

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jan-17 10:55 PM GMT

There has been a small invasion of waxwings this winter. Not so many as 2013, but the chance to catch up with these exotic visitors is not to be missed! These were at Pitsea, next to Go Outdoors, where the Rowan trees still have berries.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Goldie M, 13-Jan-17 10:34 AM GMT

Hi! essex, I've not seen Wax Wings yet but I'd love to add them to my list. Goldie 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 13-Jan-17 11:23 PM GMT

Cracking shots Essex 🇮🇪 – they've only gotten as close to me as Swindon 😊 Fingers crossed they work their way south a little more...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Padfield, 15-Jan-17 01:56 PM GMT

Yes, great shots!

I've once seen waxwings here, but not recently. I'll definitely be keeping my eyes open this winter.

Guy

**Re: essex buzzard**

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

Thanks all. Anywhere with berries, especially rowan, is definitely worth keeping an eye on this winter!

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Feb-17 06:28 PM GMT

The first couple of weeks of February were cold and cloudy, with mostly overcast, miserable days. The last week has been mild and cloudy, as winds veer southwest. Sunshine had been notable by its absence, but there was a little bit on Thursday lunchtime, when I saw my first butterfly of the year, a Red Admiral, at work. No picture, but it lifted the gloom, at least briefly.

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-Mar-17 09:46 PM GMT



*Magnolia Campbellii* in flower

Just back from a short break in Cornwall. Unfortunately, the gloomy weather that plagued February continued, and in all days combined, the sun shone for probably less than 20 minutes. White mist and drizzle throughout, any thoughts of early insects quickly vanished.

After spending the first day walking the coast path in fog, and not seeing anything, the next day we visited Trengwainton gardens, near Madron. One of the things I look forward to when visiting at this time of year is seeing the splendid *Magnolia Campbellii*. This, a tree which can grow to 60 feet, 20M., is native to the Himalayas, and can bloom as early as January in Cornwall. The tree is hardy, but the glorious big pink flowers are killed by frost. This, and that it can take 20 years to flower well, makes it unsuitable for most of us, but this makes these big, old Cornish trees even more magnificent.

Camellias and Rhododendrons were also in flower. In this frost-free environment, tree ferns, dripping with moisture, were a splendid sight.



*Magnolia Campbellii* at Trengwainton



*Rhododendron*



*Datura*



*Camellia*



*Snowdrop*

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 02-Mar-17 10:32 PM GMT

On another day, we did some birdwatching. Unfortunately, we missed a spoonbill that was at Hayle estuary the day before, but several goosanders were seen, with some bar tailed godwits.

Near Marazion, a Hudsonian whimbrel that had been present since last year was tracked down. Slightly smaller than our whimbrel, but otherwise similar. Several little egrets were on the beach, their peculiar yellow feet showing well.

Next it was off to Jubilee Pool, Penzance, for some purple sandpipers. Also present was a nice group of sanderlings with dunlins and ringed plovers.

At Helston Boating lake, a juvenile Iceland gull has been seen. We failed to find it but, a nice surprise, we saw a couple of friends of ours, who were also looking for it, we first met then in Svalbard a few years ago.

Our last stop of the day was to Looe Bar, where a roost of cattle egrets has been present. On this dull day, the pictures weren't great, but we saw them. I've seen cattle egrets in Provence, but these were my first in Britain.



*Cattle egrets*



*Helston*



*Curlew*



*Sanderlings at jubilee pool*



*Purple sandpiper*



*Dunnock*



*Little egret*



*Hudsonian whimbrel*



*Goosander with black headed gulls*

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 03-Mar-17 11:20 PM GMT

On our last day in Cornwall, the car had a problem and had to go to the garage, so we got a bus to Penzance, and then we went to Trewidden gardens. The marvellous Campbell's magnolia was here again, in all its glory, but an even greater treasure at Trewidden is their very own Magnolia Trewidden Belle, a hybrid of garden origin. With Campbellii as one of its parents, the large blooms appear early, even before Campbellii, with darker purple pink flowers.

Tree ferns are a feature at Trewidden, and the best ones, some over 100 years old, are in an old open cast tin mine known as the Dell.

Camellias are another feature, with 300 different types here. They make a splendid sight in winter and early spring both in the gardens and along the entrance road.



*Camellias*



*Camellias*



*Magnolia Trewidden belle*



*Camellias*



*Magnolia Trewidden belle*



*The dell*



*Campbell's magnolia*

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Mar-17 10:37 PM GMT

Some cracking bird shots there Essex – especially the Hudsonian Whimberel 🇬🇧🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Mar-17 11:56 AM GMT

Some fantastic colours to be seen down there, Mark. Hard to believe it's the UK in a few of those images.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 06-Mar-17 03:53 PM GMT

Hard to believe so many flowers are out essex, nothing here as colourful yet, lovely shots Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Mar-17 11:02 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, yes spring usually comes earlier to Cornwall than anywhere else, though a bit of sunshine wouldn't go amiss!

One of the treasures of the Essex coast in winter is the return of the Brent geese. Flocks of over a thousand are commonplace and swarms of 3000 are frequently reported. The sight and sound of such numbers is wonderful, but they have their tragic side too. Brent geese are shot, and the keepers were out yesterday, waiting for the flocks to fly over. I personally saw two fall out of the sky, I'm sure others were killed. This is hard for me to take—we do not own these birds, they only migrate here, from the arctic, and we are very privileged to have these lovely geese come to us.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-17 08:21 PM GMT

The final photo is a much more welcome one than one of the earlier ones 😞 When you say 'keepers' do you mean the local Gamekeepers or landowners? I take it they have to have a licence and have a 'quota'? 😊 One of the biggest flocks near me is down on the Fleet (sometimes with three varieties of Brent) and I'm not aware of anyone shooting there?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Mar-17 09:41 PM GMT

I think it's gamekeepers employed by land owners, though I'm not certain. Trouble is, it is legal to shoot wild ducks, so I suppose you can shoot geese too? There is a nature reserve right next door, where they are safe, but they leave the reserve to feed on the arable fields, where they are vulnerable.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 07-Mar-17 10:14 PM GMT

Hi Essex,

Interesting pictures, concerning the Brent geese, i had a quick look on the BASC website which gives a list of all Game species that can be shot legally ,in season ,and Brent goose doesn't appear to be one of them ! (but curiously Pink footed goose is ),so don't quite know about the legality in shooting the Brents,seems a bit dodgy to me ( but i'm happy to be corrected ). regards . Allan.W.

### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 07-Mar-17 11:36 PM GMT

looks to be legal under strictly controlled conditions

<http://adlib.eversite.co.uk/adlib/defra/content.aspx?id=000HK277ZW.0A4G4PITS7OA5L>

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Mar-17 09:01 PM GMT

There is no suggestion they have done anything wrong,legally. Morally,on the other hand...

Much is said about hunters in Southern Europe killing our migrant birds,such as turtle doves, which we rightly deplore. But these geese are someone else's migrants,so is it really any different? Really?

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Mar-17 09:42 PM GMT

At last the sun came out late last week, and with above average temperatures the hibernators emerged. After Red Admiral, 2 Brimstones and a Comma on Thursday, a lunchtime walk at work on Saturday produced another Comma and this lovely Small Tortoiseshell.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Mar-17 09:53 PM GMT

Sunday saw us back in Cornwall, and into the sun! In afternoon, we visited the excellent Caerhays Castle estate, south of St. Austel. Never been here before, and we were treated to a spectacular display of Magnolias. Camellias and Rhododendrons. Lots of territorial buzzard activity in the air, on the ground we saw the first Peacock of 2017. While I was photographing the Magnolias, Esther shouted 'Painted Lady!' Eventually I tracked it down, again, my first of the year. 😊





### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 14-Mar-17 10:29 PM GMT

Well done, Mark. We've had all kinds of sightings over the last week or so but no-one had hitherto recorded a Painted Lady!

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 15-Mar-17 12:00 AM GMT

Cracking stuff Essex – isn't that a UK first – I can't recall anyone else seeing a Painted Lady yet? 😊 Mind you I think its cheating have two pairs of eyes when going out beuuterflying 😊😊 I'm just jealous as whenever I suggest that my wife 'might like to accompany me butterflying', she suggests that 'no she definitely does not like too!' 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 15-Mar-17 06:09 PM GMT

Lucky you Essex, 🍷 nothing here yet, lovely shots as well, Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Mar-17 11:01 PM GMT

I indeed was very lucky, especially having Esther with me as she spotted it, while I was photographing flowers!

Brimstones are not always the easiest to photograph, so imagine my pleasure when this lovely male landed on these daffodils in Harlow this morning. 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 16-Mar-17 08:20 AM GMT

Great to see your Painted Lady and the 'parked' Brimstone, it really blends with the Daffodil.

You are off to a good start,  
Trevor.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-17 10:54 PM GMT

Great shot Essex 😊 Daffs don't seem to be that popular with butterflies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 16-Mar-17 11:03 PM GMT

Goodness – a Painted Lady! I know they pop up in Cornwall earlier than most places, but that's a great sighting. I also agree with the others that the Brimstone shot is a classic – it blends beautifully with the flowers. 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 17-Mar-17 03:17 PM GMT

Love the Brimstone shot Essex, still awaiting here for the sight of just one, Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Mar-17 12:01 AM GMT

In the woods, the willow catkins are now in full bloom. They are very attractive to bumble and honey bees and, on the warmer days last week, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells were enjoying them too. Our local buzzards have suddenly found their voices and taken to the skies in impressive soaring flight. After months of saving energy, they are now preparing for the breeding season. The woodland primroses are out and, in the gardens, daffodils are at their peak. Spring is here! 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 21-Mar-17 08:03 AM GMT

Three great shots there Essex, especially the Buzzard, never seen one perched like that.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-17 08:37 PM GMT

The perched one is a female kestrel, should have said before!

One of the great things about living in Essex is the coastal estuaries and mudflats. Although not attractive to look at, they are a magnet for thousands of winter and early spring birds.

Visiting Maldon and nearby Heybridge Basin last week, I was delighted to find good numbers of Brent geese still present, any day now they will start their long migration east, to breed in Siberia.

All through winter, hundreds, sometimes thousands of black-tailed godwits have been present. Grey-brown in winter, they often start to moult into their lovely russet breeding plumage, before they migrate to Iceland for breeding. On my visit, I was hoping to see and photograph this event, and this was a success!





### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-Mar-17 10:44 PM GMT

Wednesday 22 March. Today, I headed across the border, to do some walking in the splendour of the Welsh hills. Rain was expected to clear through the morning, with sunny spells and good clarity to follow. But when I got here at 9AM, it wasn't rain that greeted me on arrival:



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-17 11:41 PM GMT

Woah that's got to be the most spectacular MET Office fail that I've seen! 🤔😅 Great shots of the Blackwits BTW 😊 I seem to recall from my birding years that scaly back = Bar and smooth back = Black when in winter plumage 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 24-Mar-17 08:40 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Nice wintery looking vista there 😊 I noticed in our forecasts earlier in the week that all the rain we had been having here had been falling as snow on the Welsh hills which are really not that far to the west of us. A couple of guys at work who drive in from around Telford said they had some as well.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: essex buzzard

by NickMorgan, 24-Mar-17 10:09 PM GMT

Just catching up with your diary. Amazing that you have seen a Painted Lady already. I wonder where it has come from and if it will survive to breed? I love the shot of the Brimstone on the daffodil.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Mar-17 08:55 PM GMT

With the rain and snow expected to clear and visibility forecast to improve, I decided to head up the highest mountain in South Wales, Pen Y Fan. If all goes to plan, the views would be spectacular by afternoon. To be fair, the forecast was spot on, as by lunch time, the mist was lifting off the tops, giving splendid views all round!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Mar-17 09:04 PM GMT

On the way back from Wales, I decided to visit again the 'golden triangle', an area near Newent where the woods are full of wild daffodils, or lent lilies. They even grow next to the M50! It's been a few years, so it was nice to go there again, even though it rained most of the day!



**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 31-Mar-17 10:22 PM GMT

You sure get about, Mark, fair play.

I had seen the snow clad upper slopes of Pen y Fan from afar when I drove back to Swansea from Abergavenny last Sunday, but it's interesting to see how it looks from the viewpoint of someone up near the summit.

886m makes it the highest British peak south of Snowdonia, and clearly one that can hang on to winter well into spring!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Apr-17 09:11 PM GMT

As you know, David, I like to keep busy. Trouble is, the housework never gets done!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Apr-17 09:19 PM GMT

GIBRALTAR!

Just back from a cracking little trip to Gibraltar (GBZ).

We visited in 2014, and it was great to go back to the rock again. Good, sunny weather, plenty of wildlife, including a nice selection of early spring butterflies to kick-start the season, made it a holiday to remember! 😊



*The rock!*

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-Apr-17 10:12 PM GMT

An early flight saw us in Gibraltar by 1pm. After landing-on the road!- we dropped our bags at the hotel, and got straight on the cable car to the Upper rock, where we were soon surrounded by Barbary macaques! After numerous photos, we spent the afternoon enjoying the excellent views and visibility, and walking the lanes and footpaths seeking the flowers and butterflies.

The day belonged to the Spanish Festoons, easily the most abundant butterfly seen. What a great pleasure to see these lovely insects again. Cleopatras were also fairly common and, like Brimstones in England, rarely landing! A few Provence ( or Moroccan) Orange Tips were seen, as were a few Large Whites. Red Admirals were at the top, and the last butterfly of the day was a male Wall.

Swallows were migrating through. A kestrel was on the rock, and in the evening, swifts were abundant over the town, where dinner was taken. A super start to the trip! 😊



*Spanish festoon*



*Provence orange tip*



*Cleopatra female*



*Barbary macaque*

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-17 10:29 PM GMT

That's from one extreme to the other isn't Essex – Snow in Wales and then basking in the sunny Med 🤪 Cracking shots the Festoons look stunning and the Provence OT looks like an OT that's had an accident with a yellow paint pot – brill! 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 01-Apr-17 11:25 PM GMT

Wow! When I remarked that you get about, Mark, I wasn't expecting this.

I'll look forward to seeing details of your sightings.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-17 10:52 PM GMT

The next day, we spent most of our time in the Alameda botanic gardens, leaving for lunch and returning mid afternoon. The gardens are full of plants we expect to grow in our homes, or as summer bedding plants. A fascinating mix of bird of paradise, cactus and bourganvillias.

However, the main reason for visiting was that the last time we came, we saw several Monarchs sweeping around. There was a bit more cloud today, and things took a bit longer to get going. We did find some Large White caterpillars on nasturtium, though. Then, around 11.30, the first Monarch glided past and landed on bamboo. Great, they were still here! Monarch 's have been seen in southern Spain for a while now and, in 1998, some were seen in the gardens. That year, food plant was planted, and they bred that autumn, and re-appeared the following spring. Now, they have a complex series of overlapping generations in the gardens. It amazes me that a species known for its migrations in USA, here never flies more than a few hundred yards in its life!





### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-17 10:58 PM GMT

Later, a Monarch was hovering around a plant, landing on leaves then instantly taking off. Very distinctive female behaviour. She was looking for egg laying sites. Eventually, she found a spot, landed and curled her abdomen in. We kept our distance, but also saw several caterpillars on this plant.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Apr-17 11:04 PM GMT

Several more adults were seen during the day and, late afternoon, we were talking to another couple who were also looking at them, when two were seen together. A brief chase followed, before they descended to mate nearby. After joining, they flew up into the trees, one being carried by the other, to continue in peace.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-17 10:13 PM GMT

Almost the full lifecycle in one day Essex 🤔👍 That final shot would look good in the Species forum 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 05-Apr-17 07:11 AM GMT

After the excitement of seeing images posted of both Small Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals in cop, I suppose it's entirely fitting that someone has added photos of Monarchs doing likewise.

