by bugboy, 03-Jan-17 07:37 PM GMT

3rd January, Bookham Commons

It's been a long while since I've managed to get out and find anything worthy of reporting, having had to work all through the festive period but I managed an afternoon browse in Surrey today.

It was decidedly chilly, the ground was still mostly frozen and there was certainly little hope for anything flying but there's always eggs to find here and today was no different, another 6 Brown Hairstreaks found bringing this winter's total to a healthy 34 without much effort. Today's newbies included another two doubles and I was interested to see how worn they looked, with much of the intricate network of ridges seemingly worn off. I'm not sure if this is normal or whether it means these eggs are no longer viable? Perhaps it gets worn away when surrounding foliage rubs against them in breezy weather?



slightly worn 'double'



Badly worn 'double'



A distant shot illustrating how they stick out like a sore thumb!



A Purple relative.

Anyway, HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE 😁

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-Jan-17 10:18 PM GMT

Happy New Year Buggy $\stackrel{\Theta}{=}$ Like the double egg shot – I've seen similar ones before and they always remind me of a cartoon character – the twig through the middle being the nose $\stackrel{\Theta}{=}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Jan-17 06:28 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel 😀

So before Christmas I treated myself to a new phone and browsing the themes I was very surprised to find this one. Not the whimsical artistic impressions of make believe butterflies, or (even worse) artificially touched up real butterflies but a selection of scientifically accurate ones, each built in app got it's own species





Name those butterflies :)

by Wurzel, 21-Jan-17 09:17 AM GMT

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jan-17 07:17 PM GMT

23rd January Barnes Wetland Centre,

On a rather chilly, misty morning I ventured south of the river for some casual twitching at London's WWT reserve, somewhere I've not visited since last winter.





Green Woodpecker in the foreground



Trying the capture the inverted reflection of the reeds.

Vast swathes of the open water had frozen over meaning most of the birdlife was being corralled on the few patches that were still liquid.

Most of the winter visiting ducks were present in decent numbers, Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon as well as the resident Mallard, Gadwall, Pochard and Tufted.

Also a few Pintail could be seen lurking in the flocks if you looked carefully enough.







I had hoped to find some Bearded Reedling which are here again this winter but like last year remained elusive to my ears and eye's. Reed buntings were putting on a good show though, with a small flock feeding in the reeds just outside one of the hides.





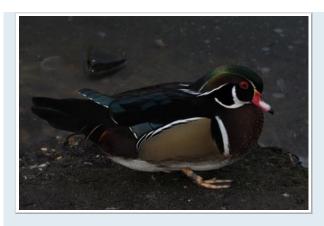
Bitterns, a few of which winter here every year, are usually to be seen skulking along the edges of the reed beds and you rarely get more than a glimpse of one unless you stake out a hide for the entire day. Today however, one could be seen (at a great distance) in the middle of the ice, possibly the worst attempt at camouflage I've ever witnessed!

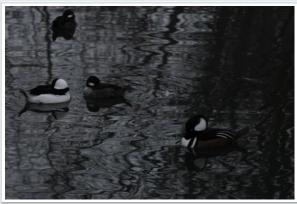


Elsewhere I noticed an ingenious use for old boots:



Some of my favourite non native ducks in the North American enclosure, The Carolina Duck and Hooded Merganser (with Bufflehead in the background)





Dotted around (part of some exhibition one presumes) were some rather impressively realistic (albeit somewhat enlarged) lego models 😃







I do hope this cold weather we're getting pays dividends come the spring, it really is bloody freezing down here in the south east at the moment!

Also this is my first post since the upgrade and I do like the addition of multiple image upload, very useful, thanks Pete 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Jan-17 06:28 PM GMT

I have yet to sample the delights of uploading mulitple photos, I can't wait! Θ



Hopefully the cold weather will be great for the butterflies. The Wood Duck is a cracking looking bird - there was an escape on the Avon a few years back and it always brightened up my day when I saw it while out on errands 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Feb-17 06:02 PM GMT

Another trip to the wetland centre in South London today (gotta get my money's worth, 3 trips a year pays for my WWT yearly membership!) It did feel quite warm in the sun but no insects were seen so just some birdie pictures again.



The Lapwings have returned now the ice has melted, making the islands predator proof again.



Several flocks of Shoveler were busy enjoying feeding frenzies



and this Ring-necked Parakeet was attempting to choose a nest site in some holes in the brickwork that I think are designed to encourage House Sparrows to nest.

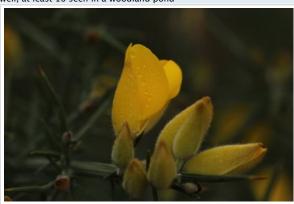


Surely only weeks to go before a butterfly presents itself to me!?!

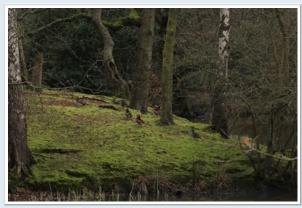
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Feb-17 09:31 PM GMT

A few hours wandering around Epping Forest in almost springlike conditions today. In 4 or 5 weeks time I should be tripping over Peacocks and Comma's if the weather behaves but today it just wasn't springlike enough. Did find some Gorze in flower and the resident Mandarins are doing rather well, at least 16 seen in a woodland pond







by Wurzel, 06-Feb-17 10:21 PM GMT

Great shots of the Mandarins Bugboy 😊 I remember reading years ago that there are more feral in the UK than in China, though I'm not sure of the veracity of this. It shouldn't be too long now, a few more weeks reckon so long as the newly arriving cold weather doesn't hang around 😃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Feb-17 10:50 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great shots of the Mandarins Bugboy 😉 I remember reading years ago that there are more feral in the UK than in China, though I'm not sure of the veracity of this. It shouldn't be too long now, a few more weeks reckon so long as the newly arriving cold weather doesn't hang around ³

Have a goodun

Wurzel

There's certainly more in the UK than in China and Eastern Russia but there's still good native populations in Japan. I would hazard an educated guess to say that there's roughly equal numbers in their native lands and feral populations in Europe and North America.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Feb-17 10:28 PM GMT

Good to know that the situation isn't as dire as I thought it was $\stackrel{\textstyle \bigoplus}{}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Feb-17 07:58 PM GMT

A little bit of excitement for me at work today. I was doing a bit of weeding and pruning when something caught my eye, a Speckled Wood pupae. It very nearly made it into the compost! It's been many a year since I've seen one of these green jewels in the flesh and never a wild one. It's now sitting safely in my fridge where it will stay for the next month or two.





EDIT: I don't know why the pictures have turned themselves landscape ?

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Feb-17 12:44 PM GMT

Great find, Bugboy. This is one of the most attractive pupae in my opinion. I'm looking forward to seeing how it develops.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Feb-17 12:17 PM GMT

I'm off the mark too now, a Red Admiral flying around at work 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by SimonC69, 16-Feb-17 01:56 PM GMT

Fantastic find. I don't remember the last time I found any form of Pupae, but it would've been way back in the 70s I reckon. You've just inspired another goal there 🐸

Re: Bugboys mission

bugboy wrote:

I'm off the mark too now, a Red Admiral flying around at work 😃



HI Buggy,

You beat me to it!. Out in the garden after lunch I saw the black outline of a flypast Red Admiral or Peacock. My first sighting of the year.

All the best,

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Feb-17 05:07 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I'm off the mark too now, a Red Admiral flying around at work 🚇



Well done, Bugboy. First of hopefully many in 2017.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Feb-17 11:19 PM GMT

Good to see another UKB'er hitting 2017 running 🖰 Now we need some Small Torts and then we can be sure that winter is definitely over. 🖰



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Feb-17 06:06 PM GMT

Thanks Simon, Trevor, David and Wurzel. I fear we have few weeks to go before we can be sure winter's over for another year Wurzel, I just hope the frosts we've had so far have worked their magic!

18th February, Bookham

I chanced my luck and hoped the forecast would pan out, an alleged sunny afternoon, and encourage an early sighting or two. Indeed the forecast was correct and soon I had to shed my jacket, but alas there will be no butterfly pictures in this post, not a single one was seen. In retrospect this is probably a good thing, it is only February after all and there would be precious little feeding opportunities, I saw but one lonely Dandelion and the Blackthorn hasn't even begun to bud here. Still, it did feel very springlike with lots of birds flitting around and catkins everywhere.





The Hairstreak eggs are still quite easy to locate but there is no sign of any Sorrel leaves so hopefully this warm spell hasn't woken up the Small Coppers





Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Mar-17 08:55 PM GMT

Epping Forest 4th March

This weekend looked decidedly iffy for any sort of butterflying but I went out anyway. Today the sunny spells tempted me out to my local patch but I failed miserably to avoid the heavy showers which unfortunately dominated the hour I was out.

Saturday was very much a drier affair but the sun was only hazy at best meaning temperatures were kept down and I saw nothing much, even the birdlife seemed to be taking a day off. There were though a few signs that we have only a few weeks to wait 😀

The culprits of this spawn all scarped as walked over, I felt many pairs of eye's looking up at me from the weedy pond



And I rescued this Queen from certain death as she struggled to cross a path



by Wurzel, 05-Mar-17 10:50 PM GMT

It seems winter is here for a bit longer Bugboy 🙁 – but hopefully it'll mean that when Spring does arrive it will be brill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Mar-17 07:19 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Epping Forest 4th March

This weekend looked decidedly iffy for any sort of butterflying...

That bl**dy jet stream has shifted again meaning that after such a benign winter, we are back to storms and low pressure. I sincerely hope this isn't a sign of things to come.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Mar-17 06:39 PM GMT

David M wrote:

bugboy wrote:

Epping Forest 4th March

This weekend looked decidedly iffy for any sort of butterflying...

That bl**dy jet stream has shifted again meaning that after such a benign winter, we are back to storms and low pressure. I sincerely hope this isn't a sign of things to come.

I fear a less predictable jet stream may become the new norm as climate change continues . Time will tell. It did feel relatively warm today in the sun but that stiff breeze was certainly keeping a lid on temperatures and things don't look good for the rest of the week. Generally it's the second half of March when I start seeing things down here so hopefully the jet stream moves north again soon.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Mar-17 08:57 PM GMT

Let's hope so, Bugboy. The last thing we need are winter storms in late March.

For the last week or so, being in south Wales has been like living under a curtain, such has been the predominance of cloud cover.

With any luck, things will change soon and we'll all get the opportunity for an early spring butterfly fix!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Mar-17 05:33 PM GMT

The local patch 7th March

In the world of Bugboy, Tuesday is the new Wednesday. A change in my work rota means I know have every Tuesday off as opposed to Tomorrow so expect a regular Tuesday update from me this year 😛

Today did feel much warmer than the 10 degrees that was forecast, a drop in the wind from yesterday probably being the main reason. Despite this I have still to find anything on the wing since the Red Admiral at work a few weeks ago. I've noticed over the years that Walthamstow Marshes is quite an early site for Blackthorn, of my usual haunts, it's always the first place to burst into flower.



Also just getting ready for the spring pollinators are the local Sallows, although this cheeky Squirrel was getting a head start munching his way through the sweet snacks!



I suspect my next update will actually have some butterflies in it, I'll not be able to get out for a week. I've also taken my rescued Speckled Wood pupae from the fridge so that will hopefully be emerging in a few weeks time, I might (emphasise on the **might**) even catch it emerging on camera!

Re: Bugboys mission

bv MrSp0ck. 07-Mar-17 06:45 PM GMT

You will get at least a days notice on the Speckled Wood pupa, as it will darken up in the wing cases, it will be interesting to know if the Brown or the White/Cream forms first. In Orange Tips, the Orange comes first in the Male, then in both sexes, White, and lastly the Black spot and wing tip.

Marbled White pupae form up fast, so the next morning, the butterfly has hatched, so i expect similar in the Speckled Wood.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-Mar-17 08:28 PM GMT

Here's hoping you're right about the next posting having some butterflies Bugboy, after the briefest of tasters in February it's backwards round here!

Gales, frosts, torrential rain showers 🙂 Blooming Jet Stream 😩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 08-Mar-17 09:46 AM GMT

HI Buggy,

It's the same around here, the Blackthorn is starting to bloom, and we've had sunshine, but the cold wind/air is keeping any Butterflies from flying. So far I've had one sighting from a distance, and on Monday I spooked a basking Red Admiral by casting my shadow over it.

Not a happy Bunny, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-Mar-17 08:33 PM GMT

You're in a good part of the UK for early butterflies, Bugboy, so I expect to see some returns within the next week! I shall be trying to do likewise from my own disadvantaged location in south Wales! 😃

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Mar-17 07:32 PM GMT

Thanks Mr SpOck, it's been many years since I've reared a Speckled Wood from any stage, probably sometime in the late 80's!

And as promised this post has a butterfly in it! As the temperatures rose this morning at work I was wishing I'd been able to take the day off, there was no way I would have not found a butterfly today but I was left hoping to catch one at work. As it happened the butterfly Gods were feeling sorry for me and my first Comma of the year fluttered around me and settled just long enough to get a snap on my phone 😃



10 minutes later in almost the same spot a Peacock appeared but he was a little more camera shy so you'll just have to trust me on that.

