

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Jan-16 11:11 PM GMT

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

While we have avoided the terrible flooding in northern England and Wales, and southern Scotland, mild south-west winds have brought relentless dull, grey skies to the south so far this winter. For example, London recorded just 28 hours of sunshine in November. This compares with 48 hours in Edinburgh, and 53 hours in Manchester. The average for London is 70 hours.

But on my local walk on 28 December, the sun came out, and many signs of spring were already evident. There are still a few autumn leaves around, too. Hazel catkins were out, the first primroses were in flower, and first new hawthorn leaves were starting to show. In December!



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 07-Jan-16 08:12 PM GMT

Hi! essex, I've got Snow Drops in my garden which is very unusual up here in the North at this time of year Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-16 09:10 PM GMT

Although interested in birds, especially during the winter, I don't usually go for twitching. However, this year a great grey shrike has spent the winter at Heybridge Basin, near Maldon and, a couple of weeks ago I got the chance to go and see it.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-16 09:21 PM GMT

Welcome to spring. We have survived the winter, and a rather strange winter it was. December was, as we all know, very mild and wet and I was still seeing bumble bees in my garden in January and the first hawthorn leaves and myrobalan plum bloom were opening. Everything seemed set for a very early spring. But then temperatures dropped. So much so that in March they were below average, at least in the south. This weekend, it has reached 15c, the first time since Christmas. This time, Spring really is here 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 03-Apr-16 09:43 PM GMT

That's a stunning bird, EB. No wonder you took time out to go and see it.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-16 10:31 PM GMT

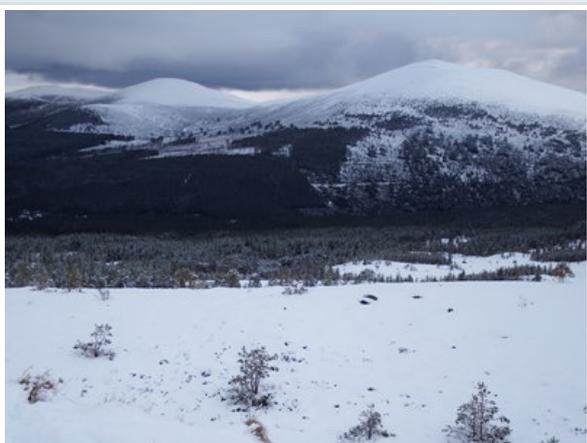
Thanks Dave. Never seen one before and to see it in Essex too is a double bonus. Lucky it was a long stayer!

In early March I took a holiday north of the border, to see some of the classic wildlife of Scotland, staying at Nethy Bridge in the Cairngorms. Met up with a group there, 11 of us in all.

It was too early at the Ospreys centre for ospreys but this a great place for crested tits. Lots of other birds on the feeders and one of the group fed a coal tit from the hand! After enjoying the activity there, we headed for the ski centre. Being a Sunday it was busy, but the snow buntings were unconcerned, feeding at the picnic tables.

We then visited a couple of nearby quieter carries to search for two iconic species which turn white in winter- mountain hare and ptarmigan. Never seen the hare before and I was surprised how many there were here. They were one of the highlights of the holiday. Several white ptarmigan were present to, quite unconcerned by all the people.

Time was ticking so, after some photo stops we returned to the Caledonian pine forest to finish the day looking for crossbills. No luck with those, but we returned to the hotel delighted with our first day 😊





Snow buntings



Ptarmigan



Mountain hare





Tree creeper



Crested tits

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-16 11:03 AM GMT

Great shots Essex, I'm especially envious of the Ptarmigan - my Life List has a massive gap missing all four Grouse species 🇬🇧 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 04-Apr-16 01:04 PM GMT

Smashing shots there Mark - my vote goes to the Mountain Hare 🇬🇧 Sounds like a great trip 😊 🇬🇧

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Apr-16 09:21 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Just when I thought this day couldn't get any better, after dinner a few breaks in the cloud revealed another thing I've never seen. One of nature's greatest wonders. The delicate flickering of the northern lights in the night sky above!

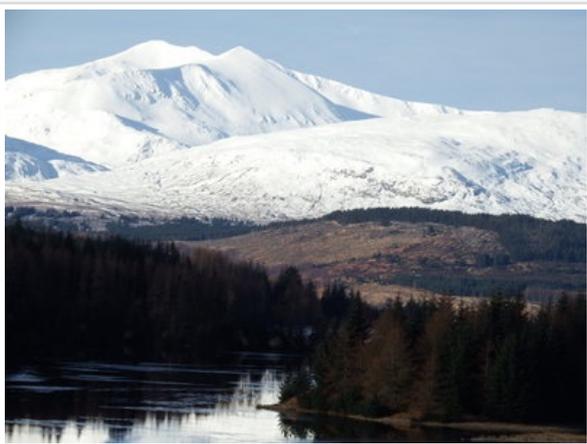


Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-16 10:06 PM GMT

An early start the next day saw us heading west. With deep blue skies, snow covered mountains and a thick frost in the glens, the drive to Fort William was truly spectacular. Heading west the black carrion crows turned into hooded crows . A roadside tawny owl and a fine stag Sitka deer were highlights. We passed Ben Nevis, resplendent white against the blue sky, and on to catch the Corran ferry. On the other side, we drove along the sea lochs, seeing Slavonian grebes, great northern diver and a lovely otter fishing by the shore.

After our hearty picnic lunch, we drove over the mountains, seeing distant golden eagles and goosander on a Lachlan. Then down to check into our overnight hotel, and out again, to a private garden where food is put out in the evening. As darkness fell the first of four pine martens, just yards away, were seen. Staying in the vehicles, we enjoyed these elusive mammals for 40 minutes, though sadly too dark for photos. Then back to the hotel for dinner.



Corran ferry



Otter



Highland stags

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-16 10:09 PM GMT

The next day was dull and damp. This day saw our best chance to see the white tailed eagle. We had seen several golden eagles already, and several more today. We searched the hills all morning without luck, eventually reaching the coast, where Mull was visible across the sea. So we stopped for lunch, when we were joined by the white tailed eagle officer for RSPB. She showed us some wing and tail feathers, allowing us to compare golden and white tailed eagles. Suddenly, while we were eating, she shouted 'White tailed eagles!' Although a long way off, scopes were put up and a pair of adults were seen by all, sitting in the trees. Then, a golden eagle appeared and soared right overhead, giving a great view. Then, it was back to the Corran ferry and, after a stop to admire a smashing roadside blackcock, back to Nethy Bridge. Although fewer species, another good day.



View to mull



Juv golden eagle



Black grouse

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-16 10:12 PM GMT

First Ptarmigan and now Black Grouse 🇩🇪 🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-16 10:13 PM GMT

And a distant pair of white tailed eagles.

Thanks Wuzel. More grouse to come.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Apr-16 11:09 PM GMT

This morning, Wednesday, the hotel bird tables were well attended, with many redpolls, siskins, house sparrows and chaffinches. One of the redpolls was very pink.

After a snowy start, today we searched the pine forest for capercaillie. These huge grouse have undergone a massive decline which continues to this day, and are now in real danger of dying out. There is some evidence that increasing numbers of pine martens are having a negative effect on the birds. Despite much searching in suitable habitat, we failed to find any. So it was off to a riverside, the Spey, for lunch. Then we went to Coignafearn glen, where dippers, buzzards, kites and a kestrel were seen. Brown hare at the bottom, mountain hare on the slopes.

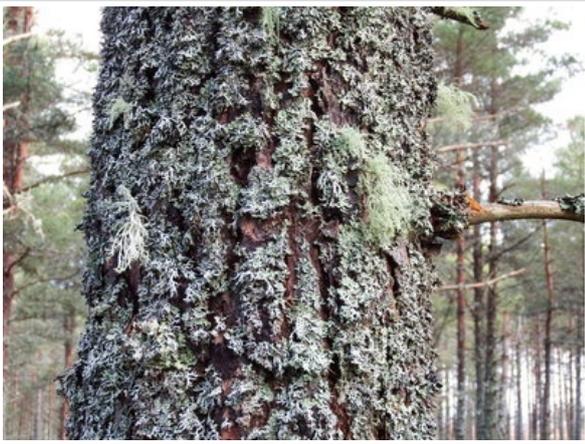


Nethy bridge





Pine forest sadly no capercaillie



Lichen

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Apr-16 08:58 PM GMT

A glorious frosty morning saw us out before breakfast to visit a blackcock lek. This is where male black grouse gather to fight for the females. From a good distance, so as not to disturb the birds, we watched about 15 cocks huffing and puffing, a fascinating sight for those like me who have never seen this before. All against a backdrop of the splendour of the summit of Cairn Gorm.



Blackcock lek



What a view!



Cairn Gorm, with ptarmigan restaurant to the right

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 07-Apr-16 09:03 PM GMT

I'm enjoying your recent set of posts, some interesting bird species I've never seen and some absolutely glorious scenery 😊🇬🇧

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Apr-16 09:38 PM GMT

For our last couple of days, we headed to the lowlands, to get our species list up, and also see some of the farmland birds that have declined in England. To get there meant a drive across the moors, where several red grouse were seen, the famous grouse! On the lowland farms, we found such birds as English partridge, tree sparrow, linnets and yellowhammers. We also saw a familiar bird that is a rarity in much of northern Scotland – a magpie. Reaching the coast, we found long tailed ducks, common and velvet scoters, eiders and early returning guillemots and razorbills out to sea. By now, the sun was warm and, at Burghead, I saw my first peacock of the year!

After lunch, we went gull spotting and, in a group on a roadside field, Roger found an Iceland gull, my first ever! We watched this for some time, much to the bemusement of the locals! Then on to Lossiemouth estuary where lots of wigeon and waders including curlews, oystercatchers and bar-tailed godwits. For late afternoon, we visited a pig farm, hoping for new gulls, but there were no new kinds. We did add stock doves and fieldfares to our week list. Returning, the Cairngorms were resplendent in the evening light. Last day tomorrow.



The famous grouse!



Burghead



Iceland gull



Lossiemouth

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 07-Apr-16 10:26 PM GMT

Wonderful shots from the Cairngorms, Buzzard. I camped with a friend a couple of times near Kingussay when I was a schoolboy, looking for many of the same species you have been seeing, though there were no white-tailed eagles then! Nor was it possible to get such brilliant photos then, without thousands of pounds worth of equipment. I think we only got one decent view of capercaillie, when one exploded out of the ground like a panicked turkey a few metres from us. We did see ptarmigan, up Cairngorm itself, though I'm not sure about the Ptarmigan restaurant. I tried to sign a petition against developing the area as a ski resort but my hands were so cold I couldn't write my name. Perhaps that was the one signature they were lacking ...