Like you, I'm bemused at how sedentary this species is in those parts of western Europe where it has put roots down. Still, I suppose we only have to look at our own Swallowtails to understand that butterflies behave differently dependent on where they reside, to the point where their physical characteristics begin to change.

Maybe the overwhelming majority of Monarchs have a natural dislike of crossing water, and those swept across the Atlantic do so because they have no option having been blown off course by freak weather conditions?

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-17 10:03 PM GMT

I agree, David. Where conditions favour sedentary populations, even in the same species, the thorax muscles probably weaken as the body changes shape, through the generations.

Thanks for your comments as well, Wurzel.

### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 05-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

I agree, David. Where conditions favour sedentary populations, even in the same species, the thorax muscles probably weaken as the body changes shape, through the generations.

Thanks for your comments as well, Wurzel.

I believe this has been proven in Swallowtails, *Britannicus* flight muscles are apparently less well developed and weaker than continental animals.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-17 10:25 PM GMT

Next day, in brilliant sunshine, we had a full day on the upper rock. With plenty of time, today we walked past the 'beware vertigo' warning signs, and up the steep Mediterranean Steps. Not that many butterflies here in terms of numbers, but Swallowtail and Painted Lady were notable, and Spanish Festoon and Provence Orangetip were seen.

The rest of the day was spent again enjoying the views, and wandering the many paths and lanes, enjoying the wildlife and, where possible, taking photos. Even a Cleopatra stoped long enough for a picture! By the great siege tunnels, which we enjoyed, the Barbary macaques posing, to the pleasure of the many visitors. Lots more Spanish Festoons were seen and, by the evening, the Provence Orangetips were beginning to settle, firstly on flowers and later for roosting—almost always on the caterpillar foodplant, buckler mustard. Searches on these flowers also turned up several eggs. Orange, and

exactly the same as eggs of our Orangetips.



*Provence orangetip male*





*Provence orangetip female*

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 05-Apr-17 10:30 PM GMT

You've done well to capture the Provence Orange Tips so well, Mark. For me, this is a most infuriating species, that seldom stops and when it does generally alights for no more than a few seconds!

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-17 10:34 PM GMT

That's right, Bugboy. Everything the Monarchs need is in the gardens. This is probably the case too with many British species that have isolated populations. Adonis blues, Heath fritillary for example. Even within Britain, species such as Small pearl-bordered fritillary have sedentary, isolated colonies in the east, but free, wide ranging populations in the west, in Cornwall for example.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Apr-17 10:40 PM GMT

They are not easy, Dave! They behave exactly the same as our Orangetips, and they are not always easy either! Early or late in the day were most successful for me though, in cloud, they may settle at other times. But this was a sunny day, not that I was complaining! 😊😄

### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 05-Apr-17 10:46 PM GMT

Oh those Provence Orange-tips are gorgeous. Isn't it clever how all these species evolve into their own niche. *cardamines* background colour white to match the spring flora they prefer and *euphenoides* yellow to match its preference 😊

Oh and those Festoons are to die for...

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Apr-17 09:43 PM GMT

And here is a Swallowtail from GBZ,



### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 07-Apr-17 10:01 PM GMT

Great photos, Essex, especially the Provence Orange Tips. Honorary British Butterflies the lot of them! 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Apr-17 10:08 PM GMT

GBZ LAST DAY

The levanter was blowing over the rock today while, bringing mist and low cloud when, across the plains of andalucia, there was brilliant sunshine. We had a walk around to town, picked up one or two souvenirs to take home, and picked up some lunch to eat up on the rock. Having had several days here this time, and having seen so much already, we could relax a little, and it did not matter is the weather wasn't perfect. After a morning in the town, we walked up, past the castle, and up to the upper rock, where we ate our light lunch—well away from the Barbary macaques!

Hi Dave, yes, they are definitely British—we could do with a few more species!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 06:42 PM GMT

The views alone would have been worth coming up here for but, by early afternoon, the levanter began to blow itself out gradually, as more and more weak sunshine began to penetrate, the butterflies started to emerge. This, in fact, was perhaps the most enjoyable day of all. Having already chased lots of butterflies for pictures, I could just watch the performance. In the misty sunshine, the Provence Orangetips gave a cracking display, my best ever! Because it was cooler at first, they started slowly, allowing a close approach. Later, we saw several courting males, the females reacted in the usual way, rejecting their advances! It was a glorious show of yellow Orange Tips! 😊

First pictures show the males,





### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 06:47 PM GMT

Then the females.



And courtship.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 07:15 PM GMT

Otherwise species were seen, including Spanish Festoons, Large White, Dappled White, Cleopatra, Painted Lady, Swallowtail, Red Admiral and Hummingbird Hawkmoth.





**Re: essex buzzard**

by bugboy, 08-Apr-17 07:28 PM GMT

I think I need to go to Gibraltar next year!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 07:48 PM GMT

**OTHER WILDLIFE**

Lots of lovely wild flowers were out on the rock, including the endemic Gibraltar candytuft, but some of which I didn't recognise. Here are a few pictures,







### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 08:08 PM GMT

A few good birds were seen, including migratory ones. Yellow legged gulls were everywhere, both in the town and on the rock. A couple of black kites were soaring over gaining height, before drifting off. In the Alameda gardens, Esther spotted a hoopoe and I saw two robins—one of the rarest birds in GBZ! Sardinian warblers were everywhere and, on the upper rock, blue rock thrushes were seen. Birds of prey were kestrel and peregrine. Swifts were abundant over the town.





**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 08:43 PM GMT

Didn't see any snakes in GBZ, but plenty of lizards were about, both on the edges of the roads and on the rocks. Here are a few pictures,





### Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 08-Apr-17 08:44 PM GMT

Really excellent pictures, Buzzard! I love the shots with male and female Provence orange tip together.

You haven't mentioned lesser kestrel. Now when I lived on the Rock, back in the 80s, lesser kestrel bred on the North Face and was far commoner than kestrel. If you have any kestrel pictures it would be worth checking ...

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 09:00 PM GMT

So that's it from GBZ. We had an early flight home, but great memories of the fantastic time we had there. Bug boy, I would recommend an early spring trip there to you, and anyone on UKB! A great way to get the season started, enjoy some sunshine, and as we have seen, see some great stuff! 😊😊😊

Guy, we only saw one kestrel, though we saw it on a couple of days. As a migratory species, it's possible lesser kestrels haven't arrived yet.



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Apr-17 09:18 PM GMT

Mark, you've really surpassed yourself (and everyone else) with those Provence Orange Tip images. Those will prove difficult to improve upon for, as you know, this is a difficult species!!

Sometimes, it's those days that dawn badly that prove the best of all, as butterflies waken slowly from the adverse conditions giving rare approaches that one doesn't normally see.

To put all that guff into perspective, all I'll say is I'd have paid £100 to have members of that species so docile in front of me. I'm sure you know exactly what I mean.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

I know exactly what you mean, David. Moments and memories like these are priceless. 😊

## Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-17 11:44 PM GMT

Fantastic set of shots Essex – those Provence OTs are to die for 🌿 And Blue Rock Thrush has always been on my birding wish list 🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-17 10:56 PM GMT

When I got back from Gibraltar, my first port of call was to visit the woods, where I found the wood anemones at their glorious peak. These tiny, simple flowers give one of the most spectacular shows that wild Essex has to offer. But this carpet of white lasts just a few short weeks, all too soon, they are gone.





**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 10-Apr-17 11:53 AM GMT

That is a truly beautiful sight, mark. It almost looks like snowfall.

We have plenty of wood anemone near me but nothing like the carpet you've got there.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 10-Apr-17 07:17 PM GMT

Thank David. I got back from GBZ just in time. With the warm weather recently, they have gone over even quicker than usual!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by trevor, 10-Apr-17 08:09 PM GMT

Good to see the carpet of Wood Anemones, Mark.  
I have just returned from Wiltshire, and was amazed to find some white Primroses growing wild.  
Fortunately one plant was found in my Daughter's garden, and is now in a pot at home.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Neil Freeman, 10-Apr-17 08:14 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Just catching up on you trip to Gibraltar, look like a fascinating place. I love those Provence Orange-tips and great job capturing the pair in flight 😊

I also love the look of that carpet of anemones, like something out of a fairy tale setting 😊

Cheers,

Neil

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 10-Apr-17 09:34 PM GMT

ORANGE TIPS!

Last Wednesday I visited Wheatley woods Rayleigh. A new planted wood, the wide grassy paths are great for spring butterflies. Lots of Commas and Peacocks were here, as well as several firsts.

Just a couple of yards in, I saw my first British Speckled Wood of the year. Saw three in total, including a nice female.



Further along, I found what I really wanted—my first Orange Tip! A week ago, I was watching yellow Orange Tips in Gibraltar. Now I was watching the white ones! In the event, several were seen patrolling the edges of these young woods, all males. They made my day!





A few other whites were seen, but only one landed long enough for a picture, my first Green-veined White of the year. A fabulous afternoon!



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 05:35 PM GMT

I know what you mean Essex – there is nothing quite like that flash of white and brilliant orange for brightening up a spring day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 01-May-17 10:11 PM GMT

Hill house wood, near Colchester, is one of the best wood in Essex – maybe even the country – for bluebells, which are now at their glorious peak. Amongst the carpet is stitchwort, wild garlic and a scattering of early purple orchids, including a few white ones. Nightingales sing here, and Holly Blue and Orange Tip were seen on the day. April is early for bluebells, normally they peak in May.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 01-May-17 10:25 PM GMT

That penultimate image reinforces your claim regarding this wood being the best in the UK for bluebells, Mark.

That is nothing less than an astonishing carpet of blue. Even in a photograph I can almost see the colour shimmering. A spectacular sight for sure, and you are very lucky to have it within striking distance of your home.

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 02-May-17 11:04 PM GMT

Thanks David. To be honest, pictures do not do the sight, or the scent, justice. More bluebells to come, but I've got a bit of catching up to do...

### CORNWALL

Just back from our holiday. My first port of call was the south east of the country. I have only fairly recently started to visit this area of Cornwall, but it has quickly become one of my favourite areas, especially at this time of year. The woods, paths and road verges are full of bluebells, stitchwort and wild garlic, and the area is good for butterflies.



Just along the coast from Seaton, a colony of Pearl-bordered Fritillary can be found. They emerge early on this south-facing site, in mid-late April. Although it was fairly cloudy, it was just bright enough to encourage activity and several were seen. They spent much time resting on the ground, allowing for picture taking. Other butterflies were fewer than expected. Only the odd Holly Blue was around, normally they are common here, and only one Small Copper, but Walls and Speckled Wood were in reasonable numbers. 😊





**Re: essex buzzard**

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-17 08:35 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great report and photos from Seaton...I have fond memories of that part of Cornwall from when we had family holidays there back in the 1970s and I was but a nipper. 😊 We were always there in the main holiday weeks in August so far too late for the PBFs...if they were there back then.

Cheers,

Neil

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 08:53 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments, Neil. For me, this is a much nicer area to visit in spring.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 09:49 PM GMT

At Looe, a lovely drake eider was on the beach. It should be in its northern breeding grounds by now, however, he seems to prefer the local herring gulls!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 10:00 PM GMT

The next couple of days were much needed family time. However, I managed early and late visits to Marazion and Hayle estuary. The beach at Marazion, overlooking St. Michael's Mount, had lots of migratin whimberels, as well as a few bar-tailed godwits, some of which were in breeding plumage. Dunlin and rigged plover were present, too. In the reedbed, reed and sedge warblers were present. Unfortunately I missed a cattle egret that was present a couple of days earlier, though several little egrets required checking.



*Sedge warbler*



*Whimbrel*



*Bar-tailed godwits*

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 10:07 PM GMT

I also saw this lovely female stonechat at Marazion,



As they are nearly always present in pairs, I knew her mate wouldn't be far away,



Kites are still a scarce bird in Cornwall, so I was delighted to see one circling over Madron Church, a place that is dear to me,



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 10:11 PM GMT

At Hayle, a spoonbill has been present over winter, occasionally joined by a second bird. I missed it a few weeks ago, so it was nice to catch up with it this time, here with a green shank.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-May-17 10:21 PM GMT

And here is St. Michael's Mount, from the coast path between Marazion and Perranuthnoe, early one morning.



## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-17 11:12 PM GMT

After a tough winter, it was good to have some family time together. But now it was time get back to some walking, with another section of the South-west Coast Path. The length between Coverack and Lizard point is south-facing, with a lush, well vegetated character.

Coverack is an attractive little place, with a picture postcard setting and harbour. The path heads south, reaching Downas Cove and Carrick Luz, site of an Iron Age cliff fort, before heading to Kennack Sands, a popular beach resort . During this section the sun was shining, and both Speckled Woods and Walls were common, with the odd Green-veined White in damper areas. It seems strange seeing Speckled Woods and Walls chasing each other down the leafy path, in eastern England they fly in completely different habitats. I also saw lots of silk tents full of caterpillars on the flowering blackthorn bushes. The cliff tops here are grazed by Shetland ponies.

Cadgewith is a pretty little fishing village, with many thatched cottages. Passing the Devils Frying Pan, the path heads past Church Cove, then the Lizard lifeboat station, with its new boathouse, then onto the Bass Point National Coastwatch lookout. The flowers here were spectacular, a mix of bluebells and three corner leeks making a glorious combination. By 2.30PM, I had arrived at Lizard Point lighthouse, where I had lunch in Britains most southerly cafe.



*Cadgewith*



*Caterpillars*



Coverack

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 04-May-17 11:15 PM GMT

What a fantastic part of the UK that is for wildlife and natural scenery, Mark! You've seen a hell of a lot during your trip and much of it pretty scarce stuff.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-17 11:34 PM GMT

Thanks David. As you know, I love this part of the country, though I may have swapped places with you that day you found your hotspot with all those Holly Blues, 🐦 which have been decidedly scarce for me so far.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-May-17 09:08 AM GMT

It must have been great to see those Walls – they are becoming something of a rarity round our way 😞 Also interesting to see the 'left behind' Eider I know this happens sometimes but it still makes for an incongruous sight 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-May-17 08:27 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. That eider, a full adult male, was most unexpected!

Walls, fortunately, remain common in Cornwall. Especially on the coast, but also inland. Perhaps it's all those stone walls and Cornish hedges, which make perfect habitat. Short grass for breeding, bare stones for basking and abundant flowers for feeding. 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-17 08:58 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

More great photos from Cornwall 😊

It looks like I might be heading down there a couple of times this year, first in early June and then possibly a family holiday later in August.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-May-17 10:15 PM GMT

Wow Neil, you lucky thing! You will be able to see both generations of SPBF! Don't know when I am going next, been three times already this year!

After the official walk had finished, I couldn't resist walking the extra couple of miles to beyond Kynance Cove and back. I only saw one Small Copper, compared to the dozens or hundreds you can see here in autumn, though it was quite chilly by now. But the beautiful wildflowers and spectacular scenery more than made up for this. The seaside flowers are early this year and in places, a glorious carpet of spring squill made gave a cracking display.



*Whitethroat*



*Small copper*



*Spring squill*

And here some scenery shots,



### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-May-17 10:33 PM GMT

Stunning scenery and a wonderful assortment of wildlife. I'm not surprised you've been three times this year already! 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-May-17 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks Dave.

