25..03.2016*



*Common Quaker - Coverdale 25..03.2016*



*Common Quaker - Coverdale 25..03.2016*



*Hebrew Character - Coverdale 25.03.2016*

I will say that being a beginner at this I would welcome any comments and corrections on any moth IDs that I make as it is apparent that a lot of species can be vary variable and I am bound to get some wrong.

I am really looking forward to finding out what is flying around my garden during the hours of darkness over the coming months.

Bye for now,

Neil

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-16 11:00 PM GMT

Great start to the season Neil (or is that Sith Lord) and also great Moth shots. 😊 Good idea about forgoing the need to upgrade – with lit like that it's always a good idea to go straight for the best 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 27-Mar-16 09:32 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, must admit a fair chunk of brownie points were included in the cost of the trap 😊 At least with the weather forecast over the next few days it looks like I will building up a few more.

### Looking back at first sightings

Now that I am off the mark with my first 2016 season butterflies I thought that I would have a look back at the dates of my first butterfly sightings over the past few years just out of curiosity to see how this year has compared.

The dates for the 5 previous years are below with the species seen along with the numbers.

This year – 25th March... Peacock (1), Small Tortoiseshell (3)  
2015 – 20th March...Peacock (3), Small Tortoiseshell (5), Comma (1)  
2014 – 9th March...Brimstone (2), Peacock (10+), Small Tortoiseshell (12+), Comma (6+)  
2013 – 6th April...Comma (1), Peacock (1)  
2012 – 11th March...Peacock (5), Comma (4)  
2011 – 25th March...Brimstone (1), Peacock (1)

These sightings were all either from my garden or close by around Solihull, so there is some consistency in terms of location.

This shows that for me this year has started a few days later than last year and a couple of weeks later than 2014 which was a notably early start to the season, at least for around here. 2014 was also a standout year for the numbers of hibernators seen on the first day. In contrast 2013 was a late spring and I clearly remember we had some snow which was still lying in the garden in the last week of March with my first sightings not until 6th April.

These sightings also reflect the recent recovery of Small Tortoiseshells and the fact that Brimstones are a bit hit and miss around my local patch.

### Saturday 26th March – A few more moths.

Friday night was another clear and cold night but with no rain forecast I couldn't resist the temptation to run my new moth trap again. Inspecting the trap on Saturday morning produced 2 Hebrew Characters, 1 Common Quaker and 1 Clouded Drab, the same species as the previous night although photos showed them all to be different individuals. This comparison is made easier by the fact that all these species can show considerable variation.

With the moths being docile during the day it was easy to remove them from the trap and position them for some photos.



*Clouded Drab...a more attractive moth than the name suggests*



*Common Quaker...looking quite cute from this angle*



*Hebrew Characters...showing some variation in colour*



*The same two Hebrew Characters*

With next week off work my fingers are crossed that once storm Katie has passed through I will be able to get out a bit and have a look around my local spots.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 28-Mar-16 05:01 PM GMT

Great to see you finally took the plunge Neil and your moth shots are wonderful. I always seem to struggle with mine which may be something to do with the light levels at that time of the morning. Between yourself and Dave, you have given me the incentive I need to get cracking again 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-16 07:15 PM GMT

With regards to Brownie points my advice is to buy some paint and a paint brush and when the weather's awful paint one of the rooms – Brownie points banked 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 31-Mar-16 10:25 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Yes, after a couple of years of thinking about it I finally took the plunge, not exactly acting on impulse for once 😊 I have been using my old FZ150 with the close up lens for the moth shots as it is easier to use when the moths are docile during the day and I don't have an adapter to use the lens on my FZ200.

Cheers Wurzel, no painting this week but plenty of blitzing of all the stuff we seem to have accumulated and clearing out of rooms ready for painting to come...still counts as brownie points 😊😊

#### Thursday 31st March

I have run the moth trap a couple of times this week although the nights have been cold with clear skies and temperatures dropping down to 2 or 3 degrees in the early morning. Even so I have been catching a few moths, usually a couple of Hebrew Characters and Common Quakers each time. On checking the trap this morning after another cold and clear night I found a single Hebrew Character, 2 Common Quakers and a larger moth which although a bit worn was much more attractive. A quick check in my book confirmed it to be an Oak Beauty which is one of the larger and more attractive of the early spring flying moths.



*Oak Beauty – Coverdale 31.03.2016*



*Oak Beauty – Coverdale 31.03.2016*



*Oak Beauty – Coverdale 31.03.2016*

As well as the cold nights the past few days have also been a bit nippy around here and whilst there has been some nice sunny spells the temperature has struggled to get into the low teens at most. There has also often been a cold breeze and when the sun has been covered by clouds it has felt decidedly cool. I have therefore ended up getting some jobs done around the house so far this week rather than going out anywhere.

Looking at the weather forecasts earlier in the week it looked as if Thursday was going to be the best day to get out and so I had planned to nip out for a bit this afternoon for a look around one of my local spots.

Well, wouldn't you know it...Thursday dawns and the forecast has changed 😞. After waking up to a chilly morning with clear blue skies, clouds were now forecast to build up through the day, just like the previous few days. Still, having made my mind up to go out, just after midday I went around to my local spot at Bickenhill.

At least the wind was much lighter today and for an hour or so I enjoyed some nice sunshine during which it felt nice and pleasant. Wandering over to one of the usually reliable sheltered corners here, I soon spotted 3 Small Tortoiseshells and a single Comma, all nectaring on Blackthorn blossom. A bit further along I also had a flypast by a Peacock which flew rapidly off across the M42.

By mid-afternoon the clouds had built up with some darker grey ones amongst them and after a short shower during which I sheltered under some trees I headed for home.

I did take a few photos but it looks as if I must have changed my camera settings somehow and they were all massively over exposed so I have binned them. Oh well, that will teach me to check things before merrily clicking away.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 03-Apr-16 04:50 PM GMT

That Oak Beauty is certainly properly named – great shots too! Good news on the Brownie point collection! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-16 08:59 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, looking forward to spending the points as the season progresses 😊

### Saturday 2nd April

Since getting my moth trap the nights have either been clear and cold or wet and windy so not really good weather for mothing so far. Friday night looked to be cloudy albeit with a bit of a breeze so I decided to run the trap again. In the end it got quite blustery and rained all through the second half of the night but despite this I still had 3 Common Quakers, and singles each of Hebrew Character and Clouded Drab when I checked the trap in the morning.



*Common Quakers - Coverdale 02.04.2016*



*Hebrew Character - Coverdale 02.04.2016*

The weather forecast for the rest of the day was for the initial rain and cloud to move away during the morning to leave a nice sunny day. In the event the morning remained grey and drab and the cloud took longer than forecast to clear but by early afternoon it was warming up a bit and looking promising enough to tempt me out to my local spot at Bickenhill again.

During a couple of hours here the clouds gradually cleared to leave wall to wall blue sky and light winds that made for a very pleasant afternoon. I soon saw a couple of Small Tortoiseshells and wandering along the footpaths I counted at least 6, possibly more, spaced out every hundred yards or so along the sunny sides of the hedgerows. These were usually either basking down on the grass, from where they would take off to intercept anything that flew close, or nectaring on the plentiful blackthorn blossom along the hedges.



*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*

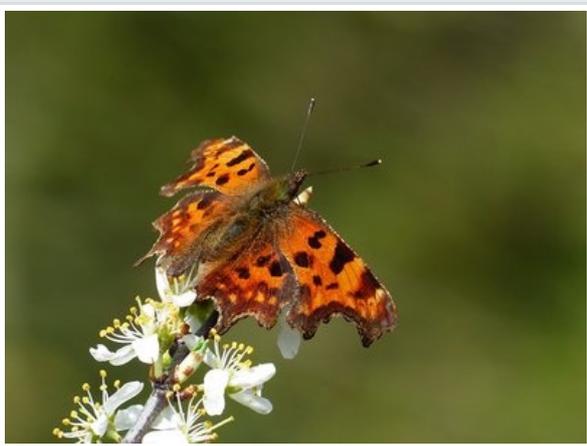


*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*

As well as the Tortoiseshells there were at least 2 each of Comma and Peacock along the same stretches of path and all three species would often spiral up into the sky with each other when they intruded into each other's airspace.



*Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



*Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2016



Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2016

As usual I am a bit vague on exact numbers due to the way these species will patrol along a considerable stretch of hedgerow. In fact I saw one of the Peacocks, easily identified by a large chunk missing from one hindwing, in quite separate spots here at each end of one hedgerow and could easily have counted it as two different individuals.

It seems that a few Specklies have been seen over the weekend...shouldn't be long now before they re-appear in my garden 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 03-Apr-16 09:11 PM GMT

Looks like we had very similar days Neil, isn't it wonderful when we finally get that first decent set of images in the spring 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 04-Apr-16 08:56 PM GMT

#### Neil Freeman wrote:

It seems that a few Specklies have been seen over the weekend...shouldn't be long now before they re-appear in my garden

Wouldn't be spring without them, Neil, and I expect to see images from your garden within the forthcoming few days!

### Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 04-Apr-16 09:15 PM GMT

Lovely stuff, Neil. There can be nothing more beautiful than a colourful Butterfly

on Blackthorn against a blue sky. A real taste of Spring.

Best wishes,  
Trevor.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Butterflysaurus rex, 05-Apr-16 06:51 PM GMT

I see the moth trap is attracting some goodies there Neil, it's something I've been wanting to do for a long while but I've been too busy to get around to it. Hopefully one day. Lovely photos of the three hibernators on blossom too.

ATB

James

### Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-16 10:23 PM GMT

I too am enjoying your butterflies on the blackthorn blossom, and a bit of blue sky makes all the difference, doesn't it.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-16 10:04 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil 😊 Looking forward to your Specklies!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-16 09:03 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments Bugboy, David, Trevor, James, Mark and Wurzel 😊

I always look forward to trying to get a few shots of butterflies on blossom at this time of year, one of the quintessential sights of spring 😊

With the weather taking a turn for the worse this week I have not seen any more butterflies and it looks like I will have to wait a little longer for the Specklies to appear in the garden.

I ran the moth trap a couple of times earlier in the week but gave it a rest the past couple of nights when it has been rather blustery with heavy showers.

Along with the usual Common Quakers and Hebrew Characters I also caught a few more Clouded Drabs and a couple of Oak Beauties both of which were looking quite worn and tattered. I also had a Twin-spotted Quaker and An Early Grey, both of the latter two species being new ones to my trap.



*Twin-spotted Quaker - Coverdale 04.04.2016*



*Early Grey - Coverdale 05.04.2016*



*Early Grey - Coverdale 05.04.2016*

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 11-Apr-16 07:55 PM GMT

**Saturday 9th April**

Still not much happening around here with last weeks return to colder conditions making it feel like it was dragging the end of winter out again.

I am still waiting for a good night for the moth trap with the nights continuing to be either cold and frosty or wet and windy. I did run it on Friday night and had the usual mix of Common Quakers and Hebrew Characters plus an Early Thorn which was another new species for me.



*Early Thorn - Coverdale 09.04.2016*

After a sunny but cool Saturday morning it started raining later in the afternoon but as I was indoors at the Warwickshire BC Spring Meeting enjoying some interesting presentations (and cake 😊) I didn't mind so much.

#### **Sunday 10th April**

A nice bit of sun during the morning produced my only butterfly of the weekend, a male Brimstone that I spotted passing through the garden from the kitchen window. It clouded over and the wind picked up again in the afternoon so I carried on with a few little jobs around the house (more brownie points for later in the year 😊)

Bye for now,

Neil

#### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-16 08:04 PM GMT

Being at work during the decent spell of weather we have had this week means I still don't have anything to report with regard to butterflies. I have been checking the garden when I have got in from work but it has been very quite so far...my usual Specklies are late this year.

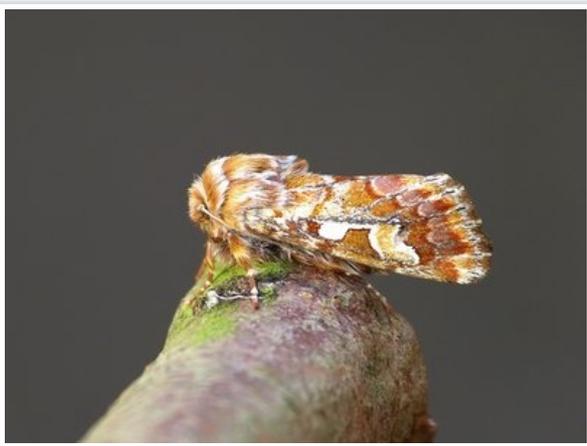
I have run the moth trap a few times this week and had a few more species new to me including a nice Pine Beauty which I was well chuffed with.



*Early Grey - Coverdale 13.04.2016*



*Common Plume - Coverdale 13.04.2016*



*Pine Beauty - Coverdale 14.04.2016*

The weather is not looking good for the weekend so it looks like I will probably have to wait a bit longer for my season to properly get going after the single decent day I have had so far a couple of weekends back. At least the moth trap has provided a most welcome diversion, indeed it is surprising how many moths will fly in the rain. It seems that it is just the clear, cold nights and the wind that they don't like.

Bye for now,

Neil

## **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 17-Apr-16 06:14 PM GMT

After a day and night of constant rain on Friday we woke up to snow on Saturday morning, although I must admit this had been forecast so it wasn't too much of a surprise. Although it is fairly unusual for us to get snow here in April it is not unknown and I can remember it happening a few times when I was younger, in fact it is apparently statistically more likely that we will see snow here at Easter than on Christmas Day.

### **Sunday 17th April**

A very cold and frosty night led to clear blue skies this morning although it was late morning before the sun began to win out against the chill in the air. By the time I had some time free early in the afternoon a lot of cloud had built up and when this covered the sun a rather cold breeze would make itself felt.

Having a quick look around the garden I was pleased to see a splash of bright tawny orange of a Comma against the yellow of a dandelion, only the fourth butterfly I have seen in the garden so far this year and only my second one for April.



*Comma - Coverdale 17.04.2016*

I then decided to go out and have a look around my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull to blow the cobwebs off. A couple of hours here during which it felt pleasantly warm when the sun came out but chilly when it went in, produced half a dozen or so each of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. These were often basking down in the grass out of the breeze but I did see a couple nectaring on blackthorn blossom which is one of my favourite sights of spring.



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 17.04.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 17.04.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 17.04.2016*



*Peacock - Castle Hills 17.04.2016*



*Peacock - Castle Hills 17.04.2016*



Peacock - Castle Hills 17.04.2016



Peacock - Castle Hills 17.04.2016

With these being the only two species seen here this afternoon things are definitely running later than usual with timings so far being more in line with 2013 which was also when we had snow in late March.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 18-Apr-16 10:05 AM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, sounds like your having the same weather there as we have here. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 18-Apr-16 10:42 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil - and that Pine Beauty is a real cracker of a Moff 🍷😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Apr-16 08:41 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, yes it does sound like we are having similar weather, one step forward, two steps back it seems. it looks like this will be another week with the best weather being in the middle of the week whilst I am at work and conditions deteriorating for the weekend again 😞.

Cheers Wurzel, I was quite chuffed with that Pine Beauty 😊

### Tuesday 19th April

My first butterfly this year that was not an adult hibernator...A Green-veined White that flew through the garden shortly after getting in from work today.

Neil.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 19-Apr-16 09:58 PM GMT

I'm very envious of your Tortoiseshells, Neil. 😊 They are much commoner up in your neck of the woods than round here.

Dave

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-16 07:46 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, it is great to see the Tortoiseshells continue to do well around here 😊. Lets hope the weather bucks up soon so we can see some more.

### Winter refuses to let go

Since my last post I have seen the grand total of one more butterfly, my second Green-veined White that passed through the garden one afternoon last week, although with the recent cold northerly winds and wintery showers I have not bothered going out anywhere looking.

It has all been reminiscent of the late spring of 2013 which prompted me to look back at my notes and UKB diary entries from that year. What stands out straight away is that in 2013 I did not see an Orange-tip or Speckled Wood until the first week of May, the exact dates being 4th and 7th respectively. This year looks like being very similar.

### Saturday 23rd April

The cold conditions are also affecting moths with low numbers being reported from many areas. This was very much a topic of conversation on Saturday night when my son Chris and myself joined some members of the Warwickshire Moth Group for a Moth Night at Ryton Pools Country Park near Coventry. There were a number of traps set up around the park and between a couple of breaks for hot drinks and cakes we toured around them to see what they had attracted.



*How to spend a cold Saturday night...*

The conditions were not really that good with a cold breeze but the clouds built up a bit later on to keep the temperature from dropping too much. Before we all departed just after 01.00 we had seen some good moths including half a dozen Frosted Greens, a species that had only been recorded in the country park once before.

One of the CP rangers who was with us returned later on Sunday morning to count up the moths which produced a final count of 88 moths as follows;

Common Quaker 14  
Small Quaker 2  
Powdered Quaker 7  
Hebrew Character 29  
Clouded Drab 10  
Lead-coloured Drab 1  
Early Grey 1  
Brindled Pug 11  
Shoulder Stripe 2  
Streamer 3  
Frosted Green 6  
Water Carpet 1  
Brindled Beauty 1

### Garden Moths

Despite the cold conditions I have continued to run my moth trap occasionally in the garden without attracting anything of note, usually a few Hebrew Characters and Common Quakers with the odd Clouded Drab and Early Grey.



*A couple of Hebrew Characters - 22.04.2016*



*Clouded Drab - Coverdale 25.04.2016*

The best catches were around 10 days ago when I had the Pine Beauty and a Brindled Beauty among the other usual suspects so here are a couple of shots that I forgot to post back then.



*Another shot of the Pine Beauty posted previously*



*Slight worn Brindled Beauty – Coverdale 16.04.2016*

With the cold northerly winds set to last for the rest of the week at least it looks as if I won't be seeing much else for a while yet.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 25-Apr-16 10:15 PM GMT

Hi Neil, I think we are all feeling the effects of the cold, cloudy weather this year. Round here, I have noticed much of the vegetation is about normal, with the bluebells out and the first hawthorn blossom starting to show as we enter May, yet the butterflies are what you would expect in March, only the hibernators out really.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-16 10:48 PM GMT

You really have turned to the dark side Neil 😬😬 Some great looking Moffs there 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 26-Apr-16 06:18 AM GMT

You're just showing off now Neil 😊😬 Seriously, that Pine Beauty is gorgeous and that is a great shot of it. Can't tell you how envious I am 🍷🍷

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 28-Apr-16 09:07 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Things are certainly very slow for me this year...I am still on just 5 species of butterfly. The vegetation around here seems to be all over the place with some seeming to be about normal and other stuff being behind. I guess that increased daylight length acts as a growth trigger for some whereas colder temperatures also slows down the growth on others.

Don't worry Wurzel, I shall be embracing the light again...when the weather eventually gets its act together and I get a chance that is

Thanks Pauline, I was a bit lucky with that particular shot of the Pine Beauty. They don't usually rest with their wings like that, the usual resting position is with wings folded above them like a tent as in my previous photo. I had just put it onto the old fence post for a final couple of shots prior to release when it started vibrating its wings as they do to warm up the wing muscles ready to take off. I just had time for a couple of shots before it was away and luckily that one froze the vibration blur of the wings.

With the recent mixture of rain, sleet, hail and snow plus overnight temperatures dropping to 1 or 2 degrees, I haven't bothered running the trap at all this week.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-16 10:32 PM GMT

It was -2C here this morning. So no, probably not worth putting out that moth trap! Bit less cold by the weekend, so maybe then. Great pictures btw.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-16 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks Mark, yes fingers crossed that things start to improve soon. At least losing that that cold northerly wind would be a start.

### Friday 29th April

I finished work today at lunchtime like I usually do on a Friday and after stopping off to get a bit of shopping I arrived home and decided to do a bit in the garden. The weather was the same as it has been for the past couple of days, that is cold with a biting north wind and some brief showers. When the sun did come out occasionally it had a bit of warmth to it which brought the temperature struggling up to 10 or 11 degrees at most.

I really did not expect to see any butterflies today and was therefore pleased to see a Green-veined White feebly fluttering into the garden and settle a couple of times before taking off again and getting whisked away in the blustery wind.



*Green-veined White - Coverdale 29.04.2016*



*Green-veined White - Coverdale 29.04.2016*

This was followed a short time later by a male Large White that brought my tally so far this season up to a mighty six species. As with the GVW he was 'assisted' on his way by the wind as soon as he took off from his perch.



*Large White - Coverdale 29.04.2016*

After the past weeks weather, these two brief sightings lifted my spirits a great deal and have reminded me how tough our butterflies can be and how they will take advantage of every brief window of opportunity in the weather to go about their business.

Still no sign of any Specklies in the garden yet...mind you as I posted a few days ago, back in 2013 which was the last late spring we had, it was May 7th before they finally showed up so maybe next week.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-16 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely GVW Neil 😊 It has been a trying start to the season so a tally of 6 is pretty good, I'm only on seven with hours of traipsing to no avail 😞 still gotta keep on putting the graft in!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 30-Apr-16 10:25 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, glad your seeing a few more Butterflies, love the GVW photos, no Species here yet,if it brightens up this afternoon i'll go to HLB again. 😊 Persistence pays off some times.Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-16 08:53 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel...yep it has been a slow start this year but rather than putting my time and energy into looking for the few butterflies that have been around, I have been trying to keep on top of things at home a bit and hold onto the brownie points for later.

Thanks Goldie, still no more butterflies this weekend, although it has got a touch warmer here it has still been grey and cloudy with some blustery wind and heavy showers over the bank holiday. It did brighten up today (Monday) about 4.30pm...too late for me to go out anywhere. The weather looks to be improving during week so my money is on finally seeing my first Specklies and Orange-tips soon.

#### Monday 2nd May

With the cold northerly wind and frost last week I didn't bother running the moth trap until last night when I had another two more species new to me, a couple of Double -striped Pugs and a Shuttle-shaped Dart. The little Pugs are lively things and difficult to get a photo of but for me it is necessary in order to try and ID them. My thanks go to members of the Warwickshire Moth Group who have helped me with IDs on their facebook page. This brings me up to 17 species in my garden since I started using the trap in late March.



Double-striped Pug - Covedale 02.05.2016



*Shuttle-shaped Dart - Coverdale 02.05.2016*

Cheers,

Neil

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-16 08:28 PM GMT

### May 4th - Spring is sprung at last

Today it finally felt like spring was here...or at least it looked like it was from what I could see out of the window at work. Driving home at 4.00pm there was not a cloud in the sky and the temperature on the car display was reading 18 degrees and so on arriving home I dived straight out into the garden with a mug of coffee and my camera to hand, just in case.

I didn't have to wait long for a Green-veined White to show up...



*Green-veined White - Coverdale 04.05.2016*

Closely followed by not just one but two male Speckled Woods that were squabbling and spiraling around one of the usual corners. I could have laid money on that being the corner that I would eventually see my first Speckle in the garden this year and sure enough it was, 26 days later than last year, 23 days later than 2014, but actually 3 days earlier than 2013, all seen in the same corner.



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 04.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 04.05.2016*

During the next hour or so I also had my first Holly Blue that passed through without stopping, as did a Comma, plus a Peacock that settled for a while to soak up the sun before continuing on its way.