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by Mike Robinson, 08-Apr-16 01:27 AM GMT

Whilst the Gulls in the Lossiemouth picture all look to be alone I find myself fascinated by the groups of Wigeons! What are the ties that bind? I do like to see them; preferring I think the colouring of the females to that of the males. We have Wintering Wigeons locally on the Thames/Marshes. I think that young Gulls will always be a mystery ...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-16 10:38 PM GMT

Could be, Guy! It must be said, though, that much effort has been made to make tourism responsible, and while there is a 'right to roam' anywhere in Scotland, people are discouraged from going walking around at the top during the breeding season—there is no access onto the Cairngorm plateau from the restaurant, for example. It's also possible for us to get to the wildlife at this time of year, which we couldn't do otherwise. It's a mixed blessing but, judging by what we saw, the wildlife doesn't seem to mind.

Mike we get wigeon in number on the Essex coast in winter, I can certainly identify all the gulls as adults but the young ones, they are a bit of a challenge!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-16 11:16 PM GMT

So we come to the last day. Unfortunately this was the one cold dull damp day. We headed to the Black Isle to do a bit of twitching! Starting at Newhall point, where an American wigeon has been wintering with many wigeon and waders. Some careful searching turned up the rare bird, a nice male. Then on to Dingwall where a ring-billed gull, the American version of our common gull, has been present for several winters. With local knowledge of our guides, we found it—on a roof between Ross county football ground and Tesco! A loaf of bread and some of our lunch tempted it down, where we compared it with the common and herring gull so—twitching has never been so easy!

Several kites were seen. They were introduced here after 1989 but, in reality this was a poor choice for an introduction for, while they are fairly safe here, the Black Isle is virtually surrounded by grouse moors where, even today, bird of prey persecution is rife. This explains why kites here have stuck at around 50 pairs, when the Chiltern population, introduced at the same time has built to over 1000 pairs, despite comparable breeding success. When young kites leave they have nowhere safe to go.

A large raft of several hundred scaup were on the Moray firth.

With a free afternoon, we all agreed we would have one more try for capercaillie. So another two-hour walk in the rain. Although our guide spotted a female for a split second, we all missed it, and left empty-handed. While unfortunate, it does show how hard it is to find capercaillie now. Sadly, it was time to head to the hotel for the last time disappointed, but we all agreed it was worth one last try.



American wigeon in poor light





Large scaup raft



Ring bill gull

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Apr-16 10:03 PM GMT

After my first Peacock in Scotland, I saw several Small Tortoiseshell in the second half of March though it took until the 25 March to get my first picture of 2016.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-Apr-16 10:08 PM GMT

Good to see that you're off the mark - it has been a slow start to the season - mind you what with all those great birds from north of the border you've been more than compensated 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Apr-16 08:43 PM GMT

Yes I thought I would embrace the winter this year,rather than wait for it to be over!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Apr-16 08:57 PM GMT

Last week I visited one of my favourite Essex woods, stour wood, part of the RSPB's stour wood and copperas bay reserves. At this time of year the site puts on a spectacular display of wood anemones,which form a thick and glorious carpet of white flowers in early April.

My first Commas of the year were present,and many peacocks. Bee-flies were seen. Buzzards and a kite were circling and a kestrel was nearby. In the sunshine,it felt quite warm!

Photos to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Apr-16 09:12 PM GMT

Pictures as promised.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Apr-16 09:18 PM GMT

Butterflies,



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Apr-16 10:50 PM GMT

On Wednesday we went to one of the best Spring nature reserves, Fingringhoe Wick near Colchester. This is man made habitat—it was a quarry until the 1960's. But since then it has scrubbed over, and the dense undergrowth has made it one of the best—perhaps the best—place to hear and see nightingales in spring. Usually I come in May—there are green hairstreaks here then, as well as lots of orange tips and other Spring species, and I saw turtle doves here last year as well. But by then the growth is thick and nightingales, though easy to hear, are almost impossible to see. My early trip now was aimed at actually seeing these glorious songsters.

Leaving the car park, we heard them immediately. Soon after we had our first sighting, in an area where several newly arrived males were singing. Walking around, several more were seen but, half hidden, they made poor photo opportunities. Then, in an almost magical moment, one appeared on top of a young oak and started to sing—in full view! 😊

Adders were active in the morning sunshine, as were peacocks and commas. Chiffchaff and blackcaps were singing and, as we were walking around, a nice male showed well for a photo.

After lunch, off to Holland haven, where a rough legged buzzard has been spending the winter. After my luck with the great grey shrike a few weeks ago, I fancied my chances. Several meadow pipits were doing their lovely song display flights and marsh harriers were seen. Then, after about an hour, a distant speck was soaring and hovering. Could well have been it, but was too far away to be certain, as buzzards soar and hover as well. Stayed another hour but no more sightings.

Finished the day at Abberton reservoir. Of particular interest here were several little ring plovers and some newly arrived yellow wagtails. Sand martins were also present. Pictures to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Apr-16 11:01 PM GMT

Pictures from Wednesday,



Adder male at Fingringhoe



Nightingale



Blackcap



Yellow wagtail



Great crested grebes at Abberton



Little ringed plover

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-16 09:56 AM GMT

First time I've ever seen a Nightingale let a lone heard one, many thanks for your posting essex. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Apr-16 09:48 PM GMT

So, here comes UKB's shortest ever butterfly trip report! I often try to visit Cornwall in late April so, last Monday we headed down. However on arrival it soon became clear the butterfly season was running very late due to the cold cloudy weather in March and April. Where as last year I was watching Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Holly Blues and Green Hairstreaks, this year I managed just 4 species: Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Green-veined White. I didn't even see any Speckled Woods - a species I normally see by the hundred here. And no butterfly photos!

With the lack of butterflies, I instead did some walking on the coast path and visited a couple of gardens. We did see the Cornish cough though. After some intermittent sun and near average temperatures, it gradually became colder, windier and wetter during the week.

It's been a rotten Spring so far.



Pendeen lighthouse, Monday



Cape Cornwall, Tuesday



Penzance, Wednesday



Lost gardens of Heligan, Thursday



Bedruthan steps, Friday

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-16 10:37 PM GMT

I'm experiencing exactly the same thing Essex – will this dismal spring ever get any better? 😞 On the plus side a Cornish Chough isn't to be sniffed at 🙄🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Apr-16 11:18 PM GMT

No,it isn't,Wurzel. A Cornish chough ads excitement to any day,and it's great to have them back. Here are a few birds from Cornwall:



Cornish chough



Buzzard



Kestrel on mine stack



Stonechat

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 29-Apr-16 11:30 AM GMT

Lovely pictures of Cornwall even if the weather is awful. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Apr-16 08:01 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

It looks like you made the most of your trip to Cornwall despite the weather, great photos 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 29-Apr-16 08:07 PM GMT

Love the bird shots Mark, and the scenery, and the one of you which just sums up everything about this 'Spring' 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-16 10:19 PM GMT

That is a cracking Chough shot Essex 🇮🇪 the best I've gotten is a few black dots against a seascape background, they are Chough, honest 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-16 11:31 PM GMT

Well, it's been a cold week, with frost, sleet and hail. The picture below is how May started yesterday. But I saw my first Orange Tip today at work, and with the first warm spell at last on the cards, we will see a big emergence of Spring species this week and I, for one, can't wait!



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-16 09:29 PM GMT

What a difference a week makes! This week it was the perfect weather to enjoy one of the greatest things about living in Britain- a walk amongst the bluebells. Hill house wood, near Colchester, is the finest bluebell wood I have visited. Here, the nightingale sings, and Orange Tips and Green-veined Whites fly over the glorious purple haze. The scent, too, is something to savour. If only I could bottle it all up, instead I will make do with pictures. My first Holly Blue was also here. In the damp areas of the wood, another scent takes over, with a wild garlic carpet here. Several hours were spent here, trying to savour this wonderful moment. 😊 pictures to follow.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-16 09:41 PM GMT

Pictures as promised



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-May-16 09:47 PM GMT

Wild garlic



Wild garlic



More bluebells

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-16 06:46 PM GMT

Hi Mark

Great images of the bluebells and wild garlic, I can almost almost smell the scent 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-May-16 09:16 PM GMT

Actually, I thought of you yesterday, when I saw this in my garden before I went to work, my first of the year:



Re: essex buzzard

by Essexbuzzard, 09-May-16 10:43 PM GMT

Isn't it great to have the Orange Tips back. I saw my first on the 2 May. By the end of this month they will have finished. They epitomise the beauty of this time of year, as well as the hope we all have about the months to come. Orange Tips flying up and down the hedges, and along the woodland edges, are one of the classic visions of Spring for the nature lover.

Yesterday, after work, I visited my local bluebell wood. Another beautiful carpet awaited, and along the sunny edges, lots of Orange Tips, Green-veined White, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and one each of Large White and Comma were active. The Peacocks were males, flying up at any rivals and Small Tortoiseshells that passed, climbing high into the sky, then breaking away again. A pleasure just to watch the spectacle. Whites passing by were ignored. The reed bunting was singing, swallows were flying over the fields and, nearby, a hobby was seen. All in all, a most enjoyable evening.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 10-May-16 08:50 AM GMT

Lovely views of the Woods and Blue Bells and the Green Veined White shot is great Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 10-May-16 09:45 PM GMT

Stunning 'sea of blue' Essex and some great OTs too! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-16 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie and Wurzel, glad you like the pictures.

The Poets Narcissi ,also known as the Pheasant-eye (*Narcissus poeticus recurvus*), is the last daffodil to flower,in May. Flowering so late,it extends the season. But I also grow it because it reminds me of Spring trips to Europe. In Provence and,especially to the Cevennes, in France,one of the lovely sights in May is of alpine meadows,white with Poets Narcissi, flowering by the thousand. I wonder if Guy has them in the meadows near him? They are a delight in the garden,but even more so in nature,turning the meadows white.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-May-16 10:36 PM GMT

KENT

May is my busiest month of the year. So much to see and do,too little time. But yesterday (Thursday) I had a free day so it was time for a trip to Kent. First up was Saphire Hoe. This area of reclaimed land is where the soil from the channel tunnel was dumped. Now a nature reserve, it was quickly colonised by wild plants including the early spider orchid in thousands. It's been several years since I saw them last, so it was a pleasure to visit again.

Then onto Denge Wood. I visit most years,for here is a colony of Duke of Burgundy. Quite a few territorial males were in the lower pit of bonsai bank. Another Duke was behaving differently,crawling over the primrose leaves. She was a duchess, laying eggs. Never seen this before. Many other butterflies were present,including lots of Brimstones. Early purple orchids were in flower and the rare and splendid lady orchids were starting,they will peak in a week or two.