Next day, Thursday, we headed off to the spectacular Bedruthan Steps, east of Newquay, followed, after lunch, on to Cabilla Woods. Bedruthan was lovely in the sunshine, and we had a nice time there, but unfortunately it had clouded over by time we got to Cabilla. We were hoping for Orangetips, but we had to make do with wood anemones and a nice carpet of bluebells, not bad compensation! We finished off the day with a visit to Crowns engine houses, Botallack, in Poldark country.



*Crowns engine house*



*Bedruthan steps*

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 09-May-17 11:27 PM GMT

Next day, it was time to walk another section of the SW coast path, from Perranporth to Portreath. Walking out of Perranporth, past the sundial, up the hill and onto the cliff tops, I soon began seeing primroses and spring squill. It seems strange seeing these two growing together, but they often do, primroses are surprisingly common on the coast path.



This is mining country and at St. Agnes, I took the short diversion to Wheal Kitty, now lovingly restored.



Leaving St. Agnes, the coast path passes the iconic Wheal Coates Mine, where Ravens, buzzards and a Cornish chough were seen, before descending to Chapel Porth, an area good for Green Hairstreaks, though none were seen today



After more cliffs, where early purple orchids grow, the path drops into Porthtowan, with its wide sandy beach.





Then back up the hill, passing some MOD land, before eventually joining a small road, which descends to Portreath.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-May-17 06:56 PM GMT

So we come to the last day. An early walk in Madron, to soak up the glorious views of the hills, gorse, blackthorn and mines one last time.



We then went off to Lerryn, on a family recommendation. Never been before, but it turned out to be a pretty little place, with footpaths through the woods where we saw a clump of pink bluebells, and a carpet of wild garlic.



Leaving Lerryn, driving the leafy lanes, with banks of bluebells, I suddenly spotted an Orange Tip, and slammed on the brakes. What a beauty it was.



Mid afternoon saw us at Polperro, a picture postcard harbour town. A Cornish cream tea was in order!



Leaving Polperro, there was just time to visit Seaton, to check on a small patch of waste land which was full of cuckoo flowers and Orange Tip eggs. So imagine my horror when I found the whole site had been shredded to the ground! Flowers and eggs, all gone. Why do they do this? A few plants on the edges had missed the strim, so I collected a few eggs and brought them home



*Shredded meadow*

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-17 09:23 PM GMT

When I got back from Cornwall, my first port of call was to a bluebell wood which is only a short walk from where I lived as a kid. A glorious carpet was there then, and remains today.



Although it was cloudy, a few breaks tempted the Orange Tips, first was a female,



This male settled when the sun went in, showing it's beautiful mossy underside,



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-May-17 09:29 PM GMT

I also saw this country fox, unusually, it stopped and stared just long enough for a couple of photos.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Pauline, 16-May-17 08:52 PM GMT

Cracking shot of the fox Mark. By the time I've taken off the close-up lens they've always disappeared.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-May-17 10:35 PM GMT

I thought of you when I took that picture, Pauline! I wasn't using a close lens that day. Just as well, because as you say, it would have been long gone by time I finished fiddling around.

I found a new Orange Tip site recently, a patch of sheltered ground near a canal, which was full of garlic mustard. Unlike cuckoo flowers, the amount of garlic mustard varies a great deal from year to year, as it is biennial, that is, the amount of flowering plants depends on a fresh crop of new seedlings

each year. The Orangetips found it much quicker than me, and adults, eggs and caterpillars were plentiful. One morning last week, I went to see them waking up. An Orange Tip paradise, which gave pleasure like no other! 😊😊😊 . Here are some glorious males,



And some females,



I can't get enough of them! But soon they will be gone for another year. Here is a Green-veined White.



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 16-May-17 10:40 PM GMT

I can't get to grips with Green Veined Whites so far this year, Mark, so that last image of yours has made me very envious! 🌍

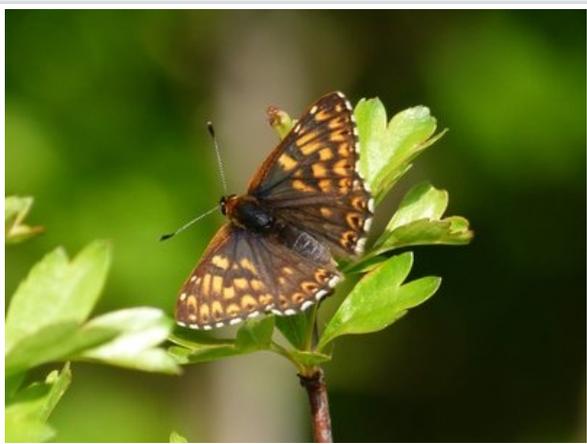
### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-17 10:41 PM GMT

Apart from PBF in Cornwall, I've been a bit short on the scarcer spring species so far. So recently I decided to put that right with an outing to Bison Hill, Whipsnade Downs. A visit straight out of the top drawer, with most of the classic spring downland species seen. On the hawthorns were Green Hairstreaks,



While in the sheltered areas, Duke of Burgundies were in reasonable numbers



At the bottom of the slope in particular, were the two spring Skippers, Grizzled and Dingy.





A super day. For a change, the weather was good, too! 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 18-May-17 11:23 PM GMT

Great shots and a great return for your visit Essex 😊 Love the one-spot Greenstreak 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 23-May-17 11:34 PM GMT

ADONIS BLUES

Although less abundant, the late-spring generation of Adonis Blues is perhaps my favourite, where these sparkling adults fly over the glorious yellow horseshoe vetch. And nowhere is this displayed better than at Mill Hill in Sussex. Good numbers are currently present, and I saw several mating pairs on my visit last week. I also saw a Neil Hulme, who was showing the North Yorkshire Dukes man around the site. There is something almost magical about the combination of brilliant blue butterflies, and the brilliant carpet of yellow vetch here.



A cluster of Adonis Blues sups at some delicious dog dirt,



Then, along the dreaded coast road, onto Park Gate Down in Kent, where the monkey orchids are nearing their peak, with fly orchids present too.



by millerd, 24-May-17 09:30 PM GMT

Lovely Adonis from Mill Hill, Essex. 😊 The horseshoe vetch there is more spectacular than anywhere, I think. And I share your view of that coast road, too – I once spent well over an hour getting from one side of Hastings to the other...

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-May-17 08:29 AM GMT

It's awful. Very frustrating. Next time, I will drive up the M23, around the M25 and down the M20. A long way round, but probably quicker than driving through Hastings!

One of the reasons I choose Mill Hill over other Adonis Blue sites, in spring, is the vetch, which is equally pretty as the butterflies. I would be interested to hear of a more splendid carpet.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-May-17 11:06 PM GMT

It's been several years since I visited Martin Down. This is not the best site for Marsh Fritillary– I see much higher numbers in Cornwall, and also at Cerne Abbas Giants hill, in Dorset. But it is certainly much easier to get to from the east of England, and is a great site for a wide range of wildlife. We saw several Fritillaries, especially near the Bockerly Dyke. Most were males.



The only female we saw was so heavy, she seemed unable to fly.



Reasonable numbers of Small Blues were nice to see, my first of the year,



Some really nice fresh Common Blues were seen, again, mostly near the dyke,



This Green had a nice streak,



Full list included, Grizzed Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Brimstone, Orange Tip, Green veined White, Small Blues, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Small Copper, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood and Small Heath.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-May-17 11:10 PM GMT

Great stuff Essex, some lovely Marshies there 😊 Did you see the Burnt-tip Orchids about half way along the Dyke?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-May-17 11:18 PM GMT

Some nice flowers were present. The blue, sometimes white, chalk milkwort, and more popular with the photographer, some nice burnt orchids.



Yellowhammers were common here, with a few corn bunting singing too. The cuckoo was heard and, perhaps even better, we heard the wonderful purring turtle dove.



Hi Wurzel, the answer is. Yes! 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-17 07:56 PM GMT

Welcome to early summer. After weeks of south, east and north winds, we can expect the westerlies to return during June, with all that implies in terms of weather. Bands of wind and rain will sweep across the country, and nowhere will that be felt more than western Scotland.

We now lose the freshness of spring. Gone are the bluebells, the May blossom and the Orange Tips, and the leaves are taking on a darker hue. As the first Large Skippers and Meadow Browns emerge, exciting things are still to come, of course. But a tinge of regret remains, it's hard not to look back at the innocence of spring.



### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-Jun-17 08:10 PM GMT

Just caught up with your Martin Down trip, Essex. Those are lovely photos, especially the Marsh Fritillaries. The female is exceptionally full of eggs and may well have been unable to fly easily except in bright sunshine – you just hope she makes it to a scabious before she bursts! 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Jun-17 09:37 PM GMT

I wholeheartedly agree, Dave. She was the only female we saw, so had all the males to herself!

A couple of years ago, I mentioned that I hoped Ravens would follow Buzzards, and breed in Essex for the first time. Well I'm pleased to say, this has now happened. From their strongholds on western coasts and hills, they have been spreading east, into the lowlands. A very different habitat for them, but no one, myself included, could ever have imagined how successfully Buzzards would colonise the county, so hopefully Ravens will also become a firmly established breeder.

One of the sounds of lazy summer days, in eastern lowland arable farms, is the wonderful purring Turtle Dove. This lovely bird has greatly declined, even in Essex, which has one of the best populations. In the 80's they were common in the general countryside, but now you need to go to a nature reserve to see them. They need less a intensive arable system, where arable weeds such as chickweed, trefoils and clovers grow on field edges and tracks, to breed successfully. A couple of weeks ago, I went to see some.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jun-17 07:41 PM GMT

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

We now lose the freshness of spring. Gone are the bluebells, the May blossom and the Orange Tips, and the leaves are taking on a darker hue. As the first Large Skippers and Meadow Browns emerge, exciting things are still to come, of course. But a tinge of regret remains, it's hard not to look back at the innocence of spring.

Very poetic Mark...well put and although it instills a touch of sadness there is still much to look forward to 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-17 10:09 PM GMT

Great view of the Turtle Doves Essex, they're still a welcome sound on a day's butterflying at Martin Down, long may they continue to grace our shores 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jun-17 11:09 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, for your comments.

At the Essex Heath Fritillary sites, the adults have now emerged, slightly earlier than usual. Much work is being done for their conservation, and I was most impressed with the site I visited last Wednesday. More cow-wheat, more coppice habitat- and more adults! I am far more optimistic for their future here than I was when I visited a couple of years ago. 😊





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-17 11:23 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Essex 🍷 - I was just thinking about what to do next week 😊 Such variation - one of the Heaths in the final shot is very dark indeed 😊  
Do you know if they have they started emerging in Kent?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 12-Jun-17 05:34 AM GMT

Yes, lovely Heath Fritillaries, a few will always pose nicely, whilst the others escape.  
They always seem a sociable species, with several basking together.

Great stuff,  
Trevor.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jun-17 07:58 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel, I haven't heard anything from Kent, though they should be out. They are usually a few days behind Essex, as summer temperatures are slightly cooler there, but I saw mine nearly a week ago, so might be worth doing a bit of 'digging'.

Yes Trevor, I have always found Heath Fritillary to be fairly sociable, though they only bask in cool weather, and early and late in the day. Thanks for your comments.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-17 10:04 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Essex, I'll pop along to the Kent website directly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by millerd, 12-Jun-17 11:04 PM GMT

Nice to see the Heath Fritillaries doing ok, Essex, and that the sites are being better managed now. The last time I was over there a few years back, two of them at least looked very unkempt. I am aware sightings have to be anonymised this year to help them along.

Dave

**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 13-Jun-17 10:53 PM GMT

Some stunning Heath Frits there, Mark. Much darker markings than those I see in abundance in France. Of course, their rarity value makes them so much more desirable over here.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Maximus, 14-Jun-17 09:25 PM GMT

Excellent shots of the Turtle Doves, the last time I saw them was at Stodmarsh in 2013. Lovely images of the Heath Fritillaries too, it's good news that they are doing well in Essex.

Mike

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Pauline, 15-Jun-17 12:24 PM GMT

I do enjoy your diary Mark and apologise for the late and infrequent comments. I thought those shots of the Turtle Doves were stunning but it made me realise that I haven't seen them in my garden this year yet which is a shame 😞. Your post of 5 June was very nostalgic and like Neil said very poetic and thought-provoking 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-17 11:51 PM GMT

Thanks Pauline, for your kind words. I know what you mean about other people's diaries, I do read them, including yours, even though I don't always comment. A pleasure to look at all the same. Well done on the Essex Skipper, you saw one earlier than me and that's not allowed! A bit early, but not outstandingly so.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 21-Jun-17 11:43 PM GMT

FOR sheer numbers, Hadleigh Castle Country Park is perhaps the best butterfly site in Essex. All the common grassland species are here in numbers, but also a few scarcer ones, including White-letter Hairstreaks and lots of Marbled Whites. On the oaks, lots of Purple Hairstreak have emerged. Hadleigh is good for wild flowers, and noisy marsh frogs are in the drainage ditches. Things are early this year, the numbers of Essex Skippers and others is now impressive, no doubt helped by the hot weather.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-17 12:01 AM GMT

Cracking stuff Essex especially the Whitter – look at the tails on it 🤪🇧🇪🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 22-Jun-17 12:12 AM GMT

Wish I had a reliable site for White Letter Hairstreaks near me, Mark. It's one species that I need to spend lots of time with but opportunities are scarce.

Good to see Essex Skippers are out and about too. I suspect I won't see them in Wales until I return from the Alps in mid-July! 😞

**Re: essex buzzard**

by bugboy, 22-Jun-17 07:59 AM GMT

I can only concur with the butterfly numbers at Hadleigh park. I was there last weekend and witnessed 30+ WLH all over bramble flowers. I think I go to a different spot than you Essex, I find them up at the Leagh-on-sea end, conveniently next to the train station.

### Re: essex buzzard

by kevling, 22-Jun-17 09:25 PM GMT

Essex,

Nice photos from Hadleigh CP. There myself last Saturday and you are right about the numbers, hundreds of them. I love the place and visit most years.

Regards Kev

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jul-17 08:54 PM GMT

ARMENIA, Butterflies of the Caucasus...

Just back from our Naturetrek holiday to Armenia. We saw around 130 kinds of birds, and 120 species of butterflies! Details to come, but got a lot of pictures to sort out, so I'll sign out for now with some pictures from Aston Rowant, taken on Sunday, when the sun was shining, and Dark Green Frits were flying in good numbers.



*Wild candytuft*



*Marbled white*



Old brimstone, hanging on



Frog orchid



DGF

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-17 10:00 PM GMT

Armenia 🤔 I'm really looking forward to being really envious about the species you saw 😊🇹🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 06-Jul-17 10:32 PM GMT

Great! I'm really looking forward to seeing your images and commentary from Armenia, Mark. It's a location of great interest to me.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Jul-17 08:29 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Something a little different!

Thanks David. Good luck in France. Certainly, it was great last time!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Jul-17 11:18 PM GMT

ARMENIA

Armenia is a small, land-locked country, about the size of Wales, perhaps. It has borders with Georgia, Turkey, Iran and Azerbaijan. It appears to be a very poor country though Yerevan, the capital, is vibrant enough, with bars, restaurants and lots of young people. Once you get away from here, though, a different story emerges. Gyumri, for example, had a devastating earthquake some years back and neither city, or the human population, have recovered.

Climate is hot and sunny in summer, especially in the lowlands, where arid, semi-desert dominates, streams run dry and temperatures often reach 35 to 40C. In the mountains, though, towering cumuli form clouds often form, bringing rain and thunder, and vegetation is lush, vibrant and full of flowers, birds and butterflies. Farming is rudimentary, by western standards, though most land seems th be farmed to some extent.