*Peacock – Coverdale 04.05.2016*

That brings my tally so far this year up to 8 species, all of which I have seen examples of in the garden. Still no Orange-tip but with the weather over the next few days it won't be long now and as far as I am concerned, with the Specklies back in the garden, all is now right with the world 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 04-May-16 08:49 PM GMT

At last, I've been wondering where your Specklies are. I think I've only just got into double figures on all my travels, a very poor start to the year for them. Hoping things pick up now the weathers nice 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 04-May-16 10:23 PM GMT

Good to see your Specklies are back, Neil. I was getting a bit worried. 😊

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 04-May-16 10:34 PM GMT

Thank God for that, Neil.

Specklies in your garden are the very definition of spring!

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 06-May-16 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments guys 😊 I wasn't worried yet about the Specklies but if they had not turned up by this weekend then I would have been.

Friday 6th May – That's more like it!

My Orange-tip drought ended yesterday with a couple of males in the garden when I got in from work 😊, at least 2 in view at the same time although they were actively patrolling and didn't stick around.

Leaving work today at lunchtime I saw another male OT as I was driving home.

After picking up Jane from home we went round to see my mom and as I often do I went for a quick look around the park by her house as they sat chatting. During a quick half hour here I saw a couple of unidentified whites flying past and at least two Speckled Woods. There was also a nice display of Bluebells along a short path through a small wooded part.



*Bluebells – Langley Hall Park 06.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Langley Hall Park 06.05.2016*

Back home later in the afternoon there was some high level thin cloud which made it feel very warm as I potted about in the garden. In truth this pottering about also consisted of long periods of just sitting there listening to the birds sing and watching whatever came along. Among these 'whatevers' was a female Brimstone that fluttered about around my alder buckthorns and stopping occasionally to lay eggs



*Female Brimstone – Coverdale 06.05.2016*

A couple of Green-veined whites passed through along with a Large White that paused briefly on my Lilac which is just coming into flower,



*Large White - Coverdale 06.05.2016*

A couple of male Speckled Woods were attempting to chase off anything which came close to their patches, One of which was already looking like he had lost a couple of scraps,



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 06.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 06.05.2016*

Having tried unsuccessfully due to our heavy clay soil to grow *Erysimum* 'Bowles Mauve' in my garden a couple of years ago, I thought that I would give it a go in a container this year. This currently small plant proved its worth today by tempting both a male and a female Orange-tip to pause in their travels, albeit briefly.



*Orange-tip - Coverdale 06.05.2016*



*Orange-tip female- Coverdale 06.05.2016*

Later in the afternoon I was watching a male Orange-tip chase a female up the garden when they both sort of crash landed on a shrub in the side border. At first I was expecting to see the typical rejection pose from the female but it soon became apparent that she was more receptive and after a bit of 'jostling' from the male they mated.



*Orange-tip pair - Coverdale 06.05.2016*



Orange-tip pair - Coverdale 06.05.2016



Orange-tip pair - Coverdale 06.05.2016

I kept my eye on them for a while hoping to see where they went when they separated but sods law being what it is, I nipped in for a moment and when I came back out they had gone.

That brings me up to 10 species, all of which I have seen examples of in my garden and in fact that is what I would normally expect to see around my immediate patch at this time of year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 06-May-16 08:48 PM GMT

I've never seen a mating pair of OT, quite near the top of my wishlist so for you to be getting them in your garden....well 🍀🍀🍀

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 06-May-16 10:35 PM GMT

Great images of the mating Orange Tips, Neil. I spent time tracking a female earlier this week but she rebuffed all approaches by males so clearly she had already coupled.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 07-May-16 11:38 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Neil, you must have a fantastic garden to attract all those lovely Butterflies without the Bowles Mauve 😊 good luck with it Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-May-16 06:53 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy...better not tell you that I photographed a mating pair of Orange-tips in my garden a couple of years ago as well then 😊😘

Hi David, I have seen a few male OTs trying it on with females over the past couple of days and, like yours, most have resulted in the rejection pose.

Thanks Goldie, My garden was described a couple years ago as creatively untidy which I think is a fair description 😊

Saturday 7th May

With my daughter expecting our second grandchild any day now, in fact she is now a couple of days overdue, I am under strict instructions from my wife not to venture too far from home in case I am needed for taxi duties. Nevertheless, with no sign of any impending birth today I nipped out this afternoon for an hour or so at my local spot at Bickenhill. By the time I arrived the nice sunny first half of the day had given over to a heavy overcast but it was still warm and felt quite muggy and I soon saw a number of Orange-tips patrolling the hedgerows. In fact these continued to be active in the cloudy conditions, no doubt due to the warm air temperature, which meant I only managed a few record type shots. I reckon I saw about half a dozen or so, possibly 3 or 4 each of males and females but cannot be certain due to the way they were constantly flying all around the site.



*Orange-tip - Bickenhill 07.05.2016*

There were also a few Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells around, mostly looking a bit tired and worn now, and at least one Green-veined White although I am fairly certain that the other 'whites' seen were female OTs



*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 07.05.2016*



*Peacock - Bickenhill 07.05.2016*

I also spotted a Ruby Tiger Moth in a spiders web and gently touched it with a grass stem upon which it wriggled a bit and then took off, seemingly no worse for its experience. Hopefully it had not yet been bitten.



*Ruby Tiger Moth in spiders web.*

By about 15.30 the clouds were getting darker and with a few spots of rain in the air I started back towards the car, making it just in time before it started thundering and raining properly.

Bye for now,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 07-May-16 07:14 PM GMT

It was the same over here today Neil, the warmth made it very difficult to get close enough to anything for a photo. What could be better though, warm weather, some butterflies and best of all you'll soon be holding your new grandchild. 😊

All The best

James

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Maximus, 07-May-16 07:46 PM GMT

Nice photos of the mating Orange-tips, Neil, and it's always nice to get the pre-mating shots too.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 07-May-16 09:59 PM GMT

Lovely shot of the OT Neil 😊 I hope everything goes well for your daughter 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-16 07:05 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments guys 😊

**Sunday 8th May,**

Another day spent lurking around the house just in case we got a call from our daughter and with the glorious sun most of it was spent out in the garden. The Specklies were the first butterflies up and about with a couple of males soon occupying their sunny spots.



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 08.05.2016*

These were soon joined by a succession of Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Orange-tips and Holly Blues that kept passing through, all of which were very active in the rapidly warming conditions and were not settling.

At one point in the early afternoon I spotted a raggedy looking female Brimstone fluttering around my alder buckthorn and she soon attracted the attentions of a passing male who proceeded to try it on for a few minutes,



*Brimstones – Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Brimstones – Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Brimstones – Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Brimstones – Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Brimstones – Coverdale 08.05.2016*

Eventually he took the hint and carried on with his wanderings leaving the female to carry on investigating the buckthorn and stopping occasionally to deposit an egg.



*Female Brimstone – Coverdale 08.05.2016*

That is the third Brimstone I have seen laying on the buckthorn this year but most of the eggs have been laid in positions that are hard to get to so keeping an eye on them will be difficult.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by kevlng, 09-May-16 07:37 PM GMT

Neil, I enjoyed the sequence of Brimstone photos. Your fast shutter speed done you proud on the first one especially. I wish Brimstones rested with their wings open like that!

Regards Kev

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 09-May-16 08:17 PM GMT

Nice motion images, Neil, but what was he doing trying to court a female in THAT condition (possibly the most ragged I've ever seen of this species)? The chances of her being a virgin were lower than minuscule! 😊

I always feel a bit sorry for male Brimstones at this time of year. They keep patrolling away with no reward at all likely. The other adult over-winterers seem to perish around this time but our lemon-coloured friends somehow eke out another few weeks of life with their only apparent purpose being to brighten our lives.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 10-May-16 10:08 AM GMT

Great action photo's Neil, it's great watching the Brimstones in flight. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 10-May-16 08:44 PM GMT

Thanks Kev, I couldn't tell you what the shutter speed was, not really being a photographer as such the only setting I fiddle with is exposure compensation and let the camera (Panasonic FZ200) do the rest 😊.

Hi David, I suppose the fact that she was female was enough, I have known some blokes like that...better not go into any more, could get into trouble 😊😊

Cheers Goldie, I love watching them dancing around each other like that 😊

{b}Monday 9th May{/b}

Well, after a weekend of lurking around in case of a phone call from my daughter it was back to work on Monday and wouldn't you know it, she goes into labour and later that afternoon produced a bonny little girl 😊 The strange thing is that she was just over a week late and my Dad passed away exactly three years ago and May 9th would have been his 80th birthday. It was almost as if she was hanging on especially to be born on that date...spooky 😊

With the weather at the weekend bringing the butterflies out in the garden and the nights staying relatively warm I decided to make the most of it before the weather turns again and run the moth trap each night. This produced some more new species for the garden including Angle Shades, Chocolate-tip, Waved Umber, Knot Grass, Red-green Carpet, Flame Carpet. Least Black Arches and Brimstone Moth.

I released the catch the following dusk in the front garden and it appears that I did not catch any of the previous nights moths again.



*Angle Shades - Coverdale 07.05.2016*



*Chocolate-tip - Coverdale 08.05.2016*



*Waved Umber - Coverdale 09.05.2016*



*Least Black Arches – Coverdale 09.05.2016*



*Red-green Carpet – Coverdale 09.05.2016*



*Flame Carpet – Coverdale 09.05.2016*



*Knot Grass – Coverdale 09.05.2015*

After the glorious sun at the weekend it has returned to typical British weather today (Tuesday), in other words it has been raining all day and is still lashing down as I write this.

Bye for now,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 10-May-16 09:28 PM GMT

Congratulations on the arrival of your granddaughter, Neil! 😊 May's a good month – all my three boys were born in May.

Dave

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 10-May-16 10:16 PM GMT

Great Moffs, great OTs and congratulations on the birth of your granddaughter 😊 – any names yet? Possibly Vanessa, Camilla or Rubi 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 11-May-16 04:23 PM GMT

Congratulations Neil, isn't it just great being Grand Parents when you can hand them back at the end of the day and spoil them rotten in-between 😊 When my Grand Daughter was born I received the phone call at 9am to say my daughter was on her way to Hospital and could we go and look after my two Grand Sons, problem was I'd been at the Home where my Mother had died at 4am that morning, Boy ! we were all spooked out! That's one Birthday I won't for get in a hurry 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 11-May-16 05:45 PM GMT

May I add my best wishes too, Neil. Splendid news.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 12-May-16 08:00 PM GMT

Many thanks all for the comments and the best wishes on the birth of my Granddaughter 😊 No butterfly inspired names unfortunately, they had already decided that a girl would be named Chloe which just happens to be a name that I really like...not that it would have made any difference if I didn't 😊

**Thursday 12th May**

The weather on Tuesday was really dismal here with rain practically all day and yesterday was not much better. In complete contrast today was a beautiful day with clear blue skies all day and the temperature on my car display reading 23 degrees on my way home from work this afternoon at 4.00pm.

Back home in the garden the usual butterflies were all about with a couple of male Specklies in their respective spots and Orange-tips, Holly Blues, and Large, Small & GV Whites passing through.



*Orange-tip – Coverdale 12.05.2016*



*Holly Blue - Coverdale 12.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 12.05.2016*

Looks like some cooler conditions ahead for a few days, lets hope that doesn't last too long.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-May-16 08:49 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, One Butterfly I've not seen yet is the Holly Blue, Well! lets say I've seen it flying past me 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-May-16 10:23 PM GMT

Once again Neil...Oh for your garden 🍷🍷 That is a lush OT and Holly Blue!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-16 09:34 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie, Oh yes!...plenty of Holly Blues on the move but that was the first one that I have seen stop still this year.

Cheers Wurzel, at this time of year with all the action kicking off down south I need my garden to keep me sane before things get going up here.

### Friday 13th Mayy

After the glorious day that was Thursday, most of which I missed at work, Friday was a bit cooler and cloudier but still quite pleasant. After my usual half day at work I finished at lunchtime and the plan for the afternoon was to head home to collect Jane and then go round to pick up my mom and take her over to see her new little great-granddaughter. Having a quick cuppa at home before going out I was watching the resident Specklies through the kitchen window and couldn't resist the temptation to nip into the garden and grab a couple of shot. Think that cost me a brownie point as Jane was ready to make a move and told me to get a move on 😊



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 13.05.2016*

**Saturday 14th May - Morning**

After a cold night, Saturday morning started off with a chill in the air with a cool breeze blowing from the north. We had just got in from doing some early morning shopping when I spotted a fox nosing around the garden and took a couple of quick shots through the kitchen window.



Despite the cool breeze there was some good warmth in the sun as it rose higher in the sky and by 10.00am the Specklies were flying in the garden, at least two males and a female, and these were soon joined by a couple of Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites.



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 14.05.2015*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 14.05.2015*



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 14.05.2015*



*Orange-tip – Coverdale 14.05.2016*



Orange-tip – Coverdale 14.05.2016



Green-veined White – Coverdale 14.05.2016

Then it was back to the Saturday morning household chores. The forecast was for more cloud to build up through the afternoon but I figured that I might nip out for a couple of hours to a local spot if I got the chance...

afternoon report to follow,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 15-May-16 12:18 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, I hope you don't keep chicken's 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-16 06:21 PM GMT

Don't worry Goldie, no chickens around here 😊

#### Saturday 14th May –Afternoon

Saturday afternoon turned into a reasonable spring day in the end, practically normal for the time of year compared with the past two weekends when we woke up to snow on the Saturday morning two weeks ago followed by the summer temperatures last weekend.

Anyway, with a couple of hours spare I scuttled round to my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull to see what was about. Starting off along one of the usual footpaths I soon started to see Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites. Although it was reasonably warm there was a cool breeze blowing which made itself felt when a cloud covered the sun and this meant the OTs in particular were settling quite regularly, often on the many clumps of Herb Robert along the edge of the path. As Trevor recently observed in his diary this is a favourite of OTs and a plant that I leave to self seed in my garden for this very reason.



Orange-tip – Castle Hills 14.05.2016



*Orange-tip - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*



*Orange-tip - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*

I also saw a few females that would get chased by males and watched a couple of times as they settled and adopted the rejection pose, usually not in a suitable position to get a photo although I did just about manage to get one shot with two males and a female in frame,



*Orange-tips - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*

The males soon got the message and the female promptly flew off a couple of yards and settled down near the ground to compose herself before carrying on her way,



*Orange-tip female- Castle Hills 14.05.2016*

At one point the path goes alongside an area of wasteground, this being the place where last year there was plenty of knapweed which attracted a number of Painted Ladies. This time there was clumps of Forget-me-not all over the place and in a couple of small sheltered areas between banks of earth I found a number of Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. The Tortoiseshells in particular had mostly seen better days but all of them were flitting about actively between bouts of basking.



*Forget-me-nots*



*Three Small Tortoiseshells and Two Peacocks in this sheltered spot.*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 14.05.2016*



Peacock – Castle Hills 14.05.2016



Peacock – Castle Hills 14.05.2016

I was half hoping to find a Small Copper here but that was wishful thinking perhaps given the spring we have had. They don't usually appear around here until mid may in a good year and so far this has been a late one here. Maybe in a week or two by which time I also hope to have caught up with Grizzled and Dingy Skippers and Green Hairstreaks, all of which are now on the wing in Warwickshire.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 15-May-16 06:36 PM GMT

Belated congratulations on the arrival of Chloe, Neil. I am struggling to keep up with the diaries with the frequent postings 😊. Naturally I love the fox shot – she is in great condition. I have many wild foxes visit but despite years of feeding they only come after dark and a movement from inside sends them fleeing. I would have thought the presence of the residents would have reassured them but no! Oh, and some smashing moths in your last posting 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 15-May-16 10:07 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the manage Neil 😊😊 and the final Peacock shot is a beaut, I wonder at it's thought processes as it seems to contemplate it's own shadow 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 16-May-16 04:53 PM GMT

Lovely OT's Neil, and the scene shots are lovely, that's what we're short of around here Flowers to entice the Butterflies. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by kevlng, 16-May-16 05:54 PM GMT

Neil,

Lovely selection of the Castle Hills Orange Tips. I never tire of those aerial shots especially.

Regards Kev

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 16-May-16 10:03 PM GMT

You're doing really well, Neil, with a mix of vanessids and Pierids. My 'patch' seems to lose the former more rapidly than elsewhere, and to make matters worse we don't get the earlier emergences in May either! Nice to see such a return elsewhere.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 17-May-16 09:01 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, I don't feed the foxes at all, they just turn up every now and then. They will come right up to the house if it is quiet but if they see any

movement they will be off in a flash.

Cheers Wurzel, I rather liked the way that Peacock seemed to be studying its own shadow myself.

Thanks Goldie, I hope you find some flowers and butterflies to go with them before long.

Thanks Kev, I saw more action than I managed to capture. Sometimes the pleasure lies in simply watching.

Cheers David, I often see ex hibernators up until the end of May, sometimes into June and this season is running at least three weeks late around here.

#### **Tuesday 17th May**

Not much to report since last Saturday with family stuff on Sunday and work this week. At one point late yesterday afternoon I had three Holly Blues chasing each other around the garden but as usual none of them settled at all.

I have run the moth trap in the garden a few times recently and had a few more species new to me but with a run of cold nights with clear skies the numbers have been low. Apparently there is a 'May lull' in mothing, similar I suppose to the June Gap for butterflies when there is a transition from spring to summer species.

Anyway, a few photos of recent moths from the garden.



*Lime-speck Pug – the first Pug I have been able to easily identify.*



*Yellow-barred Brindle – These are greenish in colour when fresh and fade to yellowish.*



*Brimstone Moth – Smaller than the butterfly but even brighter yellow.*



*Angle Shades – from a different angle.*



*Muslin Moth – cute little fella.*

The thing I am finding amazing is that despite living in this house for more than twenty years, with a few exceptions, I have never seen most of the species of moths that I am catching here before. Just goes to show what we miss during the hours of darkness.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 17-May-16 10:05 PM GMT

#### **Neil Freeman wrote:**

The thing I am finding amazing is that despite living in this house for more than twenty years, with a few exceptions, I have never seen most of the species of moths that I am catching here before. Just goes to show what we miss during the hours of darkness.

Indeed it does, Neil. Many of these moths you're posting images of are species I've never seen. Just goes to show what we miss during night-time.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 17-May-16 10:15 PM GMT

Just catching up on things here Neil. That trio of Orange-tips earlier is a superb capture, the slight blurring from movement I think helps add to the frenetic nature that we all know was happening in real life 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 17-May-16 11:09 PM GMT

Loving the Moffs Neil, especially the Lime-Speck Pug – it reminds me of the underwing markings of a Buzzard. 😊

Have a goodun

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 23-May-16 09:13 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Bugboy and Wurzel 😊

### Sunday 22nd May

After a wet and miserable Saturday, Sunday started of a bit better with some decent sunny spells albeit with plenty of cloud about still. So far this year, for various reasons, I had not been further afield than my local patch and with a cloudy but warmish afternoon forecast I decided to drive the forty odd minutes down the M40 to Bishops Hill.

My target there was Small Blue which have been doing well there over the past few years and sure enough, within feet of entering the site I saw half a dozen or so fluttering about. The conditions were cloudy with a temperatures around 18 or 19 degrees which was warm enough for the Small Blues to be active, but not too active. During the couple of hours that I spent here a couple of big black clouds came over and heralded a couple of short sharp showers which knocked the temperature down a few degrees and during which I sheltered under some trees but the Small Blues were soon active again when they passed and the clouds became lighter. All in all there must have been more than thirty of these delightful little butterflies flying, although as usual there seemed more but I was undoubtedly seeing some of them more than once.



*Small Blue - Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Small Blue - Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Small Blue - Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Small Blue - Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*

One male looked to have a lot more blue scales on his wings than the rest and really stood out when flying amongst the others,



*Small Blue - Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*

As well as the Small Blues there were also some Common Blues, all males from what I could see which indicated they have not been out long here.



*Common Blue – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Common Blue – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Common Blues – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Common Blues – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*

This is usually a good site for Dingy Skippers and I did see a few but not as many as would be expected on a good sunny day here.



*Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*

In previous years I have also seen Grizzled Skippers and Green Hairstreaks here but both of them only in small numbers and neither species put in an appearance this time.

Bye for now,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 23-May-16 10:24 PM GMT

Lovely Small Blues, Neil. That one you picked out is exceptionally blue. 😊

Dave

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by trevor, 24-May-16 09:02 AM GMT

Lovely images, especially the Small Blues.  
I saw plenty yesterday, but photographed none, they were supercharged !.  
They must be the easiest Butterfly to lose sight of when on the wing.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 25-May-16 09:52 PM GMT

Beautiful Blues Neil 😊 I've still to capture my first Common Blue on 'light sensor' (doesn't have quite the same ring does it 😊) 📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 26-May-16 08:38 PM GMT

Great Blues Neil, I must say though your photos of the Dinky make it look great, certainly not Dinky, 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 27-May-16 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, that one is certainly the 'bluest' Small Blue I have seen yet.

Hi Trevor, with the cloud around on the day they were not too active and quite easy keep sight of. I find Grizzled Skippers and especially Silver-spotted Skippers much harder to follow in flight.

Cheers Wurzel, it doesn't quite have same ring does it...or should that be capture on SD card?

Thanks Goldie, the Dinky Skipper is quite an attractive butterfly when fresh although when they are a bit older and more faded you can see where the name comes from.

#### Friday 27th May

Since last weekend it became colder as the week went on with a cold wind blowing from the north and midweek temperatures struggling into the low teens during the day and down into single figures overnight. I have not seen many butterflies, just a few Holly Blues and 'whites' in the garden when I got in from work. The whites appeared to all Large and Small, the Green-veined and Orange-tips both being notable by their absence this week.

At least the cloud meant that the Holly Blues were less active including one female that actually posed for me for a few minutes,



Holly Blue - Coverdale 24.05.2016



*Holly Blue - Coverdale 24.05.2016*

Today (Friday) felt much warmer with some decent sunny spells that pushed the temperature up and brought more butterflies out in the garden this afternoon although they were all still Holly Blues or the two 'cabbage whites'. I even had another female Holly Blue settle briefly.



*Holly Blue - Coverdale 27.05.2016*



*Large White - Coverdale 27.05.2016*



*Small White - Coverdale 27.05.2016*

I have been running the moth trap in the garden most nights as I have been doing a little experiment to see if the same moths return to the trap. The dropping overnight temperatures haven't helped with this as the numbers of moths have dropped through the week but I have had some new species, particularly on last Sunday and Monday nights. I have photographed every moth I have caught, made easier to do by the low numbers, and can say that so far I have never had a moth return to the trap the following night. I have had a couple turn up again a few nights later which I have recognised by comparing photos but at least they were free to go about their normal 'mothy' business in between.

I was pleased to get my first Hawk Moth in the trap, a nice Poplar Hawk,



I had a Puss Moth which was actually sitting on an upturned bucket that I place as a rain shield over my extension lead, a good ten feet away from the trap,



My first Pale Tussock also turned up earlier in the week,



I have been getting a nice selection of Carpet Moths including,  
Garden Carpet...



...and Flame Carpet,



One of the things that is fascinating but at the same time quite confusing is the degree of variation in some moths, a good example being the nice fresh May Highflyer below...



...which had me stumped for a bit compared with others of the same species that I have been seeing which look more like this,



These could easily be taken to be two separate species but is apparently well within normal variation and this is by no means unusual in the moth world. It seems I have entered a whole new world with so much new stuff to learn.