It's good to get of the mark properly with 2 out of the 4 genuine adult hibernators ticked off. The next 2 days don't look too good but I may chance my luck and take my camera to work with me on Saturday, similar temperatures (17 degrees) as today predicted 😉

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Mar-17 07:35 PM GMT

Good for you, Bugboy! Usually Commas and Peacocks are a little behind Torties and Brimstones, but today has been so mild I think they've all been given a very loud alarm call and risen simultaneously!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Mar-17 07:46 PM GMT

Nice one Buggy 😊 It's getting to that time of the year when you'll need your camera all of the time 😊



Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Vince Massimo, 09-Mar-17 08:39 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I've also taken my rescued Speckled Wood pupae from the fridge so that will hopefully be emerging in a few weeks time, I might (emphasise on the **might**) even catch it emerging on camera!

MrSp0ck wrote:

You will get at least a days notice on the Speckled Wood pupa, as it will darken up in the wing cases, it will be interesting to know if the Brown or the White/Cream forms first. In Orange Tips, the Orange comes first in the Male, then in both sexes, White, and lastly the Black spot and wing tip. Marbled White pupae form up fast, so the next morning, the butterfly has hatched, so I expect similar in the Speckled Wood.

Hi Paul,

The Speckled Wood is one of the Species I have studied in detail, including documenting the development of the pupa. You can see the photos here: $\frac{\text{http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=37\&t=7957\#p91359}}{\text{http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=37\&t=7957\#p91359}}$

Vince

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Mar-17 08:53 PM GMT

Vince Massimo wrote:

bugboy wrote:

I've also taken my rescued Speckled Wood pupae from the fridge so that will hopefully be emerging in a few weeks time, I might (emphasise on the **might**) even catch it emerging on camera!

MrSp0ck wrote:

You will get at least a days notice on the Speckled Wood pupa, as it will darken up in the wing cases, it will be interesting to know if the Brown or the White/Cream forms first. In Orange Tips, the Orange comes first in the Male, then in both sexes, White, and lastly the Black spot and wing tip. Marbled White pupae form up fast, so the next morning, the butterfly has hatched, so I expect similar in the Speckled Wood.

Hi Paul,

The Speckled Wood is one of the Species I have studied in detail, including documenting the development of the pupa. You can see the photos here: http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=37&t=7957#p91359

Vince

Thanks Vince, your pictures are very useful. I'll try to replicate them as best I can, it will be interesting to see how closely they match.

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 09-Mar-17 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks Vince

So its 32 hours notice from when the first spots start to appear in the wing cases. 15 hours when the Brown starts.

I found it interesting that the white/cream spots form first as orange/brown, then is the last to get the colour 15 minutes before hatching.

Overwintering pupae could be different, as the diapause breaking could be a factor, along with temperatures.

Re: Bugboys mission

Thanks David,

David M wrote:

Good for you, Bugboy! Usually Commas and Peacocks are a little behind Torties and Brimstones...

in my part of the world it's not unusual to have Peacocks and Commas as my season firsts, S. Torts are still thin on the ground here and the other two species far outnumber them. I am slightly surprised not to have seen a Brimstone yet though.

Wurzel wrote:

Nice one Buggy 😊 It's getting to that time of the year when you'll need your camera all of the time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

You're quite right there Wurzel!

11th March

With a repeat performance of Thursday on the cards My camera was safely packed into my bag for work, hoping to use my lunch break to catch up with what I saw two days ago. It wasn't quite as sunny, mostly bright hazy, but it was plenty warm enough with very little wind to ruin the day so come noon I quickly stuffed my face with food and shot off to the best butterfly spot at work... nothing $\stackrel{\frown}{\square}$.

It took a good ten minutes of searching before a Comma finally shot up from under my foot. It flew around, briefly threatened to settle again before vanishing. I wandered off and disturbed another (or most likely the same) Comma who again vanished. With just five minutes of my lunch break left I caught a glimpse of orange amongst the bramble and nettles on a bank close to the first sighting. It was third time lucky, she sat still as I struggled to maintain my balance on the bank whilst getting her in frame and trying to avoid my shadow falling over her.









by millerd, 11-Mar-17 10:09 PM GMT

Nice Comma, Buggy – she looks nearly as fresh as she would have been before her winter rest! 😉



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Mar-17 09:47 AM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy 😊 Butterflies do often leave it until the last minute before appearing, I swear they do it on purpose ⊌ Sometimes if I'm not having much luck I wander around muttering "Oh well I better head off then" and then they flutter out of the woodwork 🥯 Another trick is to pour yourself a coffee or start eating your lunch – pre-pour no butterflies, scalding hot coffee poured from the Thermos butterflies everywhere 😇 🕃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 12-Mar-17 08:54 PM GMT

Just catching up. It should not be long before you have the other hibernators ticked off. The next few days don't look bad 😉 . Good luck with your Speckled Wood. I have reared this species a few times and missed the emergence almost every single time, hopefully you will have more luck. Well done on finding a pupa, I have only ever managed to find an already hatched one in the wild.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Mar-17 09:02 PM GMT

Amazing to see Commas so plentiful after last year's paucity.

Let's hope this trend continues throughout the year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Mar-17 06:55 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, It's funny how everyone is commenting on the amount of Comma's appearing, for me it's nothing out of the ordinary so far!

And speaking of which, are we bored of Commas yet,,, no, good Θ



13th March

Another sunny spring day stuck at work so I had to squeeze in the butterflying where I could. My lunchtime browse today didn't come up with anything, there was more of a breeze today with a distinct nip to it and I had to wait a little while longer for anything to appear. By the middle of the afternoon the breeze seemed to die away, temperatures 'soured' and sure enough a butterfly appeared, another Comma but I was meant to be working so no camera to hand. He seemed quite settled though, basking on a log pile, and sure enough when I was able to make time to grab my camera he was still sat there. This one makes it 3 separate individuals so far at work.



A while later, after making sure I'd done some noticeable work, I spied a barely visible splodge of orange in a sea of sprouting Cow Parsley. From the distance I was anyone else would have hardly noticed anything but I've got my eye in for Commas now and sure enough another Comma it was, and another new individual, a rather boldly marked chap 😃



Day off tomorrow but unless there's a massive change to the forecast, I won't be seeing anything, it looks to be thick cloud all day 🙁



Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 13-Mar-17 07:36 PM GMT

Well done Bugboy, I went to Hall-Lee-Brook yesterday and saw nothing, mind you, we've had no Sun for a few day's so, although warmer, looks like the Butterflies may be late up here. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Mar-17 12:24 AM GMT

It's great that there seem to be so many Commas around, a species it'll be very difficult to get bored of 😊 Great shots there Buggy 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-Mar-17 01:16 PM GMT

It'll be interesting to see whether this seeming 'explosion' of Commas has any effect on numbers later in the year.

Meanwhile, Bugboy, enjoy conditions while they last – looks like next weekend heralds storms. 😩



Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 14-Mar-17 03:04 PM GMT

All of these Commas are wonderful to see. The colour is deep and rich and very photographic. I'm off to Whitecross Green Wood tomorrow (based on a weather forecast earlier in the week...but getting less sunny everytime I look 😕) I hope the Comma glut extends into Oxfordshire and the sun does it's stuff.

I have been trying to catch up with other diaries before I make a second entry myself. Just to get the tone of 'showing off' absolutely right 🥹 .



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Mar-17 06:18 PM GMT

Art Frames wrote:

All of these Commas are wonderful to see. The colour is deep and rich and very photographic.

Aren't they just! here's some more 😃



15th March

Weekend, work, sunny and warm, butterflies seen. Monday, work, sunny and warm, butterflies seen. **Tuesday, off, cool and thick cloud, no butterflies.** Wednesday, work, sunny and warm, butterflies seen. Weekend off soon, prediction, rain!

Can anyone else see a pattern developing 🙁 ...

Anyway here's some more Comma's I saw yesterday, actually the same two I saw on Monday, identifiable by the slight damage to the wings.











l also finally saw my first Brimstone of the year, a patrolling male. I did attempt a few in flight shots but achieved nothing better than barely recognisable yellow blurs, better luck next time maybe.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 16-Mar-17 08:05 PM GMT

That last Comma image is great. I expect I have seen the same one several times too. But they do seem to be everywhere at the moment. Lets hope other species are as plentiful as the season progresses.

All the best, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Mar-17 10:43 PM GMT

Hi Buggy – I'd noticed that your switch to Tuesdays off hasn't worked too well yet. 😢 Let's hope things change, though you're doing well with the Commas again. 🤐

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-17 11:02 PM GMT

More great Commas Bugboy 😊 The trick with the early Brimstones is to click away and then by the third or fourth time that you see them they seem to give in and land – either that or like with Orange-tips you need a passing cloud to turn up at the right time 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Mar-17 11:30 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

More great Commas Bugboy Θ The trick with the early Brimstones is to click away and then by the third or fourth time that you see them they seem to give in and land – either that or like with Orange-tips you need a passing cloud to turn up at the right time Θ

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Another trick is to not be at work where I'm supposed to be doing more than chasing butterflies around 😌

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Mar-17 03:01 PM GMT

Lovely Comma's bug boy, wish I could see just one 😇 😇 Goldie 😃

by bugboy, 18-Mar-17 09:07 PM GMT

Thank Goldie, I'm sure your first sightings aren't far away now 😃



My apologies to anyone that wanted to go butterflying today, me being off work and free to do some myself is the probably reason for the weather today, ditto for tomorrow but Monday should be fine for the morning at least!

On the plus side, there seems to be signs of life in my Speckled Wood pupae, only days away if Vince's photographs from a few years back are anything to go by 🖰. No photo's yet though, I'll leave them all until I have a full set (as best as I can get).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Mar-17 11:06 PM GMT

It's the usual story with the weather Bugboy - reasonable during the week and then when most of us can get out at the weekend it's too cold, too grey, to wet, too windy or all of them 2 Oh well the breaks will come...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Mar-17 06:00 PM GMT

19th March, the local patch

A large break in the cloud this afternoon had me grabbing my camera and darting of to the Marshes in the hope of getting some butterfly action outside of work. Unfortunately sods law reared its ugly head and no sooner had I arrived than the clouds closed in again and I was left with the just the occasional chink of blue.

Thankfully the earlier sun had woken a few up and I actually got my very first sighting of a butterfly outside work, which was, you've guessed it, a Comma. It didn't settle though, seemingly on some kind of mission. It taunted me briefly before darting off into the distance, never to be seen again. Five minutes later whilst I checked out a large bed of nettles I finally got a picture of something other than a Comma



This the last butterfly I was to see though. With clouds thickening and threatening rain I scurried off home.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 19-Mar-17 07:13 PM GMT

Lovely Red Admiral, and an ab. bialbata if I am not mistaken.

The Red Admiral seems to be the scarcest of the hibernators at the moment, I've only seen one.

Still lots to look forward too,

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 19-Mar-17 11:02 PM GMT

Well done with the Red Admiral, Buggy.



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Mar-17 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Trevor. I think you might want to go to specsavers Trevor, can't see any white spot on the red band. As to numbers we might have

been spoiled by the recent milder winters which allowed significant numbers to survive. They don't actually hibernate as such, just 'sleeping' through the worst of the weather, much in the same way as any butterfly does during the summer months. Hibernation is a specific physiological ability where all but essential body systems shut down or slow down to the bare minimum, something which, as far as I'm aware, Red Admirals can't do or at least to the extent of our four true hibernators.

21st March, a few local patches

At last some decent sun on my day off, just a shame an arctic breeze decided to join in! The plan was for a day exploring three local sites, Walthamstow Marshes, Abney Park and Tottenham Marshes, all good for early spring species with plenty of sheltered spots to hide from the wind. I left at 10 but it wasn't until after 11 that I found a butterfly, a speck of orange in a nettle bed proving to be a female Comma, a little bit battered but a good sign that temperatures were creeping up.



5 minutes later I finally got my first sighting of a Small Tortoiseshell for the year and a few minutes after another turned up. Only record shots of both though since neither was particularly approachable and as soon as they flew they were whisked away by the breeze.





I made a slow return with another Comma doing a flyby when a white butterfly caught my attention. I followed it around, snapping away in the hope of being able to ID it if it didn't settle. When it did settle it was down in the grass, but I was able to grab one shot, enough proof of a male Small White before it vanished over a hedge. Had it not been for the Brimstone at work last week this would have been my first Pierid of the year, indeed it is the first one I've seen here, I've still only seen the one Brimstone this year. Before deciding to leave for my next port of call I found my third Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock with the Tortoiseshell making sure I didn't get any pictures of said Peacock, the stroppy g*t!



My wander over to Abney Park was further stalled by a couple more Commas, a male and female using the spot to soak up some rays.







And then another Small Tortoiseshell feeding on catkins. It was as I was taking his picture that another Small White fluttered by (I was some distance from the first sighting but by no means can I say it wasn't the same animal). This time, after some careful stalking, I was able to get some better shots, though still with the eternal struggle with exposure.





Its not often you see season firsts of Small Tortoiseshell and Small White on the same day!

Due to increased cloud cover, both Abney Park and Tottenham Marshes ended up being butterfly fails, just a single brief Comma sighting at Abney and absolutely nothing over at Tottenham.

Some things were worthy of recording though, this humongous Fungus on a Horse Chestnut at Abney was well over a foot across, very impressive



Humongous fungus!