There is a fledgling interest in birds in Armenia, but butterflies are virtually unknown—I think locals are too busy trying to earn a living to take an interest in butterflies or conservation. They could certainly do with some protection, as collectors were at at least two of the sites we visited and at one, adults were seen to get squashed in a book.

It was midnight when we arrived in Yerevan and, next morning, I was amazed how many swifts were flying over the city, 100's if not 1000's of them! At our first stop , a thistle patch was attracting many butterflies including lots of Cardinal Fritillaries, Guy would have loved it!



Plus several others, including what I think is a Klug's Tawny Rockbrown and Hermit.



Then we visited a semi-desert area, where the commonest butterflies were—Common Blues! The black version of Small Copper was here, and birds included rose-coloured starling, (steppe) buzzard, black-headed bunting and crested lark.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 11-Jul-17 06:48 AM GMT

Wow - I expect you saw quite a lot of things you've never seen before, Buzzard! I'm glad you enjoyed the sight of cardinals on thistles - thanks for thinking of me! Hermits and rockbrowns too - lovely (I think you have the IDs correct).

Looking forward to your further postings.

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jul-17 06:41 PM GMT

I thought of you a lot that week, Guy, as there were cardinals everywhere! I've seen a few before, but this was on a different scale.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-17 10:43 PM GMT

A cracking start Essex but I need more! 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Jul-17 11:52 PM GMT

Several other species were seen here, including lots of Balkan Marbled Whites and a Lesser Fiery Copper,



Here is a black headed bunting, and a view of the scenery,



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 12-Jul-17 11:39 PM GMT

After lunch was taken in a nearby gorge, where Southern Comma, Blue-spot Hairstreak and Bergers Clouded Yellow were seen, we went to a streamside, where mud-puddling butterflies, especially blues, had assembled. Here is a Pontic Blue:



Other blues included Common, Adonis, Eastern Mazarine and Amanda's. A Loew's Blue was new for me:



Odd-spot Blues were also present:



Eastern Brown Argus was new too:



Here is Amanda's and Silver-studded Blues:



Other species included Marsh and Queen of Spain Frits, Steppe Grayling and Turkish Fiery Copper. Ant lions were common throughout, marking the end of great first day in Armenia.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-17 11:12 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Essex, that's what I was hoping for – Odd-spot Blues certainly live up to their name 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun  
Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jul-17 09:03 PM GMT

Aren't they peculiar? I've seen them in Greece, but this is the first time I've managed a picture!

The next day, we headed to the Acharkut beech forest. The road in was too rutted for our minibus, so we transferred to jeeps to get deep into the forest. Again, UKB's own Guy was not far from my thoughts. I know he loves his Cardinals and they were abundant today—every thistle patch had several feeding on it. The sheer size of this fritillary can be seen, when it shares a thistle with a Brimstone;



On the track, we saw Southern White Admiral, Nettle-tree Butterfly and Silver-washed Fritillary, while this Caucasian Fritillary was new for me;



Several kinds of Grayling were seen. Great Banded were easy to identify, but I'm not sure about the other picture, though Cypress Eastern Grayling and Syrian Rock Grayling were present;



A Large Tort seemed to take an interest in our lunch, but landed only briefly. A Swallowtail didn't land at all! Wood whites were seen along the track, again without stopping. But Sooty Coppers and an Eastern Short-tailed Blue were more obliging;



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 14-Jul-17 09:21 PM GMT

This False Small White is new to me, but I've seen Chapmans Blues before, at least that's what I think it is! Another really good day, especially as I saw my first ever black stork!



**Re: essex buzzard**

by bugboy, 14-Jul-17 10:22 PM GMT

You definitely saw an impressive array of species, looking forward to further posts 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Pauline, 15-Jul-17 06:02 AM GMT

Some stunning butterflies posted recently Mark. I have seen Cardinals on Guys diary but never appreciated just how big they are. That's a great shot of one with the Brimstone which gives context to it 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-17 09:50 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Essex – those Cardinals are huge 😲 A cracking array of butterflies 🦋 and Black Stork – they're brill birds 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-17 10:25 PM GMT

Just returned from our holiday in the beautiful isle of Purbeck. So getting a bit behind on my diary– I am having a competition with Wurzel this year, who takes longest to get up to date!

Back in Armenia, and next day, a pre-breakfast Waldo produced Dark-veined White and a lovely Scotch Argus.



Later, we were off to the Jajur Pass. A hovering buzzard turned out to be my first ever long-legged buzzard. On the road verge, an Orange Tip was flying. In the open woodland, Cardinals were again common. Other Frits included Caucasian, Nickerl's, Silver-washed, Dark Green, Queen of Spain, Marsh and Glanville. A Mountain Alcon Blue colony was present, and we found a mating pair. A nice Yellow-Banded Skipper was photographed, with Orb Red-underwing Skipper nearby. Heaths included Chestnut and my first ever Caucasian.





### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 24-Jul-17 10:53 PM GMT

But even these were eclipsed when we went around the corner. For a leaky fountain had produced a marvellous show of mud puddling Gavarnie Blues—we estimated we saw 200 on the day! Other blues amongst them included a few Pontic Blues. We had lunch here, where we could relax and enjoy the scene.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 24-Jul-17 11:05 PM GMT

Gavarnie Blue!!! What a sighting, Mark. I'm truly envious. Armenia is full of surprises!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-17 11:09 PM GMT

I was still reeling from the Yellow-banded Skipper and then you go and drop those Blues on us 🤪👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps - I've so far behind that you'll have to go a long way to out-slow me 😊😄

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jul-17 10:12 PM GMT

Aren't Gavarnie Blues strange things, David? I've seen them in France, and here, a thousand miles away, is another colony!

Thanks Wurzel, though I'm a month behind!

After lunch, we headed up into the hills. Lesser spotted and golden eagle were seen, and lots of Glanville Fritillary and Purple-shot Copper males were on territory along the track. Large and Dingy Skippers were easy to identify, Green Hairstreaks were not, for several kinds occur here. We sent images to a local expert, these were considered to be Sovinsky's Greens.



A Swallowtail flew past, and lots more Gavarnie Blues were found, and a few Eastern Mazarine Blues. The only Painted Lady of the trip was also here.

Later, at Gyumri, where we stayed that night, we searched a small waste patch, much to the amusement of the locals, we found several White-letter Hairstreaks.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 26-Jul-17 07:21 PM GMT

Hi Buzzard. You don't work for the Armenian Tourist Office do you? I suspect they're going to get a lot of visitors next year, after people have read these amazing posts! 😊

If you've seen Gavarnie blue in France, then I'm happy to give you an armchair tick, as the population in Armenia is *A. dardanus*, not *pyrenaica*. I think this is accepted now as a distinct species – and if I understand Kudrna right (reading between the lines a bit) *pyrenaica* and *glandon* are more closely related to each other than to *dardanus* (he says *pyrenaicus* is a member of the *glandon* group but that *dardanus* is only possibly a member of this group).

Re the green hairstreaks, I think Sovinsky's green hairstreak is *Callophrys chalybeitincta*. Now it's almost impossible to identify *Callophrys* from the underside alone – the colour of the upperside and the shape and size of the sex brand are important. But one thing you can see from the underside is the anal lobe on the hindwing. In *chalybeitincta* this is quite well developed. In the other two Armenian species (*danchenkoi* and *armeniaca*) it is much less so. Yours seem to have very little in the way of anal lobe, visible in these pictures, at least. My source is Tuzov – *Butterflies of Russia and Adjacent Territories*. I'd be interested to know how the diagnosis of *chalybeitincta* was reached – perhaps by ecological or distributional clues.

Love it!

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 26-Jul-17 09:04 PM GMT

Wow! More surprises, Mark!

Armenia has definitely been elevated in my list of places to visit.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-17 09:42 PM GMT

Hi Guy, I know next to nothing about the butterflies in this region. At least not those that are not found in central or Western Europe, so thanks for your input, especially the Gavarnie Blues—or not!

The Green Hairstreaks, which again I'm not familiar with, were identified by sending site details, habitat and image shot to an Armenian butterfly specialist, of which there are not many! So mistakes could certainly have been made.

Cheers!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 26-Jul-17 11:22 PM GMT

Next day, we went to mount Aragat, making several stops. Marsh Fritillaries were surprisingly common in this dry stony habitat. Other Fritillaries included Glanville, Knapweed, Caucasian, Cardinal and Dark Green. Here's a Knapweed;



And a Marsh;



This frit I'm not sure about;



Several blues were seen, including good numbers of Blue Argus;



A nearby field was full of cranesbill flowers, and it was no surprise that Geranium Argus were there too;



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-17 09:48 PM GMT

I think Guy's rumbled you Essex 😊 – if you don't work for the Armenian Tourist board already then I'd get in touch quick and tap them up for some commission 😊 – if it wasn't for work or family commitments I'd be there like a shot 🇹🇲 🇹🇲 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-17 10:12 PM GMT

Mud puddling is one of the great pleasures of butterflying in Europe and beyond. Our next stop was for a known site. Here we had the dazzling sight of hundreds of butterflies on the edge of a rocky stream. Some groups were dominated by Black Veined Whites:



Other groups were mainly Blues:



Several grizzled Skippers were here,too. I think these are Olive Grizzled Skippers:



A Hungarian Glider stopped by:



Here is Eastern Mazarine Blue, I think:



Here's a scenery shot



Hi Wurzel, yes there is no end to Guy's talents! Perhaps the tourist board can give me another holiday! 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Jul-17 10:33 PM GMT

Mouth-watering stuff, Mark. That Knapweed Fritillary looks SO different to the ones nearer home that it's hard to believe it's the same species.

How many different species did you see approximately?

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-17 11:27 PM GMT

I wondered if anyone would pick up on that- they look so different from the ones I see in Europe that it took a while to get my head round it! But the size, shape and basic pattern is the same.

How many species? Around 125 for the group, the same as we saw in France. My personal figure was slightly lower- I missed the only Peacock, for example...

### Re: essex buzzard

by kevling, 28-Jul-17 06:31 AM GMT

Enjoying your recent posts Essex. Those mud puddling Black Veined Whites are splendid. Of all the exotic species up for grabs in Europe, I never tire of this simple but elegant species.

You might be interested in this;

<http://siberiantimes.com/other/others/features/butterfly-invasion-hits-siberia-as-black-veined-white-goes-east/%E2%80%8B>

Kind Regards  
Kev

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-17 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks Kev for this link. What extraordinary pictures! Puts my images in the shade! I agree, when I went butterflying in Europe for the first time (in the French Pyrenees) it was the Black-veined Whites that were the most spectacular.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Jul-17 09:57 PM GMT

Then, mid afternoon, we went even further up the mountain, for here, an alpine specialist lives- the Bowden White. In reality, this is really a mountain species of Green-veined white, but still great to see.

Griffon vultures, long-legged buzzards and a bearded vulture were here, as well as a short-toed lark.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Padfield, 28-Jul-17 10:09 PM GMT

Hi Buzzard. Knapweed fritillary is incredibly variable – I have in fact seen individuals similar to yours in Switzerland, as well as ones so completely different you would think they were a different genus. I photographed this one in May 2011:



I don't think anyone has named your unidentified fritillary – it is twin-spot, *Brenthis hecate*.

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Jul-17 10:17 PM GMT

#### Padfield wrote:

I don't think anyone has named your unidentified fritillary – it is twin-spot, *Brenthis hecate*.

Thanks for that, Guy. I think I was probably almost as eager as Mark to know what that one was. I didn't have a clue (probably because I have never seen this species).

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jul-17 08:37 AM GMT

Thanks from me too, Guy. I did look at Twin-spot but, in my inexperience, it looked a bit paler than the one in the book.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Jul-17 08:42 AM GMT

Yes, your Knapweed it very pale too, I wondered if it might be a response to heat but, as you saw it in spring in CH, presumably not.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-17 10:16 PM GMT

In contrast the next day found us in a semi-desert habitat. This is the domain of hoopoe, bee-eater and roller, while Egyptian vulture circled overhead. Grayling were here, many seeking shade, including False Grayling



Not sure about this one:



A few meadow browns were seen, including Oriental, Dusky and Gross's Meadow Brown, though not sur what this is, suggestions welcome:



Here is a Mallow Skipper, and a habitat shot:



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-17 10:25 PM GMT

Before lunch, we managed to find my first ever Saadi's Heaths:



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-17 11:21 PM GMT

After lunch, we visited another mud-puddling area. Here, many anomalous blues had assembled. These blue ones are probably Firdussii's Anomalous Blue, *A. furdussii pseudactis*, but could be *A. Surakovi*:



Likewise, these brown ones could be Fosters Anomalous Blue, *A. eriwanensis*, or *A. demavendi*:



The surrounding vegetation also had many butterflies, here a Niobe Fritillary:



Osiris Blues were here, too:



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 30-Jul-17 11:24 PM GMT

This Meadow Brown is clearly unusual, but I can't remember what we agreed it was, not the best picture in the deep shade:



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 31-Jul-17 08:42 PM GMT

So, we come to Friday, our last day in Armenia. It started with a pre-breakfast bird walk, seeing, amongst others, rock sparrow, hooded crow, black-eared wheatear and hoopoe. Here is a hoopoe:



An eastern rock nuthatch was new to me:



Here is a bee-eater:



Here, Syrian woodpecker is the most common of the woodpeckers:



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 31-Jul-17 09:47 PM GMT

I'm blown away at some of the stuff you've seen, Mark. To be honest, I'd never even heard of Saadi's Heath, let alone seen one!

### Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 31-Jul-17 09:51 PM GMT

Hi Buzzard. Your graylings are certainly not false graylings (*Arethusana arethusa*), but I'm not 100% sure what they are. Logically, they would be *Hipparchia pellucida* and I suspect this is what they are. The general appearance and markings are right. But those white veins are striking. I have occasionally seen ordinary graylings, *semele*, with white veins, and *pellucida* is very close to *semele*, so I stay with that. However, there is another related species, *autonoe*, that flies in Georgia (not that far away) which is characterised by strong white veins. The rest of the markings are not so good for this species, though. I go for *pellucida*.

I think your *Hyponephele* is *naricoides* (or *naricina naricoides*, depending on whether you treat this as a subspecies of *naricina* or not). It would be easier to tell if the fringes were not worn – *naricina/naricoides* has conspicuous white fringes.

Finally, I suspect your last mystery 'meadow brown' is a chestnut heath, *Coenonympha glycerion*.

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 09:52 PM GMT

Woah the photos are very envy inducing and the bird list is mighty impressive as well and the Saddy's what a stunner 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Jul-17 10:14 PM GMT

Neither had I until I saw it on the pre-trip list!

Today, up into the lower mountain meadows at Gnishik.

I took a lot of pictures on this day! For sure, we saw some great stuff but also, even early on, storms were brewing over the mountains, and the resulting cumulonimbus cirrus plume weakened the sun, slowing things down. But I will try to keep to the most interesting species! We soon found Pearly Heath, but Russian Heath was new to me and the only ones of the week:



The pointed wings suggest Bergers, rather than helice Clouded Yellow:



This is a Lesser Firey Copper, also seen earlier in the week:



Lots of Lesser Lattice Browns were here, again new to me:



We saw here, our only Esper's Marble Whites of the holiday:



To be continued...