Early spider orchid at samphire hoe



Green-veined white



Duke of burgundy



Duchess of burgundy



Duke of burgundy



Brimstone



Lady orchid



Bonsai bank

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-May-16 10:08 PM GMT

Then onto Trosley Country Park. Here, lots of Dingy And a few Grizzled Skippers were seen. Plenty of Brimstones and Peacocks, and several Holly Blues, these seem to be having a good Spring again. Small Torts were near the hedges, as were only one or two Orange Tips, sadly, these lovely Spring butterflies seem very few this year, what do others think? Still a very nice day out.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-May-16 10:39 PM GMT

On my day off this week I decided to visit a couple of my local parks, to soak up the sights and scents, including the splendour of hawthorn blossom, the magnificent horse chestnut, the buttercups and the birdsong. A few butterflies were seen, though only one Orange Tip, I expect to see more here. Also saw Small Torts and a couple of caterpillar batches. Small Tortoiseshells have been at most sites I've visited this spring, certainly I've seen far more this year so far than I saw late summer and autumn last year, suggesting there could be something in my theory last year that some first brood adults went straight into hibernation rather than produce a second generation. 😊



Hawthorn



Horse chestnut



Tortoiseshells caterpillar batch



My only orange tip

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-May-16 10:40 PM GMT

Lovely set of shots Essex 😊 I've done alright for OTs this year but that could be because I've found a 'good' site for them? I started reading through from the top of this page and what a contrast – from ice to butterflies! 😊 Really sums up this topsy turvy spring.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-May-16 10:56 PM GMT

After lunch, of to Bison Hill, Whipsnade. About an hour from home. Here the Duke of Burgundy flies, and many were seen. This place has a great support cast in the form of Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Brimstones in number, and a single Orange Tip. Unfortunately, no Green Hairstreak this time. A lovely willow warbler was singing, and buzzards and kites overhead.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-May-16 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel,a contrast indeed! I have only found Orange Tips in number at one site,everywhere else they seem decidedly scarce,though perhaps it's my imagination and I've been unlucky-what do others think. They have only been out for about three weeks,I certainly hope they are not disappearing already?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-16 10:06 PM GMT

THURSDAY 36 MAY

Despite a few minor disappointments,this was a super day. Warm sunny weather,and splendid hawthorn blossom everywhere!
At Langdon,saw my first Common Blues of the year,plus Small Heath but,sadly,no Grizzled Skipper. They have been recorded by others,though.
Then Grays,where man orchids were putting on a fine show. Brimstones were everywhere,including three spiralling in the air,see picture, and several Green Hairstreaks, saw one laying eggs. Holly and Common Blues,Speckled Woods, whites,an Orange Tip and a Red Admiral also seen.
A nearby recreational ground had thousands of green wing orchids.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-May-16 10:31 PM GMT

By now it was early afternoon,so we opted for Mill Hill, Sussex,not only for Adonis Blues,but I was hoping for a nice yellow carpet of horseshoe vetch. Driving along the The A27,I noticed large patches of vetch on the verges,a good sign. Sure enough,Mill Hill was yellow with the stuff! Plenty of fresh Adonis Blues on site,including females and two mating pairs. Dingy and Grizzled skippers present too,still some fresh ones. Two Green Hairstreaks were feeding on the vetch, as were several Common Blues. Speckled Wood,Red Admiral and Small Heath seen,and a Cinnabar moth. By 7pm,had to drag myself away from the lovely horseshoe vetch and the views,it was too good to leave. Driving back,again enjoyed the glorious flowering hawthorn on the verges.







Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-May-16 10:40 PM GMT

Beautiful set of shots Essex, especially the male Adonis, in typical upside down pose 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jun-16 10:36 PM GMT

Just back from our early summer holiday. First we visited the Isle of Wight, arriving 9am. Unfortunately, it was rather grey and cold at the beginning of June. So we headed for the Needles for some walking, and also to see the multi-colour sands at Alum Bay. After lunch, we went on the lovely Isle of Wight steam railway. In the evening, we visited Bembridge windmill, the only surviving one on the island.

Not quite what we came for, but a nice day never the less.





Re: essex buzzard

by Katrina, 11-Jun-16 07:31 AM GMT

Your rabbit photo made me smile!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jun-16 08:20 PM GMT

A cute baby rabbit. What's not to like!

2 June. Our second and last day on the Isle of Wight was expected to have better weather. We spent the morning at Compton bay, where it was cold and grey but, painfully slowly, things improved with a few sunny spells by lunchtime. Our target here, of course, was Glanville Fritillary. We eventually found some. Not many, 2 here on the under cliffs, and one up on Compton down. The underside is quite as attractive as the upper side. Common blues were at the bay, and I found my first Large Skippers of the year.

After lunch, we moved onto the downs. Here, Brown Argus, Small Blues, Dingy Skippers and a late Wall were found. The kidney and horseshoe vetch and the rock rose were a riot of colour on the downs, and thrift, or sea pink were splendid at the bay. On the downs, there was a Dartford warbler.







Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jun-16 07:27 PM GMT

Next day, we left the Isle of Wight, and headed down to Cornwall. Traffic was very heavy, and it took until 4pm to arrive at Kynance Cove. Fortunately, it was warm and sunny by then, and there was plenty of time to walk to Lizard Point for an ice cream and back. As usual, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were easy to find, and we also saw Large Whites, Common Blues and Small Heaths. As well as buzzards, Cornish choughs were at Kynance. It was great, after such a long drive, to stretch our legs in such a wonderfully scenic place. 😊



Lizard point



Meadow pipit

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-16 10:20 PM GMT

Stunning seascapes Essex 😊 – the Glanvilles weren't to shabby either 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

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

Great images, EB. I must get down there myself one day. The scenery (and the wildlife) looks stunning.

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 14-Jun-16 08:30 AM GMT

A stunning sequence of images from the IOW and Cornwall.

If the Small Pearls were easy to find, does this mean that they are doing well at that location ?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jun-16 10:27 PM GMT

Yes,Trevor, SPBF are doing just fine in Cornwall,and we saw them at just about all the places we visited. There has been a slight decline inland, perhaps, but they remain locally common on the coast.

4 June. Today we visited the marshy fields at Hayle Kimbro Pool, a recently discovered Marsh Fritillary site. Once we entered the damp areas,and the sun came out,adults were soon found in number. Most were fresh males,suggesting they were still emerging. Many males were on territory, flying at any insect that passed. A fresh female was pursued with vigour and went to ground,and mated with one of the males. A few fresh male Small Pearl-borders were present, with Common Blues and,near the hedge, Speckled Woods. Lots of dragonflies were at the lake,a cuckoo and willow warbler were singing and a circling pair of buzzards mewing.





Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 15-Jun-16 08:23 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great reports and photos from the IOW 😊

Those Marsh Fritillaries from the Lizard are bringing back memories of when I was there last year, I cannot believe how quickly that year has flown by. Reading your report has also made me realise that 12 months ago I was watching SPBFs on the Lizard and then last week I was watching them up at the other end of the UK in Scotland.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jun-16 09:17 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, yes I've been reading about you exploits up there. For me it's the other way around, as I was up there last year!

After crab sandwiches at Mullion Cove, we went for a walk along the cliffs, and back to Kynance. SPBF were again present, with more Common Blue and a Red Admiral too. Kestrel, Ravens and a pair of Cornish choughs were seen, and a splendid display of wild flowers were on the cliffs. 😊



Early purple beside the seaside



Burnet rose



Ravens



Mullion cove



Flowers at mullion cove

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jun-16 10:40 PM GMT

On Sunday 5th,I walked the 14 mile section of coast path from St. Ives to Pendeen Watch. This section is tough and remote, with rugged cliffs and rocky scrambles. But it is a magnificent stretch of coastline and, halfway along and just inland, is the lovely village of Zennor,with its pub and cafe,the perfect lunch stop.

The weather was rather dull and misty,but warm,and it improved later.

A lovely wren and stonechat were singing early on. In the wet flu he's were many Heath spotted orchids and soon the first Small Pearl-border Fritillaries were seen--there were to accompany me throughout the walk. Here they seem to live in loose,open populations,covering mile after mile of habitat,in contrast to the small woodland colonies at the eastern end of their range,where they are restricted to tiny,enclosed fragments is suitable habitat.

Grey seals were in a sheltered cove,and some young Ravens were on the cliffs. A Green Hairstreak was seen,and several Painted Ladies and Speckled Woods. After a few hour tough walking,I arrived at the picture postcard village of Zennor,for lunch.





Stone circle at trevalgan cliff





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jun-16 07:04 PM GMT

So, after refuelling at the Tinnars Arms, I was ready to go again. More SPBF and Speckled Woods and several Painted Ladies, one of which showed well. A couple of Walls too. The visibility had improved but now, and the rugged, windswept coast with tiny coves and translucent water was magnificent as I approached Gurnard's Head. Common and lesser white throat were singing, and a pair of Cornish chough were seen. By now, the distinctive lighthouse at Pendeen Watch could be seen in the distance. Looking seaward, the views continued to be spectacular, the slopes dotted with foxgloves. As I approached the finish, a dip lead down to a little beach where, after some hard walking, a chance to dip my feet in the cold sea was too tempting to resist.



Zennor



Gurnard's head



Pendeen watch

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jun-16 09:51 PM GMT

The next day dawned fine and bright. At Hayle Towans, the sand dunes are home to an extensive and large colony of Silver-studded Blues. It was only the start of the season,so we were surprised how many blues were seen,and how easy they were to find-within minutes of arriving. Here they use birds foot trefoil as their caterpillar food plant, unlike colonies inland.

More Small Pearl-bordered Frits were speeding around,plus Large Skipper, Common Blue, Painted Ladies, Red Admiral and Small Heaths. By lunchtime,it was clouding over,so we went for a pasty in Hayle,and our butterfly day was over.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 19-Jun-16 09:27 AM GMT

Essex, I'm just catching up on your posts and your scenery shots are fantastic, I think we'll try Cornwall next year 😊 The variety of Butterflies you'e posted so far have been great shots as well. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jun-16 08:30 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie. If you are going, this is the time of year to go, from a butterfly prospective at least. Early August is good, too, for in west Cornwall in particular the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary has two generations, and there are usually good numbers of Clouded Yellows and Walls then too.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jun-16 09:15 PM GMT

Tuesday 8th. Today, I decided to walk the coast path from Porthleven to Marazion, as I've never seen the views from there. Well I still haven't—because there was sea fog throughout the 11 mile walk. One of the first things I noticed was the Painted Ladies. They were everywhere, often flying up off the footpath in front of me. Kittiwakes were visible through the fog, and a peregrine was on an old mine stack.

Orange Tips are scarce in west Cornwall, so I was delighted to discover a colony at Prussia Cove, where several males were disturbed from vegetation. I could find no garlic mustard or cuckoo flower, but then I noticed flowering sea kale. Sure enough, I quick search soon revealed the Orange eggs on the kale flowers.

A hummingbird hawk moth was seen and, near Wheal Prosper, another pair of Cornish chough. A brief clearance in the fog revealed Large Skippers, Common Blues, Large Whites, red Admiral and Speckled woods. Near Marazion, a kestrel was seen and sand martins were breeding on the sandy cliffs. At Marazion, the splendour of St. Michael's Mount appeared through the mist.



Porthleven



Peregrine



Wheal prosper





St Michaels mount

Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 21-Jun-16 09:52 AM GMT

I do enjoy the picturesque shots you include in your diary Mark, along with glimpses of other wildlife – even the fog doesn't detract from it 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 21-Jun-16 03:08 PM GMT

I agree with Pauline, infact I think the shot of St MM is great, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-16 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline and Goldie, I like other wildlife too and the countryside in general, so I'm glad people like the images which I hope gives that little bit extra.