And I spent some time with a male Pheasant at Tottenham. Rounding a corner I found myself face to face with him. Expecting him to flee rapidly I backed off and made sure my camera was set to sport mode to capture any action and then carefully crept forward expecting him to take flight. He didn't, just scampered into some loose undergrowth and set about casually wandering along eating the odd shoot as I followed. He turned out to be bold as brass, although keeping an eye on me he wasn't that bothered by my presence, only panicking slightly if I got closer than around six feet or if he wandered into a clearing. I ended up following him around for about half an hour. I'm pretty sure if I had a handful of mealworms he would have approached closer. To show how close I was I haven't cropped any of these pictures which were taken on my 105mm macro lens.









To finish here's some more birds I photographed on my way back home.



Lesser Black-backed Gull



A small charm of Goldfinch



Blue Tit

by trevor, 22-Mar-17 09:21 PM GMT

My mistake with your Red Admiral. You've had a more fruitful week than me.

All the best, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Mar-17 11:28 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Bugboy, I'm glad that you got your Small Torts as I can now post my shots ⁹ Good find with the Small White too ⁹ ®



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Mar-17 09:13 PM GMT

The Speckled Wood

So to recap:

On the 11th of February, I discovered a Speckled Wood pupae at work whilst doing some gardening and took it home to pop in the fridge so it could continue its hibernation (My little London flat doesn't have an 'outside'). On the 9th of March I took it out of the fridge and set it up in my front room. I don't put my heating on much so it was just sat in ambient room temperature.

It only took a week for the first changes to occur, a slight opaqueness indicating the wings were beginning to develop. From here I took a picture every day:



16/3/17 7.38pm



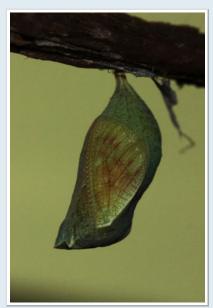
17/3/17 6.54pm



18/3/17 1.24pm



19/3/17 9.05 pm



20/3/17 5.25pm



21/3/17 9.42 am



21/3/17 11pm
I was only working one day this week and it looked like sods law was about to strike, I took this picture before leaving for work on Wednesday, fully expecting to find it emerged by the time I got home



 $22/3/17\,6.18$ am But no, it had awaited my return but at 6.50pm emergence looked to be imminent

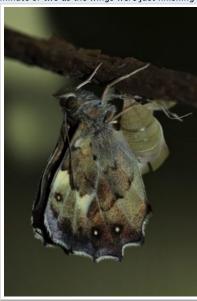


22/3/17 6.50pm
I spent the rest of the evening watching it like a hawk, in-between making my evening meal and toilet breaks etc. but it was keeping me in suspense, it still hadn't emerged at 11.10.



22/3/17 11.10pm

It was at this point that I must have dozed off because I awoke with a start to find I had missed the critical moment Θ , probably by no more than a minute or two as the wings were just finishing expanding!



22/3/17 11.40pm It's a boy 🖰 ! I stayed up to make sure he didn't fall before his wings had fully expanded and started to harden off.



22/3/17 11.45pm



23/3/17 1.27am

Being off work for the next two days I kept him somewhere dark and took him back to work today to be released where I had found him as a pupae.



It's quite remarkable just how closely his development matched Vince Massimo's pictures, http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=37& t=7957#p91359, even the pulling apart on the abdominal segments on the final day is an exact replica. It doesn't matter how many times you witness this kind of thing it's still a miracle of nature you can never get bored with.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-Mar-17 11:44 PM GMT

Marvellous to see, Buggy. It's a lovely specimen too. 😀



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Vince Massimo, 26-Mar-17 09:57 AM GMT

Great work, Paul. I admire your dedication and stamina. It was all worth the effort in the end Θ



Vince

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 26-Mar-17 10:21 AM GMT

What an experience Bugboy, great shots too, lovely Butterfly. Goldie 😌



Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 26-Mar-17 11:55 AM GMT

Congratulations, Bugboy! A wonderful experience and a superb set of pictures! 😌



by Neil Freeman, 26-Mar-17 06:00 PM GMT

Superb sequence of the Speckled Wood emergence Bugboy 😊 I really must make an effort to find early stages of this species in my garden.

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Mar-17 07:40 PM GMT

Bugboy, many thanks for sharing that sequence which is right up there in the top 1% of posts on this site.

Shame you didn't get to see the moment the butterfly emerged – your dedication surely warranted it!!

Well done once again.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Mar-17 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you all for your very kind comments, I'm glad I could share the experience with like minded people 🚇



25th & 26th March

What a lovely couple of days to do some butterflying, unfortunately I was at work all weekend so I had to make use of my lunch breaks. The chilly $breeze\ worked\ to\ my\ advantage,\ corralling\ the\ butterflies\ into\ a\ sheltered\ spot\ so\ what\ was\ about\ was\ very\ easy\ to\ track\ down,\ stalk\ and\ photograph.$ On Saturday, there were a couple of male Brimstones active, both of whom eagerly stopped off long enough to feed on the Dandelions and also briefly on a Daffodil.









There was also a Comma, sat in one of this year's usual spots. I managed a few pictures after he had settled down from a foray up in the air chasing a female. Easy to see it was the opposite sex that attracted his attention as, rather than the usual aerial dogfight there was a more seductive bout of fluttery bottom sniffing, so romantic!



On Sunday on the same spot a single Brimstone was actively patrolling, he didn't settle today and the Comma was in the usual spot but somewhat less approachable than yesterday.



The one species I did spend some time with today was my first 'proper wild' Specklie of the season, a lovely female who wasn't the best poser in the world but obviously as fresh as yesterday's male.





The Warm weather has also brought out some local Bee Flies



I do hope this weather lasts until Tuesday, it looks touch and go currently...

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 26-Mar-17 09:36 PM GMT

Well done on getting some Brimstone pics, Buggy. None of the ones I've seen over the weekend stopped at all. 😃



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Mar-17 09:41 PM GMT

Forecast looks great for tomorrow, Bugboy, and in the east you'll probably eke out another decent day whilst we in the west welcome another arrival of Atlantic cloud. 🙁

Orange Tips and Large Whites possibly on the menu?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-17 09:58 PM GMT

Great sequence of shots of the Specklie emerging Bugboy 😊 😇 And a fresh wild one as well 😇 It's all kicking off now, and long may it continue 😊

Wurzel

Have a goodun

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 27-Mar-17 08:55 AM GMT

I admire your dedication and enthusiasm for the immature Speckled Wood shots, Paul. Well done!

ATB

by Art Frames, 27-Mar-17 01:30 PM GMT

Great story and set of pictures of the speckled wood and the release portrait is superb. It has been half lifetime since I reared and released anything. But emergence is still the most amazing spectacle.

The other pictures show some lovely shots. Uplifting work.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 27-Mar-17 04:06 PM GMT

Great shots of the Speckled Wood Buggy but I can imagine how frustrated you must have felt at missing the actual emergence. You wouldn't believe how many times that has happened to me (took me 3 years to get the White Admiral) but I expect it will just make you more determined next time (No more loo breaks or dozing (3) (6))

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Mar-17 07:19 PM GMT

Again Thank you everyone 🐸



Great story and set of pictures of the speckled wood and the release portrait is superb. It has been half lifetime since I reared and released anything. But emergence is still the most amazing spectacle.

The other pictures show some lovely shots. Uplifting work.

It's been a similar length of time for me. When I was a teenager I captured a gravid female Specklie and ended up rearing about 30 or 40 of them from eggs, didn't witness a single emergence though

Pauline wrote:

Great shots of the Speckled Wood Buggy but I can imagine how frustrated you must have felt at missing the actual emergence. You wouldn't believe how many times that has happened to me (took me 3 years to get the White Admiral) but I expect it will just make you more determined next time (No more loo breaks or dozing (3) (3))

Yes I was kicking myself for dozing off after watching it so intently all evening. Never mind, I'm just glad it was a successful emergence, I was starting to get a little worried.

27th March

Another lovely sunny day where I was left to snatch what time I could during my lunch break. It felt a bit warmer today, the wind having lessoned from the weekend but surprisingly there were no Comma's today. I was keen to keep an eye out for some other springtime species, holly Blues in particular but as it turned out there were only Brimstones today, two males (probably the same two as on Saturday) and my first sighting of a female this year. They were all in feeding mode and I witnessed something I've never seen before, a male and female feeding from the same flower with no interaction.



The male very briefly attempted to flutter after her when she left but quickly gave up and returned to feed. It would seem he has yet to build up the stamina to keep up with the girls!

The female was particularly amenable today and even allowed me to move the occasional offended blade of grass as she fed.









I was also very pleased to get some nice shots of Bee Flies feeding on Green Alkanet







Day off tomorrow and looks like this sunny spell is about to collapse 😇 I might just be lucky and get some late morning sunshine but I won't be holding my breath!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-17 10:52 PM GMT

Great stuff withe the female Brimstone Bugboy Θ they can be right pains to photograph at this time of year Θ I hope the weathermen get it wrong tomorrow, fingers crossed for you Θ If not then they seem to think that next week will be good again.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-Mar-17 02:58 PM GMT

I agree with Wurzel, still waiting to see Brimstones here so it was good to see yours, hope fully the nice weather will be back , it's been cloudy all day today. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Mar-17 05:48 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...I witnessed something I've never seen before, a male and female feeding from the same flower with no interaction.

That's most unusual. You see this regularly in summer but in spring the males are generally more interested in chasing females than feeding. Perhaps this one had just finished a marathon?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Mar-17 11:11 PM GMT

28th March, Local patches again

These past three days have been excruciating, stuck at work with just lunchtime breaks to go hunting. Whilst I've been reasonably successful at work, I really needed a good day full of butterflies so I was praying this sunny spell would hold on for just one more day, thankfully it did and the reward for my 'patience' came in droves.

The plan was the same three local site trip as a few days ago, with targets for the day to get a picture of a Peacock and some shots of anything on Blackthorn blossom, (with maybe a Holly Blue or Orange-tip thrown in). Before I even got my camera ready a Peacock appeared, things were looking good. He sat for a bit but with the departure of the recent chilly breeze the sun was able to warm everything up and he was soon swooping off across the field. In the same nettle bed, I also found a Comma lurking, the first of many.



A few more Comma's turned up further along the path, one feeding on Blackthorn blossom



The other one decided I was much tastier! Several times I tried to encourage him onto the blossom but it would seem I was secreting some particularly tasty mineral salts today. Even when I did manage to get him off he would take to the air in ever increasing circles until he relocated the source of his addiction again I finally.







Eventually I escaped my lepidopteran stalker and found another butterfly enjoying some blossom.



There were two here but only the better looking one posed for me, oh well. Like last time a Small white put in an appearance and I had a Brimstone flyby today as well.



Several more Comma's later I made my way to where the Small Tortoiseshells normally hang out (others have Comma corner, I have a Small Tortoiseshell path). As expected I found my quarry, two in fact, looking resplendent in the March sunshine.







With the morning coming to a close it was time to head of over to Abney Park but it was difficult to tear myself away, what with more Tortoiseshells and a Brimstone distracting me.







Like last time the hour I spent at Abney was ruined by cloud which only started to clear as I left, waking up another Comma and Small White.



Last time at Tottenham Marshes was butterflyless, this time was the complete opposite. I had a Small White flyby before I even had my camera out of my bag and this was quickly followed by a couple of Commas, and then another couple after which the Small Tortoiseshells began to appear in droves, including a courting pair. Well the male was courting, I'm not so sure the female was in the mood!











All these Nymphalids were easy to find as they were concentrated at the bottom of a lush bank of nettle, Cow Parsley and Comfrey. If there's an opposite to hilltopping this is what they were doing. I suspect it was the strong breeze that was keeping them down here. This context shot, facing south shows what is so attractive, full sun all day! The fence on the left stops you falling into one of the River Lea navigation canal thingies.



Next stop was my other butterfly hotspot at this site, a similarly sheltered path which also runs north/south and so receives full sun for most the day. As long as you visit at the right time of year in good weather butterflies are guaranteed and today was no exception, at least five Peacock and four Commas jostling for territory.











Not too sure if this chap could still fly, missing most of its left forwing.

I mentioned on Wurzels diary a few days back how I was jealous of his double figures tally of Tortoiseshells in one day. Not any more, today was one of the best days for me in recent memory, a conservative tally of 15 individuals. Add to that 14 Comma, 12 Peacock and 3 Small White It's easy to forget we're still in March, things are looking good for 2017, touch wood!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 28-Mar-17 11:23 PM GMT

Great haul there, Buggy. I'm glad today was kind to you. We had an early sea mist, which lifted into low cloud and kept things too cool. Then a certain Mr. Hulme finds a Large Tortoiseshell.

I should have stayed in bed!

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-17 09:21 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I love the comma on your finger, how did you manage that 😗 😊 I've always found them very skittish 😊 You certainly had a great time .Goldie 🖰

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-17 06:19 PM GMT

I'm glad that the weather held for your outing Bugboy, and glad that you managed to make the most of it 😊 Godd news about the Small Torts 😊 although I did see mine within 20 minutes 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Apr-17 09:05 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, you can always count of that Mr Hulme to trump your day out can't you!

Thanks Goldie, I didn't do anything other than sweat a little bit and he was on me!