### Re: essex buzzard

by Padfield, 31-Jul-17 10:29 PM GMT

Ah!! I retract my chestnut heath ID and replace it with lesser lattice brown!! Total size confusion in my head – and you were right with the meadow brown size. Bizarre – could never happen in the field!

The lack of any pale spots in the dark band of the clouded yellow suggests it is not *helice* (and it is certainly not Berger's). There is a species called *Colias chlorocoma* that flies in the Armenian highlands. The male is pale and has no white in these marginal bands. It could be this.

Guy

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Jul-17 10:36 PM GMT

Several Mountain Small Whites were found here:



Along with Esper's, Balkan Marbled Whites were common, testing our identification skills:



I was especially pleased to find this Meleager's Blue:



And with a bit of friendly persuasion he opened up, revealing his glorious, Chalkhill Blue-like uppersides:



Thanks yet again, Guy- I owe you another drink! 😊 I must confess, I do find the graylings a very confusing group. Hopefully, when I have had a bit more experience, I won't make quite as many mistakes!

Yes, I've managed to work out the Lesser Lattice Brown, it was bigger than a Heath, but you're not to know that!

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 31-Jul-17 10:55 PM GMT

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

Several Mountain Small Whites were found here...

Grrr. Now you're absolutely **killing** me, Mark. Do you intend to post a full species list so we can all see what you encountered during the course of your trip?

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-17 09:08 PM GMT

Just back from our short break to west Cornwall. More to come on that in due course. After I've reported from Dorset! And then there's Aston Rowant. And Lydden TE downs...

Right, I must finish Armenia. On the way to our last lunch stop, we passed several valley towns and villages, and many had stork nests.



At our lunch stop, butterflies were plentiful, but mostly species we were now familiar with. However, this grizzled skipper I'm not certain on, it was more brown than the others I had seen:



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-17 09:58 PM GMT

Not a clue from me on your Grizzle Essex though it looks like not a Grizzlie if that makes sense 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-17 10:10 PM GMT

For afternoon, we visited the Norovank gorge. This is one of the places we saw collectors at work. There were certainly plenty of butterflies, including

our last mud-puddling blues.



Here is a blue Anomalous blue, possibly *A. furdussii pseudactis*;



This is Osiris Blue which was present all week, but this was my first open winged picture ,for certain;



All week, I had been finding Eastern Bath Whites, but this is my only open wing picture;



**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-17 10:29 PM GMT

We had seen a few Amasian Satyr, but this worn adult is the only one that settled long enough for a picture;



This fritillary is clearly of the Knapweed group, new to me, i think it's Freyers Frit;



A Southern Comma was a nice find;



Here is another Nettle Tree, found by Esther;



To finish off the day, here is another grizzled skipper, to test the identification skills;



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Aug-17 07:40 AM GMT

Another wonderful, mouth watering selection there, Mark. Your *pyrgus* doesn't look like any I've ever seen. Those forewings are especially strongly marked.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Aug-17 10:03 PM GMT

Yes, I can't find anything similar in any of my books, though they are all European based. Don't think it's an ab. either, as there were several similar ones.

Today, we had a late-morning flight, so we got an early start, and made it in good time to the airport. However, , when we checked the departure board, our flight out had been cancelled due to big storm in Moscow! Eventually we managed to get booked on a 2am flight.

But every cloud, and all that. We now had a bonus day in Yerevan, so we decided to visit the city botanical gardens, and look for birds and butterflies there.

Even here, in the middle of the city, the Cardinal Fritillary was here, on the ornamental flowers. All week I had been photographing Brimstones, hoping to claim a Powdered Brimstone. But it wasn't to be. Common Blues were, indeed, common, and male Queen of Spain Fritillaries were on and near the paths. Meadow and Dusky Meadow Browns were found, as were Brown Argus, Holly Blue, Small Copper, Eastern Bath, Large and Small Whites, Scarce Swallowtail and Essex, Large and Small Skippers.



But the highlight of the day were the Blue-spot Hairstreaks. They were everywhere! I counted a hundred and then stopped, and I gave up photographing single adults. We saw some cow parsley family flowers, and seemingly every head had one, two or three on it. They were also fond of yarrow blooms. Birds were a little quiet, but included laughing dove and hoopoe.



*There are five in this picture*

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-17 10:13 PM GMT

Those Hairstreaks are great, and to see so many just milling about 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 10-Aug-17 10:14 PM GMT

Those are serious numbers of Blue Spot Hairstreaks, Mark. I wonder whether that is usual or whether they were just having an exceptionally good year, like Scarce Coppers in the Alps last month?

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 13-Aug-17 10:52 PM GMT

So that was Armenia. We left Yerevan overnight for our flight to Moscow (Moskva) and transferred without incident to Heathrow, arriving around 9.30

AM.

So, as David asked, here is my list– just the species I saw myself, as I missed a few, the only Peacock for example! Still have one or two species to confirm,too.

Essex Skipper  
Southern Small Skipper  
Large Skipper  
Dingy Skipper  
Mallow Skipper  
Marbled Skipper  
Tufted Skipper  
Oriental Skipper  
Orb Red–underwing Skipper  
Tessellated Skipper  
Yellow–banded Skipper  
Sandy Grizzled Skipper  
Olive Skipper

Clouded Apollo  
Scarce Swallowtail  
Southern Swallowtail  
Swallowtail

Wood White  
Real' s Wood White  
Orange Tip  
Black–veined White  
Eastern Bath White  
False Small White  
Dark–veined White  
Bowdens White  
Mountain Small White  
Large white  
Small White  
Clouded Yellow  
Berger's Clouded Yellow  
Brimstone

Small Copper  
Purple–shot Copper  
Lesser Firey Copper  
Turkish Firey Copper  
Sooty Copper

Blue–spot Hairstreak  
White–letter Hairstreak  
Hairstreak Satyrium abdominalis

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 13–Aug–17 11:52 PM GMT

BLUES

Small Blue  
Osiris Blue  
Eastern Short–tailed Blue  
Holly Blue  
Alcon Blue  
Odd–spot Blue  
Zephyr Blue  
Idas Blue  
Silver– studded Blue  
Loew's Blue  
Eastern Brown Argus  
Brown Argus  
Blue Argus  
Geranium Argus  
Eastern Mazarine Blue  
Gavarnie Balkan Blue  
Pontic Blue  
Adonis Blue  
Meleager's Blue  
Common Blue  
Chapmans Blue  
Amanda's Blue  
Anomalous Blues A. delmavendi  
A. eriwanensis  
A. belovi  
A. furdussii pseudactis  
A. surakovi

Nettle–tree Butterfly  
Lesser Lattice Brown

Wall  
Small Heath  
Caucasian Heath  
Chestnut Heath  
Pearly Heath  
Russian Heath  
Saadi's Heath  
Meadow Brown  
Oriental Meadow Brown  
Dusky Meadow Brown  
Gross' Meadow Brown  
Woodland Ringlet  
Scotch Argus

Marbled White  
Balkan Marbled White  
Esper's Marbled White  
Amasian Satyr  
Dryrad  
Cyprus (Eastern) Grayling  
Syrian Rock Grayling  
False Grayling?  
Great-banded Grayling  
Hermit  
Steppe Grayling?  
Klug's Tawny Rockbrown

Southern White Admiral  
White Admiral  
Hungarian Glider  
Painted Lady  
Small Tortoiseshell  
Southern Comma  
Comma  
Large Tortoiseshell

Spotted Fritillary  
Glanville Fritillary  
Knapweed Fritillary  
Freyer's Fritillary  
Caucasian Fritillary  
Nickerl's Fritillary  
Silver-washed Fritillary  
Cardinals  
Dark Green Fritillary  
Niobe Fritillary  
Queen of Spain Fritillary  
Twin-spot Fritillary  
Weaver'a Fritillary  
Marsh Fritillary

Probably a few more for the group, this will appear on the official report.

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by kevlings, 14-Aug-17 09:44 PM GMT

Wow, that is some list. I had no idea that Armenia was such a great place for Butterflies. Been enjoying your report and photos. You've made a grown man cry 😊

Regards Kev

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 14-Aug-17 09:50 PM GMT

Thanks for that, Mark. Lots of lifers for me on that impressive list. How would you rate Armenia for other things, e.g. infrastructure, quality of food/accommodation/transport, welcome from locals, provision of services, etc? I know so little about this country, but it has been on my radar for a while now.

### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 15-Aug-17 09:18 PM GMT

Oh, and Colias chlorocoma, the white clouded yellow, kindly pointed out by Guy.

David, some good questions there, and I will come back to them.

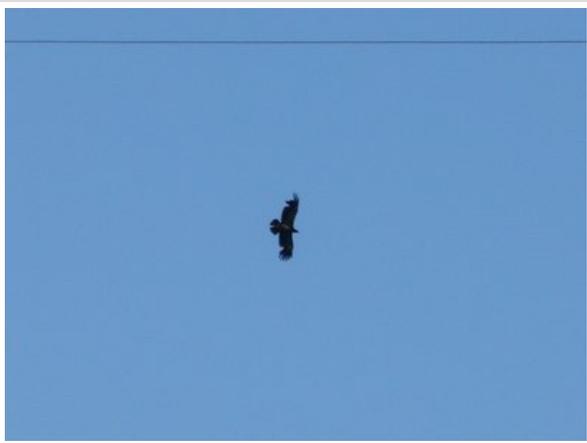
I didn't lug loads of bird photography equipment around Armenia, however I did see some good stuff, and I did take some record shots with the lumix, besides those posted already. Other members of the group with bigger cameras will have managed better shots, these are Armenia gulls;



Poor picture, but a record none the less, of my first ever long-legged buzzard ;



A very ragged, moulting lesser spotted eagle;



Red-backed shrikes were everywhere, throughout the trip;



This ring ouzel was nice to see, over looking a valley with mud-puddling Black-veined Whites;



Distant, but easily recognisable, a bearded vulture;



Above our heads, at a picnic lunch, was this lesser grey shrike;



### **Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 15-Aug-17 10:50 PM GMT

This holiday was very well organised by Naturetrek– somebody must have done a considerable amount of work finding the sites in this relatively little-known country.

Thanks to our local driver for the week, and to our lovely local guide, Hasmik, with her impressive bird knowledge. And a big thank-you to Tom Brereton, of Butterfly Conservation and Tour Leader, it was a great pleasure to meet up with you in Dorset a couple of weeks later as well!

When we got back from Armenia, one of the first places we visited was Lullingstone Country Park, Kent, where Dark Green Fritillaries were showing well, and the nearby lavender fields were splendid.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 15-Aug-17 10:56 PM GMT

What a beautiful, dark individual she is, Mark. Almost a Mountain Frit-like sheen to her!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-17 08:22 AM GMT

Cracking DARK green Frit Essex, almost smoky 🤔👍 Very envious of the Lammy 🍷🍷 Looking forward to the Dorset photos 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 17-Aug-17 09:18 PM GMT

Thanks David, yes she does remind one of those mountain Fritillaries, it's true. She was a lovely fresh specimen.

Coming very soon Wurzel!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 18-Aug-17 09:43 PM GMT

GREETINGS from the Isle of Purbeck!

Next up for us, it was a trip to Dorset. We normally visit in late August, but circumstances conspired against that, so we went mid July. The butterflies now would clearly be different to late August, so it would be interesting to see what we would find.

First it was off to Swanage on the excellent Swanage Steam Railway, then an early lunch, then walked to Durlston CP. Near the car park, a nice male Wall was to quick for me, so I had to make do with this Gatekeeper;





The prime target here is the Lulworth Skipper, and walking down the slope, we soon started to see them. Here is my best picture...



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 18-Aug-17 10:03 PM GMT

😄 Only joking! Anyone who knows Durlston will recognise this habit shot;



Male Lulworths were the first to be seen, on this warm but initially cloudy day;



Females were keeping a lower profile, but we found a few in the sheltered dips;



This male was trying it on, but the female was taking no notice and had probably already mated;



Other butterflies here included Small Skipper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Grayling , Marbled White and Meadow Brown. Here is a Small Blue ;



And a Grayling;



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 18-Aug-17 11:27 PM GMT

Interesting image of the pair of Lulworths, Mark. The male is holding his wings flat, which I've never seen before. A good tutorial into the differences between the sexes, I'd say.

Your Small Blue is **very** blue...almost Silvery Argus-like.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-17 10:28 AM GMT

Great sequence of shots Essex and as David mentioned that is an unusually posed male, it clearly shows how similar the sex brand is to the male Small Skipper 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-17 06:46 PM GMT

If that Small Blue had been in Europe, I would have had to do a double take, David!

I think the male Lulworth was posed like that because he was displaying to the female, possibly showering her with scent scales.

I felt that the number of Lulworths at Durlston was a little lower than I normally see in August, but this was more than compensated for by sightings at many other sites.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 19-Aug-17 07:28 PM GMT

In the early evening, we checked into our excellent bed and breakfast at the bottom of Bindon Hill, West Lulworth. Then there was just time before dinner, to have a walk on the hill, where Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blue, Lulworth Skipper, Wall and Marbled Whites were going to roost.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-17 08:43 AM GMT

Lovely fresh Marbled Whites Essex, they practically glow in the right lighting 😊 Durlston is a 'late' site for this species and so they might not have peaked yet, I was there about a week before you and they'd only just started emerging in any real numbers so hopefully that's the explanation for them being in fewer numbers.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Aug-17 10:23 PM GMT

Next day, Monday 17 July, dawned bright, so we had a walk up the hill before breakfast, to enjoy the views and see the butterflies waking up. We say fewer butterflies than we normally see in August—we could only find two Chalkhill Blues, for example, which we were a little surprised at. However, we saw more Lulworth Skippers than normal, which is ample compensation.

Full list was Lulworth Skipper, Small Skipper, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blue, Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Wall.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by millerd, 21-Aug-17 10:41 PM GMT

I'm very much enjoying your visit to Dorset, Mark. Lovely butterfly images and steam trains as well! 😊🇬🇧 I must try and spend more than the odd day down there...

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-17 08:54 PM GMT

You really should, Dave!

That day was expected to be the sunniest day of our break, so we got our butterflies in early, then it was a leisure day. We walked the footpath, visited the coves and swam in the sea—very refreshing! All among the glorious scenery and sunshine!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-17 10:30 PM GMT

The next day dawned bright again, so another early start saw me up on the hill. This time, I wanted to get a Lulworth Skipper with a view. This is what I managed. Anyone familiar with the area will recognise the chalk path in this view,



Brown Argus were waking up too, and several Walls were basking on the footpath by 8AM, here is the best specimen.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-17 10:36 PM GMT

This was a warmer, more humid day than the previous one, with thunder threatening. After a swim in the cove, we made our way to Swanage, then walked the Purbeck Way over to Corfe Castle—an area known as the Purbeck Ridge. I have never walked this path before, so it would be interesting to see what we could find.

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 24-Aug-17 10:48 PM GMT

Lovely landscape shots, Mark, and a fair few highly desirable butterfly species thrown in for good measure!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Aug-17 10:55 PM GMT

Our first find was another Lulworth Skipper colony. Here is a male holding territory, which was flying at any passing insect.



Slightly further up, this Painted Lady was feeding on greater Knapweed



Small Skippers were about also, most fairly worn, but here is a nice female,



Dark Green Fritillaries were seen, and a golden ringed dragonfly was disturbed from a hedge. Here is a view from the top of the ridge, toward Bournemouth and Sandbanks.



Eventually, Corfe Castle comes into view, nestled in a gap in the Purbeck hills.