By the evening,all the fog had gone and visibility was very good. Here is a view to St. Michael's Mount from Madron carn, where Painted Ladies and Red Admirals were hill-topping as usual.



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 22-Jun-16 09:29 AM GMT

That's a great view and the cow's make it original 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-16 08:16 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

I too like looking at the scenery shots in your reports, they really add to the 'feel for the place' 😊

Great images in the mist, very atmospheric...you can almost hear someone saying 'don't go off the path after midnight' (in best west country accent) 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jun-16 09:53 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for your comments,I'm grateful four your feedback.

So,we come to our last day in Cornwall. We said our goodbyes and did a few bits,then had lunch (a pasty,what else!) in Morrab Gardens,Penzance. Then we headed up to Bodmin Moor,and to Minions, where we had a look round the Hurlers stone circle (actually three stone circles). Then,among Bodmin Moor ponies, belted cattle and sheep with lambs,we walked up to the rocky tors. Here,Painted Ladies and Red Admirals were battling it out,as they had been at Madron Carn. We spent the rest of the afternoon here,enjoying the marvellous views,before setting of on the long journey home.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jun-16 10:04 PM GMT

Today, to get from the deluge of rain and storms in the east, we went to Daneway Banks. With the weather as it was, this was really just a chance to find the site, and have a look round for a future visit. It turned out to be my best ever encounter with the Large Blue.

On arrival at 9am, the first thing we saw was a Ringlet, my first of the year. Then we put up some Marbled Whites out of the wet grass. Then a dark blue butterfly was put up—a Large Blue. I gave chase, but it kept flying and I lost it—their dark colours make them hard to follow.

But our luck improved! The next blue was lighter—a Common Blue. It was good to compare the two. As more people arrived, more Large Blues started to show. At the upper end of the site, I had the pleasure of watching a female egg laying on wild thyme.

Although remaining overcast, it was warm and humid, and most of the blues sat with their wings open. In sunny weather, the wings stay shut once they have warmed up, and adults often disappear in afternoons. Some of the Large Blues were starting to look worn, but many were in great condition, and they brought much pleasure to the many admirers.

The site was full of colour, especially yellow, with lots of rock rose, trefoil and kidney vetch, which meant I saw Small and Large Blues at the same time, which was nice to compare. Large and Dingy Skippers, small Heath, Speckled Wood and Meadow Brown were present. A super day.







Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 25-Jun-16 10:29 PM GMT

Nice shots, looks like I missed a few people today, couldn't get there until gone lunch but I've got home with a camera full of Large Blue pictures 😊. I noticed all the Kidney Vetch myself but never saw any Small Blues though and just one or two Commons. I did hear that a survey today counted 58 Large Blues!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-16 10:03 PM GMT

Great shots Essex 😊 And thanks for posting yesterday as it made the decision on where to go today that much easier – and what a great site it is 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jul-16 09:10 PM GMT

Hi everyone.

Just back from the Greenwings butterfly trip to the French Alps, brilliantly led by Yiannis Christofides and UKB's very own David M. Much more to come on that, both from Dave and myself in due course. After the leaden skies of June in Britain, it was nice to wake up to blue skies and see the sun for a change!

However, before I went, I took the short trip down to Wye Downs in Kent, where we found orchids and the Black-veined White moth.



Fragrant orchids



The very rare late spider orchid

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 10:06 PM GMT

TRIP TO ALPES MARITIMES 2-9 JULY 😊

After endless cloud and rain in UK,it was something of a novelty to arrive in Nice to blue skies and warm sunshine. However cumulus clouds were forming over the Alps and,shortly after arriving at our hotel,the heavens opened. But, being so close to the Med,the weather in much more reliable here than elsewhere in the Alps and soon, the sun had returned.

A track next to the hotel produced a wealth of butterflies . Blue included Amanda's , Escher's , Large and several little Baton Blues. Heath Fritillaries were abundant here and everywhere on the holiday, perhaps second in abundance only to Marbled White. Staggering, given its status in England. Common and Bergers Clouded yellows sped past,and a Purple-shot Copper was admired by all. Marbled Skipper, Ilex hairstreak , Spotted Fritillary , Pearly Heath. In a couple of hours,we clocked up around 50 species. What a start to the week. 😊

Having trouble sending pictures for some reason so will try text only...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 10:15 PM GMT

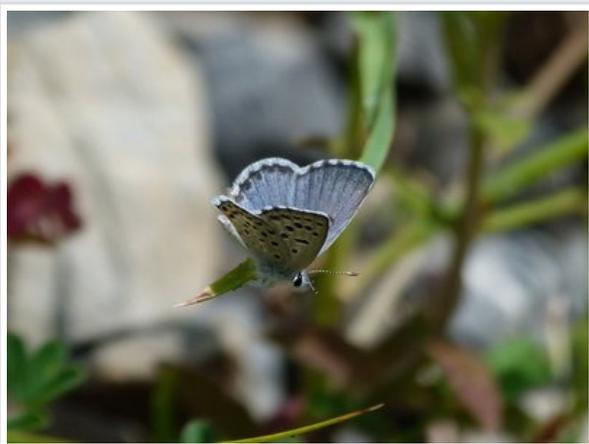
Try again,pictures from day one.



Amanda's blue



Escher's blue



Baton blue



Knapweed fritillary



Spotted fritillary



Ilex hairstreak

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 13-Jul-16 10:44 PM GMT

I see the Alps are in this year!

Great pictures, Buzzard – but in a reverse of what I wrote on David's page, may I point out your ilex hairstreak is a sloe hairstreak? 😊

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 10:48 PM GMT

Ha! Thanks Guy, please feel free to correct my (many!) mistakes. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 10:52 PM GMT

Is it a female sloe, because of a hint of blue near the tail. The ground colour seems to be lighter on the male sloe?

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 11:00 PM GMT

Is this Ilex? Doesn't seem to have any blue by the tail. I stand to be corrected, of course!



Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 13-Jul-16 11:03 PM GMT

Yes, that last one's an Ilex hairstreak. I'm not sure I can instantly sex that first sloe hairstreak – most individuals have some blue there. My gut feeling is male, but I too stand to be corrected. It's too late here for me to get my books out!

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Jul-16 11:07 PM GMT

Yes, even I'm thinking of going to bed – and you're an hour in front of us! Many thanks for being so helpful, as always 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 13-Jul-16 11:32 PM GMT

Padfield wrote:

Great pictures, Buzzard – but in a reverse of what I wrote on David's page, may I point out your Ilex hairstreak is a sloe hairstreak?

We must have our images mixed up, Mark! 😊

Either way, I'm sure we've got both but with multi-hundreds of images to trawl through it's not easy!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jul-16 07:29 AM GMT

No, it isn't. Probably even harder for you, as you have two weeks to sort out! But I'm not complaining – what a brilliant time we had over there...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-16 07:14 PM GMT

The next day dawned with deep blue skies – something I'm not used to! David had kindly told us the day before, the area of the hill that catches the morning sun. So the early risers headed there, and were treated to Heath and Spotted Fritillary, Marbled White, Clouded and Bergers Clouded Yellow, Red-underwing Skipper, Meadow Brown and Pearly Heath, warming up in the early sun, all before breakfast!



Marbled white



Pearly Heath



Heath fritillary



Red underwing skipper

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-16 09:36 PM GMT

Today, we headed up, past the resort of Isola 2000, and up to the Col de la Lombarde, at 2300M, and right on the border with Italy. On the way, we made several stops. At these, many butterflies included lots of Almond-eyed and the odd Piedmont Ringlet, Purple Edge and Sooty Coppers, Black-veined White, skippers incl. Tufted Marbled, Common, Large and Mazarine Blues, Northern Brown Argus, Swallowtail, Apollo and Speckled Wood. By the road verge one of my favourite European butterflies was on vipers bugloss – a Cleopatra.



Tufted marbled skipper



Almond-eyed ringlet



Purple edge copper



Cleopatra

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-16 10:04 PM GMT

But even that was eclipsed when we got to the top of the Col. For, hilltopping in the sheltered dips, where wild pansies grew, were good numbers of a butterfly I've wanted to see for years—the Cynthia's Fritillary! They showed well, much to our delight, including a few females, and on our first full day, this magic moment was one of the highlights of the whole trip. I make no apologies for posting several images!

On the way down, a clearing was full of wood cranesbill, which meant Geranium were present. It was were hot by time we arrived back at the hotel, where I opted for a walk before dinner, and saw Great Banded Grayling, Bath White and Hummingbird hawk moth. A truly, truly super day! 😊😊😊





Female Cynthia's molested by a male



Marmot



Col de la Lombarde

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-16 10:11 PM GMT

Evening walk pictures,



Hummingbird hawk moth



Great banded grayling

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jul-16 10:14 PM GMT

Monday. Today, we were to head up the Tinee valley and up to the Col de Bonnette, at 2802M, the highest mountain road in Europe. Before that, a sunny early walk produced Southern Comma, Blue-spot Hairstreak and Weavers/violet Fritillary, among others. Later, we made several stops on our way up the valley. A damp patch had skippers and blues assembled, plus Mountain Green-veined White, Black-veined White, Wood White and Knapweed Fritillary. Most of the skippers were Safflower and Essex, but we found Mallow and Marbled too, and our first Eros was with the blues. The meadows here were full of colour—and full of butterflies! More blues, plus Appolos, Almond-eye Ringlets and our first Niobe Fritillary. We had lunch here, when Large White, brimstone and orange tip were seen...



Southern comma



Weavers fritillary



Mountain green veined white



Mud puddlers



Tinee valley

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 16-Jul-16 10:22 PM GMT

Brilliant butterflies and brilliant photos, Buzzard!

I'm really glad you got your Cynthia's fritillaries. I think they're very special butterflies.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jul-16 10:36 PM GMT

Then up to the Col, at 2802M. On a walk here, Yannis pointed out some of the special flowers of this harsh environment, including gentians and some lovely pink and white buttercups. Peak Whites were here, confirmed when David managed a mid-flight shot using sport mode, for this is a butterfly that never stops. Our only Sooty Ringlet of the trip was here, too, a first for me. Several Small Tortoiseshells were hill topping. Visibility was excellent, making for great panoramas.

Then, time to head down, making a couple of stops for orchids and I took a picture of what looks like an olive skipper. Once back, a walk before dinner produced this lovely Spotted Fritillary. 😊

Thanks Guy, me too. I am absolutely delighted with them, and they even showed well for picture taking! 😊



Sooty ringlet



Pink and white buttercups



At the top of the Col



Olive skipper?



Spotted fritillary

Re: essex buzzard

by NickMorgan, 17-Jul-16 12:14 PM GMT

Wow, what a fantastic trip. You seem to have seen an amazing variety of butterflies. I have enjoyed reading about them.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jul-16 07:28 PM GMT

Thanks Nick,more to come! I do hope the weather is improving for you north of the border...

Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 17-Jul-16 08:27 PM GMT

I somehow missed your Cynthia's, superb pictures 🍷🍷🍷

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-16 09:33 PM GMT

Today was change over day. We had a last pre-breakfast was,sadly the second hotel didn't have a walking area, though there was compensation! The first Great Sooty Satyr looked as if it had done a couple of rounds with a bruiser. A nice Bergers Clouded Yellow was on lavender ,several Darwins Heath were found as was a better Great Sooty Satyr,as well as the by now familiar stuff.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-16 09:54 PM GMT

Heading toward the next hotel, a stop produced a colony of Mountain Alcon Blues in a damp field, supported by perhaps a dozen gentian plants. The females were laying eggs on these, and a mating pair was found. With more cloud today, several females opened their wings halfway, showing the black spots and borders. The males' markings were less impressive, a uniform dark blue with a black edge.

Yet more Heath Fritillaries were seen, and also a few False Heath Fritillaries. Safflower Skippers were on a dung heap, as were Amanda's, Small and other blues, and Northern Brown Argus, as well as many common species.



Mountain Alcon blue with eggs



Alcon male



Northern brown argus

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jul-16 10:52 PM GMT

After our picnic, the next stop was at some very flowery meadows, which we had permission to visit, so long as we didn't trash the site. However, on arrival some of these fields were already well trodden, perhaps by rooting wild boar, but probably by people. Not that the butterflies minded, for there were plenty. A worn Duke of Burgundy was hanging on, and a Clouded Apollo was nearby. Fritillaries seemed to be Meadow Frits, and two Southern White Admirals were together. Blues were abundant, incl. Common, Silver-studded, Eros, Escher's and Turquoise. Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, as were Glanville fritillaries and a mating pair of Spotted Fritillary. Brimstones and Cleopatras were seen. Then it was on to the hotel, where a Geranium Bronze was laying eggs on ivy-leaf geraniums.



Geranium argus



Meadow fritillary?



Southern white admiral



Spotted fritillaries



Turquoise blue



Geranium bronze

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Jul-16 11:15 PM GMT

Your Frit certainly looks like Meadow to me, Mark, but I think your Heath in the earlier post has suffered a typo – Dusky rather than Darwin's!

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-Jul-16 11:44 PM GMT

Wow oh wow that trip looks amazing, stunning photos Essex 😊🌿🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Jul-16 11:19 PM GMT

Although there were no walks near the new hotel, there was plenty to interest the early risers – a large thistle patch right next to the hotel. This morning, a splendid Niobe Fritillary was present and, when we returned in evening, High Browns and Dark Greens were nectaring.



Niobe frit



High brown

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jul-16 09:58 PM GMT

Thanks Dave for the correction!

Today we headed up to Estenc. The scenery was amazing and the butterflies so good,we stayed here all day. Beside a broad walk , mud puddling blues were abundant,with some Dingy and Safflower skippers. Further on,I found this white which I think is Green-veined. Titania's and a few Grisons Fritillaries were in the damp meadows,as were Purple-edge Coppers and a Small Copper near some bistort. Almond-eyed and Piedmont Ringlets were around,at one point I had one of each on my leg! These meadows were full of colour,and attendant butterflies. Lesser Marble, Pearl-border and Glanville Frits, Appolos, Chestnut and Darwin's Heath were identified ,and Orange Tips were beside the river.



Green veined white?



Titania frit



Almond eyed and Piedmont ringlet



Grisons frit



Purple edge copper

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jul-16 10:05 PM GMT

Estenc and turk's cap or martagon lily



Re: essex buzzard

by Katrina, 22-Jul-16 10:09 PM GMT

Two butterflies on your leg 🤩 You are raising the bar a bit there! 😊 Great photos!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Jul-16 10:24 PM GMT

But this day really belonged to the blues. The sight of hundreds of blues mud puddling is one of the pleasures of butterfly watching in Europe. Small, Mazarine, Silver-studded, Idas, Glandon, Adonis, Escher's, Chalkhill and Eros blues were all present as well as the odd Silvery Argus and Chapman's Blue. Back at the hotel, Dave found a Lesser Purple Emperor. 😊





Mud puddling blues



Idas blue



Silvery argus



Gladdon with Mazarine blues? The one on the right is lighter

Re: essex buzzard

by Katrina, 22-Jul-16 10:33 PM GMT

The second photo is spectacular! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-16 10:29 PM GMT

Thanks Katrina. The sight of these butterflies mud-puddling like this is very special to us more used to a sprinkling of British species!

Thursday 7 July brought more blue skies, and lots of Meadow Browns, Marbled Whites and fritillaries to the thistle patch. We headed up to another Col, first stopping just below the summit. Getting here early proved a winner, for down by the river, we found a photogenic Small Apollo—a first for me! We spent the morning here, seeing Swallowtail, Mountain Green-veined White, Geranium Argus, Glandon, Idas, Amanda's, Adonis and the lovely little Alpine Blue. Mountain and Shepherds Frits were identified, I think the photo shows a Mountain. Darwins and Small Heath were seen, along with Large Ringlet. We took lunch here, then headed to the top of the Col.



Swallowtail



Small Apollo



Mountain frit



Glandon blue



Alpine blue

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-16 10:56 PM GMT

Once at the top, amongst many lovely mountain pansies, Shepherds Fritillaries were buzzing around in number, and I found a mating pair. A male Cynthia's Frit was present, too, and a Sooty Copper showed well. Then David found a real rarity, a False Mnestrá Ringlet. Lots of Mazarine Blues were even at this altitude, and another Alpine Blue was briefly seen. Trumpet and Spring gentians coloured the slopes in places, and vanilla orchid were seen in good numbers.

Mid afternoon, we stopped briefly at yesterday's mud puddling site, where a Damon Blue was spotted. At the hotel, a nice Dark Green Frit was on the thistles. Another super day 😊



Sooty copper



Cynthia's frit



Shepherd's fritillaries



Dark green frit

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-16 08:49 PM GMT

Forgot the False Mnestra Ringlet!



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 25-Jul-16 09:39 PM GMT

Yeess!! Somebody else DID get an image of this species!! 😊

To be fair, Mark, you and Esther were the only ones that followed me to the hotspot (and got a bonus Alpine Blue thrown in too). In future years, I'll make a point of telling people that if they want to see something quite rare, they'd better accompany me!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 07:53 AM GMT

Just one, David! There was no picking the best picture to post, for this is the only one I got—and the only one I need!

Today was our last day in the field. It was a cloudy to start, something we weren't used to! We stopped at a likely area on our way up to the Col des

Champs. Under cloud,it took a bit longer to find roosting Heath Frit, Chalkhill Blue and Chestnut Heath. As it brightened a little, Safflower Skipper, Orange Tip, Almond-eyed Ringlet and Chapmans Blue , and David found a Dusky Meadow Brown. The larch trees here were looking very brown and sad,which,in high summer,is a worry.



Orange tip



Dusky meadow brown



Chapmans blue

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 09:34 PM GMT

So,then up to the Col. The flowers here were even more spectacular than ever,a real riot of colour. A pair of whinchats were attending a nest,and many marmots were around. Here are a few flowers;





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 09:54 PM GMT

Slowly, the sun started to break through, and immediately the award became alive with butterflies. Several very fresh Purple Edge Coppers showed, Eros and Green-underside Blues and Shepherd Fritillaries appeared from nowhere. Small, Silver-studded and Mazarine Blues were seen, and another Alpine Blue was found. A Large Grizzled Skipper was spotted, as was a Glandon Blue. Clouded and Bergers Clouded Yellow were seen, and a Mountain Dappled White was near the car park, and eventually photographed by several members of the group. On the high slopes, a few Mountain Ringlets were found.

Another stop on the way down produced Purple-shot Copper by the roadside, plus Blue-spot Hairstreak, Great Sooty Satyr, False Heath Fritillary and Large Ringlet while the thistles by the hotel produced my only Silver-washed Fritillary of the week nearby. A great last day 😊. Pics to follow...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 10:24 PM GMT

Pictures as promised;



Purple edge copper



Shepherds fritillary



Mountain ringlet



Shepherds frit with friend





Mountain dappled white

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 10:27 PM GMT

And the Alpine Blue,



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 10:32 PM GMT

And from the road verge,



Great yellow gentian



Purple shot copper



False Heath fritillary

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 26-Jul-16 10:36 PM GMT

Great stuff, Mark. I'm envious of the Purple Shot Copper – I was too lazy to photograph one even when they were relatively plentiful early in the week. 😞

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-16 10:45 PM GMT

Next morning, under brilliant blue skies, there was time after breakfast to take one last look at the thistle patch, clocking up 😊 amongst others, my only Scarce Copper of the week, and a Pearl-bordered Fritillary 😊, before heading down to Nice for our flight home, as all good things come to an end 😊

Thanks Dave, though I have to say I almost missed it as Yiannis and I were photographing the great yellow gentian! So I only managed a couple of quick shots, fortunately they came out reasonable.



Scarce copper



Pearl-bordered fritillary

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-16 10:53 PM GMT

👍👍👍 It's all I can bring myself to type 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 28-Jul-16 05:00 AM GMT

Amazing range of species, Buzzard! Very impressed.

Your pearl-bordered fritillary is a lesser marbled fritillary.

Guy

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-16 10:14 PM GMT

Told you I would make a few mistakes! 😊 Thanks Guy.

After the butterfly banquet in France ,by mid July it was back to normality. At least the weather has improved! The edge of my local wood faces north-west,and recently there have been a few sunny evenings,meaning after work visits were worthwhile. Hutchinsoni Commas have been present each time,if in slightly lower numbers than recent years. Ringlets are here too,but I also like to see the skippers. Large Skippers are perched every few yards,with Small and Essex Skippers in the grass.



Hutchinsoni comma



Small skipper



Large skipper



Essex skipper

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-16 10:34 PM GMT

One Essex species I didn't see in France was the White-letter Hairstreak . So when I got back it was a priority to visit my local site at Hadleigh Castle Country Park. The poor season here was obvious ,and only about half a dozen were found during my morning search. However,I did see a White Admiral,a site first,although it flew away over the hedge before I could get the camera ready!



Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jul-16 09:02 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Just catching up with your continental adventures, great reports and photos of the butterflies but those scenery shots with all the wildflowers are spectacular 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Aug-16 08:04 PM GMT

Thanks Neil. For me, it's not just about the butterflies, though they take priority! It's about where they are, the setting, the scenery and wild flowers, that make these mountains so special.

28 July. While I was in France, I saw hundreds, if not thousands, of butterflies each day. Well today, I saw hundreds, if not thousands of butterflies in Britain! The difference was, I didn't see 60 different kinds. At Devils Dyke, near Newmarket, they were all the same kind - Chalkhill Blues. Many species are having a poor year, no doubt in part due to the poor weather and lack of sunshine. But the Chalkhill Blues here were in fine fettle, there were as many as I have ever seen here, and they made a splendid sight, shimmering over the steep, hard to work, south-facing slope. 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-16 09:46 PM GMT

Another week goes by, and another week of mostly grey skies. This has been an all too familiar and unwelcome aspect of the summer this year—decidedly dull, even by British standards !