You can go off people sometimes Wurzel 🙂



1st April, Walthamstow Marshes

I decided to have a few hours browse this morning before the predicted showers arrived just to see how my patch is moving along. As it turns out it was much the same as my last visit but with the addition of a few Speckled Woods. Once again Commas were the most numerous, popping up in all the usual spots,





Just 3 Peacocks were seen, one of whom had quite spectacular hindwing ocelli





a more normal blue 'face'

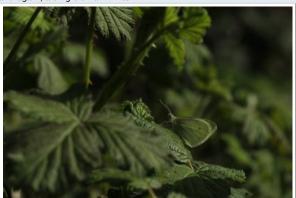


A few Small Tortoiseshells sat for me





and again, a single Small White.

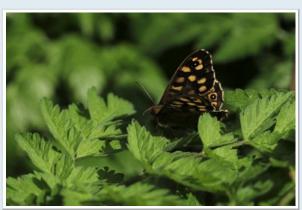




Three male Specklies were about, mostly not very cooperative but all very fresh and with a distinct orange tinge to the speckles.

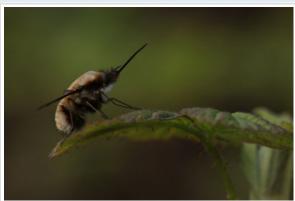


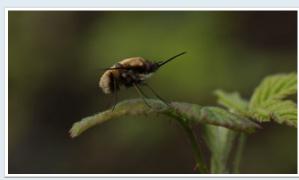




As you would expect, they mostly disappeared when the sun was obscured but I filled in the time looking for other stuff and came across a Bee Fly grounded by the lack of said sun, perfectly positioned in the centre of the path, waiting to be splattered. He was easy to move and posed perfectly for







After an afternoon trip to the shops, the clouds seemed to be thinning so I was tempted out again for a last little wander. Predictably less was about but another Comma did pose impeccably





I've got the whole of next week off, perfect timing from the look of the forecast, to go to some of my favourite sites and see if there's any early emergents 🖳

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-17 10:19 PM GMT



😉 I was only pointing it out... 🥯



Looks like the Mr Greens will be pouring forth from my computer across the interweb to your p.c. next week Bugboy – that is almost perfect timing 👨 Cracking set of shots and impressive haul from today, my fave has to be the second Specklies shot - really captures the 'feel' of the species if you get my drift 😊 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Apr-17 11:34 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I've got the whole of next week off, perfect timing from the look of the forecast, to go to some of my favourite sites and see if there's any early emergents

You scoundrel, Bugboy!



I'll look forward to your reports this coming week. I too have bagged time off, but unfortunately only one day, rather than a whole week.

It's times like this when I wish I were retired!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Apr-17 08:44 PM GMT

I know what you mean Wurzel, if he could speak I'm sure he would be saying something along the lines of "Go on, I dare you, take one more step 👺



2nd April, Tottenham Marshes

I popped into work today to get this year's transects started and on the way home I couldn't resist stopping by the other Marshes near me for the last few hours of daylight. The Small Torts and Commas today were conspicuous by their absence today, none were seen along the gully next to the river. I suspect this was due to there being no significant wind today, allowing them to disperse unhindered across the neighbouring meadows, all of which have large swathes of fresh nettle growth awaiting the hungry jaws of their offspring. There were a few Whites around though and the first one to settle within range was a female Small.



Further out flitting over the meadows were a couple more. As they slowly drifted closer I took a couple of distant shots and zoomed in. Sure enough I could just make out a distinctive pattern telling me these were worth further attention. My first GVW of the year settled near me a short while later, a

lovely marked lady.





Over at Tottenhams Butterfly Alley (I need to give it some sort of name!) the usual suspects were all present, enjoying the afternoon sun. The several Peacocks and Commas today joined briefly by a single Small Tort and a couple of unidentified whites.











It was whilst I was stalking one of these that a small flash of blue caught my eye. Now If Millerd were here, then I'm quite sure he would have settled down at waist height, had clean and sat patiently whilst we took pictures from every angle. Sadly he wasn't so I was left with a fleeting flyby and a few rushed snaps, some of which turned out surprisingly identifiable.



After this clouds thickened and the sun all but disappeared but I did find a couple more butterfies wandering further afield.





On my return I had another Pheasant encounter, this time a couple of males were having a standoff in the middle of a meadow. As I got closer the reason for the standoff erupted from under my feet, taking several seconds of my life!









Before leaving I made one more saunter along Butterfly Alley. Everything it would seem had gone to bed but just as I reached the end I saw a distinctive shape nestled in the turf. There is something so scrumptious about a freshly minted GVW!



A brief glimpse of the sun was enough to wake him up where he was quickly joined by another male, both very fresh and obviously still learning how to use these big flappy things that weren't there when they went to sleep last autumn!







A few hours that bodes very well for this coming week

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 02-Apr-17 09:13 PM GMT

Well done with the Green Veined Whites. One species conspicuous by their absence around here. Only a matter of time. Hope you have a great time on your week off !.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Apr-17 09:53 PM GMT

Splendid reportage once again, Bugboy. I'm sure by next weekend you'll have seen just about everything on the menu. Surely Large Whites and Small Coppers can't be far away?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Apr-17 10:17 PM GMT

trevor wrote:

Well done with the Green Veined Whites. One species conspicuous by their absence around here. Only a matter of time. Hope you have a great time on your week off!.

Thanks Trevor, I'm sre I'll be letting you all know how things go this week ⁽¹⁾



David M wrote:

Splendid reportage once again, Bugboy. I'm sure by next weekend you'll have seen just about everything on the menu. Surely Large Whites and Small Coppers can't be far away?

Add to them Orange-tip, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Dukes..... I'm getting greedy now 😌



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Apr-17 10:19 PM GMT

I reckon you'll chalk off at least three of those!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-17 11:43 PM GMT

I saw my first Large White today and there was a Greenstreak seen at my Marshie site so I reckon you could be quids in with your week off timed as it is Bugboy of Doubley Green-veined white shots Doubles

Have a goodun Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-17 07:59 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy,

Best of luck for your week off...looks like you could be in for a productive week.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 03-Apr-17 08:39 PM GMT

Lovely GVW, Buggy. When brand new they are such an attractive butterfly. 😀

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Apr-17 09:23 PM GMT

Thank you everyone, I think my week got off to a reasonably good start 🔴



3rd April, A Big Tortoiseshell long shot

So, what does bugboy decide to do on his first day of his week off, go hunting for an early Green Hairstreak or Grizzled Skipper, perhaps a little jaunt to Bookham to see if any Copper have hatched? Well no, I start at the top and go after the mythical UK Large Tortoiseshell of course! Noting that Neil's sighting wasn't too far from a mainline station, I left at the crack of dawn and put my day into the hands of southern rail.

They didn't fail to disappoint 😂 , one cancelled and one delayed train later (4 hours in other words) I arrived at Amberley armed with my phone's GPS and map..... whereby I got lost for a bit, the GPS couldn't work out where the hell I was but during my idle wanderings I did stumble across a roosting female Orange-tip.



With the weather looking particularly dreadful, low grey cloud and a nippy breeze I finally got my bearings and headed along a country lane to North Stoke only to get lost again, I'd completely missed the track down to the site and found myself wandering aimlessly across what are probably private fields :

The day wasn't getting any better when I finally found the clearly signposted track, the weather if anything was getting worse but I hadn't come all this way to give up. Over 3 hours later and not seeing a single butterfly of any species I gave up and walked dejectedly back to the station. Not really wanting to leave, I decided to go find my female Orange-tip. As a testament to the awful weather she was still on exactly the same flower head. It was only now that the clouds began to break, awaking her and I cursed my luck. Still, I was able to get some nice studies of an Orange-tip :













It was still quite early, around 3 and I mulled over whether to back to Tortoiseshell valley. Long looks at the sky trying to work out if it was clearing up or not and wondering if it was worth going back or leaving early and avoiding the London rush hour. The clincher though was when it occurred to me that it was around this time of day that Neil saw his one. That was it and at least this time I knew where I was going. With the weather improving by the minute my hopes of catching a glimpse rose and as I got to the bottom of the hill at the entrance to the site I saw only the second butterfly of the day, a large Nymphalid feeding on some blackthorn. I hadn't even got my camera ready when it took off and glided casually in front of me. Seeing it's upperside in the sun, my heart leaped into my mouth and then it landed in the grass a few feet away \mathfrak{P} . A few expletives of joy later and I had bagged the lifer to end all UK lifers!







And here it stayed allowing me to get within touching distance. It alternated between basking on the ground and on tree trunks. When I finally lost sight of it I wandered off to see if I could find Neil's one, this one obviously being separate individual. I didn't find any more but I did get a peacock flyby and disturbed a lovely male Orange-tip who thoughtfully settled for me. Safe to say the day had improved somewhat





Thinking my day was over I disturbed my Tortoiseshell again. It hadn't moved at all, still soaking up the rays in the same area and so I spent the best part of another hour in its company.







Only four butterflies seen all day but oh what a day, from dejected to euphoric in under an hour!

Ok well I guess I shall await the little green faces, I think they will all be very well deserved 😇 . I certainly won't be using them on other peoples pages for a while

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 03-Apr-17 09:31 PM GMT

You deserve rather a lot of little green faces, Buggy. That is utterly brilliant. Persistence paid off big time. Well done, and great photos too.

Oh and this as well...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 03-Apr-17 09:34 PM GMT

Welcome to the UK large tortoiseshell club, Buggy! Mine was back in 1985. I know just how ecstatic you felt - they are wonderful insects in their own right, but on UK soil just out of this world.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Apr-17 09:51 PM GMT

No-one can ever take that away from you, Bugboy. Your abysmal start to the day was recompensed several times over!!

So, that's TWO different mainland LTs photographed on here so far in 2017. How many more are out there?

All we need now is evidence of breeding.

Things are looking extremely positive.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Hulme, 04-Apr-17 04:19 AM GMT

Hi Paul,

You superstar! Congratulations – just rewards for battling against the odds and showing such tenacity. I had hoped that by providing accurate grid references on the BC Sussex website it might encourage others to go out looking, as working on this species in the UK requires a significant investment in time – the more eyes the better. Large Tortoiseshells are incredibly elusive and highly skittish, unless you catch them under marginal flight temperatures.

The very good news as far as I'm concerned is that your specimen is a male. Your sighting provides a valuable piece in the UK Large Tortoiseshell jigsaw I've been working on, which is discussed in the forthcoming 'The Butterflies of Sussex'. Far from being 'proof' of anything, it is pertinent to point out that this sheltered river bluff hosts the largest population of healthy Wych Elm I know of in West Sussex. The slope faces south and south-west, but is sheltered by the crescent-shaped topography – and it's in a river valley close to the coast.

We need more eyes out there, collecting more data. Those living in East Sussex would do well to search the Litlington/Friston Forest/Lullington Heath area.

BWs, Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 04-Apr-17 06:10 AM GMT

Fantastic news Buggy. I am really, really pleased for you (just wish it had been me 🙂 📦). Well deserved after all your persistence and determination.

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 04-Apr-17 08:26 AM GMT

Brilliant stuff, Paul.

Perhaps you or Neil will see a pair of LTs in cop – now that would be something else 😃 😃 .

ATB

Peter

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 04-Apr-17 08:39 AM GMT

Done with style and restraint, I have so much too learn 😉 – I am also extremely pleased for you. Sorry I don't really do jealousy but I can do great happiness 😀 😅 😅 . Hope your holiday continues in similar style. best of luck.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 04-Apr-17 09:57 AM GMT

What can I say Buggy 😇 😇 three greens should do it, Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 04-Apr-17 10:41 AM GMT

I was surprised you described your large tortoiseshell as 'she', Buggy, as the behaviour was all 'he'. But I was on my evening dog-walk, tapping on an iPhone. If Neil can find a she and you a he, they can definitely find each other. In fact, Neil's she looked as if she might already have found your he. This is very exciting!

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Apr-17 10:44 AM GMT

Thank you all, definitely a day I shan't be forgetting anytime soon. Looks like I chose the right day as well. What started off as looking like a decent week now seems to have turned into a damp squib, cool and cloudy all week now

Padfield wrote:

Welcome to the UK large tortoiseshell club, Buggy! Mine was back in 1985. I know just how ecstatic you felt - they are wonderful insects in their own right, but on UK soil just out of this world.

Guy

1985, I was only 14 then and probably rearing its Small cousin in my bedroom at the time! They are a magnificent insect, their flight reminds me of HIM and White Admirals, lots of casual floating and very few flaps.

David M wrote:

No-one can ever take that away from you, Bugboy. Your abysmal start to the day was recompensed several times over!!

So, that's TWO different mainland LTs photographed on here so far in 2017. How many more are out there?

All we need now is evidence of breeding.

Things are looking extremely positive.

not just two mainland sightings David but a male and female on the same site! Difficult not to jump to any conclusions 🥮



Neil Hulme wrote:

Hi Paul,

You superstar! Congratulations - just rewards for battling against the odds and showing such tenacity. I had hoped that by providing accurate grid references on the BC Sussex website it might encourage others to go out looking, as working on this species in the UK requires a significant investment in time - the more eyes the better. Large Tortoiseshells are incredibly elusive and highly skittish, unless you catch them under marginal flight temperatures.