Thanks David, it sure is a great part of our country–no wonder a trip there is a firm annual fixture in our diary!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-17 09:02 PM GMT

After storms in the night, the next day was misty and drizzly– classic warm sector weather. Butterflies were out of the question, so we visited the Abbotsbury sub-tropical gardens. When also had a walk on Chesil beach.

In the early hours, a cold front cleared through, and the high cloud gradually cleared, making another early walk possibl. It was a lot cooler first thing, but sunshine tempted a few early risers, including Brown Argus and Gatekeeper. A Chalkhill Blue was still roosting.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-17 10:06 PM GMT

Brilliant shot of Durdle Door, my favourite place in the world 😊😄 Good to hear that numbers of Lulworths picked up and that is one of the best Chalkhill shots that I've seen 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 25-Aug-17 10:50 PM GMT

Yes Wurzel, we saw Lulworth Skipper in far more places this year.

After another sumptuous breakfast, we headed back to Corfe Castle, to check more slopes for Lulworth Skippers. To my delight, we found some, mostly females, in a new area. Even better, while watching one, she reversed down a tube of tor grass and laid two glassy white eggs. 😊. All the usual stuff was here, including Small Copper and a nice male Common Blue.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Pauline, 26-Aug-17 06:44 AM GMT

Great landscape shots as usual Mark but I do like that Lulworth with the path in the background – reminiscent of the ones Guy and William sometimes take and which I've tried (unsuccessfully) in the past to achieve 🙄

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-17 09:21 AM GMT

Hi! essex, fantastic shots of landscapes and Butterflies you've made my mind up for next year, I'm definitely going back to Dorset. Goldie 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-17 07:49 PM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great series of reports and photos from Dorset. That area is one of my favourites and I missed my late season visit there last year...I can't let that happen two years running, so after a week back at work guess where I am heading for a few days soon 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-17 08:45 PM GMT

So we can expect lots of Adonis Blue and Clouded Yellow pictures to appear on your diary soon, to make us all jealous Neil?

That evening, we were delighted to meet up with Tom from Butterfly Conservation and leader of our recent Armenia trip. He showed us an area of heather heath, where we found the tiny bog orchids, then onto some recently created dragonfly ponds, where we found small red and scarce blue-tailed damselflies. Thanks Tom!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-17 09:24 PM GMT

So, we come to our last day in Dorset. This was a cloudy, windy day, with a new low pressure driving rain in from the south-west. We visited Swanage, and managed a quick visit to the Arne RSPB reserve, seeing Dorset Heath and Dartford warbler, before the heavens opened.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-17 09:44 PM GMT

So, in summary, we had a very nice time in Dorset. We went a month earlier than normal (end August), and overall numbers of butterflies were probably slightly lower, which was a little surprising to me. However, in August we normally see Chalkhill and Adonis Blues by the hundred, whereas in July the Chalkhills were only just starting. This was levelled to some extent by much higher numbers of Lulworth Skippers, while Small Skipper and Gatekeepers were abundant, they are usually gone by late August. Clouded Yellows would have emerged by August.

Weather was a typical British mixed bag, so not very different from August. However, there are about two hours a day extra daylight in July! Here are my last couple of pictures from Arne, of Dorset Heath and Dartford warbler, a little grainy I'm afraid in the poor light.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Aug-17 10:38 PM GMT

Wow--did someone forgot to tell the weather gods it was a Bank Holiday weekend?



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Aug-17 09:53 PM GMT

We didn't see as many Chalkhill Blues in Dorset as expected , so on our next day off it was time to put that right. On 26 July, with cloud and light rain spreading across the country, we decided our best chance was to get as far east as possible. The nature reserve at Lydden Temple Ewell is great for downland butterflies and flowers, and we had a great 3 or so hours sunshine, which is more than we would have had anywhere else , before the cloud arrived.

Chalkhill Blues were everywhere, many freshly emerged and warming up in the early sunshine. They made a glorious sight, including the first females, and were feeding on marjoram and chasing each other around.



At rest, the Chalkhills underside is quite as attractive as the upper side;



Lots of lovely Common Blues were present, Esther spotted this beauty;



With so much stuff to see at the bottom, it took some time to start climbing the hill, by the time we did the sun was going. I was not expecting to see Silver-spotted Skippers today, so I was delighted to find several, nice fresh adults, mainly males;



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 29-Aug-17 10:09 PM GMT

Lovely late summer shots there, Mark. You look to have had a very productive holiday (which seems to be a theme wherever you go!)

Chalkhills & Silver Spotted Skippers are always welcome, but with their presence comes the realisation that things are winding down.

A bittersweet time of year.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Aug-17 10:29 PM GMT

Bearing in mind I took these pictures at the end of July when we still had all of August to look forward to, which turned out to be a belter! Cheers David!

Other stuff was seen at Lydden TE. Small Torts were about, as were fresh Brimstones, and I was delighted to see some Walls, as I don't always see them here. Although it was now cloudy, in the sheltered long grass at the top of the slope were several Brown Argus males.





The Gatekeepers were looking worn by late July,



The weather by late morning was turning against us, but no complaints, in a few early hours we had seen hundreds of butterflies. So I'll sign off with a habitat shot, and memories of a great morning in east Kent. 😊



## Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-17 12:47 PM GMT

Those Chalkhills are lush Essex 😊 I think when fresh they're more beautiful than their showing cousins 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Aug-17 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. Yes, they truly are beautiful and, thankfully, common in the right places.

A visit to Aston Rowant is one of the highlights of the butterfly calendar—for sheer numbers and variety this place is hard to beat. With the early emergence of Silver-spotted Skippers this year, I decided to come early, at the end of July. An early arrival found the butterflies just waking up on the southern section. Good numbers of Chalkhill Blues were basking, some already showing signs of wear, but most were excellent. I spent some time here at the bottom of the slope, where a wealth of whites, blues, browns and a few fritillaries were enjoyed.



Then, by mid morning, it was time to turn my attention to the SSS. The wind had increased and some dark clouds started to appear, so I made the most of the sunniest spells. Males were about in good numbers, and the first females were present too, they had not reached their peak yet. Mostly in

excellent condition, these fantastic little butterflies were a great pleasure to see. After enjoying them, I headed briefly to the much noisier northern section, where I met a couple from Northamptonshire who had never seen an SSS before. I had the pleasure of finding them a male, as well as showing them the best area to look. Early afternoon and time to leave as I had commitments elsewhere, but it had been a great morning. 😊





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-17 10:42 PM GMT

Great stuff Essex 😊 I saw my Silver-spots early in their season so didn't get to see any females this year, something to remedy next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Sep-17 11:21 PM GMT

West Cornwall early August.

I need no excuses to visit west Cornwall, but there were two things in particular I wanted to see this time. The moors and cliff tops clothed with the glorious colour of heather and western gorse, and the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, which are unique in west Cornwall in always producing a second generation in August. Strangely, PBF, which fly slightly earlier, are not known in Cornwall to do so. Remarkably, this second brood is actually larger than the first in good years.

The weather during my holiday was a typical mixed bag, those long, warm dry days earlier in the summer a distant memory. The first day was misty and drizzly, while the second was much brighter but windy. Here are a few pictures from near Lands End. Despite the weather, a glorious setting.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-17 11:35 PM GMT

The colour from the clifftops is amazing Essex 😊😄 We could do with a few female Walls round this way too 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 03-Sep-17 11:44 PM GMT

I missed your posts from Lydden and from Aston Rowant – what a lovely selection from both spots, which I know well. 😊 And that colourful Cornish clifftop is just astonishing.

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 04-Sep-17 10:42 AM GMT

Lovely shots from Cornwall essex, you can almost smell the flowers and the sea from your photos. Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-17 09:11 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Yes, even in the mist and drizzle the colour here was spectacular. One of the things I came here for!

The next day, it was time to do a bit of walking on the north coast, between Holywell Bay Perranporth. The area between Holywell and the rather unattractive Penhale army camp has a vast population of Silver-studded Blues in season, but for now I had to make do with Small Copper, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Dark Green Fritillary, Gatekeeper, Grayling and Speckled Wood. Cornish though are spreading on this north coast, and a couple were seen.



*Holywell bay*



Later, I visited a site near Truro. Unknown to many, the Dorset Heath is also found in Cornwall, though only in a very small area. The marsh valley I visited was being grazed by ponies and the site is also home to other marsh plants like sundews, and also dragonflies. This area contains the only population of Dorset Heath outside Dorset.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-17 10:00 PM GMT

Beautifully marked Copper Essex, a proper blue badger 😊🍷 So how did Dorset Heath end up in Cornwall – have the populations between been lost or was seed transported there? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Sep-17 10:48 PM GMT

It's a good question Wurzel—if only I knew the answer? But if the Cryptic Wood White can find its way to Northern Ireland, anything is possible.

Saturday 5 August. This was the day I had been waiting for. A splendid blue, early start saw us at Kynance Cove first thing. In the sheltered dips and cliff slips, the first of the second generation Spall Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were warming up, wings spread wide, and angled to the sun. Here, they live in much more open populations than woodland sites further east, flying over large areas of habitat, containing sheltered patches of violets used for breeding. Here are some males...



### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 05-Sep-17 08:24 AM GMT

Great to see those SPBF second brooders, Mark. To my knowledge, this doesn't occur in south Wales, though I think I'll make a special effort to go looking for them in their favoured locations near where I live in August next year just to see.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 05-Sep-17 04:35 PM GMT

Lovely Pearl's essex, they don't appear in the North, no second Broods here, wish there was, Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 05-Sep-17 08:03 PM GMT

Second brood SPBF have been recorded more widely this year, David. So you never know— certainly worth a look!

Thanks Goldie, they are a treasure, just another reason why Cornwall is so special!

As well as the males, females were warming up in the early sun, and were easier to approach than the males, even this early in the day...



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Maximus, 05-Sep-17 08:18 PM GMT

Nice to see that SPBF are doing well in Cornwall, Mark, and lovely shots of the second brood males and females.

Mike

**Re: essex buzzard**

by bugboy, 06-Sep-17 07:30 PM GMT

You don't arf get about! I thought I had a busy year...! Looks like it was all well worth it though 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by millerd, 06-Sep-17 08:04 PM GMT

All those SPBF are an even bigger incentive to spend some time in Cornwall, Essex. 😊 Great shots of lovely butterflies.

Dave

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-17 10:14 PM GMT

Now you have all this time on your hands 😊, no reason why not, Dave!

Lots of other butterflies were seen at Kynance. After having our fill of SPBF, attention turned elsewhere. Four Walls were seen.



We counted six Clouded Yellows.



Common Blues were indeed common, we estimate double figures.



Small Coppers were around in low numbers, they reach their peak later, in late September and October. About 6 seen.



Perhaps the most remarkable thing present today was this Peacock. We saw a fresh one earlier, but this one is over a year old! Never before have I seen one still alive in August.



**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-17 11:17 PM GMT

Six Clouded Yellows, you're just rubbing it in now, I've still not seen one this year and time's running out 🙄🙄🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-17 11:36 PM GMT

You need to head back down to the old country, Wurzel! I believe Neil F is down there at the moment, be interesting to see what he had found. I'm willing to bet there are a few Clouded Yellows down there...

The Cornish Heath is found uniquely in south-west Cornwall, nowhere else. It is in full flower in August at Kynance.



The autumn squill is common here, too. The only place I have seen it.



The local Cornish choughs have bred successfully this year, and they showed well, giving close views.



Here is a view of the splendid scenery, no wonder it is one of my very favourite places, even before the wildlife is taken into account.



And lastly, here is the peaceful evening scene of Penzance harbour.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Hulme, 07-Sep-17 06:53 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Great reports and images. I would rank an early/mid August visit to watch second brood SPBF on the Lizard Peninsula amongst the very best butterfly-watching experiences in the UK. On sunny days it's worth going just for those unique cliff-top colours alone. I may sell the children and a buy a cottage in Cadgwith Cove.

BWs, Neil

### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-17 07:22 PM GMT

Great reports and photos from Cornwall Mark...bringing back the memories from our recent week down there 😊

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

...I may sell the children and a buy a cottage in Cadgwith Cove...

Hmm!...now there's a thought 😊

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

...You need to head back down to the old country, Wurzel! I believe Neil F is down there at the moment, be interesting to see what he had found. I'm willing to bet there are a few Clouded Yellows down there...

Just got back yesterday...there were indeed a couple of Clouded Yellows flying about 😊 not as many as I saw in Cornwall though.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 09-Sep-17 12:19 AM GMT

Lovely sequence, Mark. That coastline reminds me of Pembrokeshire, although Clouded Yellows and Wall Browns are much thinner on the ground round that way! 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-17 07:23 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Neil, (H), with the Silver-spotted Skippers, Chalkhill and Adonis Blues, Brown Hairstreaks, etc., August is a packed month! But I wholeheartedly agree, with that scenery, flowers, butterflies and, not least cuisine, the Lizard experience is right up there with the very best.

Neil F, I thought you might see a few more Clouded Yellows in Dorset than that, though it might be between generations to some extent. Your report from Cornwall was excellent.

Thanks David. Clouded Yellows are about in The West Country almost every year, though the numbers are of course variable. So I'm a little surprised there are not more on that splendid Pembrokeshire coast.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-17 10:23 PM GMT

On our last day in Cornwall, low pressure was approaching again, so we had another walk in the morning on the coast path at Gwennap Head, taking advantage of the early sunshine.



Then we spent the afternoon at bustling St. Ives. As did a lot of other people!



## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Sep-17 10:42 PM GMT

9 August. It was now peak Silver-spotted Skipper time. Trouble is, persistent cloud and rain was forecast for practically the whole of the Midlands and south-east. The only area that would 'poke out' would be the far east of Kent. And so it proved! So a slightly enforced trip to Lydden Temple Ewell today. But it's not so bad down there. Silver-spotted Skippers, Adonis and Chalkhill Blues can't be wrong!

Arriving here, Adonis Blues, in mint condition, were soon found- they were just starting.



Here, at the Temple Ewell end, SSS, though present, are lower in numbers so after enjoying those lovely Adonis, I headed up, through the trees, then down the Lydden end. Here SSS are much higher in number, though yet to reach their peak. At this strong colony, male were plentiful, with fewer females. There must be many hundreds at this site.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 10-Sep-17 10:59 AM GMT

Lovely Adonis and SSS shots essex, looks like I just missed the Adonis by a week , I went home end of July 😊 last year I was in Kent in August and they didn't come out so soon , one of these years we'll click and I'll get them. 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 11-Sep-17 08:32 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, if you are coming down here next year, mid to late August is, on average, best in Kent for SSS and Adonis Blue. I would be happy to show you the best areas at Lydden TE.

Other butterflies seen on this day included a second generation Dingy Skipper, plus Common Blue, Brown Argus, Chalkhill Blues, Clouded Yellow, Small and GV White, Peacock, Wall, Gatekeepers, Meadow Brown and Small Heath.

Next stop, Sussex!





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-17 10:40 PM GMT

Great set of Silver-spots Essex 😊 The final Adonis is featuring some fracking under wing markings too 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 12-Sep-17 12:25 PM GMT

Beautiful Adonis images, Mark. I look forward to reading about what you saw in Sussex.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-17 09:47 AM GMT

Hi! Essex, we visit our Daughter every year in Kent, so we've to fit in with their plans, usually they go on Holiday towards the end of August so we visit before then, I did wonder about going to Dorset in May or June, I believe the Grizzled Skipper and the Adonis can be found there then, if we do manage to get to Kent late August it would be good to meet up 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Sep-17 11:40 PM GMT

In August, many pictures of Brown Hairstreaks were coming onto the forums, and for some time it seemed I was going to miss out again this year. However, in late August an opportunity arose to visit Sussex. The weather was only borderline suitable for Britain's laziest butterfly, warm but mostly cloudy- a theme that has become all too familiar since then. But fortune favours the brave!