The woodland and grassland season is on the wane, though there were still a few Hutchinsoni Commas, in various stages of wear, on the one bright evening last week, and there were still a few Gatekeepers around. Purple Hairstreaks were still flying around the treetops. But the Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Skippers have mostly gone. But as one door closes, another, the last one, opens. The downland season, with the emergence of new season Blues and Silver-spotted Skippers, is about to reach its (hopefully) glorious peak, and that's where I will be heading next.



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Aug-16 10:06 PM GMT

Fear not, Mark. I've just watched the weather forecast and we have been promised some very favourable conditions by the weekend! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Aug-16 10:15 PM GMT

I fear it may be too little too late, though very welcome of course!

So, we headed off to Denbies hillside, Surrey. The site was more overgrown with thick, rank vegetation than usual. Whether this is because of all the rain or through lack of management, I don't know. Either way, it will be interesting how many Adonis Blues appear later this month.

The poor season here was obvious, with dozens to low hundreds of Chalkhill Blues, rather than the expected thousands. They should be at their peak now. A few Brown Argus and Common Blues were found. Even Meadow Browns were low in number, a few late Large, Small and Essex Skippers were seen, and one Silver Spotted Skipper—my first of the season. After a damp night, several edible (Roman) snails were found.





Edible snail





Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 09-Aug-16 10:51 PM GMT

Nice shots from Denbies, Essex – I was there yesterday and can only agree that it was a bit disappointing and that the grass is unusually long. It must be the rain earlier in the year as I think it was grazed in the normal way last winter and looked "normal" in the spring when the first brood Adonis were around.

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Aug-16 06:51 PM GMT

That makes sense,Dave. I can't believe they would take their eye of the ball on such a great site as that. Just shows how bad the weather has been,as if we didn't know!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Aug-16 09:23 PM GMT

After our morning at Denbies , we eased over to Ciddingfold wood. By mid afternoon ,the weather had brightened,and we saw good numbers of butterflies along the rides. Wood White numbers were fairly low,with about a dozen seen in the two hours the weather remained suitable. But we witnessed courtship,egg laying and a mating pair. A Large Skipper was in surprisingly good nick,they are long gone from where I live. Peacocks and Brimstones were feeding up, and plenty of mostly worn Silver-washed Frits were about. Day list for both sites, Large,Silver-spotted, Small and Essex Skippers, Large White, Brimstone, Green-veined White, Purple Hairstreak , Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common and Chalkhill Blue, White Admiral, Peacock, Comma,Painted Lady,Red Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Meadow Brown,Gatekeeper, Ringlet and Small Heath.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Aug-16 07:08 PM GMT

The silver-spotted Skipper is my favourite of the late summer butterflies, and I spend most of my spare time this month visiting colonies. On the face of it, they are very similar to Large Skippers, but their habits, and their habitats, are completely different. I like to not only photograph the adults, but also watch their behaviour, for these gorgeous little skippers, whether at rest or in flight, are full of character. On warm days, everything is done at 100 mph, yet in dull weather, they hardly move at all, unless disturbed. At rest they are equally appealing, with their teddy bear faces. They are a wonderful way to end the summer.

One of the best sites I know of is Aston Rowant. A visit here is normally one of the highlights of my season. But my visit last Sunday was a bit different. For there was much talk about a summer gale in Scotland that day. But there was much less talk about gale force gusts in many parts of southern England. Consequently, Aston Rowant, and ourselves, got a blasting, and most of the butterflies were being swept away, or were holding on for dear life.

However, we managed to find the most sheltered areas, where at least some butterflies were seen, even if we did not observe much of their normal behaviour. Silver-spotted Skipper numbers were very low, though this may have been because of the wind, and were lying low. Still some nice Chalkhill Blues, and a few Common Blue and Brown Argus were highlights. A tough, but in the end, successful day.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Aug-16 10:56 PM GMT

Other stuff from Aston Rowant.



Chiltern gentian





Chalkhill with thick black border



Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Aug-16 11:21 PM GMT

Some good variety there, Mark. Aston Rowant is a favourite site of mine, though it'll be missing from my 2016 list, sadly. If I remember correctly, there are always loads of Brimstones fattening up for winter on the betony at the bottom of the hill?

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-16 09:58 PM GMT

Great series of shots Essex 😊 – interesting Chalkhill with the thicker margins – is that within the normal range of variation or an ab?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Aug-16 09:56 PM GMT

It's true David, this is a favourite area for Brimstones – normally . But on this day, the wind was blowing the plants prostrate, and the only Brimstones were in the shelter of the trees further on.

Hi Wurzel, this Chalkhill certainly stood out in the field, which is why I went to extra effort to photograph it. Probably just a well-marked specimen .

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-16 07:02 PM GMT

10 August. Silver-spotted Skippers in Sussex.

Today found me at Malling Down, near Lewes. This was a much more enjoyable day than Aston Rowant, with much better weather. Plenty of Fresh SSS were about, both males and females, and they gave a cracking display of speed and manoeuvrability. Chalkhill and Common Blues were plentiful, and the first Adonis Blue was photographed. Lots of flowers were on the down, including the sought-after round-headed rampion. Near the allotments, a late Hutchinsoni Comma was chasing anything that went near, but a large patch of hemp-agrimony only turned up one Red Admiral. A couple of Small Copper were seen as were Small Heaths, and quite a few Meadow Browns. It was so good here, I was late leaving, but I eventually headed over to Windover Hill, home to the only Grayling colony in Sussex. Eventually the cloud broke, and a few evening Grayling were seen, together with several Wall, lots of SSS and Chalkhill Blues. 😊

From Malling;





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-16 08:37 PM GMT

And from Windover we have;



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-16 10:43 PM GMT

Fantastic sequence of shots – those Silver–spots are to die for Essex 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-16 09:33 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel–aren't they gorgeous ? It was a pleasure to spend time with them. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Aug-16 10:04 PM GMT

Lydden Temple Ewell on 17 August.

Today was a glorious day in east Kent,at one of my favourite sites. Having blue skies all day meant we could relax a little,take it easy,and watch the goings on at this excellent KWT reserve at leisure. This made it even more enjoyable. We walked through the Temple Ewell end and up through the trees at the top of the site. Even here,Common Blues and Brown Argus and a Wall were seen. As we emerged back into the open,a bright sulphur butterfly was seen– my first British Cloude Yellow of the year.

Then down the Lydden end,soon seeing SSS in numbers,sometimes 4–5 together ,chasing each other around the down,a lovely sight! Chalkhill Blues were mostly worn,but a few good ones too. At the bottom of the slope,Common Blues and Brown Argus were plentiful ,and Meadow Browns were feeding on marjoram and scabious. There was even a Marbled White. Small Whites were around,but Large Whites seem to have finished. After enjoying all these butterflies,it was time for a relaxing lunch in the park at Temple Ewell,knowing the sun would still be out when we finished. Then did it all again,seeing lots of SSS at their peak,and some really nice Brown Argus,the best ones I've seen this summer. We left at 6PM,having had a really great day. 😊



View from Temple Ewell







Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Sep-16 10:33 PM GMT

Just back from our annual end of summer trip to Dorset. More on that soon, but before we went, I couldn't resist a second trip to Aston Rowant, to admire some Silver-spotted Skippers for probably the last time this year. 😊 It was nice to see several Small Torts, and Common Blue numbers were much higher, too. 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Sep-16 10:55 PM GMT

DORSET

We have just returned from 6 days in Dorset, based at Lulworth Cove on the isle of Purbeck. Weather was a typical British mix, which was a pity, as the preceding week had brought some wonderfully warm and sunny weather. Three out of the 6 days were dull and damp, and three were bright. But it was by no means a washout. One of the bright days was taken up with the Great Dorset Steam Fair. Coming from a farming background, this is somewhere I've wanted to go for many years, so it was great to do it at last! Only butterflies there were Small White and Small Tort. To follow are the sites we visited, together with a few notes and pictures where possible.

Fontmell Down. This was one of the damp, misty days, but it was mild, and Meadow Browns were easily put up, and several Adonis Blues were disturbed from the wet grass. At the far end of the site in particular, lots of Autumn ladies tresses were in flower. Our intention was to come back to Fontmell on a better day, as this normally excellent site had great potential. But the weather, sadly, prevented this.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-16 09:32 PM GMT

Ballard Down.

This was a great disappointment. I remember up to a few years ago marjoram bushes smothered in Adonis Blues and other butterflies – I have a photo of 8 males on one plant, and it was my best site for Adonis. Now it is so heavily grazed no flowers are left, and areas where flowers used to be are broken and brown and Adonis resting on dead vegetation doesn't do it for me. With this, and far fewer butterflies nowadays, Ballard is probably no longer worth visiting.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-16 10:15 PM GMT

It's a pity to hear of a great site going to the dogs 😞 Hopefully the butterflies can move onto suitable habitat nearby 😊 You still managed some great shots though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-Sep-16 11:05 PM GMT

Sad to hear this, Mark. I visited Ballard Down 5 years ago and it was highly productive. Seems that it doesn't take long for things to go downhill if the sites aren't managed correctly.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Sep-16 08:44 PM GMT

Thanks to you both. The Adonis Blues were still there, though in lower numbers, but there is nothing for the adults to eat. I often see blues feeding on flowers, but I wonder if they actually need nectar plants? I couldn't tell if the flowers had been grazed out, or if they had had a machine go through there. I would like to see all the grazing animals taken off during the summer, and put back on in late September. Although I'm no expert, this would allow the nectar plants to quickly recover. The difficulty for me was avoiding photographing butterflies on dead vegetation.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Sep-16 09:52 PM GMT

Bindon Hill.

Our B&B was at the bottom of Bindon Hill, so a pre-breakfast walk was possible on fine fine days. We also had a day visit. We saw far fewer butterflies than previous years, but this may have been because our visit to Dorset was a couple of weeks later this year. We only saw one Wall, for example, and this was a worn specimen, as were all the Brown Argus and Chalkhill Blues we saw. A few Common Blues were in better condition, and it was lovely to see fresh Adonis Blues, wings spread wide in the early sun, warming up in the mornings. A late Marbled White was a surprise. Others here were Small White, Small Copper, Meadow Brown and Small Heath. Waking up to Adonis Blues, before breakfast, well, it doesn't get much better than that! 😊



Common blue



Adonis blues at Bindon hill





Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 05-Sep-16 10:01 PM GMT

Superb Adonis images. I haven't found any that co-operative yet this year !.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-16 07:14 PM GMT

Thanks,Trev! If you have any colonies near you,get there early if it is sunny-this Thursday should be good. I took these images between 7.30 and 8.30AM.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-16 07:30 PM GMT

Durdle Door.

We also visited Durdle Door a couple of times. A barberry bush up the hill between Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door had a Grayling feeding. Although not a great picture,it kept flashing its wings open. Another Grayling was at the Door,along with a Clouded Yellow,Common Blues,Meadow Browns and Small,but not Large, Whites. Many people here too,enjoying the splendid scenery and weather. A kestrel was having a dust bath,and 3 Ravens,two adults and a juv, came close,feeding on scraps left by the tourists.