The very good news as far as I'm concerned is that your specimen is a male. Your sighting provides a valuable piece in the UK Large Tortoiseshell jigsaw I've been working on, which is discussed in the forthcoming 'The Butterflies of Sussex'. Far from being 'proof' of anything, it is pertinent to point out that this sheltered river bluff hosts the largest population of healthy Wych Elm I know of in West Sussex. The slope faces south and south-west, but is sheltered by the crescent-shaped topography and it's in a river valley close to the coast.

We need more eyes out there, collecting more data. Those living in East Sussex would do well to search the Litlington/Friston Forest/Lullington Heath area.

BWs, Neil

Thank you Neil for providing the site location, even if it did take me half the day to find it 📦 I wasn't sure of the sex at the time but I knew it was a different Insect the moment he landed. I did notice all the Elm growing along the bank and had an inkling how the topography would be beneficial.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Apr-17 10:52 AM GMT

Padfield wrote:

I was surprised you described your large tortoiseshell as 'she', Buggy, as the behaviour was all 'he'. But I was on my evening dog-walk, tapping on an iPhone. If Neil can find a she and you a he, they can definitely find each other. In fact, Neil's she looked as if she might already have found your he. This is very exciting!

Guy

To be honest I wasn't sure either way at the time Guy, calling it 'she' was simply a slip in my excitement of my write up 🧐 Indeed it is extremely exciting stuff. As Neil mentioned there is a hell of lot of Elm there all coming into leaf so maybe a late summer visit with some Binoculars would be worth pencilling in.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Apr-17 01:18 PM GMT

Art Frames wrote:

Done with style and restraint, I have so much too learn 😉 – I am also extremely pleased for you. Sorry I don't really do jealousy but I can do great happiness 😊 😊 😊 . Hope your holiday continues in similar style. best of luck.

Haha, I like to downplay these once in a lifetime events 🥯



Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 04-Apr-17 06:43 PM GMT

Double Post

See Below

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 04-Apr-17 06:51 PM GMT

Great work finding the male part of the jigsaw, the spot with the vein running through it was a stripe in Neils female [7 spots and a stripe], and just the

spot in your male. If any others are photographed, it will be important to see if there are more than the 2. If you had given up earlier, we all would have missed this event. A spring pair in the same location has been a rare event since the 1950s.

A book being published, is always a good trigger for events not mentioned in it, or long lost species turning up. The Ghost Orchid was declared extinct in 2009 after not being seen since 1987, only to be refound a few weeks later.

The Butterflies of Sussex will be an interesting read. Ive attached the left forewing patterns of the 2 for reference



Female



Male

Re: Bugboys mission

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



Nuff said...

Have agoodun

Wurezl

see I'm so jealous I can't even type!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Apr-17 10:07 PM GMT

5th April, Bookham

I took a day off from butterflying yesterday after all the excitement of Monday. The weather seemed mostly cloudy so I did some housework, nothing like some hoovering and giving the bathroom a spring clean to bring back down to earth!

Anyway, today I visited Bookham and what a lovely day it was. Had I believed the forecast on my phone's weather app I may not even have left the house, that app is now deleted!

It started off a bit chilly and for the first couple of hours all I disturbed was a male GVW and a Specklie.



As the day warmed up though so did the butterflies with Peacocks turning up regularly, probably 20+ by the end of the day and the occasional Specklie.



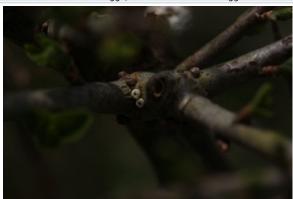


The odd male Orange-tip flew past but I was most surprised to find OT eggs already, mostly fresh and still white but I did come across one that had gone orange. I found seven or eight by the end of the day.





I checked on a few other eggs, The Brown Hairstreak egg close to the station has still to hatch but a twiny I re-located had, as had my Purple Hairstreak.





There was also evidence of life at the Small Copper nursery but no culprits were seen and no adults were seen either although it can only be a matter of days for them.

The next species to turn up was a Comma, the first of several, most of which seemed to be females. Perhaps the males have all worn themselves out into an early grave!





Following a couple of battling Specklies a Red Admiral swooped up into the tree tops from under my feet. It didn't take long to descended again though. Just as I was taken her picture a Holly Blue appeared and settled close by. The dilemma now was how to get close to the Blue without disturbing the Admiral.





It proved impossible and the Blue shot after the Admiral only to drop down and start nectaring on some Celandine. He didn't pose well but it's not often you catch one nectaring so I recorded it for posterity nevertheless.



At one point there was a sudden disturbance in the avian world as a female Sparrowhawk drifted over the treetops



Now well after midday things were starting to warm up, Peacocks fighting over sunny glades left right and centre and back in the scrubby fields male Orange-tips flew past regularly, only stopping briefly to check out any spot of white which mostly turned out to be bird poo. The Peacocks and Commas which continued to annoy each other were now joined by the occasional Small Tort and at one point I had a triple nymphalid battle on my hands.









Despite all this action the day did feel a bit odd. Apart from Orange-tips there was a distinct lack of Pierids. Not a single Brimstone was seen and I only had one other unidentified white flyby. Also, despite almost every blackthorn being in full flower I had yet to see a single butterfly nectaring on it.

By now I was probably into Orange-tip double figures, only males though, and I noticed how one Cuckooflower seemed to be rather popular with surrounding ones all but ignored. A close inspection revealed a fresh egg, perhaps so fresh that essence of female still hung in the air around it ?







As the afternoon wore in I decided to do one more circuit of the scrub in the hope of catching some settled Orange-tips. True to form their batteries were starting to run low and several were settling to try and soak up the weakening sun and feed. Another odd moment was when I saw one nectaring on blackthorn, something I've never witnessed before. Shame he didn't come lower but still worth recording. When you think about it it's not surprising it's a rare sight, the two wouldn't normally appear at the same time after all.



Others were feeding on more regular fare.







Elsewhere I finally had a peacock on blackthorn, just the one though. Out of 30+ Nymphalids seen this was the only one I saw feeding.



An interesting day but I left feeling something just wasn't quite right. I have to keep reminding myself its only just April. I think the warm March has skewed up the spring. It's interesting that the Orange-tips seem to have responded to this warm spell but other whites seem to be lagging behind on a more 'normal' emergence here. Could it be that Orange-tips do a lot of their developing over the summer in their pupae so they can 'spring forth' as soon as the warm weather appears in the spring whereas other whites don't start developing until winter has ended? It would make sense for the Orange-tip since it's larval food source is quite seasonally restricted unlike the others food sources. As for Brimstones I have no idea what's happened to them.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 06-Apr-17 06:14 AM GMT

Morning Buggy

Some great shots there. I have yet to capture any early butterfly on blossom but it makes a lovely composition. With regard to your shot of the PH egg, I don't think it has actually emerged yet but is on the brink of doing so. I'll post some shots later in my diary to explain what I mean. Smashing photo tho' and better than I have managed to achieve.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 06-Apr-17 08:38 AM GMT

HI Buggy,

10 Points, and a large quantity of mrgreens , you lucky b----r. 😇 😇 🐨

Well found,

Trevor

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-17 08:49 PM GMT

I had a similar dilemma Bugboy when I found my first OT, in the end the Red Admiral lost out so I still don't have a shot of one 😃 Interesting shot of the males hanging around after the female has visited 😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Apr-17 09:48 PM GMT



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Apr-17 10:04 PM GMT

6th April, Box Hill and Denbies

Another day when the forecast was rather wrong, hardly a cloud all day and it ended up feeling like a mid summer's day! Today I had company on one of my epic rambles across Surrey, a new colleague at work enjoys getting out of the big smoke and asked if she could tag along. "Sure, as long as you don't mind me stopping at every butterfly we see!"

Today was the years first trip to Box Hill and Denbies. The main targets being Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak. We arrived at Box Hill nice and early, just after 9, and to warm up headed straight up the side of the hill. Predictably it was too early for anything to be up but an hour after arriving I found a roosting female Orange-tip, complete with egg.



Singletons of Peacock and Speckled Wood completed a trio of species before we headed of to Denbies via the North Downs Way. Things were warming up nicely and Specklies were popping up regularly enough for the inevitable fights to break out but we were both distracted when a few Holly Blues showed up, not particularly cooperative as usual but I managed a few shots. By this stage I seemed to have infected my friend with the butterfly bug. She'd already managed Orange-tip and Specklie pics and now had her heart set on the Blue. She learnt the hard way what little s***s they are!









Nothing much else appeared until we were close to Denbies when a few male Orange-tip and Brimstone began to appear and gave my friend a few more hard lepitopteran lessons, no point chasing them in the heat of the day. Luckily we did find a couple of grounded ones during the rare cloudy spells.



male



female

Denbies itself was pretty much bereft of butterfly life. Over an hour gave us singles of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, a pair of Brimstone and a solitary grizzled skipper who remarkably turned out to be an compositing female! *Edit gotta love auto correct, that's an ovipositing female obviously







I impressed my friend when I casually pointed out a trio of Brimstone eggs (I'd already known where the Buckthorn was from watching an ovipositing female last year)



I remember last spring there was some discussion about the state of Denbies, then it was overgrown. This year it looks the complete opposite, almost overgrazed and parched. I suspect though the answer lies in the preceding 6 months: last spring was very wet and followed an abnormally mild winter meaning plant growth was able to go mad. This year we had a colder winter and are in the middle of a very dry spring which obviously isn't conducive to plant growth. I did also notice several half grown Burnet moth larvae wandering across the paths suggesting foodplants are scarce, making me

wonder how well the Blue's will fare this year. I think we need a wet spell to get some decent plant growth or we may be in for a barren year at this site

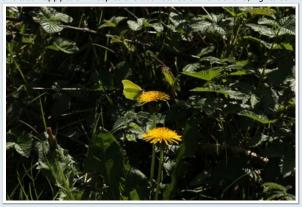
The journey back was peppered with the same, numerous Specklies, Holly Blues, the odd Orange-tip and a Comma or "dead leaf butterfly" as my friend had started to refer to them as.. He was another species that foiled all attempts to add to her growing collection of butterfly pictures

Bee Flies were out in great abundance all day and I witnessed the remarkable aerobatic coordination of a mating pair. Unlike other flies they mate bum to bum like butterflies but unlike butterflies they both fly at the same time, meaning one has to fly backwards and one forwards to remain together end of they know who does what, does one sex always go forwards, whatever's going on its amazing stuff!





By late afternoon we arrived back at the base of box hill to find several male Brimstones in feeding mode allowing my friend to finally grab a few shots she was happy with. Despite the abundance of Dandelions, fights still broke out.







Unfortunately the male Orange-tips were far less helpful and only tormented my friend relentlessly. To be fair they were being annoying, this being the only shot I was able to grab!



I had better luck with a female, most likely the same one we had found 8 hours earlier.





Ultimately today had the same odd feel to it as yesterday but I think I get why now. The recent weather makes it feel as though it's high summer, dry and increasingly warm, but in reality we are only seeing spring species and not all at the right time with the Orange-tip appearing a month early and joining the adult hibernators leaving other spring emerges in their wake. Also it's interesting how my local patches have Small and GVW but no Orange-tips yet these past two days at other sites it's vica-verca. It's just all a bit off kilter for me this year so far

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

You're right about that odd feel, Buggy. I am seeing a lot of butterflies locally, but the weather makes it feel like they are the wrong ones! I had to stop myself looking for Common Blues and Brown Argus today. Orange Tips scuffling with Red Admirals seemed odd as well... Anyway, your Grizzlie at

Denbies is worth a 😇 . I wondered if the Green Hairstreaks might be out there too.

PS. Holly Blues are not little sh*ts. They are splendid obliging thoroughly decent butterflies and I'll not have a word said against them. 🤐



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Apr-17 10:19 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

You're right about that odd feel, Buggy. I am seeing a lot of butterflies locally, but the weather makes it feel like they are the wrong ones! I had to stop myself looking for Common Blues and Brown Argus today. Orange Tips scuffling with Red Admirals seemed odd as well... Anyway, your Grizzlie at Denbies is worth a 🙃 . I wondered if the Green Hairstreaks might be out there too.

Dave

I had a good look for the Greenies in their usual place but didn't see any signs. Planning on looking for Dukes in the Chiltons tomorrow so I may yet come across a Greenie there as well.

I'd be interested in your view of the condition of Denbies, this is only my third year visiting the site so I have limited experience.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Apr-17 10:54 PM GMT

You're certainly re-writing the script so far this year, Bugboy.

I doubt if there are many (if any) who have had such a glorious start to 2017.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 07-Apr-17 07:45 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy, just caught up with your Large Tortoiseshell...congratulations and well done for persevering on a day that could otherwise have turned out to be a disappointing one.

Cheers,

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Apr-17 09:35 PM GMT

Thanks David and Neil, I suspect the weather has more to do with re-writing the script than me this year!

7th April, Chiltons

For my last day of freedom before getting back to the grindstone tomorrow I decided to see if there were any (very) early Dukes out up at Ivinghoe, and perhaps a few more Grizzlies on the way. The forecast (oh why do I still bother even caring 🥯) said blue skies all day. I left under a blue sky yes, but arriving at Tring that had turned to cool and overcast which lasted until mid-afternoon...

Butterfly activity was obviously seriously affected and it wasn't for nearly an hour that I saw anything, a Small Tortoiseshell absorbing what warmth there was.