We started with a morning at Anchor Bottom, where many hundreds of Adonis Blue were on the downland slopes- the warm, wet summer has clearly benefited this glorious species. I was also amazed at the numbers of autumn ladies tresses on site. One of the Adonis was feeding on round headed rampion, the pride of Sussex!



Then onto Steyning. As luck would have it, a short spell of sunshine was just enough, and I found what I was looking for within minutes of arrival—a Golden brown double Streak! I even managed to show it to a couple of visitors, from Kent. Just as well, for it soon clouded over again, and it was the only one I saw. A couple of Adonis Blue and Clouded Yellows were seen, too.





Although we later went back to Anchor Bottom, the weather was deteriorating, and nothing new was seen.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-17 12:25 AM GMT

Saturday 2 September. Today we headed off to St. Margaret's Bay in east Kent. A new, autumn generation of Large Whites had emerged, and many were seen. Small Coppers were found, including one with blue spots, the common form *caeruleo-punctata*. In the short grass areas, Adonis Blues, while scarcer than in Sussex, were still resplendent against a few rather faded Common Blues. By now, it was clouding over, and time for lunch.





### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 21-Sep-17 08:22 AM GMT

Lovely looking Small Copper Essex and good to see that you didn't miss out on the Brostreaks 😊 I better get a wriggle on and sort my photos out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-17 06:49 PM GMT

Just made it, Wurzel! It's been a couple of years, so I was double pleased to find my Brown Hairstreak. I was hoping she would lay some eggs, but it wasn't to be this time. My picture wasn't as good as many, but I'm certainly not complaining!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-17 08:25 PM GMT

After St. Margaret's Bay, it was back to Lydden and Temple Ewell for afternoon. Still plenty of Adonis Blues there, in varying condition, but including some really nice ones. Lots of Meadow Browns were present, and I was pleased to still find a few early autumn Silver-spotted Skippers, including a nice male. Small Heaths were still in good numbers, and another Clouded Yellow flew past, though it evaded my camera. A very nice day.





### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 21-Sep-17 09:48 PM GMT

A nice Kentish selection, Essex. You visited the same spots that I did at the start of the same week – I recognise those butterflies! 😊 That Clouded Yellow wasn't stopping for anyone... 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Sep-17 10:50 PM GMT

You only spotted one Brown Hairstreak, Mark, but she looks a beauty...as does that female Adonis.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 22-Sep-17 11:59 PM GMT

Thanks Guys. I've seen some lovely Adonis this year, both male and female. But I was delighted to find that Brown Hairstreak. Clouded Yellows stop for no-one! But as the autumn progresses, and hopefully a few new ones emerge, they should slow down a little!

Welcome to the autumn equinox. In theory, this means there was 12 hours of daylight today the world over. But this is not quite true, because the light is slightly bent as it enters the Earth's atmosphere, adding about six minutes 'fake' daylight each day. The twelve hours equal day is Sunday.

There is already plenty of autumn colour about, perhaps a month earlier than last year. Maybe this is because of the warm early to high summer, and a cold September. It was a lovely sunny day today however—the best since August.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Maximus, 23-Sep-17 12:50 AM GMT

I'm glad you saw your Brown Hairstreak too, Mark.

Mike

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-17 10:43 PM GMT

Great Adonis from the previous post Essex 😊 Is it just me or are the 'two pupil-ed' Meadow Browns becoming more common?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 06:57 PM GMT

They do seem to be, don't they Wurzel? Rather like blue female Common Blues.

Dungerness, 6 September. A trip to see the Small Coppers, as well as hopefully a Clouded Yellow or two. Plenty of Coppers were indeed seen, around 40, but surprisingly they were outnumbered by Small Heaths, around 50- a good number in the short time the weather was suitable. And we did find a couple of Clouded Yellows, by the wall around the power station.





Several Painted Ladies were about—considering I saw my first PL way back in March, I'm surprised there haven't been more around this year. I was pleased to see several Peacock, my first since early August. Common Blues were in good numbers, and a few fresh Brown Argus, perhaps third brood. Meadow Brown, Large White, Small White and Red Admiral complete the picture. It was much cloudier than forecast, so I think this was a pretty good showing.





### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 09:50 PM GMT

Forgot the Painted Lady picture from Dungeness!



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 10:25 PM GMT

I've struggled this September to find any reasonable breaks in the weather. All too often it's been cloudy and cold, but I did manage a short visit to Bedfords Park a couple of weeks back. All three whites were seen. A male Large White was feeding on a large clump of devils-bit scabious, oblivious to a female feeding nearby. Suddenly he spotted her, and they were off, spiralling upwards, until she landed high on a hawthorn. He landed alongside where, after a bit of fidgeting, they mated, though too high up for a picture.

This site is excellent for Small Coppers, being warm and south-facing. They showed well, in the short time the weather was suitable, including some nice, fresh third brood ones. Bedfords is on the Essex border with London, with grand views over the city skyline.





## Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 27-Sep-17 10:30 PM GMT

### essexbuzzard wrote:

I've struggled this September to find any reasonable breaks in the weather.

Tell me about it! This is the worst September for several years and it has obliterated any chances of finding good numbers or decent ranges of species in October, unless we have an exceptionally fast turnaround in the weather.

I think you have instinctively called things correctly in this quote:

~~[quote]~~ There is already plenty of autumn colour about, perhaps a month earlier than last year. Maybe this is because of the warm early to high summer, and a cold September. It was a lovely sunny day today however—the best since August.

You may be right there, Mark. I certainly noticed many of the trees have taken on their autumn colours this weekend whereas last year even at Hallowe'en many of them were still in full leaf, albeit shades of yellow, red and brown rather than green. The flowers seem to have gone over quicker too, although that may be down to the frequent stormy weather my area has seen lately.

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 10:41 PM GMT

This is also a really good site for Commas, with lots of sheltered, south-facing blackberry bushes. They were here in good numbers, and it was a delight to see so many. Also expected were the Speckled Woods, but a Small Tortoiseshell was a pleasant surprise, even more so when it sat for picture-taking!



## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 10:45 PM GMT

I echo your sentiment, Dave. The last few days the temperature has gone back up to average, but it's been so cloudy! Hope I'm wrong, but I fear it's going to a long winter...

## Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 11:16 PM GMT

All through September I had been waiting for a decent break in the weather, for one last long-distance trip out. After several 'shall we or not' days, I we finally found a day when the forecast was good, and set out for Osmington, in Dorset. After heavy rain the day before, and no doubt other days recently, it was a very muddy path up to White Horse hill. But there was a bit of early sun, and we soon spotted the first Speckled Wood, a bit tatty, but very welcome after a long drive. Several more were seen later.



Once on the Hill, I was really hoping for some Adonis Blues, if all the wet weather had not finished them off. I soon found several, but they were very worn. Then Esther shouted me over, the male she found was much better. Pictures were taken, then I continued the search. A little while after, I found another good male.



While searching for my Blues, I also spotted this lovely Small Copper, with a great set of blue badges, a great find.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 27-Sep-17 11:37 PM GMT

A few nice female Adonis were found at Osmington, including this cracker, with her lovely dusting of blue scales.



A couple each of Comma and Red Admiral were feeding on the sheltered blackberries, but I was surprised, and delighted, to find this lovely Peacock, they are long gone into hibernation in my neck of the woods.



By lunchtime it was unexpectedly clouding over once again, so we headed to Swanage for lunch, hoping things would improve. They did, but not until evening, so we walked from Swanage to Old Harry Rocks, enjoying a little late sunshine, and the fantastic views from up there.



So, although the weather wasn't quite as good as forecast, we had, at last, had a good day. 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 28-Sep-17 08:29 AM GMT

That certainly is a stunning female Adonis Blue, Mark.  
There is something fascinating about 'blue' female Common/Adonis.  
I was hoping that you would have a third brood Wall report for us.

Trevor.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-17 08:46 PM GMT

Maybe I have...

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 28-Sep-17 09:04 PM GMT

That's one hell of a *caeruleopunctata*, Mark, and the female Adonis in your next post is almost as striking! You've seen some wonderful late season action this year in what has been a predominantly dreary period for most of us.

### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 28-Sep-17 10:20 PM GMT

A lovely Small Copper and the female Adonis is a smashing insect. Worth that long trek down... 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-17 10:32 PM GMT

I agree with David Essex, that is one hell of a Blue Badger – I don't think I've seen one that well 'badged' before! 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Sep-17 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. Despite all the recent cloud and rain, Osmington Hill still managed to come up with the goods! And I agree, that Small Copper must be one of the best I have seen!

Convey Island now probably has the strongest colony of Walls in Essex, though they can also be seen nearby at Benfleet Downs and Hadleigh Castle CP. Last Sunday, the sun at last came out, so I arrived at the Canvey Wick nature reserve, an old industrial site, earlier to catch the Walls warming up. They would probably be hyperactive later!

I soon found my first Wall, a rather worn male. But much better was to come, for I soon found a few more males, some fresh, some less so. Two males met, and went spiralling upwards into the sky, spinning for maybe a minute or two before separating, only to meet again and repeat the action. Several others were feeding on ragwort, or whatever flowers were available.



After enjoying these excellent males, my attention turned to finding the more elusive females. This wasn't too difficult, as I found a larger patch of ragwort which had a nice one feeding on it, wings spread wide. A search elsewhere turned up a few more, and some male Walls. As the day warmed up, they became more and more flighty, reminding me of the benefits of arriving early at Wall sites. I also was able to show someone a Wall, a female, who had never seen one, as well as a Clouded Yellow, Brown Argus and Common Blues. A good mornings work!





### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 29-Sep-17 10:10 PM GMT

Some very nice Walls there, Essex, especially the females. It also shows that Sussex doesn't have a monopoly on the third brood! 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 29-Sep-17 11:34 PM GMT

Some great Wall images there Mark, especially that fresh female. You were lucky to have a tall plant, like the Ragwort, for them to nectar/pose on.

Great stuff,  
Trevor.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 30-Sep-17 06:55 PM GMT

Thanks for your comments, I'm well chuffed with those Walls, and it's a delight to still have them as an Essex species. Now all I need is a bit of Clouded Yellow action...and a bit of sunshine.

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Sep-17 10:58 PM GMT

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

...Now all I need is a bit of Clouded Yellow action...and a bit of sunshine.

Good luck with the latter, Mark! I can't ever remember a second half of September so dull and cloudy as this. Maybe October will see a change.

Here's hoping.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Neil Freeman, 01-Oct-17 10:08 AM GMT

Hi Mark,

Good to see that you made it to Osmington and were rewarded with some nice Adonis Blues and that beautifully blue spotted Small Copper 😊

Cheers,

Neil

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Oct-17 10:50 PM GMT

Following Trevor's report of Clouded Yellows from Shoreham in Sussex, it was inevitable I would be down there as soon as the weather allowed. Sunday was rather cloudier than forecast, but some sunny spells lunchtime were enough to produce the sightings. Once the sun came out, butterflies appeared instantly. At the harbour, several fresh Clouded Yellows, including a helice, were seen. The markings were heavier on some males than others.



In between these Yellows, several Small Whites and a Large White were spotted. Common Blues were found, including some nice females and a fresh male. Red Admiral and two Small Coppers were also present.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Oct-17 11:01 PM GMT

Then onto Mill Hill. A few more Clouded Yellows were seen in any sunny spells, as were Common Blues, though these were more faded than the ones at the harbour. Meadow Browns were seen, some surprisingly fresh—why a Meadow Brown would rather emerge in October than July I have no idea. Several Walls were still present, and one each of Comma and Painted Lady completes the list. That's 10 species, quite acceptable for October. Had there been a bit more sunshine, I'm sure I could have seen two or three more.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-17 11:07 PM GMT

10 Species for October is a very haul Essex, and those Cloudies are the icing on the cake 🍌🍌

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 09-Oct-17 11:12 PM GMT

Pictures from Mill Hill. A successful day I've been waiting a long time for. Thanks for posting, Trevor. 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 10-Oct-17 08:49 AM GMT

Great Clouded Yellows and Blues from Shoreham, Essex. Worth the trip I'd say. 😊 That last one is beautifully marked. It's good to see Mill Hill is still going strong too – and like you, I can't understand how Meadow Browns work at all. My first sightings (including a female) were on 2nd June this year. 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 10-Oct-17 05:35 PM GMT

I'm pleased that the journey from Essex to Shoreham paid off.  
Your helice could be the 4th one that site has produced, not bad for a fairly small population.  
The heavily marked CL earns you a mrgreen, and is possibly the second example with such markings. 🍀

Great stuff, Mark.  
Trevor.

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 10-Oct-17 09:56 PM GMT

That 4th Clouded Yellow in your 9 October post is an absolute beauty, Mark. Really defined underside forewing spots. Great that you got a *helice* and the female Common Blue is notably attractive as well. A productive trip for sure.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 12-Oct-17 06:14 PM GMT

Love all your shots 🍀🍀 I think they're outstanding! Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 15-Oct-17 11:32 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for all your comments. As always, a bit of luck is needed to get these sightings, especially in October, and not least from the weather. It was certainly well worth the trip down there.

Today we were off to Dungeness. We were hoping to see some of Hoggers 's Small Coppers, and also Clouded Yellow or two. In fact, not only did we see some of Hoggers 's Coppers, we also saw a Hoggers-great to meet you! Although a lot of cloud at times, there was enough brightness to find 10-15 Coppers, some still fresh.



We also saw 3 Clouded Yellows near the power station fence, where we also met Hoggers,



Elsewhere at Dungeness, I was pleased to see two Peacocks in the moat area, while 1 Common Blue, 2 Painted Ladies, 2 Red Admiral and a Small Heath, which looked like it had had a lucky escape, complete a successful days sightings. 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by Allan.W., 16-Oct-17 08:33 AM GMT

Good to see you had some joy at Dungeness yesterday Essex ,by the time we arrived there the sun had completely disappeared, but still managed half a dozen Coppers and a single "ghost" of a Clouded Yellow, there was something going on in the moat ,while we were there ,with about twenty parked cars ,and like number of birders ,intently scoping the bushes .....kept well away , maybe re-found yesterdays Raddes ! Also saw a couple of singing Black Redstarts ! regards Allan.W.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 16-Oct-17 03:14 PM GMT

That's really great for October, wish I'd payed a visit to Kent instead of Decorating 😊 my Daughter's coming here instead 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 16-Oct-17 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks Alan. Yes, we saw all those people and cars down in the moat—so that's what it was, in those bushes? Twitchers. Funny things, them. But I suppose they might say the same about me when I'm chasing butterflies!

Thanks, Goldie. Yes, it would have been great to take you round Dungeness yesterday. But it seems you have been doing pretty well, with those garden sightings!

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-17 10:54 PM GMT

Great set of Coppers and Cloudies Essex and a really lovely dark painted Lady 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 21-Oct-17 02:03 PM GMT

Lovely selection there, Mark. I'm almost getting bored with Clouded Yellows and Small Coppers so it's nice to see a Small Heath make an appearance. 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 23-Oct-17 10:53 AM GMT

Right, this is clearly another for the 'list of places I need to visit'  
Great selection essex, I do like those pictures with pebbles in the background.