View to Lulworth cove



Man o war beach

Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 06-Sep-16 07:43 PM GMT

My favourite bit of English coast, Essex, and a great selection of butterflies, especially the Adonis. 😊 They seem later down there (but go on for longer) – the Adonis are much newer than those on the Chilterns and North Downs, and the Graylings on the Surrey heaths are probably long gone. Does Dorset still have Chalkhills? The foodplant is the same, but I know Adonis like warmer conditions with shorter grass. I didn't see any at Durlston.

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-16 09:16 PM GMT

Nice to hear from you, Dave. As we have seen, the flight time of butterflies does vary, even within Britain. Why this is, I don't know, with some species flying earlier, later or longer than elsewhere. Dorset does have Chalkhill Blues. I saw a few worn adults on Bindon Hill even this late, so I guess they would be fairly common there in season. But at most sites, Adonis seem to dominate, though of course Chalkhills could have been present earlier, in high summer. Most Dorset sites are heavily grazed, which doesn't suit the Chalkhill Blue.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-16 10:08 PM GMT

Old Harry Rocks

Walked here from Studland. Although this was one of the cloudy days,by luck,a few sunny spells appeared. Small Whites were abundant,no doubt using the sea kale as LHP. Red Admiral, Common Blues and this very nice Adonis Blue were seen. Speckled Wood on the access track. We were lucky,as shortly after leaving,the mist and drizzle returned.



Old Harry rocks



Old Harry rocks from Studland

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 09-Sep-16 07:54 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis essex, your lucky to see so many butterflies, nothing special here, Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 12-Sep-16 08:33 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie. By going to Dorset slightly later this year,we were hoping to catch the Adonis season,and it was great to see so many.

Durlston CP.

We visited Durlston on the 1 September. I was hoping, but not expecting to see any Lulworth Skippers, but we found several. Adonis Blues were again common, but numbers of species and butterflies were lower overall than I usually see in August. Small White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown and Small Heath were present.





Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-16 05:36 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis essex, 🍷 I missed them again this year, looks like I'll have to visit Dorset in Sept Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Sep-16 10:43 PM GMT

White horse of Osmington

This was the last site we visited. With sun all day, we arrived late afternoon. Unfortunately, cloud chose that exact moment to unexpectedly invade from the west. So after a few minutes sunshine, when a Clouded Yellow was seen, the butterflies soon disappeared, apart from a few Meadow Browns. But judging from the number of Adonis Blues we disturbed from the ground, and found roosting, this looks to be a great site, with much potential. Perhaps the most surprising thing we saw was this freshly emerged Marbled White, in September! We must return next year, as we had much unfinished business to do here, as we had only scratched the surface.







Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 14-Sep-16 12:22 AM GMT

Fresh Marbled Whites and Wall Browns in September ?. Whatever next.

Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 14-Sep-16 08:15 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Really enjoyed your reports and photos from Dorset...as you know I missed out on visiting there this year and went to Cornwall instead for our late season week so it has been interesting to see what it has been like there this year.

Osmington has been my favourite site down there over the past few years, I reckon it has been more productive than the more usually visited (and managed) sites such as Durlston and Ballard Down. Like you I was a bit disappointed with Ballard Down the last time I visited.

I have also found good condition Marbled Whites on my early September visits there, they seem to last much longer on that stretch of coast.

Great stuff 😊

Neil

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 15-Sep-16 09:11 AM GMT

Really enjoyed your posts from Dorset , I love it there and hope to return next year Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-16 09:02 PM GMT

Thanks Neil and Goldie for your comments. Goldie,you really should visit Dorset,it's a great way to finish the season,and I promise you butterflies by the bucket load if you come late August early September. Neil, Osmington looks such a great site,I may not be able to wait until next August...

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-Sep-16 09:04 PM GMT

A September Marbled White is something to behold, Mark! What a find.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-16 09:26 PM GMT

Thursday 8 September

With great weather, and accurate forecast, and everything going to plan, this was one of the best days of the year. Even the roads were clear!

After unfinished business on our holiday, it was back to Dorset—for a day! Lots of lovely swallows and house martins were above the car park lane in Osmington, and we were able to pick out the juveniles. Then up the slope, with Speckled Woods and Small Coppers on the track side. Lots of Adonis Blues were on the down, including many more females than last week. Spent some time here, admiring these lovely butterflies, then walked up to the white horse. The views from here were splendid on this crystal clear day, right over to Weymouth and Portland. Kestrels were being hounded by jackdaws, and two Ravens flew over. One or two Adonis even up here, and a Clouded Yellow was seen. Esther found some nice autumn ladies tresses at the top of the slope.

By now we were hungry, so we headed to Lulworth Cove for lunch, a swim in the cove, and an ice cream.





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Sep-16 09:43 PM GMT

We could easily gone back to Osmington and spent the rest of the day there, but instead we had a little walk around the village of Tarrant Monkton. With its ford and lovely Dorset thatched cottages, this is picture postcard stuff. Then a short drive to Fontmell Down, to spend the late afternoon there. Perhaps not quite so many Adonis Blues here, but a most enjoyable end to the day. Esther spotted a female with a good dusting of blue scales. A couple of juvenile buzzards were practicing their flight skills, and I briefly saw a hare. Many Meadow Browns were present, and a Small Tortoiseshell was present, too. By now it was 6pm, and time to head home. But it had been a truly super day. 😊😊😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-16 08:02 PM GMT

A great set of reports and photos from my home county Essex, I got all nostalgic and teary eyed reading them 😊 That Marbled White was a surprise – worth mentioning on the 'Notes' section?
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Sep-16 09:40 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. But why ever did you leave such a great place? I can't believe a butterfly enthusiast would vacate the best county in Britain for butterflies without good reason...

East Kent

On Sunday 11 Sept, it was another sunny day, so we headed back to Lydden Temple Ewell. Most of the Adonis were looking distinctly more aged than those in Dorset, and we also saw an aged Silver Spotted Skipper. Several Small whites were about, and a few fresh 3rd brood Large Whites, my first since early August. A Clouded Yellow was present, and a late Brimstone was a surprise. Old Brown Argus were seen, several Common Blues were in better condition. Meadow Browns were still in reasonable numbers, one had lighter markings than usual. Surprisingly, a female Gatekeeper was seen, as were several Small Heath. A lovely Hummingbird Hawkmoth was at the Temple Ewell end.
Pictures to follow...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Sep-16 10:46 PM GMT

Pictures from Lydden TE. The Meadow Brown is a contender for my most ragged butterfly of the year!





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Sep-16 10:57 PM GMT

A few more...



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-16 11:12 PM GMT

More great shots Essex, especially the Hummingbird Hawk Moth 😊 I had to leave Dorset to go to Aberystwyth University, and then to London once I was in the band. But I'm only just over the border now and my passport is up to date 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Sep-16 08:20 PM GMT

Ha ha,excellent Wurzel!

Sunday continued. After lunch,we headed for Dungeness. Went up the lighthouse,where the views were splendid. Then had a walk around,and managed to find some of Hoggers' Small Coppers,including this well-marked adult,as well as Common Blues and another hummingbird Hawkmoth . After the dry August, most of the flowers had shrivelled,the few remaining were a magnet for insects. Several Small Heath were also present.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Sep-16 11:48 PM GMT

CORNWALL!

Just back from a few days in west Cornwall. It was dull and damp when we arrived, but things improved so I walked the South-West coast path from Mullion Cove in afternoon, arriving at Porthleven by early evening. Although mostly cloudy, a few butterflies were seen, including Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and Wall. Stonechats are common on the Cornish coast, and several were spotted, as well as buzzards, kestrels, ravens and swallows. An enjoyable afternoon. 😊





Church cove



porthleven

Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 26-Sep-16 08:31 PM GMT

Lovely view of the harbour essex, I'd like to visit Cornwall next year all being well. Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Sep-16 09:55 PM GMT

You'd love it Goldie, fantastic scenery, and birds and butterflies too!

Tuesday. Today we visited Kynance Cove, and walked to Lizard Point and village, where we sampled the delights of Ann's Pasties, before walking slowly back. There was a lot of cloud, but it was quite warm, and a few sunny spells. And these brought out lots of Small Coppers and several other butterflies.

The coppers were abundant, especially near Lizard Point, but there were plenty elsewhere, in varying stages of wear, as the pictures show. Females were fresher than males, but with considerable overlap. As Neil F found when he visited a couple of weeks ago, they varied a good deal in size, one near the lighthouse was the size of a Small Blue. One female was laying eggs, choosing young sorrels with small leaves, ignoring bigger clumps. Many had blue spots, all were a pleasure to see.





Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 26-Sep-16 10:40 PM GMT

Looks like a couple of abs. there Essex, the first one looks like an intermediate between normal and *radiata* and the tatty final one looks like it is (or was in its younger days) a full on *radiata* 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-16 08:01 AM GMT

Other butterflies were seen. Lots of Small Whites, and a Large White was laying egg. One aged Common Blue was found, and we also saw Comma, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Speckled Woods and Walls. Buzzards, ravens, swallows, wheatears were noted, and I was pleased to see Autumn squil, as this is the only place I have seen it, all against a backdrop of the most splendid scenery you can imagine. 😊



Large white egg laying



Autumn squil



Wheatear



Kynance cove

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Oct-16 09:40 PM GMT

The next day, Wednesday, we walked the 12 mile stretch of coast path from Portreath to Hayle. Although mostly cloudy, it was quite warm, and butterflies were about. Small Coppers were again seen in several places, with Small and a few Large Whites. At the Portreath end, high cliffs and deep valleys dominated, with little sandy coves far below. At the spectacular Hell's Mouth, two newborn grey seal pups were in the cove. Now the path levelled out on the high cliffs, and Red Admiral and Painted Lady were noted. Continuing along, the splendid Godrevy lighthouse came into view. Another rocky cove here had many grey seals hauled out. After a refreshment stop nearby, the path lowers down onto the beach, and with the tide out, we walked the 3 miles of sand, before heading up into the scrub approaching Hayle. A Speckled Wood was seen. By time we arrived at Hayle viaduct, it was late afternoon, and we could reflect on a very nice walk.

Birds today included buzzard, kestrel, peregrine, raven, swallows, house martins, stonechats and wheatears.