I took a long, dawdling wander across to Ivinghoe Beacon, enjoying the chilly scenery and the sounds of spring: Skylarks were in full voice, Yellowhammers and Corn Buntings were singing here and there and the hedgerows and thickets were alive with the sound of Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and my first Willow Warblers of the year.

At Ivinghoe I managed to disturb a couple of Peacocks but it was still too cool and cloudy for much else to be flying. Nevertheless, I checked around to see if I could find anything roosting and finally put up a lovely female Comma.





It was getting close to 2pm before the cloud started to break but apart from the Comma all I managed to find was part of a Brimstone... so in desperation I took some pictures of that!









One of the sheltered paths favoured by Dukes

By now even if there were any Dukes around they would be looking to roost and lets face it, it was a long shot finding one in the first week of April so I decided to make a move back to Aldbury Nowers to see if the sun had woken anything up there. As I was leaving the area behind the car park I disturbed a small herd of Deer. At first I thought they were Roe but getting a better look, and seeing the stags antlers they were obviously something different.



Sika Deer is my thought but if anyone can confirm that would be great. They were very skittish so this was the best I could do.

Back at Aldbury the now clear blue sky had awoken a few, males of GVW and Orange-tip did flybys and another Comma sat for me. No sign of any Grizzlies looking to roost though.



Just as I was leaving I came across another Orange-tip and Comma sharing a basking spot. The OT went on his way leaving the Comma to pose some more, high up but I do love the contrast with the sky.





Again it was an odd day, very little about due to the weather but like yesterday the condition of the turf and sun baked paths made it feel like it was much later in the season. In my considered opinion we need a few April showers, at least here in the south east, or this season my crash and burn by the summer.

Also, regarding Orange-tips, this is usually a good site for them with the primary foodplant being Garlic Mustard (it's too dry for Cuckoflower here), but I sincerely hope they aren't about to all emerge early like many other sites, the Garlic Mustard is barely sprouting here. This is the most advanced I could find!



I wander, since Cuckooflower is generally a few weeks ahead of Garlic Mustard, do Orange-tips on sites where Cuckooflower is the primary food source emerge earlier than Garlic Mustard sites? That would explain why I haven't seen any Orange-tips at my local sites and here (all Garlic Mustard sites) but did at North stoke and Bookham (Cuckooflower sites)

by millerd, 07-Apr-17 09:52 PM GMT

Interesting report from up on the Chilterns, Buggy - I know the spot at Ivinghoe quite well. I'm amazed it was cloudy for the morning as here at Heathrow it was sunny dawn to dusk and it's not all that far away. Incidentally the garlic mustard has shot up from nothing in the last week and the local Orange Tips are very pleased.

By the way, I hope to have a look at Denbies over the weekend and I'll let you know how it compares with previous years.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-17 10:29 PM GMT

Some days are like this Bugboy – but I know what you mean about the weather. I find the best way is to just look out the window, it's pretty accurate 😊 I'm also with you on Holly Blues 🥯 , sorry Dave 😢 🥯



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Interesting that you're still seeing a fair few vanessids, Bugboy. They have suddenly become conspicuous by their absence in my part of south Wales.

That's one disadvantage of warm early spring weather....this family of butterflies are all but spent by mid-April.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 08-Apr-17 09:59 PM GMT

Well done! lanet

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Apr-17 02:43 PM GMT

Janet Turnbull wrote:

I haven't been on the PD for a few days and now I've caught up with what you have seen... 🙃 🙃 🙃 ! Well done!

Janet

Thanks Janet 😃

David M wrote:

Interesting that you're still seeing a fair few vanessids, Bugboy. They have suddenly become conspicuous by their absence in my part of south Wales.

That's one disadvantage of warm early spring weather....this family of butterflies are all but spent by mid-April.

Still plenty around here David (see below)



8/9th April

I managed to get both my work transects done on Saturday although due to the heat, there wasn't much opportunity to photograph much, just a few Specklie undersides. Their numbers are building nicely at work now and will most likely be the most numerous species seen (they usually are by a significant margin)



At some point though I managed to pick up some sort of nasty lurgy, a horrific strain of man-flu which lead me to take Sunday afternoon off sick. After a kip I felt a little better and thought a bit of fresh air might help, so dosed up on Paracetamol I spent a couple of hours coughing and sneezing my way around my local patch. It was still a bit on the warm side so everything I saw was still rather active but the main problem was the heat had also attracted hordes of people out who like the butterflies were attracted to the sunny sheltered areas.

Holly Blues were active in the usual spots and gave me no photo opportunities whatsoever and Speckled Woods were proving rather troublesome to get close to. I saw three species of Vanessids, a couple of Peacock and a Small Tortoiseshell but Commas are still active in impressive numbers, I found seven in total and had I been able to check all my favourite hotspots I'm quite sure I would have found double that. All the ones I found seemed to be males holding territories and they were VERY hyped up by the heat, nothing was tolerated in their airspace.











A splodge of yellow caught my eye hanging from some Cow Parsley, close inspection revealed a Honey Bee had flown its last errand.



l also had flybys by a few Orange-tip, first of the year on my patch. Three males in total were doing the usual patrolling and one female who was desperately looking for some Garlic Mustard. Every Cow Parsley flowerhead was carefully checked, sometimes twice, but I managed a few shots when she stopped briefly to refuel on some Cherry Blossom. I hope she finds somewhere to lay her eggs, I have yet to see any Garlic Mustard in flower here.





by bugboy, 10-Apr-17 08:02 PM GMT

10th April, local patch again

Still recovering from man-flu I took the day off with the intention of a lay in and a quiet day but my neighbours ended that plan early on. They are doing some renovating and decided today was a good day to get the heavy power tools in. Nothing for it then, grab my camera and go for a wander. It was early and with temperatures a good ten degrees cooler than yesterday it was no surprise that less was around. In fact I didn't see a single Comma today and just the one brief glimpse of a Holly Blue. Before any butterflies appeared, there was a commotion up above, a Kestrel spiralling up to try and escape a determined Crow.



The cooler conditions seemed to favour the Speckled Woods though who popped up in ever increasing numbers as the day wore on.





I've noticed how this year the speckles on them have a distinct orange tint which made this more normal pale speckled one stand out from the crowd.

He still had a good conditioned fringe so it wasn't down to wear and tear



In amongst the Specklies a female GVW dropped by to say hello.



It was whilst following the pale Specklie that a Small Tortoiseshell butted in and started a fight, as they often do, except when it landed it wasn't a Small Tort at all, my first Painted Lady of the year, a very early immigrant from the looks of things. Judging by the pink blush she was quite freshly emerged but she also looked quite worn so I suspect she emerged somewhere on the continent a day or two ago and had only just reached our shores, perhaps an early indication of a Painted Lady year? She proved to be a good sitter at any rate.







Cloud cover began to become more prominent and a passing Orange-tip fell briefly to earth in front of me, only to wake up 30 seconds later and vanish over the hedge.



Where I'd found one Small Tortoiseshell yesterday, today I found three in various states of repair one of whom was looking to get rid of an abdomen full of eggs. I watched her for several minutes in the middle of a nettle bed as she dithered over which leaf was perfect.













Since I was out the flat I decided to do a bit of shopping and come back a bit later.

Later came and so did the cloud cover 😇 , there was significantly less about. Specklies were still active, a fourth Small Tort was basking in the last few remaining glimpses of sun and a male GVW replaced the mornings female.







I was also able to carefully pick my way through the nettle bed and locate the mornings Small Tort eggs, a nice healthy batch to watch grow over the coming months 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 10-Apr-17 08:04 PM GMT

With the strong southerlies yesterday I wondered if anyone would see a Painted Lady today... and that's what you did, Buggy! Excellent find. 🚇



by millerd, 10-Apr-17 08:12 PM GMT

You also asked me if I had any comments on Denbies, Buggy. I would have said it was a bit dry for so early in the year and though the grass seemed quite high, a lot of it was very dried out. In fact, the smell on the very warm wind yesterday was sometimes reminiscent of that smell you get in the Med as you walk through the countryside. The early broods may be ok, but if it continues dry, the horseshoe vetch may not be lush enough to support a good showing of Chalkhills (or second brood Adonis). The two really good Chalkhill years recently followed wet springs.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Apr-17 08:37 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

With the strong southerlies yesterday I wondered if anyone would see a Painted Lady today... and that's what you did, Buggy! Excellent find.

Dave

Fresh off the ferry 😃

millerd wrote:

You also asked me if I had any comments on Denbies, Buggy. I would have said it was a bit dry for so early in the year and though the grass seemed quite high, a lot of it was very dried out. In fact, the smell on the very warm wind yesterday was sometimes reminiscent of that smell you get in the Med as you walk through the countryside. The early broods may be ok, but if it continues dry, the horseshoe vetch may not be lush enough to support a good showing of Chalkhills (or second brood Adonis). The two really good Chalkhill years recently followed wet springs.

Dave

That's what I suspected Dave 🤐 . I guess it's still early enough to get some rain to rescue the possible poor summer. Even on my patch I was looking at the paths today and thinking they looked far too parched this early in the year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 10-Apr-17 10:18 PM GMT

With the recent southerly winds I wondered whether anyone would bump into a Painted Lady.

They're clearly already here in early April so let's hope they can breed and produce another generation later in the year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 05:40 PM GMT

Great report Bugboy – but don't let you bosses find out that you're wandering around butterflying when you should be tucked up in bed with Man Flu it don't think anyone's having as good a year as yourself Bugboy - you're managing to be in the right place at the right time, long may it continue for you -

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Apr-17 09:37 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great report Bugboy – but don't let you bosses find out that you're wandering around butterflying when you should be tucked up in bed with Man Flu 😉 I don't think anyone's having as good a year as yourself Bugboy 🙃 – you're managing to be in the right place at the right time, long may it continue for you 😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel



11th April, North Stoke again

I'd been toying with going for another shot at a Large Tortoiseshell since last week but with a third sighting my destination on Tuesday was sealed. I was also curious to see what the place was like in decent weather, having seen just 3 butterflies there in the entire day last time so it was another crack of dawn start. The journey was, this time, relatively pleasant, no hidden surprises from my friends on Southern Rail and of course no getting lost this

I arrived at around 9.45 just in time to find the first butterflies awakening, Green-veined Whites seemed to be the early risers, with a few Orange-tips mixed in.







I had the place to myself so I slowly make my way along the path scanning every available tree trunk and the path in front for any patch of tawny orange, but apart from a single Comma which caused a momentary heart palpitation, there was nothing. I did have a holly Blue sit for me although he decided not to open for me



It didn't take too long for more hopeful people to turn up, virtually every single one looking longingly up into the tree covered bank. I did recognise one chap paying a lot of attention to the large patches of nettle beds, our own Vince was successfully looking for Red Admiral larvae that had made it through the winter.

The day was hotting up significantly as we wandered up and down the path, certainly getting close to 20 degrees, and the butterflies were responding very positively. Brimstones began to appear and we found three fresh Small Coppers, my first of the year, buzzing around a secluded corner, one of whom was a most vibrant colour.









Peacock numbers grew by the minute with several females observed searching for that one particular nettle leaf on which to deposit their eggs. There were also a couple of Small Tortoiseshells doing the same and a couple of Red Admirals.





Ovipositing Red Admiral



Red Admiral egg

One particular Peacock stood out from the crowd, the amount of iridescence on the forewing tips made it look really quite stunning, the pictures I managed really don't do it justice at all!





Looking around you'd think there was plenty of nettle to go around but Vince called me over when he noticed a Small Tortoiseshell had decided the ONLY leaf that she could find that was good enough for her eggs was already occupied. This seemed to be a minor detail to her and we watched as she settled down next to the Peacock to add her own eggs to the batch. A fascinating bit of behaviour.





This particular sprig of nettle was on the edge of a small open patch in the middle of the bed. This open patch we summised would be heating up in the sun and as the heat rose it would be warming up the underside of the leaf and therefore the eggs, a little natural incubator for them. It's interesting to note that the other Peacock females we observed seemed particularly interested in nettles in similar positions, particularly leaves that overhung these small open patches.





Another thing I was hoping to find today was Orange-tip in cop, something I've yet to see.

Thankfully Vince was on hand to end this embarrassingly gaping hole in my butterfly experiences. Unfortunately, the pair he had found had decided the best place to do the deed was up a tree on the side of the bank in the wind. Due to the wind, they also seemed to be doing some sort of butterfly karma sutra .







I'm not sure how they remained attached for so long but in the end, they called it a day with him flying off, leaving the female to have a little post coital snack only for a male GVW to clumsily blunder into her 😜 .







Despite the lack of any Tortoiseshells of the Large persuasion it was a thoroughly good day, I just wish there were sites as bountiful as this on my doorstep!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Apr-17 09:42 PM GMT

You've covered pretty much everything so far this spring, Bugboy. I hope you don't get burnt out as May approaches! 🥞



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Apr-17 09:49 PM GMT

David M wrote:

You've covered pretty much everything so far this spring, Bugboy. I hope you don't get burnt out as May approaches! 🚇



Still, Dukes, Green Hairstreaks, Dingy and Grizzlies, then Wood Whites and perhaps even Chequered Skippers 😊 I'm exhausted just looking at that sentance 👄

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Apr-17 09:54 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

David M wrote:

You've covered pretty much everything so far this spring, Bugboy. I hope you don't get burnt out as May approaches! 😃



Still, Dukes, Green Hairstreaks, Dingy and Grizzlies, then Wood Whites and perhaps even Chequered Skippers 😊 I'm exhausted just looking at that sentance 🔪

Me too, especially if you are venturing north to see palaemon. I wish you all the best. It's an iconic journey and one you will forever remember. I will look forward to reading your reports if that is ultimately what you decide to do.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 12-Apr-17 10:04 PM GMT

Looks like you had a great day, and a great haul. I must try the site for myself !.How many sites as good as that have a railway station close by ?. You've been spoilt 📦 .