Anyway, the weather looks to be picking up a bit for the bank holiday weekend although I am not sure if I will be getting out much as I have some family stuff on and things to do before a trip up north at the end of next week.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 27-May-16 10:38 PM GMT

That first Holly Blue Neil is a stunner, perfect 🤩🤩🤩 Plus you've got shots of a Poplar Hawk Moth 🤩 Good luck getting the family stuff done so you can get out...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-May-16 09:59 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I managed to get out for a bit this afternoon (Sunday) 😊

#### Sunday 29th May

Yesterday (Saturday) I went up to Nottingham to fetch my youngest son's stuff back from the house he has lived in up there for the past few years whilst he was at Uni. He has now finished at Uni and is starting a job in Bristol in a few weeks and has a place sorted out to move into down there but will be back with us for a week or two in the meantime. His new job is with a technology company that does work for the European Space Program, so next the next time someone says to him 'it's not exactly rocket science' he will be able to say 'well, actually...' 😊  
Anyway, by the time we got back that was the day done but I did see a couple of Green-veined Whites whilst loading the car up in Nottingham.

This morning was taken up by more family stuff but I managed to wangle a couple of hours free this afternoon, just enough time for a walk around the footpaths at my local site at Castle Hills. I wanted to see if Common Blues, Small Heaths and Small Coppers were out yet here and was pleased to find half a dozen or so of the former two species, particularly the Small Heaths as these have been doing poorly in Warwickshire in recent years. Apparently recent analysis indicates that this species has declined by 52% in distribution since 1999.



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Small Heath - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Small Heath - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Small Heath - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*

I did not manage to find any Small Coppers today, this being another species that had a poor year last year around here. I did however see a couple of hibernators still hanging in there, a Peacock and a raggedy Small Tortoiseshell.



*Peacock - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*

I was also pleased to get a reasonable photo of a Latticed Heath, this day flying moth can be a tricky subject with its usual habit of settling low down in the grass.



*Latticed Heath - Castle Hills 29.05.2016*

Despite a forecast for clear sunny conditions this afternoon it was actually mostly cloudy with just the occasional few minutes of sun. There was also a cool northerly breeze that made itself felt on the more open parts of this site which is quite close to Birmingham Airport. In fact at one point whilst walking along one of the paths I could see an Airbus A380 taking up position for its take off run, this large double decked aircraft having recently started scheduled flights to Dubai from Birmingham.



*Looking across the A45 to the Airbus at the end of the runway.*



*Airbus A380 climbing into the distance over Birmingham.*

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 29-May-16 10:07 PM GMT

Glad to see that you managed to 'escape' for a bit this afternoon Neil – lovely sequence of Small Heaths 😊 – they can be right pains, for me they always seem to sit at a very slight angle, that's when they sit still for more than two seconds 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 31-May-16 08:14 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I managed to get out again for a bit yesterday 😊

#### **Monday 30th May**

Bank Holiday Monday and a change of plans at home meant that I had the afternoon free and was not on the clock as to what time I had to return which meant that I had the time to get over to Ryton Wood and Meadows for a look around. The Warwickshire BC open day had taken place there the previous day (Sunday) but my limited time had meant that I wasn't able to attend. The weather for today was not looking too promising with a grey overcast and a chilly breeze but I figured that within the shelter of the wood itself I may find something.

My particular target for the afternoon was Wood White which has been hanging on at Ryton in small numbers for a few years now and I had seen on twitter that some had been seen during the open day. There had also been a few Pearl-bordered Fritillaries seen as well, these being a more recent (re)introduction to the wood.

I arrived at the wood and ambled along some of the paths, seeing a few Green-veined Whites and Speckled Woods and at one point disturbing my first Red Admiral of the year which disappeared high into the trees.

The weather forecast has said that it should brighten up a bit during the afternoon and whilst waiting for this to happen I wandered through to the meadows to check out one of the usual Green Hairstreak spots. Sure enough, despite the still grey overcast there were half a dozen or so flitting between a small oak and patch of brambles. Although settling regularly at low level they were constantly shuffling about as they do to angle themselves to catch the sun, or in this case the bit of sky where the sun should be.



*Green Hairstreak – Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Green Hairstreak – Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Green Hairstreak – Ryton 30.05.2016*

After a while, with the clouds breaking up a bit and a few bits of blue sky appearing, I headed back into the wood. Walking down the main ride, I soon saw the distinctive lazy flight of a Wood White heading towards me. This first one was soon joined by a second and during the next hour or so of walking along this ride and some side paths I saw at least 7 and maybe 8 different individuals. These are not high numbers compared with somewhere like Salcey Forest but it was the most I have ever seen at Ryton which has never been a large colony.



*Wood White - Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Wood White - Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Wood White - Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Wood White – Ryton 30.05.2016*



*Wood White – Ryton 30.05.2016*

I also saw a single Pearl-bordered Fritillary before the clouds built up again and it started to feel cooler.



*Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Ryton 30.05.2016*

Also seen but not photographed were a few Dingy Skippers in the meadows but that was it on what was a mostly cool and cloudy afternoon with few butterflies seen in total. Even so it was well worth getting out and seeing the Green Hairsstreaks and PBF and especially the Wood Whites which is a species I have missed out on for the past couple of years.

Bye for now,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 31-May-16 08:36 PM GMT

Lovely Wood Whites Neil, I've always thought they look so ethereal in pictures 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 01-Jun-16 09:51 AM GMT

Lovely Wood Whites Neil, 🍷 I've yet to see them 😞 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-16 10:37 PM GMT

Cracking Wood Whites Neil 😊 You have a great species list up our way 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jun-16 09:20 PM GMT

Thanks Bugboy, I think ethereal is the perfect word to sum up Wood whites, even more so when you watch their delicate flight.

Hi Goldie, it is a strange thing that there is a good colony of Wood Whites at Salcey Forest, just over an hours drive from me, and yet I have missed out on seeing them for a couple of years.

Cheers Wurzel, Ryton is the only site in Warwickshire where Wood Whites and PBFs can be seen and they are just about holding on there currently. There are good sites for both species a bit further afield around the midlands though.

**Thursday 2nd June.**

A cloudy week for the most part with a cold blustery wind blowing from the north has meant that I have not seen a single butterfly since Monday. The cold breezy nights have also meant that moth numbers have been low in the garden, although there has been a trickle of new species for me on the nights when I have run the trap.



*Common White Wave.*



*Common Marbled Carpet.*



*May Highflyer...yet another colour variation*



*Seraphim...a nice boldly marked individual.*



*Common Swift*



Flame Shoulder.



Miller.

I am lending the trap to my son Chris for the next week so he can give it a go in his garden as I am heading up North in the morning. Jane and myself are off on our first trip of the year for a couple of nights in the Arnside/Silverdale area before carrying on to Scotland for a few days stopping at Fort William. The weather is looking promising for the next few days as well so fingers crossed...

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 02-Jun-16 10:41 PM GMT

Very interesting to see all those species from Ryton, Neil (great photos too!). I may get a chance to visit on Saturday, so a trek in the wood would have been on the menu. I had no idea the PBFs had been brought back, and I've yet to see a Wood White here either.

Dave

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jun-16 08:47 PM GMT

Hi Dave, thanks for the comments and apologies for the delayed reply. I am currently in Scotland with intermittent Wi-Fi so am only logging on occasionally.

Lots of catching up to do when I get back...both with this diary and seeing what every one else has been up to.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-16 11:31 PM GMT

Looking forward to those Scottish reports Neil – is a Chequered Skipper on the cards?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jun-16 10:43 PM GMT

😄 Yes Indeed Wurzel, Chequered Skippers to come 😄

#### June 3rd –10th A trip up North part 1.

We have just returned from a fabulous week during which we stayed at Silverdale in the Arnside & Silverdale AONB for a couple of nights before carrying on to Scotland for four nights at Fort William. We then returned to Silverdale for another couple of nights before heading home this morning (Saturday 11th).

The weather during the whole trip was absolutely fabulous with temperatures on most days, including those spent in Scotland, reaching the mid-twenties. The only rain we saw was last Tuesday night in Fort William, when we had a few hours of proper heavy straight down stuff, and yesterday morning in Silverdale when it drizzled a bit until late morning and then brightened up again. It was also drizzly this morning when we left for home but in a way that was probably for the best as otherwise I would have been tempted to hang around the area for a bit and I had already given the brownie points a major hit over the previous week.

No doubt as a result of the good weather that the North-West seems to have had recently the season around Silverdale/Arnside seemed a little early. So

much so that I was surprised to find Northern Brown Argus (*salmacis*) already out when we stopped off at Warton Crag on the Friday afternoon (June 3rd). I had hoped to find early NBA on our way back the following weekend but did not expect to see them on the way up.

The season was even further ahead in the area around Fort William but more of that to come when I have had time to sort my notes and photos out into some sort of order.

My main target for the trip was Chequered Skipper which would be a first for me and would be the last species I needed to see for the UK mainland list, with just Cryptic Wood White in Ireland now remaining for completeness. I ended up seeing 20 species, including plenty of CSK, which far outweighed my expectations for the trip and included some pleasant surprises 😊

In no particular order;

Northern Brown Argus (*salmacis*) – seen at Warton Crag, Arnside Knott, Gait Barrows, Latterbarrow.  
Speckled Wood – Warton Crag, Arnside Knott, Gait Barrows, Meathop Moss  
Common Blue – Warton Crag, Arnside Knott, Glen Loy.  
Small Copper – One worn individual seen at Glasdrum Wood.  
Green Hairstreak – Warton Crag, Glen Loy.  
Dingy Skipper – Warton Crag, Arnside Knott.  
Large Skipper – one at Warton Crag (June 3rd), one at Latterbarrow June 10th).  
Chequered Skipper – Glasdrum Wood, Glen Loy, Alt Mhuic.  
Orange-tip – Warton Crag, Arnside Knott, Glen Nevis, Loch Arkaig.  
Green-veined White – Warton Crag, Glasdrum Wood, Glen Nevis.  
Brimstone – one at Arnside Knott.  
Peacock – one at Gait Barrows (June 4th) and one very worn individual at Meathop Moss (June 10th).  
Painted Lady – one at Cuil Bay (June 7th), one at Latterbarrow (June 10th).  
Small Tortoiseshell – one very fresh summer brood at Latterbarrow (June 10th).  
Large Heath – *ssp.scotica* at Glen Loy (June 7th & 8th) and *ssp.davus* at Meathop Moss (June 10th)  
Small Heath – appeared almost everywhere.  
Marsh Fritillary – two worn examples at Cuil Bay (June 7th).  
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – all sites in Silverdale/Arnside plus loads at Glasdrum Wood and Glen Loy  
Dark Green Fritillary – two fresh examples at Arnside Knott (June 10th)  
Mountain Ringlet – Irton Fell (June 9th)

As well as the butterflies there were also plenty of moths seen during the day including;

Chimney Sweeper – loads at Warton Crag, also at Glen Loy.  
Clouded Buff – Cuil Bay, Glen Loy, Irton Fell.  
Silver Hook – Glen Loy.  
Northern Eggar – Alt Mhuic, Glen Loy, Loads of males flying about at high speed.  
Argent & Sable – one seen at Glen Loy.  
Small Argent & Sable – A few identified at Glen Loy  
White-spotted Sable – Glasdrum Wood.  
Plus loads of various day flying moths that wouldn't stop still to be identified.

The areas that we went to have some stunning scenery but unfortunately the impact and grand scale of this doesn't really come across in photos but here are a few shots, book-ended with the first and last butterflies that I photographed on the trip.



*The first – Northern Brown Argus(salmacis) at Warton Crag 03.06.2016*



*The view from our first B&B just up the road from RSPB Leighton Moss.*



*A stop off at Glasdrum Wood on the way to Fort William.*



*The view over Loch Linnhe that greeted us each morning from our bedroom in Fort William...and the sky was like that most days.*



*The same view as above but just before 10.00pm at night...it stays light for ages up there.*



*The track into Glen Loy...fabulous country.*



*Clouds building over Ben Nevis. A few patches of snow lingering up there but twenty plus degrees in the glens.*



*Wildflowers at Latterbarrow in South Cumbria.*



*The last butterfly seen late on Friday afternoon, a female Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Arnside Knott.*

The rest of the butterfly photos will follow over the next few days when I get time to sort through them all and put some reports together.

Bye for now,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 12-Jun-16 12:55 AM GMT

Looking forward to this, Neil. Great timing what with the warm spell the north enjoyed during that period. It really is a joyous part of the world when the sun shines and the rain keeps away.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 12-Jun-16 07:23 AM GMT

I trust the SPBF is just a teaser of what's to come.  
Just to think I was able to see them locally, just a few years ago. Now extinct in Sussex.

All the best,  
Trevor.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Jun-16 01:48 PM GMT

Hi David, I had been watching the weather up there for the previous couple of weeks and was concerned that it would break before we got there but in the end it held for us, in fact it was sometimes too warm...didn't expect to be saying that 😊

Cheers Trevor, plenty of SPBFs to come...amongst others. They certainly seem to be doing well in the northern parts of their range 😊

#### June 3rd -10th A trip up North part 2.

A dull and wet Sunday here in the midlands has given me the chance to sort out a few photos and put some words together for a report. As I saw a lot of species on multiple days I have decided to do a series of reports on the more notable species that I saw rather than day by day which would become a bit repetitive.

So, by virtue of being the first species seen, the first report is;

#### Northern Brown Argus.

We left our house in Solihull mid-morning on the Friday (June 3rd) and after suffering the joys of the M6 we pulled into the car park at Warton Crag at about 2.30pm. As this site involves some steep paths, Jane opted to stay in the car and read her kindle whilst I had a look around for an hour. The first part of the path here passes through a wooded stretch and after coming out into the more open area my attention was drawn to a small silvery movement that turned out to be a Northern Brown Argus. The NBAs around this area are of the *salmacis* race which tend not to have the distinctive white forewing spots of their Scottish cousins and in most respects look very similar to 'normal' Brown Argus. During the next hour I found at least half a dozen more NBAs here, mostly fresh looking males which indicated they had not been out long. In fact I had not expected to see this species yet although I was hoping that they would be out by the time we returned this way at the end of the following week. This was the first sign, among many more to come, that the season up here was well ahead of ours back in the midlands.



NBA salmacis - Warton Crag 03.06.2016



*NBA salmacis* - Warton Crag 03.06.2016



*NBA salmacis* - Warton Crag 03.06.2016

We then carried on to our B&B to check in and freshen up to go out for a meal later. We spent two nights at the B&B here before carrying onto Scotland, which gave us all day Saturday (June 4th) in the area during which we visited Arnside Knott and Gait Barrows and found NBAs at both sites.



*NBA salmacis* - Arnside Knott 04.06.2016



*NBA salmacis* – Gait Barrows 04.06.2016

The following Friday (June 10th) during our return from Scotland we visited Latterbarrow nature reserve near Witherslack and found around half a dozen or so NBAs there. Those I saw were again all males but being a week later, they appeared to be a little more worn.



*NBA salmacis* – Latterbarrow 10.06.2016



*NBA salmacis* – Latterbarrow 10.06.2016

Right then, Chequered Skipper will probably be next but I have many more photos of these to sort through of examples in all kinds of condition.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Maximus, 12-Jun-16 08:11 PM GMT

Beautiful NBA's, Neil, they look really fresh and you've caught that lovely sheen on their wings in your shots 😊 This is a species I've yet to see and your report has got me thinking, ouch that hurts 😊 Looking forward to seeing some Chequered Skippers.

Mike

## Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 12-Jun-16 09:01 PM GMT

### Maximus wrote:

Beautiful NBA's, Neil, they look really fresh and you've caught that lovely sheen on their wings in your shots

Indeed, one of your specimens has a sheen more reminiscent of one of the continental Brassy Ringlets. Can't say I've noticed this before (but then I have precious little experience with this species, particularly when fresh).

## Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 12-Jun-16 10:09 PM GMT

Wow, I've never seen such an intense sheen on a butterfly that wasn't iridescent 🤩

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jun-16 09:07 PM GMT

Thank for the comments Mike, David and Bugboy 😊 .

### June 3rd -10th A trip up North part 3.

#### Number 58 - Chequered Skipper.

Over the past five years, since my early interest in butterflies became re-ignited, and with kids now grown up and having more time to do what I want (well, sometimes), I had managed to see 57 species of UK butterflies. The only mainland species that I had yet to see was Chequered Skipper and so it was that this year I had decided to make the effort. As with all our trips, I try and plan to give myself the best chance of seeing other species as well as my main targets but the timing comes down to various factors including booking time off work in advance.

Anyway, plans made and B&Bs booked we headed north as described in the previous reports and after spending a couple of nights in Silverdale we carried on to Scotland on the Sunday (June 5th). We made good time on the drive up which enabled a stop off at Glasdrum Wood, where we duly arrived at about 2.30pm on a sweltering hot afternoon.

Within a few minutes of walking up the path and onto the section beneath the telegraph poles I had seen my first Chequered Skipper quickly followed by my second as they both engaged in a little squabble over territory. In the space of an hour here I saw between 15-20 although the vast majority were worn males looking well past their best. I took a few record shots but in the hot conditions they were mostly settling with wings half shut and the harsh afternoon light didn't help with the photos.

It was obvious that the skippers had been out for some time and I remember reading somewhere that Glasdrum is an early site for Chequered Skippers compared with some of the sites a little further north. It would also become increasingly obvious over the next few days that the season in that part of Scotland was well ahead of the rest of the UK.

Oh well, at least I had already seen my main target and I was hopeful that I would get chance for better photos over the next few days.

My next chance came the next morning (Monday 6th) when we drove up to Glen Loy. After finding another worn male in one spot we drove further along the track and checked a couple more spots without any luck. I had just decided to return to the first spot when we came across a car parked up and a couple of figures looking along the verge. I stopped to chat and they turned out to be none other than UKB members Rosalyn and Phil who very kindly showed me to a spot further along the glen where they had seen some CSKs the previous day. Over the next couple of hours spent in their very good company we saw a number of skippers, fairly worn males but also a couple of females that were in a bit better condition.



*Chequered Skipper female - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper male – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

By mid-day it was again getting very warm with the temperature getting up into the mid-twenties so we departed for a drive up to Loch Arkaig for a look around. Whilst up there we stopped off at Alt Mhuic where I saw a couple of male CSKs but these were again very worn and tired looking. I must admit that I wasn't overly impressed with Alt Mhuic, something just seemed 'off' about the site and I have heard others say similar things about it. We also had a drive along to the end of the loch, just to see what was there, and checked a couple of spots along the way but without turning up any skippers. We did see plenty of big Northern Eggar moths bombing about at high speed though.

The next day (Tuesday 7th) we drove down to Cuil Bay in the morning where I found a couple of faded Marsh Fritillaries plus a Painted Lady. The forecast had said that we may get a thunderstorm or two during the day and with some dark clouds building to the south and clearer skies to the north we headed back to Fort William for a cuppa. I couldn't resist the temptation to return to Glen Loy for another look and so early afternoon found us back

at the spot that Rosalyn and Phil had shown us the previous day. This time I managed to find a few skippers that were in quite reasonable condition, both male and female.



*Chequered Skipper male - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper male - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

I also found a male that looked fresh but sods law meant that he totally refused to open his wings fully.



*Chequered Skipper male – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

It was during this session that my attention was drawn to a butterfly flapping about over the other side of the track and following it I was pleasantly surprised to realise that it was a Large Heath *ssp. scotica*. I soon saw a couple of others and took a few photos, a couple of which I posted in the June sightings thread last week. More on these to come in due course.

Anyway, back to the Chequered Skippers. Glen Loy is such a fabulous place that I found myself returning again the following morning when who should I bump into but Pete Eeles and Mark Colvin who were in the area on a tour of Chequered Skipper sites. They were also interested in my Large Heath sightings and so we all went along the glen to the spot where I had seen these. We all spent a couple of very pleasant hours here before it again got very hot and butterfly activity seemed to mostly come to a stop, so myself and Jane went off to find a somewhere for a bit of lunch (and a cold beer).

After then going into Fort William where Jane wanted to do a bit of shopping for pressies to take home, she said that she was feeling tired and wanted to go back to the B&B and that I could disappear for a couple of hours. With it now getting a bit later in the afternoon I figured that I would go back for a last session in Glen Loy as this was easily my favourite spot and was only a few miles away.

I think I saw mostly the same skippers that had been about earlier in the morning...



*Chequered Skipper female - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*



*Chequered Skipper female - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

... but there was also one female that stood out as having more extensive yellow patches on her forewings,



*Chequered Skipper female - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

Plus another nearly fresh male,



*Chequered Skipper male – Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

The next morning we would be heading back to Silverdale for another couple of nights before heading home. My initial impression on getting to Scotland and seeing the faded condition of many of the Chequered Skippers, particularly at Glasdrum, was that I had left it a bit late for them this year. In the end I saw some in quite good condition but there is no doubt that the season up there was well in front of that in my part of the midlands which almost caught me out.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 13-Jun-16 09:32 PM GMT

Great report, Neil! If only Glen Loy was midge-free – Mark and I did return before we headed back home and, believe me, you don't want to be there very early in the morning!

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-16 10:03 PM GMT

What a contrast to this time last year when, even at Glasdrum, Chequered Skippers were only just starting. But they have had the best of the weather in the last month or so. When we were there last year, it was still snowing on the hills! Just shows the fickleness of the west Scotland weather in spring. At least you found some at Glen Loy, where people were saying they hadn't been seen yet last year.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-16 10:23 PM GMT

Cracking shots Neil 📷📷📷📷 I've just got to hope that they can hang around for about 30 years until I've retired as I think that may be my first opportunity to see them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 14-Jun-16 12:10 AM GMT

Glorious stuff, Neil. You sure filled your boots.

Welcome to the '58 club! 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 14-Jun-16 08:45 AM GMT

Some wonderful shots of the Chequered Skipper, a Butterfly that is pretty remote from Sussex. Fresh or not, you had a very worthwhile trip. 📷.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 14-Jun-16 05:50 PM GMT

Great stuff Neil, I'm gonna have to start thinking about how I'm going to get to see them now 🤔🇮🇪

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Mark Tutton, 14-Jun-16 08:58 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Must have just missed you as I was at Glasdrum on the 6th – made the nine hour drive from the south coast on the Sunday!

Real shame as I remember spending a fantastic day at Fermyn with you a couple of years ago (my avatar is from that day) – if I remember rightly the weather was not dissimilar?

Kind Regards

Mark

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jun-16 09:37 PM GMT

Thanks Pete, there were a lot of midges around later in the afternoon as well but the Avon 'skin so Soft' seemed to keep most at bay 😊

Hi Mark, there was a bit of snow left on the north face of Ben Nevis but not much. I really didn't expect to get sunburn up there but as you say it just shows how the seasons can vary year on year.

Cheers Wurzel, I reckon they will still be around then. Having seen the area with my own eyes, I wouldn't be surprised if there are undiscovered colonies all over the place.

Thanks David...and they were wellington boots a lot of the time as well 😊

Hi Trevor, I think they are pretty remote for most people but yes, particularly far from Sussex.

Thanks Bugboy, it took me a couple of years of thinking about before I planned my trip.