Pic's coming up...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13-Oct-16 09:49 PM GMT

Pictures from Wednesday ,



Portreath



Hell's mouth



Godrevey



Hayle

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 14-Oct-16 04:40 PM GMT

Hello Essex,

Really enjoyed reading through your diary ,particularly liked the Cornwall visit ,we were down there back in July,but reckon we were at the right place at the wrong time

where the Coppers are concerned,didn,t manage one ,between broods I reckon,don,t know if you,d noticed but I reckon your tatty individual (Copper) is.Ab; Radiata ,shame you never found it a couple of weeks earlier. We also tried for Ann,s pasties ,but the couple of visits we made,she was closed both times ! regards Allan.W,

Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 14-Oct-16 04:58 PM GMT

Hello again Essex,

Apologies I didn,t read the other posts properly, Bugboy had already pointed out the abs,sorry about that !! regards Allan .W.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-16 06:42 PM GMT

That's ok, Alan! Thanks for your comments. Can't believe Ann's pasties was closed though, I thought she was always open! Coppers reach their peak in September and early October on this sunny coastline, and you avoid the crowds too!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-16 07:00 PM GMT

The next day dawned gloriously sunny,so it was back to the Lizard for another look at all those lovely Coppers. I first walked from Mullion Cove to Lizard Point,a distance of 7 miles- but it took until 2 pm because of all the stops. Coppers were everywhere , but especially from Kynance onwards. Again, they were variable, some had bold blue spots,others had just a few blue scales,and others were clear. The amount of black varied,too. They gathered in any flowery areas, finding wild mint, Autumn hawkweed and yarrow particularly attractive. I have probably seen more Coppers this year than ever before. And I'm not complaining! 😊





Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 14-Oct-16 07:16 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great reports and photos from Cornwall...bringing back memories of all those Coppers when I was there back in early September. Love the shot of the footprints on the beach at Hayle, I walked back along there a couple of times after wandering through the dunes at Upton/Gwithian Towans 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-16 09:15 PM GMT

Thanks Neil,as always. Yes,before I went,I read your pages with interest . So thanks for posting...

Other butterflies were seen on this day. I was particularly pleased to see several Walls, and near Lizard Point,a Clouded Yellow male shot past. Small Whites were common,with a few Large Whites. Common Blues were faded,as was a Meadow Brown. A Small Tortoiseshell was nice to see,and Painted Lady and Red Admiral complete the picture.

In places,Cornish heath was still in flower. This heather is found only here,so a treat for the nature lover to find. Several other Autumn flowers were still around,including the sea aster below. A hovering kestrel gave a great view,and an adult buzzard soared overhead. It had gaps in its primaries,as hey moult this time of year. Cornish chough's were heard,but remained out of sight. Ravens were seen too.

In such glorious weather the scenery was more spectacular than ever,and I couldn't resist including a couple of images! 😊 .





Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-16 09:23 PM GMT

Wild flowers,



Betony



Cornish Heath



Thrift or sea pink



Toadflax



Sea aster

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Oct-16 09:27 PM GMT

And the scenery,



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-16 10:03 PM GMT

Cracking Coppers Essex – a brill Blue Badger and a lush Wall too 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-Oct-16 11:50 AM GMT

Some great coastal scenery, Mark. It sure is a lovely part of the UK – and the butterflies seem to keep going late too!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Oct-16 09:24 PM GMT

It sure it a glorious place, David! I've been coming to Kynance for as long as I can remember, and it is still one of my favourite palaces, anywhere.

Thanks, Wurzel. I was particularly pleased to see the Walls, as I was hoping a new generation would be emerging!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 17-Oct-16 08:54 PM GMT

So, we come to Friday, our last day in Cornwall – it goes so quick!

We started with a walk around some of the mining district near Camborne. Some of these mines, especially near East Pool, have been beautifully and lovingly restored by National Trust and others. But these grey old stone buildings are such a part of our heritage that few Cornish people would want to see them all restored. A few butterflies were around, including Comma and Small Tortoiseshell. A very noisy juv buzzard was begging for food from a parent.



Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 17-Oct-16 10:14 PM GMT

What a great report of a late season break in glorious coastal scenery. Splendid views, flowers and of course butterflies!

Dave

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Oct-16 08:16 PM GMT

Thanks Dave. It was a great trip down there, and I would recommend it to anyone. Being lucky with the weather helps a bit, too! 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Oct-16 10:38 PM GMT

Late morning, we went to the bakers to pick up pasties and Cornish Saffron cake to take home to family, before taking a couple of pasties to Madron Carn for lunch. Normally hill topping nymphalids are here but there was just one Red Admiral and a Small Copper. But eating lunch in such great Cornish surroundings is one of my greatest pleasures.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Oct-16 10:47 PM GMT

Long term road improvements are taking place on the A30 Bodmin Moor. So to avoid the queues, we took the A39 and stopped at Rough Tor Bodmin Moor, mid afternoon. A good couple of hours stretch surrounded by beautiful scenery and animals, including Bodmin Moor ponies, then, after admiring the Ravens it was time to continue the long journey back to Essex.



Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Oct-16 07:46 PM GMT

Recently, at work, I had to trim some ivy which was getting overgrown. Aware, however, that Holly Blues were flying around it back in August, I carefully searched the developing flower buds, making sure I avoided these. Sure enough, I found several Holly Blue caterpillars, in various stages of growth, some still quite small. Thankfully, work were sympathetic, and I won't be trimming the rest of the ivy for a while!



Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 01-Nov-16 07:38 PM GMT

I think you are right Mark. The small, dark spot half way up the upperside of the hind wings make this Common Blue identifiable as the same one.
Very pleased that you had a fruitful visit to Shoreham.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-16 11:00 PM GMT

Great landscape shots Essex 😊 That pasty looked great – is it true that proper Cornish Pasties shouldn't have carrots in them? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 02-Nov-16 07:39 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Recently,at work,I had to trim some ivy which was getting overgrown. Aware,however,that Holly Blues were flying around it back in August,I carefully searched the developing flower buds,making sure I avoided these. Sure enough,I found several Holly Blue caterpillars, in various stages of growth,some still quite small. Thankfully,work were sympathetic,and I won't be trimming the rest of the ivy for a while!

Good stuff, Mark. I dread to think how many butterflies are denied living out their cycle in the name of tidiness. You did well to capture the larva on camera. I've often looked on ivy for these but have yet to find one.

Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 02-Nov-16 08:01 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Recently,at work,I had to trim some ivy which was getting overgrown. Aware,however,that Holly Blues were flying around it back in August,I carefully searched the developing flower buds,making sure I avoided these. Sure enough,I found several Holly Blue caterpillars, in various stages of growth,some still quite small. Thankfully,work were sympathetic,and I won't be trimming the rest of the ivy for a while!

Well done Mark 😊 . I have found and photographed Holly Blue caterpillars on the Ivy in my garden a couple of times but they are remarkably well camouflaged in real life and easy to overlook. It is usually just the tell tale little holes in the flower buds that give them away.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Nov-16 08:18 PM GMT

Many thanks to you all,for all your comments.

Yes Wurzel,it's true. No self respecting Cornishman would put carrots in a pasty! In Devon,on the other hand... 😊

Thanks David,and I agree. Not just in gardens,either. Just imaging how many thousands,if not millions,of Orange Tip eggs and caterpillars are killed when the road and path verges are shredded to the ground in early summer? 😞

As I said, Trevor,thanks for your postings about Shoreham. Without them,I would never have had the pleasure of visiting,and seeing those lovely late butterflies! 😊

Thanks to you too,Neil. I'm just glad they let me,rather than someone else,cut the ivy, giving me the opportunity to check the flowers. 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Nov-16 08:35 PM GMT

Back in October,I visited Canvey Wick. This brownfield site was going to e developed for oil storage tanks,but it never happened and is now a nature reserve. Recently featured on the BBCs The One Show,it is renowned for several BAP species,including the shrill carder bee,and it the most reliable site in Essex for Walls. My visit on the 6th coincided with a partial third emergence,and three were seen. Other sightings included a very nice female Common Blue.





Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-16 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers for the confirmation Essex - I've been in many an argument over 'to add carrots or not' (I was always in the 'not' camp) 😊 Great Wall shots, especially the closed wing view, the detail they show is fabulous 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 05-Nov-16 02:18 PM GMT

I hope you will post your images from Shoreham, Although Butterfly numbers are on the decline there, every visit seems to produce something new,including some amazing, late Common Blues.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Nov-16 09:37 PM GMT

Sunday 30 October.

After some amazing late sightings recently, today we visited Shoreham harbour. A couple of hours warm weak sunshine produced a splendid six, at least, Clouded Yellows, including two fresh males, 4 Common Blues, including a fresh male, a quite fresh Small White and a Red Admiral flying purposefully south overhead. A splendid success for the end of October, as the last hours of warm weather vanish.

Thanks to Trevor for his postings and images, and to Vince for adding a grid reference, without this I probably would not have made the journey down from Essex. Thanks guys!

Pictures to follow...

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Nov-16 06:50 PM GMT

Pictures from 30 October,



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Nov-16 11:27 PM GMT

Great set of photos Essex – worth waiting the extra night for 😊 That female blue is really blue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 10–Nov–16 08:25 AM GMT

That's a pretty good selection from Shoreham, Mark.
Your ' blue ' female Common Blue looks familiar.
I am very pleased that your long(ish) journey was worthwhile.
A brilliant season's end. 😊

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: essex buzzard

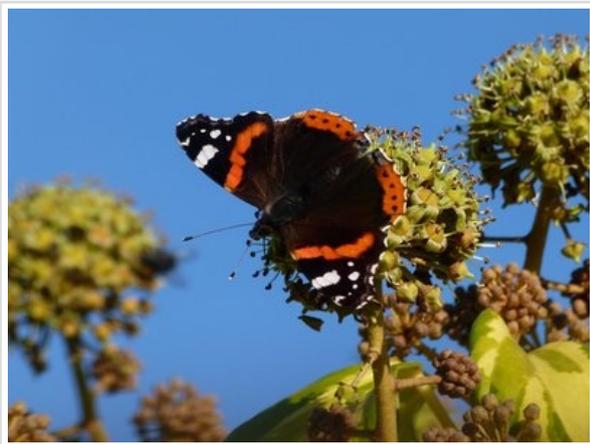
by essexbuzzard, 11–Nov–16 10:22 PM GMT

Thanks guys. Yes Trevor, it was certainly worth the effort!

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11–Nov–16 11:05 PM GMT

It was a glorious day in East Anglia today,with 8 hours sunshine! On the flowering ivy at work, a brilliant November Red Admiral was feeding 😊



Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12–Nov–16 02:40 PM GMT

Lovely shot essex, some people have all the luck and the Sunshine too 🍀 Goldie 😊

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21–Dec–16 11:02 PM GMT

CATCHING UP

After several dry months, November was slightly wetter than average. But there were also several clear, sunny days which rank alongside any that June had to offer this year,and on one of these, we visited nearby Epping Forest. It was a good year for autumn colours this year,perhaps helped by the weather, and by mid month,they were at their peak.



Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Dec-16 11:20 PM GMT

Very mellow and fruitful shots Essex 😊 – they take me back 😊 Mind you I'm still posting from August 🙄🙄

Have a great Solstice/Xmas

Wurzel

Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Dec-16 01:24 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. And a very happy festive season to one and all!

Our local kestrels and buzzards are now spending most of their time perched. To survive the winter, a buzzard needs to increase its body weight, and they do this in two ways. By keeping active flying to a minimum to conserve energy, and by building a layer of body fat in autumn. This is easy enough to start with. Prey animals are still near their annual peak in September, and days are still fairly long. As autumn progresses though, these animals become harder to find. Coupled with that, the amount of hunting time diminishes as the days grow shorter. Now, in winter, they have a tough time ahead, especially if there is any snow cover, and especially in the bare, almost entirely arable landscape of central and eastern England.