All the best.

Trevor.

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 10:56 PM GMT

Another cracking day for you Bugboy 😂 😇 Great shots, especially the Small Copper, really contrasting dark hind wings with the lush orange base colour on the fore wings.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Vince Massimo, 12-Apr-17 11:01 PM GMT

Great report Paul. That was a good day spent observing 😊



Vince

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Apr-17 09:05 PM GMT

If only we had that many Orange Tips where I live Paul. You're off to a magnificent start this year. I'm looking forward to seeing more of your adventures over the coming months.

Best wishes,

James

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Apr-17 10:41 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor and Wurzel, yes it is an excellent site where spending a whole day browsing is easy!

Vince Massimo wrote:

Great report Paul. That was a good day spent observing 😊



Indeed it was, so much going on it was difficult to know what to concentrate on sometimes, if only more places were like this!

Butterflysaurus rex wrote:

If only we had that many Orange Tips where I live Paul. You're off to a magnificent start this year. I'm looking forward to seeing more of your adventures over the coming months.

Best wishes,

James

Thanks James, good to see you back in the game as well, no doubt we shall bump into each other at the usual places again this year 😃



15th April, more Duke hunting

Another trip to see if I could find myself an early Duke or Duchess in the Chilton's started off as so many of my Chilton trips do, cool and cloudy.... and windy. Today I was accompanied again by my padawan work colleague. Having no idea what a Duke was her target today was a Holly Blue and a male Orange-tip.

The windy conditions had brought out the Raptors today, numerous Buzzards, Kites and Kestrels were seen throughout the day. One of the first ones we saw looked to be carrying nesting material.





It actually took about 3 hours before we saw a butterfly of any description, a Speckled Wood flitting around in one of the first patches of sun we encountered. This was followed by a friendly Holly Blue who landed on a leaf next to us. He opened his wings to reveal a freshly minted male and sat patiently until my friend got a little too close, she still has lots to learn!



Despite searching thoroughly all the Duke hotspots we found none. Hopefully though in a few weeks they shall be teaming with the pugnacious little buggers.

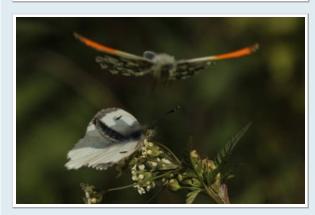
The weather had improved substantially when we returned to Aldbury Nowers. Although still rather breezy, there was plenty of sun so I was quite surprised there was still a distinct lack of butterflies. A Green-veined White dropped by briefly and a few Orange-tips were doing the usual 'hello, goodbye' flybys.

We decided to kill a bit of time wandering some unexplored paths to give the Orange-tips time to wear their batteries down a bit, and sure enough, by 4 they could be found stopping off for evening meals and looking for roosting spots, giving my friend the shots of male Orange-tips she was after. Since they were just sitting there I took full advantage as well, coming home with over 100 pictures of them alone! It's very easy to get carried away with Orange-tips isn't it any anyway there now follows a tiny selection of what I managed.







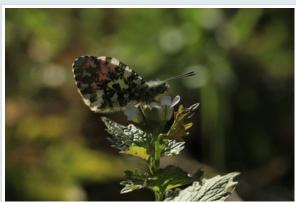














Next time I WILL have Duke pictures to show for my troubles

by Pauline, 16-Apr-17 05:48 AM GMT

Some unusual shots there Buggy. It's always nice to see something a bit different. I particularly like the Red Kite and Orange Tip (expect you can guess which one I mean)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Apr-17 08:24 AM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy Θ I especially like OT numbers 1 and 4 Θ Φ

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Apr-17 08:52 AM GMT

That's an interesting angle you've captured, Bugboy, where the male Orange Tip is gliding over the female.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-Apr-17 11:02 AM GMT

Hi! Buggy, my favourite photo is definitely Orange Tip number 4 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 16-Apr-17 11:12 AM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Buggy, my favourite photo is definitely Orange Tip number 4 😊 Goldie 😊

Yep, mine too. Love the way the male appears to be swooping in on the female Θ

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Apr-17 06:21 PM GMT

Thank you everyone, as always in those situations it's largely down to luck $\stackrel{oldsymbol{\Theta}}{=}$

16th April, local patch

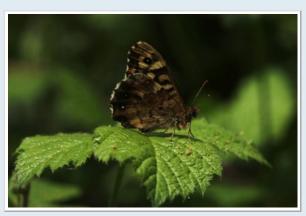
I awoke this morning pleasantly surprised to see the sun was out so I made time for a few hours exploring my favourite corner of Walthamstow Marshes, hoping it was bright but cool enough for some Holly Blues. As it turned out they were conspicuous by their absence. Unlike other people, they certainly haven't reached plague like numbers for me! I had a couple of Peacock flybys and a few Speckled Woods but today was mostly about the Whites. Fair numbers of Green-veined were active plus a couple of Small $\,$



Looks like this male had a little meconium accident upon emergence, it was mirrored on both wings.











but I spent most the morning Orange-tip hunting once again since, apart from the wind, it was perfect weather with plenty of clouds to keep them under control. I apologise for forcing you all to look at yet more Orange-tips...

Orange-tips...

I followed a female as she flitted around in between clouds, looking particularly attractive when she perched on what I think is Wild Cabbage









When she finally went on her merry way curiosity got the better of me and I checked the flower heads for eggs. Sure enough a couple of OT eggs were present. There is still a distinct lack of favoured food plants here so it looks like the females are broadening their horizons, I just hope the larave are able to go full term in this choice.



I noticed **peterc** posted a picture of a male OT with a pupil in the discoidal spot today, I didn't notice I had a similar one until I got home and went through my pictures properly. Not sure if it's within normal variation









by Wurzel, 16-Apr-17 08:57 PM GMT

I don't mind Bugboy – I could look at OTs all day everyday 😁 Especially as in Wales today we had rain, wind and cold pretty much all day 🙁 Hopefully tomorrow will be better...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Apr-17 06:08 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

I don't mind Bugboy - I could look at OTs all day everyday 😊 Especially as in Wales today we had rain, wind and cold pretty much all day 😩 Hopefully tomorrow will be better...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

We could do with some of that rain down here Wurzel, not had any for well over a month now. It's a worry for some of those later emergents, I can imagine some rather hungry caterpillars right now 3.

17th April

I had a half day today but it was rather cloudy so no butterflies were found. Instead I searched for some more Orange-tip eggs on the yellow flowered crucifer on my local patch, finding several more. As far as I can tell it's the only wild Crucifer available to them currently, so I guess its a case of needs must. I've done a bit of research and I now think it's Rape *Brassica napus*, rather than Wild Cabbage *brassica oleracea*.



This caterpillar's got a long walk for its first meal!





Rape (Brassica napus)?

by David M, 18-Apr-17 10:13 PM GMT

That's an impressive array of Orange Tip images, Bugboy. Even better when you consider that this species will probably only 'peak' in a week or so.

Keep 'em coming!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Apr-17 08:37 PM GMT

David M wrote:

That's an impressive array of Orange Tip images, Bugboy. Even better when you consider that this species will probably only 'peak' in a week or so.

Keep 'em coming!

If you insist David 😊



18th April Surrey shenanigans

Today was a two-site day. The plan was to start bright and early at Denbies to catch Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak waking up and then spend the afternoon roaming around Bookham to see if the Coppers are out there yet.

I was very early and the nip in the air was keeping everything bar a few Speckled Woods hiding away along the North Downs Way,



but by the time I was getting close to Denbies the sun was warm enough to start waking a few more species up. 5 minutes from Denbies my eye was drawn to a speck of orange in a clump of Bluebells. I don't think there's a more spring like image than an Orange-tip perched delicately on Bluebells!



Still drowsy he fluttered from flower to flower between clouds and gave me some of my favourite Orange-tip photographs to date as he warmed up for the days hunt for virgin females.









I spent a good half an hour admiring him before moving on to see if I could find any target species but even if I didn't the day was already a success 😉

Over on Denbies I bumped into a couple who looked vaguely familiar. They were both after the same thing as me and it didn't take long for them to find a perfect little Hairstreak. It was only just warm enough for it to be active and although it flitted around occasionally it always returned to the same spot enabling us to fill our boots with more wonderful springtime images.





Then another familiar face appeared, Susie taking the hound for a walk wandered by. The Hairstreak now had three eager admires pointing their cameras at it, I doubt it was expecting this kind of attention when it woke up this morning!





I'd already found one Grizzly and set off to see how many more were active but I suspect it was still a little chilly for much activity. I only found a couple more active, but the last one was not only a lovely pale individual but very cooperative when the sun went into hiding. He also received a lot of attention.











Definitely a morning of quality over quantity.

It was only when the couple left that I realised where I'd seen them before, about twelve months ago looking for Green Hairstreak and Grizzled Skippers on Denbies 🔪 . I guess I'll bump into them again next year 😃 .

It was lunchtime now and Susie kindly drove me back to Box Hill station just in time to catch a train, perfect timing. I wonder what awaited for me at Bookham... tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Apr-17 09:35 PM GMT

You're making me envious, Bugboy. Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak are next on my list, and I can only hope the Welsh weather allows me the opportunity this weekend to see them.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 19-Apr-17 10:52 PM GMT

Glad to see the Green Hairstreaks are appearing at Denbies. Nice photos too, Buggy. 🔴 I feel a weekend visit coming on!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 20-Apr-17 07:50 AM GMT

I concur, that is one lovely Green Hairstreak, and well captured.

Sometimes a difficult Butterfly to photograph, in full sunshine and wrong angle, forget it!.

Their wings seem to fluoresce under these circumstances, and you end up with a ghostly blob.

Will probably bump into you soon !.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Phil Kirk, 20-Apr-17 10:37 AM GMT

Hi Bugboy. It was good to meet you again - I had forgotten that we met last year (5th May 2016). You had just had a terrible train journey as Clapham Junction was closed due to a fire. Thanks for showing us the Grizzled Skipper!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 20-Apr-17 09:08 PM GMT

Love the orange Tip on the Bluebell Bugboy, Goldie 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Apr-17 10:08 PM GMT

David M wrote:

You're making me envious, Bugboy. Grizzled Skipper and Green Hairstreak are next on my list, and I can only hope the Welsh weather allows me the opportunity this weekend to see them.

I'm willing to swap a bit of welsh rain for some south east sun this weekend (I'm at work) 😇



millerd wrote:

Glad to see the Green Hairstreaks are appearing at Denbies. Nice photos too, Buggy. 😃 I feel a weekend visit coming on!

Thanks Dave, look no further than the usual spot 🙂



trevor wrote:

I concur, that is one lovely Green Hairstreak, and well captured.

Sometimes a difficult Butterfly to photograph, in full sunshine and wrong angle, forget it!.

Their wings seem to fluoresce under these circumstances, and you end up with a ghostly blob.

Will probably bump into you soon!.

Trevor.

Thanks Trevor, I'm quite sure we'll see each other in the coming weeks, the Pearls will be drawing me down to your neck of the woods in a week or two 🥰

Phil Kirk wrote:

Hi Bugboy. It was good to meet you again - I had forgotten that we met last year (5th May 2016). You had just had a terrible train journey as Clapham Junction was closed due to a fire. Thanks for showing us the Grizzled Skipper!

Haha, nice to meet you again to Phil, that day could only get better!

Goldie M wrote:

Love the orange Tip on the Bluebell Bugboy, Goldie 😊



Thanks Goldie, it's up there near the top of my favourite images 😐



18th April Surrey shenanigans part 2

Bookham started off quite cloudy and with nothing flying I set about looking for eggs. The brown Hairstreak I'm hoping to try and follow has hatched. It's on a small Blackthorn sucker next to a path which isn't in contact with any other blackthorn so it can't go far!



I quickly found the Orange-tips are having a phenomenal year here so far, virtually every Cuckooflower had more than one egg and three or four was not uncommon. My younger self would have taken many these 'spare' eggs for rearing... I need to get myself a better flat!

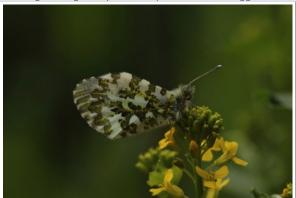




lalso found Bitter-cress was being used, hardly surprising given it's the same genus as Cuckooflower although the flower heads and seed pods are much smaller so I'm not sure if there's enough for the caterpillars.



Last year I found a Winter-cress was also being used. The same plant today didn't have any eggs but there was a female taking a nap. A sunny spell quickly woke her and then as if by magic a male appeared to bother her. Although she was clearly displaying the international Pierid signal for go away he was a persistent little bugger.













When she was finally left alone I followed her as she flitted from flower to flower, dicing with death when she fed from some Greater Stitchwort already occupied by a spider.



More Orange-tips appeared as I wandered around, interspersed with the occasional Green-veined White.