Hi Mark, it is a shame I just missed you. I remember that day in Fermyn well...and the circumstances of your avatar 😊

#### June 3rd –10th A trip up North part 4.

##### A tale of two tullias.

##### 1–*scotica*.

As mentioned in my previous report I was in Glen Loy during the afternoon last Tuesday (June 7th) when I spotted an unfamiliar butterfly fluttering about on the other side of the track to where the Chequered Skippers could be found alongside the river. I followed it for a while and soon realised that I was looking at a Large Heath, which surprised me a bit as although I was aware that the *scotica* sub-species of this species could be found in the area I thought that it was a bit early for them. I took a few photos when it settled occasionally and watched as this first one was joined by a second and after a brief tussle they split up.

The following morning we returned to Glen Loy to try and see some more of these Large Heath, as well as to see if I could find some more decent condition Chequered Skippers. This was when I bumped into Pete and Mark as described in the previous report and we all spent some time looking over the area for the Large Heath. The habitat here was damp and mossy but much firmer than that where I have previously seen Large Heath (of the *davus* sub-species) at Meathop Moss in Cumbria and Whixall Moss in Shropshire where going off the path can be risky.



*ssp. scotica* habitat in Glen Loy

In the end we reckon that we saw at least 15 individuals, far more than I had seen the previous day which indicated that they were right at the beginning of their emergence.

It soon became very warm again and by mid-day it seemed as if the Large Heath had mostly gone to ground, in fact all butterfly activity seemed to be having a siesta, so Jane and myself departed for a bite to eat and a bit of shopping in Fort William (the price of looking for the butterflies).

Later that afternoon I returned for a last session at Glen Loy and found the Large Heaths back on the wing again. They were quite active again in the still warm conditions but a bit less so than they were earlier so I managed to get a few better photos.



*Large Heath ssp. scotica* – Glen Loy 08.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. scotica* – Glen Loy 08.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. scotica* – Glen Loy 08.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. scotica* – Glen Loy 08.06.2016

**2- *davus*.**

A couple of days later, back in Silverdale on our stop off on the way back south, the Friday (10th June) morning had started off dull and drizzly so we decided to go around to RSPB Leighton Moss which was just down the road from our B&B. After spending the morning there it began to clear up and with the promise of some sunny spells we had a drive around to the other side of the Kent Estuary to Meathop Moss as I had seen that Large Heath had been sighted there over the previous couple of days.

The Large Heath found here are *ssp.davus* which are a deeper colour and have far more pronounced eye-spots than *ssp. scotica*. I soon saw that most of the boardwalks onto the moss had been replaced with new ones, although there were some old ones still in place, and wandering along these I soon saw many assorted Damselflies, Dragonflies and Day-flying moths, most of which were becoming active in the rapidly warming early afternoon. I then spotted the distinctive flappy flight of a 'brown' type butterfly which came close enough to confirm it was a Large Heath. Over the next hour or so I reckon I spotted between 10-12 individuals, a couple of which came close enough and settled for me to get some photos.



*ssp. davus* habitat at Meathop Moss



*Large Heath ssp. davus* – Meathop Moss 10.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. davus* – Meathop Moss 10.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. davus* – Meathop Moss 10.06.2016



*Large Heath ssp. davus* – Meathop Moss 10.06.2016

Seeing both the *scotica* and *davus* sub-species of Large Heath within a couple of days of each other was a most unexpected bonus and fascinating to compare the two in the flesh. The Scottish ones looked pale in flight in comparison and almost looked like a different species, rather like an overgrown and pale Small Heath. The fact that these were already flying was another indication of the early season up there this year.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 14-Jun-16 10:03 PM GMT

Extraordinary stuff, Neil. Envious isn't the half of it! Beautiful photos too – over your trip you saw all four of the butterflies I have yet to see... Amazing. 😊

Dave

### Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 14-Jun-16 10:35 PM GMT

Those *davus* are stunning little insects, the eyes positively glow in your pictures!

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 14-Jun-16 10:42 PM GMT

You've done really well to capture *tullia* like that, Neil.

To me, they're amongst the most frustrating of the UK species – flying about hyperactively when it's warm and settling amongst grasses when it's cool and/or cloudy.

What a contrast between the two forms. It's almost like one is seeing two different butterfly species.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Rosalyn, 15-Jun-16 06:27 PM GMT

Hi Neil, Was good to meet you and Jane. You have certainly made the most of your trip with some lovely pics of our northern species. I have ordered the Skin So Soft as recommended not in time to keep the mozzies at bay today. I agree with you late afternoon at Glen Loy was midge heaven and I believe I won the tick count at 7, always assuming you had your customary nil 🍷

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-16 08:52 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, I am sure you will catch up with them all eventually.

Hi bugboy, I was lucky to catch them still fresh, this is one species that gets worn and faded quickly.

Thanks David, they soon warmed up and became far less co-operative.

Hi Rosalyn, it was great meeting you and Phil too. I am a non starter in the tick count, still not had one...hope I am not tempting fate by saying that.

### June 3rd –10th A trip up North part 5.

#### Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries.

One species that I was sure I would see on my trip north was the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. I have seen these before in good numbers at most sites in the Arnside/Silverdale area in mid-June and was certain that if they were not out on our first stay there on the way up, then they would be out on the way south again the following weekend. I was also aware that they are well distributed in north-west Scotland as well so I should encounter them there.

In the end this was easily the species that I saw the most of. I saw the first ones at Warton Crag on the first Friday (June 3rd) and others at Arnside Knott and Gait Barrows on the following day. These were mostly looking nice and fresh and looked that they had only been on the wing a few days at most.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary male- Arnside Knott 04.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary male- Arnside Knott 04.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Arnside Knott 04.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Arnside Knott 04.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary male- Gait Barrows 04.06.2016*

Carrying on to Scotland on the Sunday, there were good numbers skimming rapidly about in the hot afternoon sun at Glasdrum. During our visits to Glen Loy over the next few days they were present in every spot along the river where we looked. Apparently some authorities recognise some of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries found in north-west Scotland as form *insularum*, which is supposed to be brighter and more distinctly marked than the usual examples, but I must admit that I was hard pressed to see much difference to those I have seen before, particularly bright fresh males. There were also a good number of worn and faded examples around in Scotland indicating that they had been flying longer than those I saw around Arnside/Silverdale which also ties in with the fact that the season seemed that bit more advanced up there.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Glen Loy 07.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary male- Glen Loy 07.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary male- Glen Loy 08.06.2016*

Back in South Cumbria on the second Friday afternoon (June 10th), just after visiting Meathop Moss, we stopped off at Latterbarrow which is just the other side of the A590, and found a couple flying there.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Latterbarrow 10.06.2016*

Later in the afternoon it had cooled down a bit and clouded over with a fairly thick overcast and during a last visit to Arnside Knott I found a roosting individual and managed to get some classic underside shots.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Arnside Knott 10.06.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary female- Arnside Knott 10.06.2016*

It seems that this species is struggling in many of its southern haunts apart from Cornwall where it seems to be doing well. It would appear that they are also doing well in the north-west and particularly in Scotland.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 15-Jun-16 10:07 PM GMT

Fantastic array of images again, Neil. You really DID have a productive week.

Going north sometimes is essential if you're a serious UK butterfly enthusiast, and I'm glad to see that a connoisseur like you got lucky with the weather.

For all its advantages, the south and east of England are not the places to go looking for the likes of SPBF, Northern Brown Argus, Chequered Skipper,

HBF, Large Heath, Mountain Ringlet & Marsh Fritillary.

I've had my 'fixes' often enough with these species, but never all so condensed into a single week. You must feel 100% satisfied with your haul and it certainly looks as though all those hundreds of miles were worthwhile.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Pete Eeles, 15-Jun-16 10:22 PM GMT

Excellent summaries, Neil! I like the way that you've summarised by species, rather than simply giving us a day-by-day account - I'm not sure why, but I prefer this, I think 😊

[I found a tick when I got home, so it must have been hanging on to me all day!]

Cheers,

- Pete

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Pauline, 16-Jun-16 09:20 AM GMT

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading your accounts of the various species Neil, made particularly interesting by the way you have organised them and the lovely images which accompany each one. I hope there is more to come.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-16 09:26 PM GMT

Thanks David, living in the midlands I have to travel to the southern sites as well but at least I am part way there for the northern ones...mind you, that was the longest one I have done yet and the decision to do the two night stops at Arnside/Silverdale each way turned out to be a good one.

Thanks Pete, glad you like the reports, they just seemed to fall together that way in my head when I started thinking of writing them.

Thanks Pauline, a bit more to come but mostly the odds and sods that will probably go into a final round up when I get a chance to sort them out.

Cheers,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-16 10:51 PM GMT

Very interesting reading Neil and great sequence of shots. I still can't get over the difference between the sub-species of Large Heath they're so different in appearance I wonder if they 'see' each other as the same species should some opportunity arise for them to meet?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-16 11:52 AM GMT

Great shots Neil, glad you saw the SPBF and you've encouraged me to go to Meathop hope fully this week when we've got our breath back from visiting the South, 😊 I only hope the LH are still in good condition and I get better shots than I did last year 😊 your's are great. Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 19-Jun-16 06:58 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, there is also ssp. *polydama* which is found in between the ranges of *scotica* and *davus* and where these ranges overlap apparently there is some interbreeding which can give rise to a whole range of intermediate forms.

Thanks Goldie, when I was at Meathop on June 10th the Large Heaths had only been flying for a few days so they should be good for a while yet.

**June 3rd -10th A trip up North part 6.**

**The Best of the Rest.**

Going through the remaining photos from our trip, as I only have one or two shots of most things, I have decided that it is probably better to lump them all together in a round-up report rather than split them out into separate posts.

So here we go;

On the first couple of days, Dingy Skippers were seen at Warton Crag and Arnside Knott, some of them still in quite good condition.



*Dingy Skipper - Warton Crag 03.06.2016*

Some fresh male Common Blues were also flying at Warton Crag and Arnside Knott plus a few were seen up in Scotland at Glen Loy.



*Common Blue - Glen Loy 07.06.2016*

At Cuil Bay on the shore of Loch Linnhe, I found a couple of worn and faded Marsh Fritillaries, These looked like they had been around for a while and was yet another indication that the season was well ahead up there.

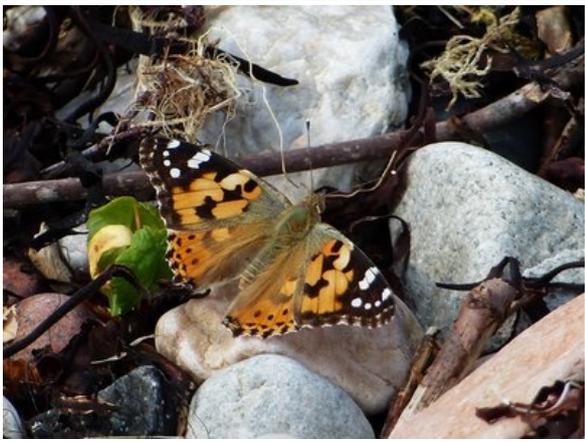


*Marsh Fritillary - Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*



*Marsh Fritillary - Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*

Also at Cuil Bay there was a Painted Lady patrolling along the shingle beach and at the end of the week another one was seen at Latterbarrow in south Cumbria.



*Painted Lady - Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*



*Painted Lady - Latterbarrow - 10.06.2016*

At Latterbarrow there was a fresh Small Tortoiseshell, the first of the summer brood by the looks.



*Small Tortoiseshell - Latterbarrow 10.06.2016*

Green Hairstreaks were numerous alongside the river in Glen Loy although they were mostly looking well past their best. The male Chequered Skippers were constantly taking off from their perches and chasing them in the warm afternoon sun.



*Green Hairstreak - Glen Loy 06.06.2016*

On our return from Scotland to Silverdale we took a detour to Irton Fell where I spent an hour or so in warm but overcast conditions looking for Mountain Ringlets. I saw approximately twenty or so individuals, mostly males, many of which were looking quite worn and faded which indicated that they had been flying for a while. Although cloudy, the air temperature was warm enough for them to be quite active and when they did settle they would sort of crash land low down in the grass. I managed to find a few females that were in a bit better condition, but taking photos was a challenge in the conditions so I just took a few record shots and mostly watched them.



*Mountain Ringlet - Irton Fell 09.06.2016*



*Mountain Ringlet – Irton Fell 09.06.2016*

During the previous couple of days I had seen a couple of reports that the first Dark Green Fritillaries had been seen flying in the Morecambe Bay area so on our last Friday (June 10th) afternoon I went up to Arnside Knott to see if any were out there. A thick overcast had built up but it was still warm enough for SPBFs to be flying in the usual spots. Going down for a look in the lower meadows, I saw a bright orange butterfly much larger than the Small Pearls, and tracking it to where it landed I crept up and found a nice fresh Dark Green Fritillary basking on some low brambles.



*Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside Knott 10.06.2016*

The DGF made it a nice round twenty species of butterfly seen on our trip.

Other butterflies seen during the week included my first Large skippers of the year at Warton Crag (June 3rd) and Latterbarrow (June 10th) and a couple of Brimstones at Arnside Knott. There were also a couple of raggedy ex-hibernating Peacocks still hanging in there, one at Gait Barrows on the first Saturday (June 4th) and one at Meathop Moss on the last Friday (June 10th). A single tatty Small Copper was seen at Glasdrum plus Green-veined Whites of what I believe are described as ssp. thomsoni. These GVWs were also seen at various spots around Fort William and seemed to be more heavily marked than those I am used to.

Whilst up in Scotland I also saw plenty of Orange-tips, most notably along the single track roads leading from Glen Loy to Loch Arkaig, but also scattered around Fort William and Glen Nevis. This was in marked contrast to back home where they seem to have had a short flight period this year and had disappeared before we went north.

As well as the butterflies I also saw some nice day flying moths, most notably good numbers of Clouded Buff and Northern Eggar in Scotland.



*Clouded Buff – Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*

The males of the latter species were often seen bombing about at high speed and I watched in vain to see if one would settle for a photo. During the morning in Glen Loy when I met Pete and Mark, we were looking for Large Heath when Mark called me over to where he had found a female Northern Eggar settled down in the vegetation. Whilst the males of this species fly by day, the females don't take to the wing until dusk and this one just sat there while I took some photos. In fact she was so docile that she allowed me to gently lift her out of the vegetation to take some uncluttered shots,

something I don't usually do. These Northern Eggars are larger than their Oak Eggar cousins found further south and she really was an impressively large moth with a big furry body nearly as big as my thumb.



*Northern Eggar - Glen Loy 08.06.2016*

Many other day flying moths were also about, most of which would not stay still long enough to identify although I did get a close enough view of one Argent & Sable in Glen Loy as it fluttered right past me.

During our visits to various places there were also various birds seen including a few pairs of Ringed Plovers at Cuil Bay.



*Ringed Plover - Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*

Also seen at various places around Fort William were Hooded Crows which Jane referred to as 'Two-Tone Crows'. This species has its stronghold in north-west Scotland where it replaces the more familiar Carrion Crow.



*Hooded Crow - Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*

During our stays at Silverdale, both on the way to Scotland and the return, we visited RSPB Leighton Moss which we often do when up in this area as there are good paths and hides which Jane can manage with her limited mobility. Among the birds seen here were Marsh Harrier, Little Egret, Reed Buntings and a large number of Black-tailed Godwits.



*Black-tailed Godwits – Leighton Moss 10.06.2016*



*Little Egret – Leighton Moss 10.06.2016*

Finally, during a visit to Gait Barrows on the first Saturday (June 4th), I went to have a look at the Ladies Slipper Orchids which were showing well.



*Ladies Slippers – Gait Barrows 04.06.2016*

Whilst at Gait Barrows I had a good look for Duke of Burgundy on the off chance that they were still around, but without success. Talking to a couple of local chaps they told me that they had been seen a few weeks earlier but never in large numbers, apparently about half a dozen seen on one day in mid-May being the highest number seen this year.

So then...just over a week spent in some of the best locations these islands have to offer. The scenery alone makes these places worth visiting but throw in the butterflies and other wildlife and they are truly something special. I would never have expected to have such good weather, conditions of which had apparently been similar for a few weeks before we went, and really struck lucky with the timing of our trip.

As mentioned in my previous reports, the good weather no doubt led to me seeing some things that I did not expect to see which made for a truly memorable trip.

This also brought home to me how much the season can vary in different regions of the country and that you cannot always assume that things will be progressing in a similar manner as in your own area.

Bye for now

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-16 10:37 PM GMT

I'd certainly settle for those Mountain Ringlet record shots Neil 🍷 – and it only took you an hour to find them 😊 I'd been led to believe that they're the hardest of the UK species "to get" 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 20-Jun-16 11:24 PM GMT

Wow! You had a great trip, Neil, by the looks of it. Those Ladies Slipper Orchids have merely topped off what was already a glorious haul!

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-16 03:19 PM GMT

Glad you enjoyed your trip North Neil 😊 I've yet to see the Mountain Ringlet so you were very lucky, I've probably gone at the wrong time 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-16 09:33 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, I actually saw the first one within a couple of minutes of walking up onto the Fell. Irton Fell is the lowest altitude site for MR in England and they fly earlier there than at the higher altitude sites. Like a number of our more localised species, if you are in the right place at the right time and in the right conditions they are easy to find. Despite what the books say, they will fly in cloud as long as the air temperature is warm enough.

Hi David, yes it certainly was a fantastic week, better than I expected.

Thanks Goldie, The Mountain Ringlets are sometimes on the wing at Irton Fell in late May but this can vary somewhat depending on the weather in any given year. I checked the Cumbria BC sightings page before going to see if they had been sighted.

#### Wednesday 22nd June

Well, since returning home from our northern trip the other weekend, the weather has been shocking. Last week we had deluges of biblical proportions with bad floods in some parts of Birmingham. Things have settled down a bit this week but there is still a lot of cloud about on most days.

The only butterflies I have seen lately have been a couple of Speckled Wood in the garden when I have got home from work.

The Moth trap has been out in the garden on the nights when it has not rained too bad. In fact cloudy nights with drizzle or light rain seem to produce good results as opposed to clear nights when the temperature drops which keeps the moth numbers down.

A selection below of moths trapped during the past week or so;



*Pale Prominent*



*Maidens Blush*



*Common Marbled Carpet*



*Common Swift*



*Riband Wave*



*Scalloped Oak*



*Buff Arches*

Anyone who read this diary a few months ago may remember that I found a Lime Hawk Moth caterpillar wandering across the pavement outside my house. I put it into a container with some garden soil and leaf mould where it pupated the next day. A few weeks ago I laid the pupa out in a cage ready for emergence and kept a watch on it. Whilst we were away up north, my son Chris kept popping in to keep an eye on the house and checked the cage. On the Sunday after we returned we went round to my moms for dinner and on returning home later found that the Lime Hawk had emerged. This could have happened anytime Saturday night/Sunday morning as I didn't check on it until later in the afternoon by which time it had caught itself in a corner of the cage and rubbed the back of its thorax on the netting. I took a few photos and when it started to get dark later I released it when it flew away with no sign of ill effects.



*Lime Hawk Moth*

I had also been given an Elephant Hawk Moth pupa a few weeks ago by one of my uncles who found it in his garden and knows of my interest. This emerged this Sunday night and again I took a few photos before releasing it.



*Elephant Hawk Moth*



*Elephant Hawk Moth*

Both of the Hawk Moths were released in the back garden and I was interested if they would show up in the trap on any of the following nights but so far there has been no sign of either.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 22-Jun-16 11:07 PM GMT

I am still in awe of your excursion to the sunny and warm North and all the things you got to see, Neil. Fantastic photos too. If only the weather could be guaranteed – it would be worth spending a fortnight up there every May! 😊 Your moth pictures are really interesting too – incredible variety and patterning, and I've always had a soft spot for hawk moths... 😊

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-16 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, our landlady in Fort William reckoned that they often have a spell of good weather around late May/early June but this year was exceptional in how hot it was and for how long the good weather stayed around. Having said that, there were some thunderstorms when we were up there but they were very localised. When we were in Glen Nevis they had a sharp downpour less than a mile further up the glen while we stayed in glorious sunshine.

#### **Friday 24th June.**

Over the past couple of weeks I have not had much chance to get out around any of my local spots so after finishing work at lunchtime today and going round for my usual Friday afternoon visit to my mom, I was keen to have a look around the park by her house. As usual, whilst Jane and mom were chatting, I had the chance to go and for a look to see what was about. This is the normal sort of recreational park but there are some areas where the grass is left to grow with some small wooded parts and hedgerows with good patches of brambles.

It was a pleasant afternoon with mixed cloud and sunny spells and I soon saw a couple of Large Skippers chasing each other about, quickly followed by my first Meadow Browns and Ringlets this year. During the following half an hour or so I saw maybe a dozen of each of these species plus four or five Speckled Woods.



*Large Skipper male - Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



*Large Skipper female - Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



*Large Skipper male- Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



*Large Skipper females – Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



*Meadow Brown male – Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



*Ringlet male – Langley Hall 24.06.2016*



Ringlet male – Langley Hall 24.06.2016



Speckled Wood male – Langley Hall 24.06.2016

It was just a short session but it was nice to see some typical mid-summer butterflies after a couple of weeks of not seeing much at all since returning from 'up north'.

Bye for now,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-16 08:36 PM GMT

### Monday June 27th – Great Orme part 1.

After a pretty uneventful past couple of weeks, our next trip further afield this year saw Jane and myself heading to North Wales and a couple of nights stopping in Llandudno. The reason for this was so that I could explore the Great Orme, a large limestone headland immediately to the north of Llandudno, and hopefully see the endemic two subspecies that can be found there, Silver-studded Blue ssp *caernensis* and Grayling ssp *thyone*. I was particularly interested in seeing the females of *caernensis* which tend to have far more blue on their upper wings than the normal ones.

So it was that we arrived at our B&B on Sunday afternoon after a wet drive through the Welsh hills and after settling in and with it still raining we went out into town for a meal. The weather forecast for the next day (Monday 27th) looked like it would be the best day all week so the plan was for me to have a good look around two particular parts of the Orme.

Our B&B was ideally located just across the road from a small path that leads up to join a larger path that is known locally as 'Invalids Walk' and which runs up and across the south facing slope from West Bay to Haulfre Gardens. I had read that this was a good place to find SSBs and so after breakfast I went for my first look.

The conditions were cloudy to begin with and there was a stiff breeze from the west which was blowing along the slopes but there were a number of sheltered spots along the path where I first concentrated my search. It didn't take long before I found a number of roosting SSBs and with the clouds thinning and the sun starting to peek through they started taking to the air in increasing numbers. During the next couple of hours I wandered along the path here and also along the yellow rock rose covered lower slope and saw absolutely loads of SSBs in all sorts of condition from really worn to fresh looking.



Slope below 'Invalids Path' – Great Orme 27.06.2016



Once I had my eye in, I also saw many mating pairs, either down in the grass or in one of the small clumps of brambles. In fact every patch of brambles along here seemed to have its own group of SSBs in and around it. I have no idea how many there were in total but there were hundreds of them, many within feet of the main path itself.



I then went back to meet Jane at the B&B. We decided to drive up to the summit for a look, our reasoning on using the car being that if it was too windy up there we could easily drive back down. We were right; it was blowing a gale up there so after admiring the views and a having a look around the visitor centre we went back down.