Cheers

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 24-Oct-17 06:52 PM GMT

No worries, Andrew. Add it to next years list, I would definitely recommend it. Lots of good birds in the area, too.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 25-Oct-17 10:11 PM GMT

After a couple of dull but mild days, the sun came out to play today—and it was my day off! 😊

I'm my local woods, the sun was setting off the splendid autumn colour on the beech trees. The buzzards were around, and I found a hornet nest in an ash tree. A Red Admiral was settled nearby, but was a little worn.



By mid morning, it was already warm, so I headed off to Canvey Island, which I thought would be my best chance of a few butterflies. Although it clouded over at times, and I feared the worst for a while, I needn't have worried. The warm sunshine returned. Throughout the day, Red Admirals were speeding through, heading south. Most did not stop, but this one did.



After a bit more searching, I found what I was really hoping to see, a Clouded Yellow, in mint condition. In my excitement, unfortunately I approached too quickly and twice I disturbed her, and she flew over the hedge and disappeared. Despite much searching, I failed to relocate her. So I retraced my steps, and there she was, back in the original area! Then the sun went in, and she went to ground. This time, I kept my distance. This was a gamble, as she would have been easy to photograph but if I disturbed her again, she might fly over the hedge again and be lost. But it worked as when the sun returned, she set about feeding on the hawkweeds in the vicinity, and allowed an approach close enough for pictures, provided I was careful 😊.

A male was around, too and a Comma, Wall and faded Meadow Brown were seen, as well as a distant white. A super late October day. 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by trevor, 25-Oct-17 10:40 PM GMT

Lovely Clouded Yellow Mark, and a very fresh one too.  
Bet you were pleased to find one closer to home. No sun for me today.

Trevor.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-17 11:06 PM GMT

What a cracking shot Essex 🍷🍷🍷 Brilliant shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 25-Oct-17 11:23 PM GMT

Another divine Clouded Yellow, Mark. You have done remarkably well with this species lately.

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 26-Oct-17 09:38 PM GMT

Hi Trevor, yes I saw it was rather cloudy down there, hopefully there should be some sunshine, and sightings, for you tomorrow and the weekend.

Yes, in well pleased with her and, even better, that she allowed me, eventually, to get close enough for some shots.

Yes David, and this is the best yet. I just need one more—in November!

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Andrew555, 27-Oct-17 11:12 AM GMT

Very nice Clouded indeed essex, I've yet to get a shot I'm happy with.  
Glad your tactics paid off 😊

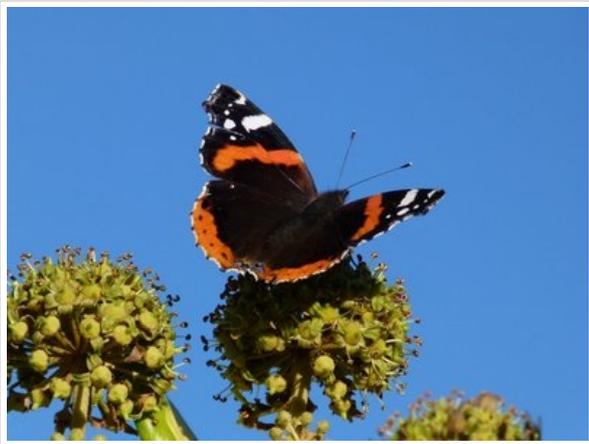
Cheers

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 30-Oct-17 11:26 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew. It was touch and go for a while, but it worked in the end!

At work there is an ivy 'Paddy's Pride ' which is in sunshine until 3pm, now 2pm, and the last few day there has been up to 4 Red Admiral and, last Friday, a Comma. This morning, a Red Admiral was nectaring from it when the air temperature was just 5 degrees! Sadly, high cloud spread in shortly after, making the weak late October sun even weaker, before clearing towards evening! Here are a few pictures...





**Re: essex buzzard**

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-17 11:01 AM GMT

Lovely autumnal fare Essex 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: essex buzzard**

by David M, 02-Nov-17 01:32 AM GMT

Great that you're still seeing Commas, Mark. I doubt there'll be anything aside from Red Admirals in my neck of the woods from here on in. 😊

**Re: essex buzzard**

by Andrew555, 02-Nov-17 12:07 PM GMT

Nice shots essex, love the sky background.

Cheers

**Re: essex buzzard**

by essexbuzzard, 04-Nov-17 08:24 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. A bit of sunshine certainly helps!

NOVEMBER SUNSHINE. NOVEMBER BUTTERFLIES!

What a fantastic couple of days I've had this week! It started on Wednesday, with a visit to Shoreham- Southwick. Immediately on arrival, we found Trevor, who had already found the first Clouded Yellow of the day, and kindly showed it to us.



Shortly after, Dave Cook arrived, and a Small Tortoiseshell was seen.



A short walk along the harbour produced a Comma, resting in the hedge



Most of the ivy has now finished, but one small patch was still in flower, and had several Red Admiral feeding on it



A second Clouded Yellow was seen, and the morning finished off with a Silver Y. Then it was off to Mill Hill...





### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 04-Nov-17 10:45 PM GMT

The afternoons are now very short, but Mill Hill is only ten minutes drive from Shoreham, and the warm weather held. On the way out of Shoreham, a Small White male was by the road, but was too quick for my camera. At Mill Hill, a Red Admiral was soon spotted, but this Painted Lady was a much bigger surprise



On the south-facing slope we soon began seeing Clouded Yellows, probably 8-10 in all, in varying condition. From the old



To the new,



I suspect they are still emerging here. All seen closely were males, so where were the females? I wonder if they mate on emergence then migrate south, leaving the males to take their chance at further mating opportunities? At the bottom of the slope, there was one more surprise—a female Small Copper.



She was crawling on the vegetation but I didn't see her lay any eggs.

By mid-afternoon the sun was already dipping but, over the two sites, we had seen an incredible 7 November species! These were Clouded Yellows 10+, Red Admiral 6, Small White 1, Painted Lady 1, Comma 1, Small Copper 1 and Small Tortoiseshell 1.



### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 05-Nov-17 12:12 AM GMT

I was at both those sites the day before and saw just a handful or Red Admiral 🐛

### Re: essex buzzard

by millerd, 05-Nov-17 12:19 AM GMT

That's as many Cloudies as there were there six weeks ago, Essex. And still fresh ones. They seem to continue breeding completely oblivious to shorter days. Lovely to see though, and seven species is a very good haul for the time of year. Nice Painted Lady too! 😊

Dave

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-17 07:34 PM GMT

Seven species at this time of year is a great haul Essex 🤗🇬🇧 Those Cloudies are certainly going strong as there are some lovely fresh looking ones in the mix there 🤗

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 06-Nov-17 09:09 AM GMT

Looks like an amazing day essex, great stuff.

Cheers

### Re: essex buzzard

by Goldie M, 06-Nov-17 09:21 AM GMT

It's great to see Butterflies in your posts , it's making the season seem much longer 🤗 Goldie 🤗

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 06-Nov-17 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks everyone. It was a brilliant day, fantastic for November. I'm glad in helping extend the season for you, Goldie. Every little helps!

The next day, Thursday, I had booked a day off work. And by sheer luck, the weather was warm again, and if anything, sunnier than Wednesday. So it was off to Dungerness, where I was delighted to meet Hoggers and his Small Coppers again. More on that hopefully tomorrow, when time allows. 🤗

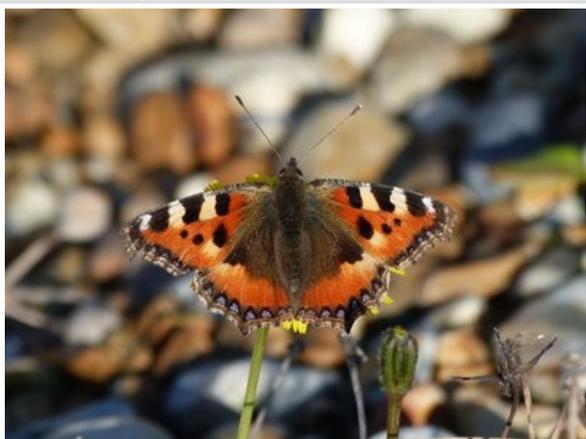
### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Nov-17 10:14 PM GMT

So, another warm, sunny November day saw us at Dungerness. A walk around the perimeter wall produced our first butterfly of the day, a Clouded Yellow. Later, while talking to Hoggers, we saw another, which Hoggers managed to capture in flight, I managed this grounded picture.



A later walk along the wall produced this Small Tortoiseshell, almost certainly our last of the year.



Quite a few dragonflies were still around, mostly Common Darters but a few Migrant Hawkers.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Nov-17 10:51 PM GMT

But the day belonged to the Small Coppers. Most were found in the moat area and were highly variable in terms of wear. Here is a very worn adult.



This Copper had probably had a dangerous encounter with a bird.



Some were in reasonable condition.



And this female was newly emerged.



The few remaining ox-eye daisies were being used.



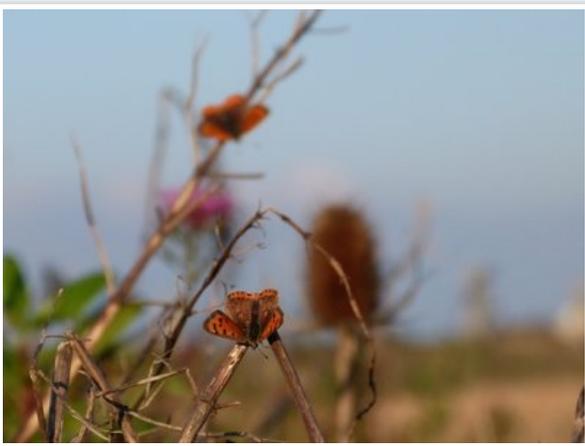
Any remaining ragwort flowers were a magnet for the Coppers



They were using the shingle to warm up, in between bouts of feeding



Sadly, this wonderful warm, sunny November day had to end, and we remained to watch the Coppers going to roost, the last female closing her wings at 3.30.



Zzz.



### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 07-Nov-17 11:32 PM GMT

So there you have it. A November diary page, packed with butterflies. Now I wasn't expecting that! 😊😊😊

With more glorious sunshine on Sunday, it was time for a walk in Epping Forest. The autumn colours, the blue sky and the sunshine made for a most enjoyable walk.



This is hornbeam, a native hardwood that was one of the last trees to reach Britain, before we broke off from the continent. It is restricted to south-east England.



That night, came the first widespread frost of the season.



### Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 08-Nov-17 02:00 PM GMT

Great shots from Dungeness essex, the colours of the butterflies and flowers in that light.. 😊  
I think we all appreciate Autumn forest walking. 😊

Cheers

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-17 07:42 PM GMT

A fantastic array of Coppers Essex 😊🍁 I wonder how many more butterflies will be about now the frosts have started arriving?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 08-Nov-17 08:37 PM GMT

Great haul for November, Mark, though I fear that solid frost might put paid to the bulk of any activity henceforth. 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 20-Nov-17 10:30 PM GMT

Hi Andrew, yes a walk in Epping Forest or, no doubt, other forests in our country, is one of November's greatest pleasures, especially if it is sunny, as autumn reaches its final peak.

Thanks Wurzel and David. Yes, I think a few frosts have finished things off. Although I saw a Red Admiral last week, I think my season has now finally come to an end.

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 22-Nov-17 03:08 PM GMT

#### essexbuzzard wrote:

Yes, I think a few frosts have finished things off. Although I saw a Red Admiral last week, I think my season has now finally come to an end.

Mine probably finished on 5th November with a Red Admiral flyby in Abergavenny town centre so looks like my next will be in late February/early March.

This late season has been full of surprises though, so we should all keep our eyes peeled.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 29-Nov-17 09:17 PM GMT

The Hawfinch is now a very scarce, perhaps even rare, British breeding bird, and has probably been lost as an Essex breeder, with just a handful of winter sightings in recent years. But this autumn there has been a perhaps once in a lifetime event- a big hawfinch invasion.

Following sightings on the Essex coast in recent weeks, they have settled in our woodlands, especially those containing hornbeam. We hope they will remain through the winter but equally, they may feed for a few weeks and move on. They are said to be particularly fond of hornbeam seeds and buds. I have never seen one in Britain before, never mind Essex. So today I visited Thorndon County Park, more in hope than expectation. Did I see any? You bet! 😊😊😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 29-Nov-17 10:13 PM GMT

You lucky bugger! I had a wander round Epping Forest yesterday (lots of Hornbeam there) in the hope of finding some but didn't see any... didn't see much of anything to be honest 😞

### Re: essex buzzard

by philm63, 30-Nov-17 07:38 AM GMT

Nice find. We have had around 6 locally over the past few weeks, with them showing a preference for cemeteries. Didn't have the free time to go looking regrettably

Phil

### Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 30-Nov-17 07:43 AM GMT

Nice one Essex 😊 A very striking bird.

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 30-Nov-17 09:23 AM GMT

Great set of shots Essex 😊👍 - they're a cracking looking bird, fingers crossed their 'invasion' will be the vanguard with Waxwings, interesting Redpolls, Brambling etc all to follow 😊

Great catching up on Saturday and cheers for the lift, sorry if I made your car smell of rancid beer, although to fair I'm only partially responsible for that 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 30-Nov-17 06:11 PM GMT

Glorious sighting, Mark...a bird I've long yearned to see. Whilst not great for butterflies, this time of year nonetheless provides good opportunities to

see other desirable wildlife!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 03-Dec-17 10:57 PM GMT

Thanks, Bugboy. I agree, Epping forest should be suitable. Thorndon Country Park, near Brentwood, is proving most reliable at the moment, with more there again this weekend. Hatfield forest has been good, too, though I don't know how easy it is for you to get there.

Thanks Phil. Don't give up, there should be some around for a few weeks at least.

Cheers Andrew, they are indeed great birds, one that I've long wanted to see!

Cheers Wurzel, no the car's not too bad! Good to see you last weekend.

David, you're right. The good thing about birds, especially near the coast, is that they fill the void in winter, when the flowers and butterflies have gone. If it weren't for that, I think I would suffer greatly from SAD, as others have said.

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 10-Dec-17 09:28 PM GMT

Like many from Wales, across the midlands to East Anglia, we had several inches of the white stuff today, creating a white winter wonderland! 😊



### Re: essex buzzard

by Andrew555, 11-Dec-17 09:39 AM GMT

Wow that's full on! 😲

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-17 08:41 AM GMT

If the recent report from Butterfly Conservation is correct then you'll be enjoying bucket loads of butterflies next season 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 12-Dec-17 10:47 PM GMT

Incredible, Mark! I'm almost envious. We haven't had a flake here in Swansea yet Merthyr Tydfil (a mere 20 miles away) has been inundated and has seen night time temperatures of -10c!!

### Re: essex buzzard

by essexbuzzard, 31-Dec-17 05:26 PM GMT

A visit to Hatfield Forest, Essex today. Hawfinches continue to be seen there, and I found several, still feeding on hornbeam seeds. Not the best pictures in the poor light today, but good to see anyway. Also a kite, which are still scarce in Essex, and a roosting tawny owl in a tree.



### Re: essex buzzard

by bugboy, 31-Dec-17 06:22 PM GMT

👍👍 for that Hawfinch, I've still not caught up with any yet, although to be fair I've had precious little time to get out and about in recent weeks. Good spot with that Owl as well 😊

### Re: essex buzzard

by Wurzel, 31-Dec-17 06:40 PM GMT

That Owl shot is a classic 😊👍👍 Happy New Year!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: essex buzzard

by David M, 31-Dec-17 09:43 PM GMT

Love the Twany Owl shot, Mark, as well as the Hawfinch update.

You seem to be able to make the most of all seasons.

Here's hoping it continues in 2018.

Happy New Year.