We then went around to 'Happy Valley' which was the second spot that I wanted to look at. This is situated on the south-east corner of the Orme in a sheltered valley and there are some very nice gardens here where we just chilled out for a while with a delicious double cornet ice cream. I then went for a wander around the higher slope above the gardens. The slope here was again covered with the yellow flowers of Common Rock Rose and with the sun feeling warm, but not too hot, and the wind being far less noticeable, there were loads of SSBs flying and basking and again there were many mating pairs.



'Happy Valley' - Great Orme 27.06.2016



Between here and along the 'Invalids Path' earlier, I really couldn't say which spot had the highest number, suffice to say that there were hundreds, maybe thousands, at both places 😊.

We then went for a coffee and as it was now gone 4.00pm decided to head back to the B&B as Jane wanted to have a shower and get ready before going out for a meal later (In truth, she is a big Tipping Point and The Chase fan and as we had a T.V. in our room...well! 😊). With the forecast for the next day not looking good, this gave me the chance to make the most of the moment and have another walk over to 'Invalids Walk'. By now the clouds had built up a bit more and it looked as if most of the SSBs were settling down for an early finish, but a slight thinning of the clouds tempted some of them back into action.





During the day I had seen many females which exhibited a large variation in the amount of blue from very little to a bright suffusion on all four wings. There was also a large variation in the size and brightness of the orange markings on the hind wings, again some had almost none whereas others were particularly bright.







The other thing that struck me was the variation in size of both sexes with some being no bigger than a Small Blue and others being almost the size of a typical Common Blue.

I had read Pete Eeles excellent and very timely report on his recent visit to the Great Orme in his dairy before going and was particularly impressed by his photo of 15 (I think) SSBs in one frame. As I watched them late in the afternoon in one particular sheltered dip near the start of the path, I realised that I could possibly get a similar shot. I reckon that I have managed to get at least 19 in the shot below...



...but this pales into insignificance compared to the photo I saw earlier on twitter and which also appears in the twitter feed here on UKB, absolutely amazing 😍 .

I had read before going that *caernensis* could be found here in some very large numbers but until you see them with your own eyes it is difficult to fully grasp how many individual butterflies there can be in these colonies. There were times when my foot snagged a trailing bramble shoot and a cloud of blue butterflies would rise around me, truly a day to remember 😊 .

As well as all the SSBs I also saw a good number of my second target, Grayling ssp *thyone* but these will follow in a second report before this one gets too big.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by trevor, 29-Jun-16 09:47 PM GMT

Hi Neil,  
Your report and images make me wish I had been there too. Take some mrgreens !.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 29-Jun-16 09:52 PM GMT

The Orme is a lovely spot at any time, but I have yet to see it adorned with blue butterflies – your report and photos are astonishing and I really must go back.

Dave

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pete Eeles, 01-Jul-16 07:44 AM GMT

Excellent report, Neil – and a lovely selection of photos! I wish I was back at the Orme right now, to be honest.

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Jul-16 07:28 PM GMT

Thanks for the great comments Trevor, Dave and Pete 😊 It was the first time I had been to the Orme for many years and I certainly won't be leaving it so long before visiting again.

### Great Orme part 2.

My second target species for our visit to the Great Orme was the Grayling sub-species *thyone*. Unlike the Silver-studded Blue ssp *caernensis* which has been introduced into some other sites close by, as far as I am aware this race of Grayling is found nowhere else but on the limestone slopes of the Great Orme.

In appearance these apparently have less contrast to their markings than typical Graylings but the main difference is the size with *thyone* being noticeably smaller than the normal type. This population on the Great Orme also emerge much earlier than is usual for this species with a normal flight period usually from early June through to mid-July.

I found that on the examples that I saw, the undersides were very similar to the normal type although I cannot comment on the upperside markings due to their usual habit of settling with their wings firmly closed. Those that I saw were definitely smaller than usual, being no bigger than a Speckled Wood; in fact in flight it was easy to mistake them for a Specklie at first glance until you got a good look to confirm the ID. All in all I reckon I saw about a dozen examples of *thyone* scattered about along the slopes from West Bay to Haulfre Gardens and another half dozen or so around the higher part of Happy Valley.



Slope above Invalids Walk – Great Orme 27.06.2016



Grayling ssp *thyone* – Great Orme 27.06.2016



*Graylings ssp thyone* – Great Orme 27.06.2016



*Grayling ssp thyone* – Great Orme 27.06.2016



*Grayling ssp thyone* – Great Orme 27.06.2016



*Grayling ssp thyone – Great Orme 27.06.2016*



*Grayling ssp thyone – Great Orme 27.06.2016*

The habitat further up the path along the south-west corner of the Orme looked ideal for these but with the stiff breeze coming from the west on the day I didn't venture far that way.

The undersides of this species are ideally marked for camouflage amongst the rocky ground but we came across one individual who didn't seem to grasp the concept. Whilst sitting on a bench in the lower gardens in Happy Valley enjoying our ice cream, a butterfly flew across in front of us and settled on the yellow lines on the road by the café a short distance away. At first I took it for a Speckled Wood but on walking over for a closer look I was surprised to see that it was a Grayling.



*Grayling thinking it was blending in on yellow road line*

Other butterflies seen during the day included Speckled Wood, Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Ringlet. There were also a number of highly mobile Dark Green Fritillaries, mostly around the higher slopes above Invalids Walk, although one individual did come down to one of the clumps of red valerian by the path.



*Dark Green Fritillary – Great Orme 27.06.2016*

We were lucky that the Monday had been a day of good (albeit breezy) weather as the Tuesday was grey and wet with drizzle or heavier rain all day. We spent the morning at RSPB Conwy where we saw various birds including Shelducks, Lapwings and Oystercatchers plus some Bee Orchids by the path to one of the hides.



*Bee Orchids – RSPB Conwy 28.06.2016*

The afternoon was spent back in Llandudno where we had a wander around the shops which kept Jane happy and meant that my store of brownie points hadn't taken too much of a hit on this trip 😊.

Wednesday was another horrible wet day during which we drove home through some torrential rain. If the weather had been better we would most likely have stopped off at Prees Heath to look at the Silver-studded Blues there as a comparison to those I had seen on the Great Orme, but as I have been there previously and seen these before, and the rain was at its heaviest as we approached the turn off for Whitchurch, we carried straight on home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-16 10:06 PM GMT

More great stuff Neil – you're mopping up those species/sub-species 🍷 Do the Great Orme Graylings fly before the other nominate sub-species/race as I haven't seen any reports down this way yet?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 01-Jul-16 10:22 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Neil of both species, I looked for the Graylings at Southport and when I was at Gait Barrow no luck though, the weather here as been awful, really heavy showers, nothing we can do about it, but for the Butterflies this year is not very good up here. Goldie 🍷

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-16 08:37 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel 😊 Yes, the Great Orme Graylings are usually on the wing a few weeks earlier than the other races.

Thanks Goldie 😊 I am sure they will be out there soon, I see there have been some recently reported from Arnside Knott.

### Friday 1st July

Well, we are into July and it sure doesn't feel like summer yet. A constant succession of bands of rain and blustery winds on most days have kept butterfly activity well down in my garden with just the odd Speckled Wood putting in the occasional appearance last week.

Friday afternoon was not too bad with some decent sunny spells and during my usual half an hour or so round the park by my moms house I saw the same four species as last week, namely Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Large Skipper and Speckled Wood. The first three of these were all present in greater numbers with good numbers of females now flying. The four or five Specklies seen were all faded to some degree and were possibly all the same individuals seen the previous week.



*Large Skipper - Langley Hall 01.07.2016*



*Ringlet - Langley Hall 01.07.2016*



*Meadow Brown - Langley Hall 01.07.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Langley Hall 01.07.2016*

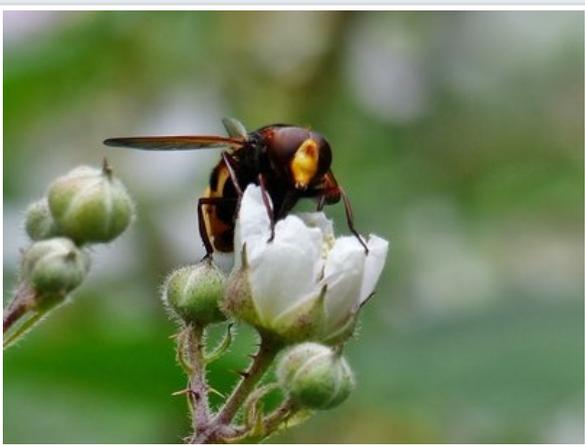
#### **Saturday 2nd July**

Saturday was a mostly dull grey and windy day with a few showers of light rain during the afternoon but with a few brief sunny spells in the morning during which I spotted a couple of Holly Blues and a unidentified 'white' getting blown through the garden.

At one point I went down to check on the bramble patch and noticed a Hornet Mimic Hoverfly on one of the blossoms. This is only the second one of this impressively large species I have seen in my garden although I have seen them before on my trips further south. It appears that this is yet another species that is extending its range north, presumably as a response to climate change.



*Hornet Mimic Hoverfly – Coverdale 02.07.2016*



*Hornet Mimic Hoverfly – Coverdale 02.07.2016*

#### **Sunday 3rd July**

A decent afternoon with mixed cloud and sun and that infernal wind dropping somewhat saw me nipping out to my local site at Castle Hills near Solihull for a look around. I was specifically looking to see if Small Skippers and Marbled White were out there yet and during a couple of hours here saw good numbers of both, mostly fresh looking males but with a few females of both species also present.



*Small Skipper - Castle Hills 03.07.2016*



*Small Skipper - Castle Hills 03.07.2016*



*Marbled White - Castle Hills 03.07.2016*



*Marbled White – Castle Hills 03.07.2016*



*Marbled White – Castle Hills 03.07.2016*

I was particularly pleased to see so many Marbled Whites here as they have only recently colonised this site in their current expansion across Warwickshire.

Other butterflies seen were Ringlets and Meadow Browns, both of which were everywhere, Good numbers of Large Skippers, a couple of fresh Small Tortoiseshells, a single worn looking Red Admiral and a couple of worn and faded Common Blues.

There were also loads of Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet Moths buzzing about and at one point I noticed a bit of a gathering of these on a dead seed head. It appears that it was half a dozen males all jostling for a single female and after a suitor managed to succeed, the others dispersed and left them to it.



*NB Five-spot Burnet Moths – Castle Hills 03.07.2016*



*NB Five-spot Burnet Moths - Castle Hills 03.07.2016*

I will probably be back here again in a week or two to see if Essex Skippers are out as that is the usual gap between those and the Smalls appearing.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 04-Jul-16 09:49 PM GMT

Just catching up with the Grayling photos from the Orme, Neil. Splendid stuff - I really must get up there again.

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jul-16 09:24 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I really recommend a visit but you need a full day at least to do it justice.

#### **Friday 8th July**

Another quiet week for me with regard to butterflies with just a few Specklies and Ringlets being seen in the garden on getting in from work.

The moth trap has been out in the garden a few times over the past couple of weeks and although some windy nights have kept overall numbers down I have continued to get new species with a few appearing at every session. I am now up to 77 species of macro moth plus 28 species of micro that I have managed to identify.

A selection of macros from the past couple of weeks;



*Figure of Eighty*



*Coronet – A very local and scarce species in Warwickshire a few years ago but has had a huge revival in numbers in recent years.*



*Scalloped Oak*



*Swallowtail Moth*



*Light Emerald*



*Dark Arches (left) & Light Arches (right)*



*Heart & Club - makes a change from all the Heart & Darts I get.*

The prize for most attractive moth in the garden has to go to Buff Arches of which I have had three now over the past few weeks,



*Buff Arches*

I also continue to be fascinated by the variation shown by some species, a good example being Common Marbled Carpet of which I have had at least ten different individuals with no two being the same.



*Common Marbled Carpet*



*Common Marbled Carpet*

Bye for now,

Neil

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-16 08:35 PM GMT

### Sunday 10th July

Another cloudy and blustery weekend with Sunday being the better of the two days by virtue of having a few more sunny spells and staying dry all day until we had a light shower around 5.00pm. During the morning I saw a couple of Speckled Woods and Ringlets in the garden plus a couple of summer brood Small Whites chasing each other about.

In the afternoon I had a run down to Snitterfield Bushes, just to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon, to look for Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals. During a couple of hours here in the more sheltered spots in the woods I saw half a dozen or so SWFs, a couple of White Admirals, plus a couple each of summer Commas and Small Tortoiseshells.

Meadow Browns and Ringlets were also flying in good numbers albeit noticeably fewer of both species than I would normally expect. I also only saw two Gatekeepers, both male, whereas these would normally be well out by now.



*Gatekeeper - Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



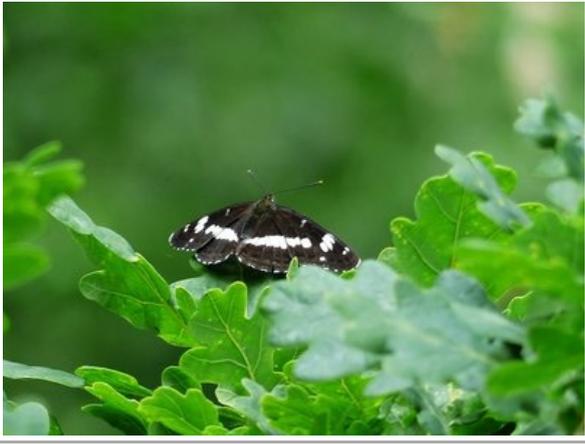
*Meadow Brown - Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



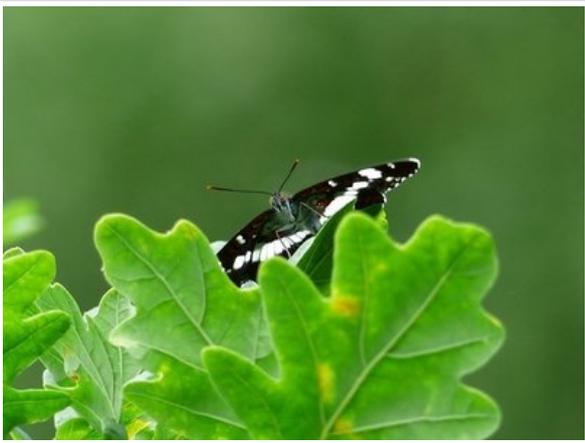
*Meadow Brown - Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



*Comma - Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



*White Admiral – Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



*White Admiral – Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



*Silver-washed Fritillary – Snitterfield 10.07.2016*



*Silver-washed Fritillary – Snitterflied 10.07.2016*

There were also plenty of Marbled Whites in a meadow at the southern side of the woods but the wind was blowing a gale to that side and they were either down in the grass or getting whisked about if they ventured out.

An enjoyable couple of hours despite the cloud and wind but one that felt that things were a good week or so behind where they should be. It is difficult to tell as yet whether things are just late or whether numbers will stay low, the next week or so should give a better idea if numbers will build around here or stay low for this year.

Bye for now,

Neil

## **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 14-Jul-16 09:27 PM GMT

**Thursday 14th July**

After a few more wet and windy days this week it brightened up considerably today but being stuck in work I couldn't take advantage of the better conditions for most of the day.

It was nice however to actually see some butterflies in my garden when I got home later this afternoon. Apart from a couple each of Speckled Wood and Ringlets that will fly in the dull conditions and which I have seen occasionally through the week, today there were also Large, Small and GV Whites, Holly Blues and a Comma.



*Comma – Coverdale 14.07.2016*



*Green-veined White – Coverdale 14.07.2016*



*Green-veined White – Coverdale 14.07.2016*

Nothing that special really but the lack of butterflies in my garden recently has been indicative of the poor season in general so far and just to see them was a lift to the spirits 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 15-Jul-16 10:32 AM GMT

I'm the same here Neil, no Butterflies in my garden at all yet which is very unusual, plus the fact also that my Boules mauve has died , too much rain, I just hope my BM in the front garden holds out 😊 Goldie 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-16 10:37 AM GMT

Hi Goldie,

Just started having a few butterflies in my garden over the past few days after not much at all for a while, a few 'Whites' and Holly Blues are now showing up plus the usual Specklies and Ringlets.

I believe that Bowles Mauve is a short lived perennial that usually only lasts a few years. I have read that the usual practice is to take regular cuttings to ensure a supply of new plants.

Cheers,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jul-16 09:13 PM GMT

**Friday 22nd July,**

Well, what a difference in the weather this week as I spent most of it sweltering in our office at work. Last weekend was mostly family stuff but I did manage an hour or so on **Sunday (July 17th)** afternoon at my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull.

All the usual species were seen, Ringlets, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Marbled Whites Large, Small and Essex Skippers, although none except the Marbled Whites were in the kind of numbers that I would normally expect at this time of year. Gatekeepers in particular were scarce with only half a dozen seen, all males, which is well down on what I would usually see here. Also seen were a couple each of Commas & Small Tortoiseshells plus a single Red Admiral, all of which were very active in the warm mid-afternoon sun. In fact I took very few photos, mostly just ropy record shots to confirm the presence of both Small and Essex Skippers, plus the mating pair of Meadow Browns below.



*Meadow Brown pair - Castle Hills 17.07.2016*

On **Wednesday (20th July)** afternoon I cashed in some brownie points and after finishing work at 4.00pm went round to Ryton Wood. I spent a couple of hours here wandering around the various paths and saw a dozen or so Silver-washed Fritillaries and 7 or 8 White Admirals.



*Silver-washed Fritillary - Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*



*White Admiral - Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*



*White Admiral – Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*



*White Admiral – Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*

Again the usual Ringlets and Meadow Browns were fluttering about but not in the numbers I would usually expect and as at Solihull on Sunday I saw just half a dozen or so Gatekeepers.



*Gatekeeper – Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*

A couple of Commas, singles of Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral, a few Large and Small Skippers plus Large, Small and GV Whites made up the other species seen. The numerous patches of brambles around the wood were strangely quiet with very few butterflies on them, just the odd Ringlet seen on the flowers, and most of the butterflies seen were actively flying about right up until gone 6.00pm when I had to make a move for home.

At one point the clouds built up and a couple of rumbles of thunder were heard but nothing came of it and the sun was soon out again albeit with a freshening breeze that was blowing the tops of the trees about. Each time the breeze dropped I would scan the tops of the numerous Oak trees and would see quite a few Purple Hairstreaks flitting about but they would soon disappear when the breeze picked up.

A nice couple of hours but the feeling is still that this season is shaping up to be a poor one for many of our butterfly species with numbers of Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers in particular being well down so far.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-16 10:42 PM GMT

Gorgeous White Admirals Neil – you've really caught the subtle markings on the edges of the hind wings 🍷 😊  
Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 23-Jul-16 10:21 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Butterflies Neil, I've not seen a Gate Keeper here yet Neil, I keep going to Hall-Lee-Brook to look if they've arrived no luck yet though, I did get a few Whites in the Garden on my Buddliea but nothing else so far.

My Boules M plant on the back Garden has died a death but I've two more on the front so I'll take some cuttings from them see what happens 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Jul-16 08:12 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, and Goldie 😊 and good luck with your cuttings Goldie.

#### Saturday 23rd July

A couple of hours around my local spot at Bickenhill near Solihull on a warm and muggy afternoon with 50/50 cloud and sun produced most of the expected species but, as has been a common theme this year, none of them were in the sort of numbers that they should be for this time of year. Ringlets appeared to be coming to the end of their season this year with most of those seen looking old and tired. Meadow Browns were pretty well scattered about across the grassy meadows but numbers were well down on previous years.

At least some of the Meadow Browns that I did see were doing their best to ensure that there would be some around next year with a numbers of mating pairs spotted.



*Meadow Brown pair – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Meadow Brown pair – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*

Gatekeeper numbers seemed to be on the up with a couple of dozen seen including a few females and it remains to be seen what kind of season they will have but indications so far seem to be that they will have a poor year around here along with the Meadow Browns.



*Gatekeeper – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*

Easily the most numerous were Small / Essex Skippers with both species buzzing about in good numbers albeit even these were lower than I have seen here before. It was interesting to note that each species was concentrated in its own parts of the meadows with Small Skippers dominating in one spot and Essex in another with an overlap in between where they were both flying together. This is a something that I have noticed before, both here and at other sites, and is no doubt due to the two species females' preference for different grasses to lay their eggs on, usually Yorkshire-fog for Small Skippers and Cocks-foot for Essex I believe.

As usual with these two species I spent some time taking record shots in order to confirm their ID and my impression was that there were present in roughly equal numbers, but they were very active in the warm and muggy conditions which made it just about impossible to do an accurate count.



*Small Skipper pair – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Small Skipper – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Small Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Essex Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Essex Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Essex Skipper female laying eggs in grass stem*

I was pleased to see three or four Marbled Whites here as I have only ever seen one individual at this site before although it is only a mile or so from where they have recently spread to and can now be found in good numbers. This is one species that is doing well around here this year with numbers increasing year on year after they spread here a few years ago.



*Marbled White – Bickenhill 23.07.2016*

Other species seen were a couple each of Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral, all of which were very active in the warm mid-afternoon conditions, as were the constantly patrolling whites of all three common species that were also about in good numbers. In previous years this has been a good site for summer Peacocks, even last year when summer brood numbers seemed to crash there were a few here, but I have seen none so far this year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 26-Jul-16 08:36 PM GMT

Great shots Neil, I want some of the Essex Skipper when I come down to Kent if possible. I finally saw some GK's today. Goldie 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-16 08:40 PM GMT

Hi Goldie,

Good luck with the Essex Skippers when you go south...although at the rate they are spreading it can't be long before they reach your neck of the woods.

#### **Friday 29th July**

Another fairly quiet week for me on the butterfly front. Weather has been mixed with some hefty showers but also some nice warm sunny spells which has seen decent numbers of all three common whites flying on my journeys home from work and in my garden. Three or four different male Speckled Wood have been about in the garden along with a couple of females and at least two different male Gatekeepers joined them earlier in the week. Holly Blue numbers seem to be on the up too with three individuals chasing each other around on Wednesday afternoon and at least a couple passing through on most days.



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 24.07.2016*



*Gatekeeper ab.excessa - Coverdale 26.07.2016*



*Holly Blue - Coverdale 29.07.2016*

The generally low numbers of butterflies around here this summer has been mirrored at night with poor catches for the time of year being reported on various FB moths groups. With this being my first year of running a trap in my garden I cannot make a comparison with previous years but I have been averaging around 30+ macros and a couple of dozen micros on most nights that I have run the trap recently, apparently well down on what I should expect for July. My tally so far is at 102 macro species and 40 micros that I have managed to identify.

A selection of garden moths from the past few weeks;



*Grey Dagger*



*Blackneck*



*Dot Moth*



*Early Thorn – second generation*



*Marbled Beauties – 3 of 8 in the trap on 20th July*



*Vapourer*



*Antler Moth*



*Dun-bar*



*Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing*



*Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing*



*I just couldn't resist posting another Poplar Hawk...I have had 4 of these recently, still the only hawk species to come to the trap so far.*

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-16 11:15 PM GMT

That excess is ace Neil 🍷🍷🍷😄 How you can say that it's been a quiet week when you've seen that I don't know 😏😏😏

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 29-Jul-16 11:18 PM GMT

Yes, I don't think I've ever seen such an extreme Gatekeeper, Neil. 🍷 That selection of moths is amazing, too – it almost makes you want to take the first steps down that slippery slope! 😊

Dave

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 30-Jul-16 04:12 PM GMT

Great shots of the ab Neil, there seems to be quite a lot of ab's about just now. your moth shot's are good too, I saw a few small White moths at HLB today but they went instantly under the leaves no chance to get a shot of them. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 30-Jul-16 07:29 PM GMT

A stunning selection of moths Neil, especially that Poplar Hawk and what a great photograph. The colours are complementary (how did you do that???) and a great composition which I always think makes for a cohesive result. By coincidence I, too, had one in the trap last night and what amazing creatures they are. I'm afraid my efforts don't quite match up to yours which you will see for yourself when I get round to posting 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 31-Jul-16 10:57 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, a pity he wasn't in better nick but still a nice one for the garden 😊

Hi Dave, that is pretty well how I started, looking at other photos which got me thinking...dangerous stuff 😊

Hi Goldie, I have noticed before that there seems to be more variation in Gatekeepers further north.

Thanks Pauline, glad you like the moths and thanks for the comments on the Poplar Hawk. I just posed him on an old fence post which I use for a lot of my moth shots and moved it about until I got a background I liked. The Poplar Hawks are nice docile moths unlike a lot of the others, especially geos which can be a pain to get a decent shot of.

### Saturday 30th July

A couple of hours at Shadowbrook Meadows near Solihull on Saturday afternoon in mostly overcast conditions reinforced the impression that this is a poor season for some of our common species. Although cloudy, the air temperature was around 20c and there were some occasional short spells of warm sun during which this site should have been alive with Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers with a supporting cast of Whites, Skippers, Common Blues, Small Coppers and summer vanessids.

I have never seen this site so quiet at this time of year with only Green-veined Whites seen in anything approaching the normal sort of numbers I would expect. A maximum of 30-40 Meadow Browns were seen across the four meadows that make up this site whereas there should have been hundreds and just a few Gatekeepers were seen when usually the dividing hedges would be alive with them. A few Large White were present and maybe a couple of dozen Small Skippers were zipping about plus a couple of Speckled Wood and singles of Comma, Red Admiral and Peacock were also seen. As well as the low numbers, a lot of the butterflies were looking worn and bit bedraggled, no doubt as a result of some of the heavy showers we have had over the past few days.



*Gatekeeper female – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Gatekeeper female – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Gatekeeper male – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Green-veined White – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Comma – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



*Red Admiral – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016*



Peacock – Shadowbrook 30.07.2016

I have previously seen Common Blue, Brown Argus and Small Copper flying here in late July but none of these showed up this time...fingers crossed they are just late.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-16 10:23 PM GMT

I'm crossing my fingers for you as well Neil 😊 Your second Hedge Brown seems to have 2 spots on the left and 1 on the right of the fore wing under the 'eyes' – nice 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 01-Aug-16 10:39 AM GMT

Hi! Neil, Just getting RA and saw the first Peacock yesterday, hope fully things are on the way out now. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-16 02:39 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, she was a particularly large and impressive individual as well 😊

Hi Goldie, yes lets hope that things improve but this season has already proved to be a poor one for a number of species.

### Saturday 30th July – addendum

We had a particularly nice sunset over the garden on Saturday evening...



### Sunday 31st July

It was Jane's birthday on Sunday and all three of our grown up kids came round to visit so it was a day spent around the house doing family stuff. It was another mostly overcast day and slightly cooler than Saturday but I still managed a few stints in the garden during which I saw good numbers of whites passing through plus a few Holly Blues including a male that settled fairly high up in the Ivy and nice female that settled lower down and posed for a

few shots.



*Holly Blue male - tight crop of a long distance shot.*



*Holly Blue female - Coverdale 31.07.2016*



*Holly Blue female - Coverdale 31.07.2016*

A single slightly tatty Comma also popped in for a brief visit,



*Comma - Coverdale 31.07.2016*

The usual Speckled Woods were also there, in fact looking through my photos afterwards there were more different individuals than I originally thought...a separate post on these to follow.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Maximus, 01-Aug-16 02:44 PM GMT

Nice shots of the Holly Blues, Neil, especially the females 😊 We've been looking for second brood Holly Blues in our garden – so far without success 😞 Last year there were plenty.

Mike

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 01-Aug-16 08:24 PM GMT

That's a lovely female Holly Blue, Neil. 😊 They do seem sparse in the second brood round here unfortunately.

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 01-Aug-16 08:58 PM GMT

Thanks Mike 😊

The Holly Blues have been showing up here for the past week or so with two or three in the garden whenever it has been warm enough.

Edit; Cheers Dave, nearly missed your comment whilst I was writing the next bit. Holly Blue numbers seem about normal for me around here although I never have had the numbers that you have had down your way.

### **Sunday Specklies**

As mentioned in my previous post I also saw a number of Speckled Wood in the garden on Sunday. From around mid-morning until around 5.30 in the afternoon there seemed to be three or four males holding territories in the usual spots, plus an occasional wandering female which is the usual sort of numbers I would expect in the garden at this time of year.

As is my usual practice with the garden Specklies, I took loads of photos to try and identify different individuals by differences in markings and wear so that I can try and keep track of how they are doing each year. On checking the photos later I was surprised to see that I had in fact photographed eight different males, all in various states of wear.



*Speckled Wood male #1*



*Speckled Wood male #2*



*Speckled Wood male #3*



*Speckled Wood male #4*



*Speckled Wood male #5*



*Speckled Wood male #6*



*Speckled Wood male #7*



*Speckled Wood male #8*

I have read up quite a bit on the Speckled Wood over the past couple of years and apparently males can be divided into 'perchers' and 'patrollers' with some taking up a fixed territory and others becoming more mobile depending on weather conditions and time of season. Also those with four spots on the hind wing tend to perch whereas those with three spots tend to patrol. There is a good description of these behaviours in the section on this species in *The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland* (Thomas & Lewington). It would appear that I had a number of patrollers passing through on Sunday.

As well as the males, three different females were identified, making eleven individuals seen in the garden on Sunday.



*Speckled Wood female #1*



*Speckled Wood female #2*



*Speckled Wood female #3*

With these and the Specklies that I have seen at other local spots recently it would seem that this is one species that is having a fairly good season so far, at least around here 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 01-Aug-16 09:53 PM GMT

I'm most envious, Neil. Female Holly Blues posing like that anytime is a joy, but to have it in your own garden....



### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-16 11:06 PM GMT

I agree with David Neil 🗨️ Great Specklies as always 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-16 10:09 AM GMT

Beautiful Sunset Neil and your Holly Blue shots are fantastic 🗨️ just wish I could see one 😞 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 05-Aug-16 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments David, Wurzel and Goldie, appreciated as always 😊

Catch up time again after my latest little trip.

#### August 2nd – 5th Arnside.

On Tuesday (August 2nd ) Jane and myself set out up the M6 for a few days stopping at Arnside for our third visit there this year, the first and second being when we stopped there for a couple of nights on the way to and from Scotland at the beginning of June. The timing of this visit of course was to see Scotch Argus on Arnside Knot.

The weather forecast did not look very promising and when we arrived at our B&B on Tuesday afternoon it was under grey skies and drizzle. Nevertheless, after settling in I decided to go up the Knot to stretch my legs after the drive and have a look around. Although it was cloudy with an intermittent drizzle, the air temperature was in the high teens and I soon saw a few Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers and making my way up to the usual spots found a few Scotch Argus flapping about. I have noticed before that, despite what some books say, Scotch Argus will happily fly in cloudy conditions as long as it is warm enough. I have also read that as soon as a cloud covers the sun they will drop into the grass but here they were still flying in full overcast and a slight drizzle. Admittedly not many were out in the conditions but it was not hard to put a load more up just by walking through the grass. After an hour or so the drizzle turned to proper rain and a stiff wind blew up so I returned to the B&B to chill out for a bit and get ready to go out for a meal.

Wednesday started off with very similar weather so we decided to go around to RSPB Leighton Moss where we spent the morning in the hides. After lunch it brightened up a bit so I went back up the Knot again. Although a bit brighter, a blustery wind had blown up from the north-west which could really be felt on the more exposed scree slopes above the car park. In the more sheltered glades and clearings the Scotch Argus were out in greater numbers than the previous afternoon along with Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, a few Speckled Woods and the odd tatty Ringlet although everything was keeping low down to avoid being swept off in the wind.

Thursday (August 4th) looked more promising with a cloudy morning clearing to sunny spells in the afternoon and with the wind dropping, so after a bit of a leisurely morning which involved a nice cream tea for elevenses I was back up the Knot again on the afternoon. The Scotch Argus were out in good numbers although it has to be said there were dozens rather than the hundreds that I have seen here on previous visits a couple of years back.

The same can be said for the Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers which were both flying in good numbers albeit both species in lower numbers than I am used to seeing here. Other butterflies were also noticeably down in numbers with only Speckled Woods seeming to be doing reasonably well. A couple of Fritillaries came close enough to ID as worn and faded High Browns but apart from these, a few Small Skippers, a couple of passing whites and singles of Brimstone, Red Admiral, Comma and Common Blue were the only other butterflies seen on what was a reasonable afternoon weatherwise.

Last year I came here in the last week of July and the Scotch Argus were just starting and I only saw approximately 20–30, all males. This year I aimed for a week later and found both males and females in good numbers but with most showing varying amounts of wear and tear. That's the vagaries of our seasons for you.







*Male underside*

In truth I found the Knot to be a lot quieter than I have been used to in the past, particularly two or three years ago. The past couple of seasons have apparently been dull and wet up here and with this year being a generally poor one again this area is in need of a good season to help things recover.

A few more photos of the other species to follow...

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-16 09:57 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Neil – looking forward to the other species shots as well 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Freeman

by essexbuzzard, 05-Aug-16 09:57 PM GMT

I think it's a poor season everywhere , Neil! But at least you got to see the Scotch Argus this year, and it's a pleasure to see the pictures. 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-16 08:47 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel and Mark, a few more shots from the trip coming up...

#### August 2nd – 5th Arnside part 2.

As previously posted, I saw a few other species during the trip but overall numbers were down quite significantly compared to my previous visits here, most notably 3 years ago as described on page 32 of this diary.

There were loads of Gatekeepers about, mostly looking tired and faded. I have noticed on previous visits here and again on this trip that a lot of these Gatekeepers are noticeably smaller than those I get back home.



*Gatekeeper male – Arnside 03.08.2016*



*Gatekeeper female – Arnside 04.08.2016*

Speckled Woods seemed to be doing reasonable well with good numbers scattered about all over the Knot.



*Speckled Wood – Arnside 03.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Arnside 04.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Arnside 04.08.2016*

A fair number of Small Skippers were seen darting about,



*Small Skipper - Arnside 04.08.2016*

No Essex skippers here yet but given that Small Skippers are a fairly recent arrival and there were no Gatekeepers here either just a few years ago, then I wonder how long until they also arrive. Speckled Wood and Comma are also fairly recent arrivals in these parts, sometime in the 1980s or 90s I believe when both species enjoyed an expansion of range northward.

Singles of Comma, Red Admiral and Brimstone were also seen on the Thursday (4th August) afternoon,



*Comma - Arnside 04.08.2016*



*Red Admiral - Arnside 04.08.2016*



*Brimstone – Arnside 04.08.2016*

Both Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries can be seen flying here at this time of year although it is late in the season for both species and they are often worn and faded by now. Indeed, I saw a couple of fresh DGFs here back in early June when we stayed here on our way back from Scotland a full two months ago. During our stay here this time I saw a few Fritillaries flying about on the Thursday afternoon when the weather was quite reasonable but only two came close enough to identify. Both turned out to be High Browns, one of which really was looking worse for wear but flying around vigorously still.



*High Brown Fritillary – Arnside 04.08.2016*



*High Brown Fritillary – Arnside 04.08.2016*

Also of note were the number of Cinnabar Moth caterpillars on the numerous yellow ragwort plants that were all over the Knot,



*Cinnabar Moth caterpillars – Arnside 03.04.2016*

Although the butterflies are my prime reason for visiting this area, it is also good for birds which Jane is more interested in. We often visit RSPB Leighton Moss and have described the birds that we usually see there in previous reports. This time we stayed in a B&B right in Arnside and our room looked out over the Kent Estuary where we could see Curlews, Greenshanks and Oystercatchers on the sandbanks when the tide went out. Too far away for photos with my FZ200 but good views through binoculars.

On the Thursday evening I was enjoying a tippie and watching the sun go down over the estuary and was captivated by the change in light as it reflected off the water and went from a silvery hue to a rich coppery gold colour...



*Evening light over the Kent Estuary*



*Shortly after the previous photo*

A beautiful part of the world, I fully intend to return many times.

Bye for now,

Neil.

## **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 08-Aug-16 10:11 PM GMT

### **Neil Freeman wrote:**

On the Thursday evening I was enjoying a tippie and watching the sun go down over the estuary and was captivated by the change in light as it reflected off the water and went from a silvery hue to a rich coppery gold colour...

One of the coincidental joys of being a butterfly enthusiast! It takes you to beautiful places to witness divine spectacles you wouldn't otherwise see.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Aug-16 08:54 PM GMT

Yes David, we certainly get to see some beautiful areas travelling around to see butterflies 😊

### Saturday 6th August

It has been a strange week for me with me seeming to be busy most evenings but I don't really know why and I intended to post this little report days ago but somehow haven't managed to find the time until tonight. Perhaps I am slowly slipping into a Wurzel time warp 😊😊

Anyway, last Saturday afternoon I went around to my local spot at Bickenhill near Solihull for a couple of hours to see what was about. It was a nice afternoon with plenty of sun with the occasional fluffy white cloud, in other words a beautiful summers afternoon. I haven't been able to say that many times this year, even the wind was just a gentle breeze for a change.

There were plenty of Whites of all three common species flying over the farmers fields to the side of the footpaths with good numbers of Gatekeepers along the hedges although these were mostly looking well past their best. Arriving at the usual grassy meadows there were a few Meadow Browns and Small/Essex skippers still flying but these were all on their last legs and would not be lasting much longer here.

This site is one where I have previously found Brown Argus although I did not find any here last year and thsi species did not have a good year locally last year. I was pleased therefore to see a small silvery object darting about which resolved itself into a male Brown Argus vigorously defending his small patch.



*Brown Argus - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*

I was even more pleased when a small coppery blur close by turned out to be a Small Copper, the first one I have seen locally this year and only the second one I have seen so far this season. This is another species that had a poor season around here last year and seems to be having a worse one this year. A closer look at this individual showed him to have a pale right half which contrasted with his normal copper coloured left side.



*Small Copper - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*

There were also a few Common Blues flying in this corner, at least two and maybe three fresh males, none of which would settle for long in the warm afternoon sun.

In previous years I have found plenty of Peacocks here but last year numbers in the summer emergence seemed to crash badly. Moving over to a couple of large patches of thistles I found at least eight individuals which was another sight which cheered me up in what has so far been a worrying season in many respects.



*Peacock - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*



*Peacock - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*

I also had a couple of flypasts from at least one and maybe two Painted Ladies that seemed to be heading north at rapid speed. Moving on to another corner of the site I found another Painted Lady that was flying about much more slowly and when settled looked as if it had not long emerged.



*Painted Lady - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*



*Painted Lady – Bickenhill 06.08.2016*

Overall, butterfly numbers were well down on what I would expect to see here at this time of year, Small Tortoiseshells were particularly notable by their absence and Common Blues were far fewer than normal. On the other hand I was pleased to find the Brown Argus and Small Copper albeit only singles of each species and the Peacocks were an encouraging sight after their numbers crashed so badly here last summer.

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by bugboy, 12-Aug-16 10:23 PM GMT

I too couldn't help but notice all the Cinnabar caterpillars, something I've noticed in several sites I've visited recently. I didn't do much birding up there myself in the end, too focused in bagging a few more butterfly lifers but I will definitely visit again and do some proper birding, such a beautiful part of the world and the little town still seems very unspoilt 😊 .

Trowbarrow is small but very picturesque, an abandoned quarry. There weren't a huge amount of butterflies on my visit but it would be interesting to visit earlier in the year in a better butterfly year.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Hoggers, 13-Aug-16 03:16 PM GMT

Hi Neil, top class report and photographs as always!

I have never come across a Small Copper like your one with pale fore and hind wing. I found one which had both forewings a lovely pale lemon colour once and I do see the occasional Copper with a pale right forewing now and again.

For some reason it always seems to be the right hand side that's affected – I've never yet seen one with just a pale left forewing!

Best wishes,

Hoggers.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 18-Aug-16 11:12 PM GMT

That's an interesting Small Copper for sure, Neil.

I'm always perplexed when just part of a butterfly's wings are aberrant.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-16 08:15 PM GMT

#### bugboy wrote:

...such a beautiful part of the world and the little town still seems very unspoilt 😊 ...

Indeed, I always feel like I am stepping back in time when I am up that way 😊

Hi Hoggers and David, I would imagine that the pale colour is the result of some sort of temperature shock or similar environmental influence in the pupal stage...just guessing really.

#### Friday 19th August

Well, as usual there was some lovely late summer weather earlier in the week whilst I was in work and now that the weekend is here it has turned wet

and windy again. Having already seen the forecast for the rest of the week, on Wednesday I cashed in some brownie points and stopped off on my way home from work at my local spot at Castle Hills near Solihull for an hour or so to make the most of the weather whilst it lasted.

Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers seemed to be just about finished here now with just a few of both species seen and those all being well faded examples. On the other hand, Speckled Wood numbers were on the up with many fresh looking individuals seen along the more shaded parts of the paths and hedgerows. A few Small Skippers were also still buzzing about but Essex Skippers seemed to have finished whereas in previous years they usually finish around the same time.

I was pleased to find maybe a dozen Common Blues as this species has been in short supply around here so far this year. They were very active in the late afternoon sun and when they did settle they were mostly reluctant to open their wings.



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 17.08.2016*



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 17.08.2016*



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 17.08.2016*



*Common Blue – Castle Hills 17.08.2016*

Also seen were a fair number of whites, mostly Green-veined and Small with a couple of Large plus a single Small Heath. No Vanessaids were seen which I found surprising given the conditions.

#### **Recent garden moths**

I have continued to run the moth trap in the garden and have been slowly increasing the number of species although overall numbers have been low, mirroring at night the situation with the butterflies around here during the day. I am now up to 117 species of macro moth plus 48 micros that I have managed to identify. There are also a fair number of micros that I have photographed and still yet to identify, something for the winter months probably.



*Yellow Shell*



*Old Lady – impressively large species this one.*



*Herald*



*Riband Wave - loads of these since mid June and still getting fresh ones.*



*Pebble Prominent*



*Orange Swift – female*



*Orange Swift – male*



*Copper Underwing*



*Willow Beauty*



*Ruby Tiger*

The best/rarest moth I have had so far is a Lesser Treble-bar form *fimbriata* which lacks the bold cross lines of the normal form. This was confirmed by the Warwickshire county moth recorder who tells me that he trapped one a couple of years ago and has not heard of another one in the county since.



*Lesser Treble-bar form fimbriata*

I will probably do a separate report on micros, probably in the winter when I have more time but here are a couple of attractive ones to be going on with.



*Anania coronata*



*Carcina quercana*

Bye for now,

Neil

### Re: Neil Freeman

by millerd, 19-Aug-16 08:39 PM GMT

That Copper was a very interesting find, Neil. I've yet to see an out-of-the-ordinary one. The Common Blues are lovely, too, and very welcome given their scarcity this year. They are noticeably reluctant to open up in hot weather, and annoyingly don't bask before roosting when it's very warm. I wish I could get up earlier and see them when they are waking up... 😊

Dave

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 19-Aug-16 10:29 PM GMT

Cheers Dave, I get up early enough but am in work for 06.30 so not much time for basking butterflies in the morning. Yes, I was pleased to see the Common Blues and other reports are showing increasing numbers are being sighted around Warwickshire at last.

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-16 07:52 PM GMT

#### Wednesday 24th August

With the recent pattern of the best of the weather usually occurring during the week whilst I am work, I decided a couple of weeks ago to take a gamble and book a day off in the middle of a week and hopefully have a run over to Grafton Wood to look for Brown Hairstreak. So it was that this Wednesday morning saw me heading over the border into Worcestershire with fingers crossed that the pleasant morning weather would hold out for the day.

I arrived and parked at the church at Grafton Flyford and headed off through the farmyard and across the fields towards the wood. Entering the wood I decided to have a meander up to the main ride and then make my way to the pond area which has been the 'hotspot' for Brown Hairstreaks here for the past couple of years, ever since the 'Orchard' became a no-go area due to an apparent falling out with the local farmer who owns that bit of land. I probably spent an hour or so slowly wandering along the rides and saw numerous Green-veined and Small Whites on patrol plus a good number of Speckled Woods. There were plenty of nectar sources along the rides and side paths including clumps of Hemp Agrimony which were strangely devoid of butterflies, but also large stands of Fleabane and Devils-bit Scabious which were attracting more interest. Some late Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers along with a few Common Blues and a female Speckled Wood were all seen on the Fleabane whereas the blue flowers of the Devils-bit Scabious in one particular large patch were being visited by Green-veined and Small Whites plus a couple each of Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral.



*Common Blue female - Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Red Admiral - Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Brimstone female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

The female Speckled Wood below appeared to have had both antennae snipped off but didn't seem to be adversely affected in any way.



*Speckled Wood female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

Finally arriving by the pond area I could hear the sound of a chainsaw and a little further on found some West Midlands BC members on a work party. Recognising a few familiar faces including John Tilt and Dave Williams, I went over for a chat and also met UKB member Van Greaves who was with the work party. As it was approaching lunch time a number of us went to check out the nearby area for Brown Hairstreaks. Apparently the females here have recently been coming down to lay at around 1.00pm and sure enough just before that time the call went out that one had been sighted. During the next hour or so there were a few more sightings and we reckoned that four different females had been seen in this area which I believe had been cut back a couple of years ago to encourage Blackthorn re-growth. In the warm afternoon sun they were reluctant to open up and show their topsides and spent most of the time either walking up and down the blackthorn suckers or sitting head on to the sun which tended to put both sides in shade and made it difficult to get a decent photo. In the end I tried using some flash to fill in the shadows and managed some underside shots I was happy with.



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

I also got this shot of one female which landed on some dead branches with the sun behind her which I like because of the unusual colour combination.



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

A couple of times there was a tantalising glimpse of the orange patches on an individual's topside before they changed their mind and either closed up again or took off back up into the treetops. The only one that opened up properly was low down in the vegetation in a combination of sun and shadow and I just managed the one quick shot before she fluttered deeper in before re-emerging and heading up for the tree-tops.



*Brown Hairstreak female – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

Also seen was a nice fresh Comma and a really tatty Silver-washed Fritillary but I didn't manage to get any shots of these.

A great day and the weather stayed better than the forecast which had indicated that it would be clouding over in the afternoon with rain heading in, which in the end didn't reach us until the evening.

Bye for now,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by trevor, 26-Aug-16 08:30 PM GMT

Beautiful Brown Hairstreak images Neil, particularly the penultimate picture which is also back lit. I always hope they will open up, but that underside is a gorgeous sight on it's own.

Best wishes,  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-16 09:04 PM GMT

Yes, I agree, I think the undersides are nicer anyway. It's great that you have Brown Hairstreaks not too far away, and your pictures are good, too. Well done. Are you off to Dorset this year?

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 27-Aug-16 09:53 PM GMT

The penultimate photo with the dead leaves is terrific, Neil. It just epitomises the Brown Hairstreak as an early autumn butterfly. A classic shot in my book. 😊

Dave

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-16 09:33 AM GMT

Thanks for the comments Trevor, Mark and Dave, I was pleased with that back-lit shot especially as I only had time for the one shot before it flew off further into the nearby blackthorn.

Unfortunately we are not going to Dorset this year Mark. Jane fancied a change of scenery for our early September break so we are heading down to Cornwall next weekend. Not sure what I will find down there at this time of year, especially the way this season has been. I only realised the other day that this will be the first time this year that I will have gone further south than the midlands.

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by MikeOxon, 28-Aug-16 11:06 AM GMT

**Neil Freeman wrote:**

..... As it was approaching lunch time a number of us went to check out the nearby area for .....

Such dedication – I thought you were going to check out local pubs 😊

Splendid BH photos and, as others have said, the one surrounded by Autumn leaves is a classic!

Mike

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-16 11:28 PM GMT

Beautiful Brostreaks Neil, the penultimate shot is absolutely perfect 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 30-Aug-16 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks Mike and Wurzel... I reckon that shot could probably be in my top five favourites I have taken this year 😊

**Sunday 28th August.**

Around this time of year I often see male Vapourer Moths flitting about high up around the trees in my back garden and have also had a couple come to my moth trap at night although they are primarily day flyers. Back in early August I found a large caterpillar of this species chomping away at some Crocosmia in the garden and kept it to rear through.



In due course it spun a cocoon in the plastic box and pupated. The cocoon was only loosely attached to the plastic and so was easily removed and placed in a cage ready to emerge. On Sunday morning I checked the cage and noticed that a plump female had emerged and was sitting on the cocoon. The females of this species are flightless and only possess tiny vestigial wings and so they never venture far, often just sitting on the cocoon waiting for a male to turn up. With this in mind I placed the cage outside in the garden to see if she would attract any males. Well, she didn't take long as when I went back outside about twenty minutes later and there were three males fluttering around the cage. This cage has a zipped flap on the side which I opened up to allow entry and one of the males soon found his way in and promptly mated with the female.



I checked again about an hour later and they had separated with the male sitting on the netting side of the cage so I moved him to take a couple of photos before he flew off.



Checking again later that afternoon, the female had started laying a batch of eggs on the surface of her old cocoon. Amazing to think that she had fulfilled her purpose in life without moving more than an inch or two the whole time.



This species overwinters as an egg so I will keep these in the garage to rear through next year.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Pauline, 30-Aug-16 08:10 PM GMT

An interesting account Neil and great shots to accompany it (as usual) 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Paul Harfield, 30-Aug-16 10:23 PM GMT

Hi Neil

Very interesting account and photos 😊. I regularly find Vapourer larvae in my own garden (on Maple) but have never seen the adults there. The males are always evident in flight whilst looking for Brown Hairstreaks 😊, but the female certainly is a curious looking insect.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 31-Aug-16 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, it was fascinating to watch the events all unfold within the space of a few hours 😊

Hi Jack, I have been seeing the males in the garden for some years now and regularly spot them whilst out and about. Although they can be on the wing from July there is a definite increase at this time of year. As you say, they can easily be mistaken for Brown Hairstreaks, especially when fluttering around the higher reaches of trees.

#### Garden Specklies

The bank holiday weekend just past was one spent mostly doing family stuff and catching up on some jobs around the house and garden. Both Sunday and bank holiday Monday were pleasant sunny days so I spent as much time as possible doing the garden jobs and was kept company as usual by a number of Speckled Woods. I could often see six or seven different individuals at the same time on and around the over-ripe blackberries at the bottom of the garden including some nice fresh examples.

Usually the males are much more in evidence as they stake out and defend their territories but at this time of year both sexes can be found together in equal numbers as they feed on the blackberries, although I did witness a couple of instances of males trying it on with a female and getting the 'play dead' rejection stance.

The females were mostly in better condition than the males as evidenced by the photos that I took which tended to concentrate on the better looking individuals...



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood male – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood trio – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood females – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*



*Speckled Wood female – Coverdale 28.08.2016*

Apart from the Specklies, the only other butterflies seen in the garden over the weekend were a few Small Whites and a single rather tatty looking Red Admiral. It has definitely been a rather poor year for butterflies in the garden this year, thankfully the Speckled Woods seem to be bucking the trend and doing well, both in the garden and elsewhere around here.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 31-Aug-16 10:22 PM GMT

Lovely to see a really nice set of Specklies from your garden, Neil. This forum wouldn't be right without them. 😊

Dave

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by trevor, 31-Aug-16 10:34 PM GMT

Beautifully marked female Specklies, Neil. All look very fresh, and could take us well into Autumn. Lovely sequence.

Trevor.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Pauline, 01-Sep-16 07:16 AM GMT

Neil you have a knack of making this relatively ordinary, common butterfly look something very special. Love the shots on blackberry – very autumnal 🍇😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-16 04:41 PM GMT

I agree with Pauline Neil, lovely Speckled Woods Neil, nothing here except Speckies and Whites, Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-16 09:30 PM GMT

Fascinating account of the Vapourer's Neil 😊 I've seen the males whizzing about but have never been able to get a photo of one so to see yours was great – I can picture them in my mind eye the next time one zig-zigs by – it has to one of the most erratic flights that I've seen 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 01-Sep-16 10:34 PM GMT

You are to Speckled Woods what Hoggers is to Small Coppers, Neil! Good to see them so numerous in your vicinity again.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by essexbuzzard, 03-Sep-16 06:59 PM GMT

I too love the vapourer report, a fascinating account of a species which most of us only really notice when looking for brown hairstreaks. Good luck in Cornwall, hopefully the weather will give you some good days.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 11-Sep-16 11:22 AM GMT

Thank you for all the great comments Dave, Trevor, Pauline, Goldie, Wurzel, David and Mark 😊. Apologies for the delayed response, I have been down in Cornwall this past week and it is now catch up time again, both on my diary and looking at everyone else's.

**3rd-10th September – Cornwall Part 1.**

We have just spent a week in Cornwall on a family break with Jane and my mom, staying in a caravan just outside of Hayle on the edge of the dune system at Upton Towans. This was a change to what had become our usual week in Dorset at around this time as Jane fancied a change of scenery so we settled on Cornwall. I had no idea what I would find down there in the way of butterflies, especially after this season which has been below par in many respects.

After a very dull and wet drive down on the Saturday (Sept.3rd), and a cloudy but warm Sunday, the weather improved through the week so that most days had decent sunny spells although there was a bit of a breeze blowing most of the time.

As usual on these family breaks I had time to get some butterflying in, it is amazing how many brownie points a couple of cream teas can get you 😊. Most days after we had been out doing 'touristy stuff' I would have a couple of hours later in the afternoon and have a wander through the dunes at Upton and Gwithian Towans which started right next to our site. On the Wednesday I also had a drive over to The Lizard and walked the path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point.

During my wanders through Upton and Gwithian Towans the most numerous butterfly seen was Meadow Brown with good numbers seen all over the dune systems. This is a species that I have often neglected in the past but given that numbers seem to be well down around my local patch this year it just goes to show that you can't take anything for granted. Meadow Browns have a very protracted emergence and many of those here were looking to be in good condition with some looking like they had only recently emerged. I was also struck by the variability of the amount of orange on the females with some also showing patches on their hindwings. There were also many individuals showing double pupils in the forewing eyespots which I have seen commented on a few times on UKB.



*Meadow Brown male – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 06.09.2016*



*Meadow Brown female – Upton Towans 08.09.2016*

Gatekeepers were still hanging on in there although most were looking worn and tired by now.



*Gatekeeper female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

Speckled Woods seem to be doing well everywhere this year and so I was not surprised to find good numbers here around the scrubby parts of the Towans.



*Speckled Wood female – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

What did surprise me was the number of these that I saw on the more exposed sandier parts of the dunes, not the usual habitat I would expect to find numbers of this species in.



*Speckled Wood male – Upton Towans 06.09.2016*

Small Heaths were also scattered about all over the Towans, not in great numbers but most sheltered areas of longer grass had one or two.



*Small Heath – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

The only other 'Brown' that I saw during the week was a single worn Grayling on the cliff path by Kynance Cove.



*Grayling – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*

Other species seen during the week were;  
Half a dozen each of Painted Lady and Red Admiral, 4 Small Tortoiseshells and a single Peacock,  
Lots of Small Whites, a few Large Whites and a couple of Green-veined Whites,  
Good numbers of Common Blues and a few Brown Argus,  
A few well faded and worn second brood Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Upton Towans,

and Small Coppers...lots of Small Coppers, I have never before seen so many of these 😊.

More reports to come as usual when I have sorted through the many photos I took.

To be continued...

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 11-Sep-16 08:57 PM GMT

What a splendid selection of Meadow Browns! 😊 The fourth female from the 4th (with a clear double eye-spot) is exceptionally marked and a terrific photo. 📷 Finding so many fully open and amenable to photography as well is pretty good too. An underrated species in my book. 😊

Dave

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 12-Sep-16 07:34 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, those shots were mostly taken earlier in the week when there was a fair amount of cloud about but it was still warm which encouraged them to bask 😊

### 3rd-10th September – Cornwall Part 2.

#### Cornish Coppers.

One species that has had some recent publicity with regard to falling numbers is the Small Copper and so far this year I had only seen a couple.

I was pleased therefore to find good numbers scattered about across Upton and Gwithian Towans last week. I probably saw some of the same individuals on my wanderings about on various days but I reckon I saw a conservative estimate of at least 30 different individuals.

Many of those I saw looked quite fresh but there were also some really worn and faded individuals as well. I believe that Small Coppers in Cornwall usually have four broods or even five occasionally in favourable years with the later broods overlapping so that it is possible to see examples of the one brood still hanging on with fresh butterflies of the next brood and this would certainly tie in with what I saw.



*Small Copper – Upton Towans 08.09.2016*



*Small Copper – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Upton Towans 08.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

Even though I was well chuffed with the Small Coppers seen at Upton/Gwithian Towans, the numbers there were easily beaten on the Wednesday (Sept 7th) when I drove over to The Lizard and walked between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point. These were by far the most numerous butterfly seen here and were found in the sheltered dips and valleys and along the stone walls that extend along this stretch of coast path. I did a very rough count up to 50 before I gave up counting and just enjoyed the experience of watching them and taking some photos. I reckon a very conservative estimate of 100+ Small Coppers were seen along this stretch, mostly along the second half of the walk to Lizard Point.

As well as the numbers, the other noticeable thing about this population of Small Coppers was their size with some females in particular being impressively large. There were also a good number of blue-spotted examples here as well.



*Small Copper Habitat*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper - Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper – Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Copper – Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*



*Small Coppers – Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*

I also witnessed a number of courtship attempts which included the 'Turkey Dance' as described by Hoggers in his reports although unfortunately none of them resulted in successful pairing.



*Small Coppers – Kynance to Lizard Point 07.09.2016*

If I remember rightly, Neil Hulme posted a report in his personal diary a couple of years ago in which he described seeing large numbers of Small Coppers along this stretch of coast path. Seeing a similar thing here this year seems to indicate that this is not that unusual for here and it is encouraging to see this species doing so well in this location when it appears to be suffering at many places elsewhere (not including Dungeness of course 😊).

So, it appears that Hoggers doesn't have them all after all 😊

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 12-Sep-16 07:53 PM GMT

A splendid selection of beautiful shining Coppers, Neil. Some of them seem completely perfect, and there is such subtle variety in colour, size and even wing shape. 😊

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 12-Sep-16 08:25 PM GMT

I agree with Dave, in fact all of your photos show that you can still find some fresh butterflies this late in the year despite it being one of the worst seasons that I can remember.

Butterflies are highly resilient and if we get a decent winter I hope to see most species bounce back very well next year.

Best wishes

James

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by essexbuzzard, 12-Sep-16 09:00 PM GMT

Good stretch of coast, that, isn't it Neil. Your pictures, and my experience show this area can be productive right to the end. Great images!

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 12-Sep-16 09:13 PM GMT

Fantastic Copper shots, especially all those blue badgers 🦋

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Hoggers, 13-Sep-16 04:10 PM GMT

Stunning location, Neil and fabulous Coppers!

I also have a memory of Neil Hulme's diary and I think he also commented that the Small Coppers there were noticeably bigger than usual.

A delight to read your report as always,

Hoggers

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-16 05:31 PM GMT

Beautiful Coppers Neil, I particularly like the Copper's on the Daisies, their whiteness really shows the colour of the Copper's best. 😊 Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-16 08:50 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments Dave, James, Mark, Buggy, Hoggers, and Goldie 😊 It was great to see so many in such a beautiful location.

From other reports, it seems that Small Coppers are doing a bit better in these later broods than they did earlier in the year at a lot of places.

### 3rd-10th September – Cornwall Part 3.

As mentioned in my earlier report, I also saw half a dozen each of Painted Ladies and Red Admirals. Four of the Painted Ladies were seen at Kynance Cove where they were spending some time nectaring on the patches of fleabane and wild mint,



*Painted Lady – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*



*Painted Lady – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*



*Painted Lady - Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*

One of those seen at Upton Towans was a really tatty example but the other one was a nice condition individual that spent a good twenty minutes on one small patch of fleabane,



*Painted Lady - Upton Towans 08.09.2016*



*Painted Lady - Upton Towans 08.09.2016*



*Painted Lady – Upton Towans 08.09.2016*

Of the half a dozen Red Admirals seen during the week, most were moving rapidly and I only saw the one individual at Kynance Cove that settled briefly before carrying on,



*Red Admiral – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*

Four Small Tortoiseshells were also seen, two at Kynance Cove and Two at Upton Towans,



*Small Tortoiseshell – Upton Towns 04.09.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*

I also saw a single Peacock at Upton Towns on the Tuesday but it was very flighty and I couldn't get anywhere near it. I watched it for a while from a short distance until all of a sudden it disappeared down one of the many rabbit burrows that are in this area. I stuck around for a while to see if it would come back out but that was the last I saw of it. I have read before about Peacocks hibernating in rabbit burrows so I guess that was its winter quarters.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries regularly have a second brood in Cornwall, usually during August but I was curious to see if there would be any still around. I did indeed find a few at Upton Towans but they were all very worn and faded. I also had a good look for them between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point but without success, I reckon I was just that bit too late for them there.



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

Bye for now,

Neil

## **Re: Neil Freman**

by essexbuzzard, 14-Sep-16 09:32 PM GMT

Yes, probably a bit late, as they usually fly in the first half of August. I'm surprised there were any left at Upton Towans by September, if I'm honest. Glad you found some though. Your Red Admiral count is quite low for west Cornwall, though there would be more. But it's quality over quantity. 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 14-Sep-16 10:36 PM GMT

That first Small Tort. is a particularly vividly marked attractive animal 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 15-Sep-16 08:58 AM GMT

Nice painted Ladies Neil, Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Allan.W., 16-Sep-16 06:45 PM GMT

Hello Neil,

Some great photos there Neil, particularly enjoyed your Small Copper shots, we were down in Cornwall, for a week back in early July, for our 25th, and like yourself took in Kynance Cove (path), what a fantastic site, but didn't see a single Copper! a case of the right place at the wrong time (ie; between broods), that said Silver-studded Blues, Grayling,

Small Pearls, Dark Green Frits, and some great plants, more than compensated..... we'll be back! Brilliant Speckled wood shots too, unfortunately I can't say their doing so well down here in my part of Kent, i've really struggled to find them this season, don't reckon I've seen more than 8-9 all season. regards Allan.W.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 16-Sep-16 08:46 PM GMT

Hi Mark, I must admit I did expect to see a few more Red Admirals down there. Numbers have certainly shot up at home this week... I had 6 together on my garden buddleias when I got home from work on Wednesday afternoon 😊

Cheers Buggy, that one stood out nicely against the sand.

Thanks Goldie, I am always pleased to see Painted Ladies due to the unpredictability of them turning up.

Hello Allan, I walked that stretch of coast last year as well, in early June when the stone walls were festooned with sea pinks and there were plenty of fresh Small Pearls. I reckon that it would be a great spot to visit at any time.

**3rd-10th September - Cornwall Part 4.**

During my wanderings around the dune system at Upton and Gwithian Towans I also saw good numbers of Common Blues, in all sorts of condition from some that were that faded they were nearly transparent to some nice fresh looking examples. This made me wonder if they had overlapping broods here similar to the Small Coppers, unlike back home in the midlands where there is a clear gap between the first and second brood.



*Common Blue - Upton Towans 06.09.2016*



*Common Blue - Upton Towans 05.09.2016*



*Common Blue - Upton Towans 06.09.2016*



*Common Blue - Upton Towans 05.09.2016*

Common Blues were also present along most of my walk between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point although here the males were all pretty well worn with just a few females still in reasonable condition.



*Common Blue – Kynance Cove 07.09.2016*

Brown Argus were also scattered about in many of the sheltered dips on the Towans, most of these being well past their best but with a couple not looking too bad.



*Brown Argus – Upton Towans 05.09.2016*



*Brown Argus – Upton Towans 05.09.2016*

Between the main beach access points there is a long stretch of sand that is almost deserted and a couple of times I walked back along here, especially if I had wandered through the dunes further than originally intended as it was a straighter and quicker walk back. During these walks I saw a number of small flocks of cute little birds which I believe are Sanderlings and managed to get a few shots of them.



*Sanderling – Upton Towans 08.09.2016*



*Sanderling – Upton Towans 08.09.2016*

And a couple of scenery shots to finish with,



*Looking across Upton Towans towards Godrevy Lighthouse*



*Between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point*

Bye for now,

Neil.

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-16 07:58 PM GMT

Beautiful photos all round Neil 😊 especially the Sanderling though – they're one of my favourite birds as they always seem like little children playing 'chicken' with the waves 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: Neil Freeman

by David M, 17-Sep-16 09:28 PM GMT

Lovely to see those 2nd brood Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, Neil. Must have given you quite a shock to your system?

## Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 20-Sep-16 10:05 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, great description of the Sanderlings...that is exactly what they looked like 😊

Hi David, not that much of a shock to be honest. I was aware that they have a second brood which usually flies in early August down there and was on the lookout for any late stragglers still hanging on.

### 3rd-10th September – Cornwall Part 5.

One last report from my week down in Cornwall, this time focusing on the moths I saw there. A couple of months back I had splashed out and treated myself to a second moth trap, a mobile 40w actinic which packs down into its own carrying case, which I was planning to take on some of our trips. As we were staying in a caravan next to Upton Towans I was hoping that I would get the chance to run it and see if I could catch some species that I would be unlikely to see back home.



*Trap out and ready.*

In the end I ran the trap on three nights and attracted 23 species of macro moth which included a few that I was well chuffed with.



*Galium Carpet – A local species that can be fairly common around the southern coasts and chalk grasslands. I believe it is extinct in Warwickshire.*



*Archers Dart – Another local species, this one has a scattered distribution around the coast of Britain and on some inland heaths. Not found in Warwickshire.*



*Hedge Rustic – A locally common species that is apparently scarce in Warwickshire.*



*Nutmeg – Fairly widespread and common but I have yet to see one back home.*

There was also an assortment of more common species that I am used to seeing in my garden trap back home;



*Brimstone, Bright-line Brown-eye and Large Yellow Underwing tucked in together.*



*Common Carpet*



*Green Carpet*



*Flounced Rustic*

Amongst various assorted micros were a couple that I had never seen before;



*Pyrausta despicata* – Apparently common in grassland, heathland and coastal areas.



*Mecyna asinalis* – A scarce species mainly found around the coasts of the South-West and Southern Ireland

I almost overlooked the drab looking micro below until I noticed it down in the bottom of the trap and thought it looked a bit different to the rest so I decided to take a couple of photos to try and ID it. I was glad I did when I managed to identify it as *Nothris congressariella*, a rare and very localised species, occurring only on the Isles of Scilly and a few localities in the South-West. Drab it may be but I was quite excited to find that one 😊



*Nothris congressariella*

My last trip of this season and not only did I see some good butterflies with the Small Coppers being the stars of the week as in my earlier report, but I also saw some good moths including some that I would not get at home.

Bye for now,

Neil.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 23-Sep-16 08:45 PM GMT

Friday 23rd September

Being at work during the week and keeping up with jobs around the house has meant that I have not been out anywhere lately. I did noticed however, along with most areas it seems, that there was marked increase in numbers of Red Admirals over the past couple of weeks with some in my garden to greet me on my arrival back home from work on nearly every afternoon. On a couple of late afternoons there were at least 6 different individuals spread over a couple of buddeias that were still in flower, one in the front garden and one in the back. This more than doubled the numbers of Red Admirals I have seen so far this year.



*Red Admiral – Coverdale 14.09.2016*



*Red Admiral – Coverdale 14.09.2016*



*Red Admirals – Coverdale 14.09.2016*



*Red Admiral – Coverdale 14.09.2016*

As well as the Red Admirals, the Speckled Woods are still in residence and there have been a fair number of Small Whites passing through.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-16 10:41 PM GMT

Love the Admirals Neil, especially the second shot 📷 – such subtlety 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 23-Sep-16 10:52 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Admiral's Neil, I've had them in my garden but only odd ones , it's still been great to see them though. 😊 Goldie 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 24-Sep-16 08:42 PM GMT

I've just been catching up with the last part of your Cornish adventures, Neil. A great selection of Coppers, a smashing Painted Lady and then all those blues... (not to mention a SPBF in there as well). Lovely photos, all of them! 😊

Dave

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 27-Sep-16 07:45 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel, Goldie and Dave. Not having the chance to get out lately it was good to see the Red Admirals in the garden.

Not much to report since last week with another busy weekend which meant I have not had chance to get out and see if there is anything around my local patch still. The garden Specklies are still hanging in there but are mostly looking a bit worn now and Small Whites are still passing through regularly as are Red Admirals, but not as many as last week.

A rather nice sunset over the garden earlier this evening brought the curtain down on another day...



Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 14-Oct-16 07:38 PM GMT

A few issues with my computer the other week led me to getting a new desktop PC at home which meant some time spent copying and backing up files and photos and setting up the new PC to how I want it. This meant that I have not been on UKB (or anywhere else for that matter) for a short while and I now have loads of catching up to do. At least with the season coming to an end I have some time to do this.

The only butterflies that I have seen for the past couple of weeks are the last of this years garden Specklies with a couple of faded males stubbornly hanging in there.

I am still running the moth trap a couple of times a week but numbers have dropped considerably although a few autumn specialities are turning up and I will probably keep running it occasionally as unlike butterflies, there are a few species of moths that fly through the winter.



*Barred Sallow - Coverdale 22.09.2016*



*Common Marbled Carpet - Coverdale 22.09.2016*



*Blairs Shoulder-knot* - Coverdale 29.09.2016



*Lunar Underwings* showing variation - Coverdale 29.09.2016



*Red-line Quaker* - Coverdale 12.10.2016

With the nights now drawing in and the favourite species photo threads now started, it is time I started looking back through my notes and photos and getting my thoughts on the season sorted ready for a looking back report or two.

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-16 10:00 PM GMT

Looking forward to your round-up Neil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 16-Oct-16 11:48 AM GMT

I wondered where you'd been, Neil. 😊

Good moth selection there. I particularly like the Barred Sallow.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 18-Oct-16 07:02 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel, likely to be a little while yet...something to cheer me up on the dark winter nights 😊

Thanks David, in truth I've not really been anywhere, the time has just flown by recently and I didn't get chance to get out anywhere else before the season just came to an end around here. Then I spent some time sorting and backing up files and photos when I changed PCs and before you know it another week or two has passed 😊

I quite like the Barred Sallow myself, they provide a nice splash of colour in the trap 😊

Bye for now,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-16 08:31 PM GMT

I have been seeing the BBC weather forecasts on the T.V. have been commenting on the 'abnormally' warm autumn again. That may well have been the case for some parts of the country and admittedly it was nice and sunny for a couple of days with the temperature reaching the giddy heights of 15c around here but I have to say so far it has been a fairly normal autumn in these parts. I woke up to a frost this morning, and not for the first time this autumn either, and it looks as if the next few days are going to be colder.

With no Clouded Yellows or third broods of anything to extend the season around here I reckon I saw my last butterfly of the season a couple of weeks ago, fittingly enough a Speckled Wood in my garden.



*Speckled Wood - Coverdale 09.10.2016*

Of course I may yet see the odd hibernator but there is always the chance of that in any season.

With the onset of Autumn there has been more bird activity in the garden with all the usual species visiting the feeders including the regular Great Spotted Woodpeckers.



*Great Spotted Woodpecker - Coverdale 30.10.2016*

I often get Magpies and Jays picking up bits of food that have fallen to the ground under the feeder but occasionally they get fed up of waiting and try and knock some down themselves...



*Jay - Coverdale 30.10.2016*

A couple of weeks back I spotted a Fox watching me warily from one of the borders,



*Watching me, watching you...*

And the Squirrels are often sizing up the feeders but they are just out of reach,



*Hmm! just too far...*

I am still putting the moth trap out on occasional likely looking nights and getting a dribble of new species, the latest of which was this Feathered Thorn from Monday night,



*Feathered Thorn - Coverdale 31.10.2012*

Bye for now,

Neil.

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by bugboy, 02-Nov-16 09:09 PM GMT

I love that Jay picture, its the best time of year to get close to them now what with them busy stashing (and more often than not forgetting where they put) acorns for the winter 😊

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-16 10:47 PM GMT

I agree with Bugboy - that is a cracking shot of the Jay 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 05-Nov-16 09:13 PM GMT

I'm assuming you live in a relatively 'countrified' area, Neil. You seem to have so much going on in your garden; far more than me, and I live in the middle of nowhere!!

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 09-Nov-16 09:34 PM GMT

Cheers Bugboy and Wurzel...I had been watching the antics of that Jay for a while before I thought of trying to get a shot of it in mid air.

Hi David, I am in a typical suburban location, not really a 'countrified' area. All of the houses around me are 1930s semis with decent sized mature gardens with lots of trees and shrubs which no doubt helps.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Goldie M, 11-Nov-16 01:03 PM GMT

Hi! Neil fantastic shot of the Jay, we have them here at Hall-Lee-Brook but they don't venture out of there much, never seen one in my garden at all. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Freeman

by Neil Freeman, 09-Dec-16 07:54 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, I get them in garden quite regularly but not often around the feeders.

#### Winter moth trapping

After a couple of weeks of proper winter weather with overnight temperatures dropping down to -3 or -4 and on at least one occasion my car display was showing -6 on the way to work at 06.30am, the weather turned much milder this week. With a few species of moths being winter specialists I decided to run the moth trap in the garden a couple of times to see if anything would turn up.

The species I expected to see was the aptly named Winter Moth which flies throughout the winter and so I was not surprised to have a couple of these in the trap.



*Winter Moth - Coverdale 09.12.16*

A faded female Red-green Carpet also turned up on Wednesday night. In this species the males fly from September to November but the females hibernate and fly again the following spring but will also come to light on milder winter nights.



*Red-green Carpet - Coverdale 08.12.2016*

I was also pleased to see nice example of The Satellite, so named because of the two small 'satellite' spots by the larger white stigma spots on each forewing. This is another species which hibernates as an adult but will also fly in milder weather throughout the winter. The larvae of this species feed on a wide range of trees and shrubs and when larger are carnivorous and actively seek out the larvae of other Lepidoptera to prey on.



*Satellite - Coverdale 09.12.2016*

The tally was completed by a couple of micros in the form of Light Brown Apple Moths and a single Twenty-plume moth, both species which can be seen in any month of the year.

Although the frequency of putting the trap out has dropped considerably, I will continue to run it through the winter on likely looking nights to see what is out there.

Bye for now,

Neil.

## **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 11-Dec-16 05:41 PM GMT

### **Looking back at 2016- Part 1**

#### **Spring**

After a very mild first half to the winter, the weather turned a bit colder in early February with some frosty nights and a few days with light coverings of snow here in the midlands.

The first hibernators started re-appearing around my local patch at the end of March which is a fairly normal time for the season to kick off around here. My first sightings are always of the three common hibernating vanessids, Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, with any of these three turning up first in any year. This year it was a Peacock, closely followed by a Small Tortoiseshell, both seen on 25th March, joined by Commas a week later when I saw all three on 2nd April. I then saw these at all the usual spots locally but numbers of all three species were well down on previous years.

Nevertheless they gave me the chance to get some spring shots of butterflies on blossom...always a good start to the season 😊.



*Peacock - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



*Small Tortoiseshell - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*



*Comma - Bickenhill 02.04.2016*

It seems that Red Admirals are beginning to overwinter successfully in the midlands with some early sightings being reported but not yet in the kind of numbers seen down south. I have yet to see one around my local patch before June.

Brimstones can be a bit hit and miss for me around my local patch but I have been seeing a few more passing through my garden over the past few seasons, some of which have lingered around, probably attracted by some buckthorn that I planted a few years ago and on which I have been lucky enough to see females laying a number of times now.



*Brimstone - Coverdale 06.05.2016*

Spring then turned into one of those cool and cloudy ones that we have often had over the past few years with a nippy northerly breeze making itself felt on many days. This seemed to hold back the emergence of the rest of the usual spring species and it was the end of April before these started to show up with Green-veined and Large Whites appearing first, followed by Small Whites, Orange-tips, Holly Blues and Speckled Woods in early May. Throughout the rest of May, most of the better weather seemed to be during the week when I was at work with the weekends often being cool and cloudy which no doubt coloured my perceptions but my impression was that numbers of most species seemed to be well down on normal. Orange-tips in particular appeared to be having a poor season locally and seemed to have a shorter flight period than normal, although I did see good numbers still flying around Fort William when I was in Scotland in early June.



*Green-veined White – Coverdale 29.04.2016*



*Large White – Coverdale 06.05.2016*



*Small White – Coverdale 27.05.2016*



*Orange-tip – Castle Hills 14.05.2016*



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 12.05.2016*



*Holly Blue – Coverdale 24.05.2016*

Later in May saw me getting out a bit further around Warwickshire and a trip down to Bishops Hill produced Dingy Skipper and Small Blues along with the first Common Blues of the season, although I failed to find any Grizzled Skippers there this year.



*Dingy Skipper – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Small Blue – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*



*Common Blues – Bishops Hill 22.05.2016*

A week later Common Blues were flying at my local patch along with a few first brood Small Heaths. The latter species is the subject of some concern in Warwickshire and currently appears to be the butterfly in most serious decline in the county. I also had a good look in the usual spots for first brood Small Coppers but without success.



*Small Heath – Castle Hills 29.05.2016*

At the end of May a trip to Ryton Wood and Meadows on yet another cloudy day produced half a dozen or so Wood Whites, around the same number of Green Hairstreaks and my only sighting of a Pearl-bordered Fritillary this year. The best site in the midlands for PBF is the Wyre Forest but unfortunately due to various limitations on my available time I did not manage to get there this year.



*Wood White – Ryton Wood 30.05.2016*



*Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Ryton Wood 30.05.2016*



*Green Hairstreak – Ryton Wood Meadows – 30.05.2016*

Some exceptionally mild weather during the previous autumn had continued well into the winter and I had read a lot of comments wondering how those conditions would effect this season. Whether it was that or the generally cool and cloudy spring, or indeed a combination of both, butterfly numbers in general had so far been well down in what had turned into a disappointing early season overall.

The next look back will take us through June and into high summer.

Bye for now,

Neil

### **Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 11-Dec-16 06:38 PM GMT

Nice start to the look back Neil – looking forward to the next installment 😊 I have some relatives living in Worcester so whereabouts are the PBFs in the Wyre, are they widespread there or in certain locations?

Have a goodun  
Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Goldie M, 12-Dec-16 06:38 PM GMT

Lovely photos Neil, not too long now before a new year begins, Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 12-Dec-16 08:41 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie. Yep, just another couple of weeks and the nights will start getting shorter again 😊

Cheers Wurzel. The PBFs can be found spread around the Wyre in a number of places and they seem to move quickly into new areas as they become available through various types of management. There are a number of good spots in the meadows along Dowles Brook and along the old railway line although I have also seen them whilst wandering more widely around the forest.

For more info on good sites within reach of Worcester and for a good read on butterflies of the area, if you don't already have it I would strongly recommend the recently published 'Butterflies of the West Midlands' <http://www.dispar.org/reference.php?id=116>

Cheers,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by millerd, 12-Dec-16 10:20 PM GMT

A lovely selection of spring butterflies, Neil. 😊 I had no idea there were PBF at Ryton – is it a new (re)introduction? I saw a couple of Wood Whites there myself this year in the wood but found the meadow area inaccessible because of additional quite robust fencing. Can this now be reached only on particular open days?

Dave

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 14-Dec-16 08:59 PM GMT

Thanks Dave 😊. PM sent.

The PBFs were reintroduced a couple of years ago although it is some time since this species was present in Warwickshire. I believe their future (and that of the Wood Whites) hangs in the balance as the wood is no longer being managed by Warwickshire BC although the meadows are. This is part of the reason for the fence and there have been issues with people wandering through from the country park and letting dogs run loose and there is often livestock present in the meadows.

Cheers,

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 19-Dec-16 08:07 PM GMT

**Looking back at 2016– Part 2****Summer.**

With the transition from late spring into early summer, the weather here in the midlands stayed pretty much the same – that is lots of cloud with an almost constant cool breeze which kept the temperatures down a bit even on the occasions when the sun was out.

Early June saw me travelling north for a couple of days near Arnside and then continuing on to Scotland for 4 days before heading back south and spending another couple of days around Arnside. It was during this trip that it was really brought home to me how much seasons can vary in different parts of the UK. On our arrival at our first B&B our hosts told us that they had been enjoying a couple of weeks of good weather, much better than we had been having back home in the midlands. This pattern continued when we were in Scotland with glorious sunny weather on every day that we were up there. The weather stayed good for us until the following weekend when we had some cloud and drizzle on our return trip.

The result of this good weather in that part of the world was that the season seemed ahead of what I had experienced so far this year in the midlands and I was surprised to find Northern Brown Argus already flying in the first few days of June at Warton Crag, Arnside Knot and Gait Barrows. I had hoped I would find these on our way back from Scotland the following weekend but thought that it would be a bit too early on the way up.



Northern Brown Argus *salmactis* – Warton Crag 03.06.2016

Good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were also flying, both around Arnside and in Scotland at Glasdrum Wood and Glen Loy. It seemed that this species is doing well in the northern parts of its range.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Arnside Knot 04.06.2016

The trip to Scotland was primarily to see my first Chequered Skippers, which I found at Glasdrum Wood, Alt Mhuic and Glen Loy, the last of these sites easily being my favourite. Never having seen them before, I could not say how the CSKs were doing compared with previous years other than the early season up there nearly caught me out. In fact the ones I saw at Glasdrum and Alt Mhuic had obviously been flying for some time and the best examples were found at Glen Loy.



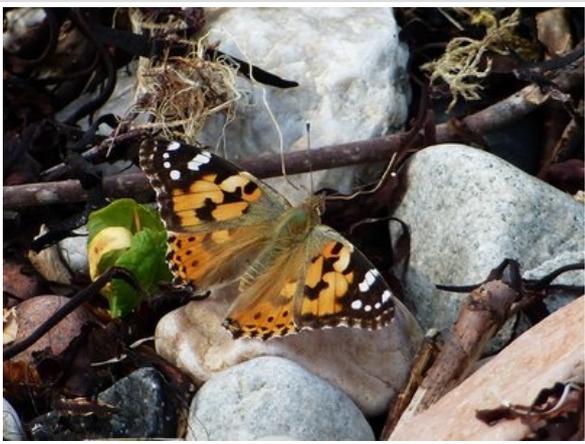
Chequered Skipper – Glen Loy 07.06.2016

The generally early season up there did work in my favour however when I found some Large Heath ssp. *scotica* at Glen Loy, an unexpected but most welcome bonus as I had never seen this particular subspecies before.



*Large Heath ssp. scotica – Glen Loy 08.06.2016*

Whilst in Scotland I also saw my first Painted Lady of the year (at Cuil Bay) plus good numbers of Green Hairstreaks at Glen Loy. Other species seen up there were Common Blues, Green-veined Whites and notable numbers of Orange-tips.



*Painted Lady – Cuil Bay 07.06.2016*

On the journey back down to Arnside, a detour to Irton Fell produced 20+ Mountain Ringlets although the cloudy but warm conditions meant they were only taking short flights and mostly settling low down in the grass.



*Mountain Ringlet – Irton Fell 09.06.2016*

Back in the Arnside area, the clouds and cool breeze had reappeared but I still managed to find a couple of early Dark Green Fritillaries...



*Dark Green Fritillary – Arnside Knot 10.06.2016*

...and a visit to Meathop Moss produced a dozen or more nice fresh Large Heath ssp *davus* which gave me a great opportunity to compare them with the *scotica* I had seen a couple of days before.



*Large Heath ssp. davus – Meathop Moss 10.06.2016*

My second trip further afield this year took me to Llandudno in late June to spend a couple of days looking around the Great Orme, specifically to see the two endemic sub-species found there – Silver-Studded Blue ssp. *caernensis* and Grayling ssp. *thyone*.

The weather was the familiar mix of cloud and wind with some sunny spells but I easily found both species on the rock rose covered slopes on the southern side of the Orme. The Blues in particular seemed to be thriving and I found hundreds flying in Happy Valley and on the slopes by Invalids Path which provided another highlight of the season for me.



*Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis males – Great Orme 27.06.2016*



*Silver-studded Blue ssp. caernensis female* – Great Orme 27.06.2016



*Grayling ssp. thyone* – Great Orme 27.06.2016

At home around my local patch during June and into July, the usual summer species appeared around their usual times, although numbers of most were down on a 'normal' year (whatever that is)

All three species of golden skippers were easily found at the usual sites with Essex Skippers seeming to be doing the best this year. As usual, most of my photos of Small and Essex were attempted head on shots in order to confirm their ID, especially in the case of females which lack the diagnostic sex brand of the males.



*Large Skipper* – Langley Hall 24.06.2016



*Essex Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2016*



*Small Skipper - Bickenhill 23.07.2016*

Meadow Browns and Ringlets are two species that often do well in cooler and cloudy years but this year both were well down on usual. There were still good numbers of both species about, just not the hordes that have been seen over the past few years.



*Ringlet - Langley Hall 24.06.2017*



*Meadow Brown – Ryton Wood 13.07.2016*

Gatekeepers were slow to get going but did seem to increase in numbers at the end of July.



*Gatekeeper female – Shadowbrook Meadows 30.07.2016*

The rest of July continued to be disappointingly underwhelming in terms of overall butterfly numbers, the one exception around my local patch being Marbled White. These had spread into the area around Solihull a few years ago and have been increasing in number year on year at one site in particular, with this year providing the highest count yet.



*Marbled White – Castle Hills 03.07.2016*

Throughout June and July, summer brood Commas, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks had all started to appear at my local sites along with a scattering of Red Admirals but all of these were in low numbers so far compared with previous years.

A couple of visits in mid July to Ryton Wood and Snitterfield Bushes near Stratford-upon-Avon produced Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals. My impression was that both were flying in similar numbers to previous years although I must admit I didn't get the chance to look for them often enough to say for sure how they did this year.



*Silver-washed Fritillary – Snitterfied Bushes 10.07.2016*



*White Admiral – Ryton Wood 20.07.2016*

So then...some notable highlights on my trips further afield but locally a season in which the overwhelming impression is of lower butterfly numbers in general and of a lot of cloud and wind.

That takes me up to the end of July which is a convenient place to end this report. The next one will cover late summer and the winding down of the season into autumn.

With the run up to Christmas and the fact I will probably be a bit busy this week I will take this opportunity to wish everyone on UKB...

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by trevor, 19-Dec-16 09:57 PM GMT

You have some envy inducing images in your Summer selection. Particularly as there are four species in there that I have yet to see. They are all a long way from Sussex, but on my to do list !.

Wishing you a brilliant Butterflying 2017.  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 21-Dec-16 11:11 PM GMT

I totally agree with Trevor – such an envy inducing selection of butterflies – some delectable lifers and subspecies very well captured 🍷🍷😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Neil Freeman, 30-Dec-16 06:56 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments Wurzel and Trevor although I must add that both of your own PDs contain some fantastic images of species that I missed out on this year so a fair bit of envy back to you 😊😁

## Looking back at 2016– Part 3

### Late Summer & Autumn.

By the time August arrived I had seen all of the species that I would normally expect to see around my local patch although many of them were in lower numbers than normal.

One of the features of my 2016 season so far was the fact that I had not yet travelled further south than central Warwickshire which meant that I had obviously missed a number of species, most notably those that favour chalk downland, although the other side of this coin was the species that I had seen on my trips to Cumbria, Scotland and North Wales.

My next trip which took place in early August saw me heading north once again for a return to Arnside to see Scotch Argus. During our three days up there the weather was typical of the year so far, in other words there was loads of cloud with some drizzle and a persistent wind blowing from the north which kept temperatures down. Up on the more exposed higher slopes of Arnside Knot it was very breezy and any butterfly taking to the air was quickly whisked away.

Nevertheless, in the more sheltered spots and especially when the sun did peek through, good numbers of Scotch Argus could be found, although it must be said they were not as abundant as I have seen there in previous years.



*Scotch Argus – Arnside Knot 04.08.2016 08.2016*

Both Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries can usually be found still flying at Arnside in August although it is at the tail end of both species flight period and they are usually well past their best. I saw a few large fritillaries flying but the only two that settled long enough to positively ID were both High Browns. Most of the other species that I would expect to see there at this time were flying but again my overall impression was of fewer butterflies than I have experienced there before.



*High Brown Fritillary – Arnside Knot 04.08.2016*

This impression of low numbers of butterflies continued to be the theme back home through the rest of August with smaller than usual numbers of just about everything at my local sites. Small Coppers in particular were notable by their absence with just a couple of individuals found locally. Common Blues seemed to be doing a bit better and I was pleased to find a Brown Argus at one local site, this species is very hit and miss locally and I only ever find one or two and some years none at all.



*Brown Argus - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*



*Common Blue - Castle Hills 17.08.2016*

The three 'common' summer brood vanessids - comma, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock - also had a poor year locally but this was partially compensated for by a better than normal scattering of Painted Ladies, mostly looking to be nice fresh home bred examples.



*Peacock - Bickenhill 06.08.2016*



*Painted Lady – Bickenhill 06.08.2016*

A trip over to Grafton Wood near Worcester later in August produced some Brown Hairstreaks although I have still to get a good open wing photo of this species...a target for next year perhaps.



*Brown Hairstreak – Grafton Wood 24.08.2016*

One species that had bucked the trend locally was Speckled Wood with them showing up just about everywhere throughout the season so far and numbers increased noticeably through August. Towards the end of the month I would often find half a dozen or more on the overripe blackberries at the bottom of my garden.



*Speckled Woods – Coverdale 29.08.2016*

September arrived and I finally went further south than the midlands with a week in Cornwall with Jane and my Mom, staying at a caravan site next to Upton Towns.

Although Meadow Browns had long since finished around my local patch, I found good numbers still flying on the Towans, many of them still in good condition. This population was also notable for the number of females with large orange patches, often also on their hindwings, and the fact that most of them had double pupils in their forewing eyespots.



*Meadow Brown female with extended Orange patches - Upton Towans 04.09 2016*

Small Coppers were also present in good numbers across Upton and Gwithian Towans along with Common Blues plus a scattering of Small Heath and Brown Argus, all except the Common Blues being species that I had struggled to find in the midlands this year.



*Small Copper - Upton Towans 04.09.2016*



*Small Heath - Upton Towans 04.09.2016*

A particular highlight of my week in Cornwall was a day spent walking the path between Kynance Cove and Lizard Point when large numbers of Small Coppers were seen. Many of the females here were impressively large and blue-spotted individuals of both sexes made up a good percentage of the population.



*Small Copper - Lizard 07.09.2016*



*Small Coppers - Lizard 07.09.2016*

From other reports I have since seen, it appears that Small Copper numbers recovered somewhat later in the year at some southern sites where they commonly have three or four broods, four apparently being usual in Cornwall. In the midlands, it is primarily double brooded with a drawn out second brood although there can be three distinct broods in a good year (which this was not).

Back home in mid-September, Red Admirals put on a good late showing with reports from all over the place and half a dozen at a time visiting the late flowering buddleias in my garden.



*Red Admiral - Coverdale 14.09.2016*

By late September my season had just about fizzled out with just the occasional Speckled Wood still hanging on in my garden, the last one being seen on 9th October.



*Speckled Wood – Coverdale 09.10.2016*

This is fairly normal for my midlands location where there are no Clouded Yellows or late anything else to extend the season for me. Of course there is always the chance to see a hibernator on any mild day after this but for me these are the exception rather than any proper continuation of the season.

So then, what did I think of the 2016 season. I had some notable highlights with some species that I travelled some distance to see but otherwise, apart from a few exceptions, butterfly number were generally well down around my local sites which made for a generally underwhelming season overall. The very mild late autumn and early winter of 2015 no doubt put a spanner in the works and this was followed by a late spring and a cloudy, cool and breezy summer. I have read some reports that the summer was warmer than average...well not around here it wasn't. I have also read that the persistent cloud kept average night time temperatures up which may have skewed the overall average but for most of the season around here the cloud was accompanied by a stiff breeze from the north which made the days feel cool even when the sun was out.

My personal tally was 41 species with some notable ones missed although this was mainly due to my pre-season decision to go for some northern trips this year and the fact I did not go further south than the midlands until September. This also no doubt influenced my impressions and if I had travelled further south a bit more maybe I would have seen more butterflies...maybe, but going by other reports I have seen my experiences seemed to be typical of the season in most parts of the UK.

As I write this we have had a few cold nights around here with some proper frosty mornings and daytime temperatures not rising above low single figures and apart from a few mild days the other week it has been a fairly 'normal' autumn and winter so far

Let us hope for a proper winter and a normal spring and here's to a better season next year.

**Happy New Year to everyone**

Neil

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-16 11:04 PM GMT

An interesting perspective Neil and one which sadly tally's in pretty much with my view of the year 😊 Mind you on the up side 41 species is great when Mountain Ringlet, Scotch Argus, High Brown, Chequered Skipper, Large Heath and Northern Brown Argus are on the list 🍷🍷

Have a goodun (New Year that is)

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Freeman**

by David M, 31-Dec-16 12:04 AM GMT

**Neil Freeman wrote:**

Let us hope for a proper winter and a normal spring and here's to a better season next year

Another excellent sequence, Neil, and yes, a dose of proper cold would do wonders.

All the best.