I stopped off to check the Purple Hairstreak egg which looked as though it had hatched last time (Pauline questioned as to whether it was actually in mid hatch last time, but then I was just giving it a cursory glance and didn't look too hard). It definitely looks empty today but I couldn't find any caterpillar, I'm sure its tucked away safely somewhere in those leaves though.



Shortly after I came across a Holly blue showing a lot of interest in a Holly, particularly the buds. Sure enough when she landed I could just make out the tell-tale motions of egg laying. Unfortunately, she stayed high up and only came low enough for a record shot once. Incredibly I think this is the first time I've seen a Holly Blue in association with Holly, plenty of other plants but never holly.

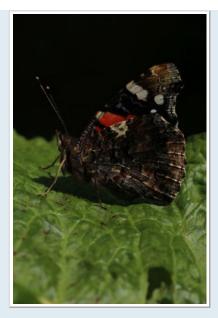


Surprisingly Speckled Woods were few and far between in the wooded areas but the Orange-tips kept appearing and on a single Garlic Mustard plant I found eighteen eggs!





The Vanessids were rather thin on the ground today, the first of these to show up was a Red Admiral just after 3. Judging by her condition I suspect she overwintered here as a caterpillar and recently emerged.





The return walk back to the station threw up a few more species, a Peacock resting during a cloudy spell and a Small tortoiseshell who was far too flighty to sit still for a photograph.



Back at the Winter-cress another female Orange-tip was being harassed by another male, this spot seems like the place to be if you want to feel rejection if you're a male Orange-tip!



"I'll just sit here until you change your mind" Another species showed itself in the form of a Comma



And then there were more Orange-tips and more pictures vying for my favourite all time pictures. Just a bit of glitter and that's my Christmas cards sorted for the year!







When the sun reappeared it turned out to be another ab. pupilata



It would seem the Small Coppers are all still snoozing in the turf, hopefully on my next visit I shall be enjoying those little orange jewels,

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Apr-17 10:48 PM GMT

You've overdosed on Orange Tips there, Bugboy. Surely you must be nearing your annual quota now! 🔒



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Apr-17 11:32 PM GMT

David M wrote:

You've overdosed on Orange Tips there, Bugboy. Surely you must be nearing your annual quota now! 😃



Surely not, it's not even May yet, a good few more weeks left in them 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 21-Apr-17 06:23 AM GMT

Lovely images recently Buggy. I particularly like the rejection sequence and some of the earlier OT's look like they're glowing. That PH egg has definitely now hatched as you can see. Difficult to tell from earlier shot but I am still of the mind that it was work in progress at that point.

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 21-Apr-17 07:44 AM GMT

That is a cracking Red Admiral photo you have there, Paul. How did you get the bands as red as that 🤐? Beautiful.

ATB

Peter

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Apr-17 05:23 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Lovely images recently Buggy. I particularly like the rejection sequence and some of the earlier OT's look like they're glowing. That PH egg has definitely now hatched as you can see. Difficult to tell from earlier shot but I am still of the mind that it was work in progress at that point.

I'll take your word for the previous picture Pauline, you have far more experience with these than I 🤐



peterc wrote:

That is a cracking Red Admiral photo you have there, Paul. How did you get the bands as red as that 🚇 ? Beautiful.

ATB

Peter

Thanks Peter . A couple of reasons for the intensity: firstly she was very fresh, no more than a few days old (she still had that gorgeous velvety look about her) and secondly that picture was taken in overcast conditions so didn't have the sun bleached look. The photo below shows the same animal taken 5 minutes previously in sunny conditions and you can see the red is slightly less intense (no less beautiful though 🐸)



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-17 07:35 PM GMT

You're filling your boots with the OT's Bugboy 😊 🚭 It seems to have been a particularly good season for them – the combination of sun and cool temps has made them much more approachable 😊 You're flying ahead with the species count – things round my way have slowed down again 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Apr-17 08:36 PM GMT

You are enjoying a great start to the year, Bugboy. You've seen more than just about anybody. I hope things continue to be sustained in your local area...I'm used to being a week or two behind in south Wales, but right now, I'm using your PD to guide me as to which species to look out for a week or so in arrears after your first postings.

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 22-Apr-17 08:39 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Pauline wrote:

Lovely images recently Buggy. I particularly like the rejection sequence and some of the earlier OT's look like they're glowing. That PH egg has definitely now hatched as you can see. Difficult to tell from earlier shot but I am still of the mind that it was work in progress at that point.

I'll take your word for the previous picture Pauline, you have far more experience with these than I $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{=}$



That is a cracking Red Admiral photo you have there, Paul. How did you get the bands as red as that 🤩 ? Beautiful.

ATB

Peter

Thanks Peter 😃. A couple of reasons for the intensity: firstly she was very fresh, no more than a few days old (she still had that gorgeous velvety look about her) and secondly that picture was taken in overcast conditions so didn't have the sun bleached look. The photo below shows the same animal taken 5 minutes previously in sunny conditions and you can see the red is slightly less intense (no less beautiful though 😃)

IMG_0463.JPG

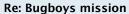
Thanks Paul. Yes that makes sense. I imagine your Red Admiral, considering how fresh it was, overwintered here perhaps as a larva?

ATB

Peter

by Goldie M, 22-Apr-17 07:57 PM GMT

Love the orange Tip shots Bugboy, keep them coming I can never see enough of them . $^{igoreday{O}}$ Goldie $^{igoreday{O}}$



by bugboy, 23-Apr-17 07:55 PM GMT

I'll try Goldie, although this coming week may be a bit of a struggle if predictions of winter conditions returning coming to fruition ⁽¹⁾



I did my transects at work this weekend, struggled a bit to fit them in in between clouds and there wasn't a great deal on the wing. I did however come across a grounded Holly Blue during one cloudy spell. I nabbed one shot on my phone before scampering of to grab my camera. He was still there when I returned, seeming somewhat dopey in the cool conditions but then I disturbed him and he fluttered off into a tree.



Phone pic



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-17 08:01 PM GMT

Fingers crossed the weather forecasters get it even more wrong than they did this weekend although a drop or three of rain would cruelly be a blessing

Have a goodun Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 23-Apr-17 10:11 PM GMT

I agree, you're having a really good spring Paul, fabulous array of photos so far. I predict this will be your best season to date. Hope to catch up with you at some point during this year.

Best wishes

James

by David M, 23-Apr-17 10:43 PM GMT

Well, I've never seen a Holly Blue on a dandelion before!

One could wait around several years before spotting that!! Well done.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Apr-17 10:17 PM GMT

25th April A Dingy Day at Hutchinson's Bank

Hutchinson's bank isn't just about the introduced Glanville's, you can go there any time in the season and usually see a good range of species. The south west facing slope would hopefully shield me and the butterflies from the worst of the chilly northerly wind. Today I was looking for the springtime Skippers and it didn't disappoint in that respect. I hoped to get a few hours in before the forecast rain turned up but in the end I stayed most the day, the forecast rain never appearing!

My first butterfly of the day was a female Orange-tip, flitting around at the top of the path that leads to the Bank, and I thought it would be rude not to take her picture since she posed.



Greeting me upon arrival was my first Dingy Skipper of the year, looking anything but dingy as he glowed in the morning sun



Things moved along slowly as temperatures gradually increased, a few more fresh Dingies waking up and then my first Grizzlie of the day, also looking rather fresh.





A Holly Blue taunted me, fluttering around at waist height but deciding at the last minute several times that certain leaves just weren't good enough for his little feet. I tried whispering at him but that didn't work either... oh well back to the Skippers.







It was becoming apparent that there was precious little else around apart from the Skippers, Nymphalids and Whites were virtually non-existent but shortly after midday a gorgeous Green Hairstreak dropped by. By Green Hairstreak standards she was huge, getting on for Brown Hairstreak size. She was very active, presumably looking for somewhere to lay judging by her behaviour but when she did settle she positively glowed in the sun.







After that welcome interlude it was back to more Skippers, they seemed to have been emerging all morning.











I managed a few other species in the afternoon but only singletons, a Peacock, Speckled Wood and Brimstone weren't interested in photography but I got a few Small Copper pictures.



The best sighting of the day happened halfway through the afternoon. I followed a Grizzlie to a patch of Dandelions where it settled to feed. Already here was another one which I realised very quickly was an ab taras. No sooner had I seen it though, it took to the air and was whisked off by a gust of wind never to be seen again, not for want of trying though, I returned to the area several times to try and relocate it. Still I got me plenty of pictures to make the day very worthwhile and I do enjoy watching these little things living up to their name, skipping through the air







by Pauline, 26-Apr-17 06:48 AM GMT

Some very nice images of Skippers there Buggy, esp. the last one and Grizzlie on Dandelion. 5 species beats my 3 – just shows, worth giving it a go despite the weather Θ

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 26-Apr-17 07:35 AM GMT

Your Green Hairstreak positively glows in the grass, always a great thrill to find one. It would seem that several Butterflyers braved the weather yesterday, and were justly rewarded.

Keep up the good work, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Apr-17 05:36 PM GMT

Things are really moving for you, Bugboy. I love this time of year when we get around a dozen 'newbies' in the space of a couple of weeks!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 26-Apr-17 08:14 PM GMT

l've always thought Hutchinsons Bank worth a visit even without any Glanvilles, and you've proved it, Buggy. That Green Hairstreak is lovely – immaculate you might say, as it is completely spotless. Not Hairstreaked at all.

Dave

by bugboy, 26-Apr-17 08:22 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, unless it's absolutely tipping it down it's always worth a wander Pauline 😉



My pictures don't do that Hairstreak justice **Trevor**, she was stunning!

Stalled a bit this week David, I've still not seen a Large White. Next on the hit list are Dukes, Pearls and Small Blues I think and then a few lifers 🧿



Thanks Dave, yes she was hairstreakless and the way the green glowed on her looked as though she'd been plugged into the mains!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-17 11:01 AM GMT

That's what I call a great day out 😊 I didn't expect any one would see much with the weather being so cold, well done! Goldie 👨 😑



Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 27-Apr-17 03:55 PM GMT

Looks like you had a good visit to Hutchinsons Bank, i will have to look for your Grizzled ab. I was elsewhere on Tuesday looking at the Early Spider Orchids in Sutton. Did see my first Small Copper of the year there.

Early Spider Orchid



Green Winged Orchid



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Apr-17 11:15 AM GMT

Cracking shots there Bugboy – HB is looking good 😊 is your Greenstreak a 'caecus' ab.?

Have a goodur

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Apr-17 09:51 PM GMT

I did wonder where you were MrspOck, it's not often I visit HB and don't bump into you!

Not sure Wurzel, I'll have to have a look.

29th April Thank God for Orange-tips!

I'm going to discreetly gloss over the target species for today's trip to the Chilton's. When I left the flat it was wall to wall blue sky and half an hour before hopping on the train back to London it was little fluffy clouds on a blue background. In-between, unfortunately it was grey, overcast and decidedly unfriendly for butterflies.

I had my little padawan butterflier with me again today so together we decided to look for snoozing butterflies and eggs. Garlic Mustard is still at a premium at Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve, a few plants have sent up flower shoots but for the most part these are very sad looking stunted growths. One of these flower heads had a total of 11 eggs present. I predict a caterpillar themed re-enactment of the film Highlander happening soon $\stackrel{\bigcirc{}}{\bigcirc}$.



We also found two snoozing, a male and a female.





We looked around for Dingy and Grizzled Skippers as well but drew a blank with them so we took the long walk to lyinghoe Beacon, with me occasionally looking up at the sky and wistfully suggesting to my friend that I thought the clouds were thinning (she mostly humoured me by laughing).

We saw nothing much here for a few hours until extensive searching finally turned up a snoozing Grizzled Skipper who looked exceedingly fresh, most likely only a few hours old. He woke up after my friend accidentally knocked him of his perch and when we returned him, he proceeded to bask in the non-existent sun, soaking up the non-existent heat, bless .





An hour later the clouds did actually thin enough for us to see our shadows and also enough to wake up an Orange-tip who we must have walked past several times already. Our Grizzled Skipper reappeared, fluttering weakly past and low down in the bramble edged path we found an Oak Egger moth caterpillar.



It was gone 3 before the clouds began to break up significantly, but too little too late for the days target so we made our way back to Aldbury, stopping off to enjoy the company of a freshly emerged male Specklie on the way.

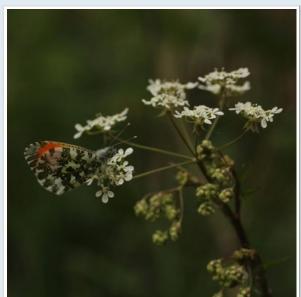




With the increasing sun Orange-tips were waking up, 6 in total including the two we'd found that morning so we spent the final hour enjoying them.













by Wurzel, 29-Apr-17 10:39 PM GMT

Good to see someone else training up their Padawan, in years to come perhaps the boards will be filled by young Wurzlettes, Buggy's, Millerlites and OZoids $\stackrel{\bigcirc}{\oplus}$ Lovely sequence of OTs – how do you get the Orange to show so vividly $\stackrel{\bigcirc}{\varpi}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Apr-17 11:03 PM GMT

HI Paul,

Love your male/female OT. encounter, that more than makes up for a lack of Dukes. Would love a shot like that in my portfolio. $\overline{\mathbf{w}}$

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 30-Apr-17 12:01 AM GMT

11 OT eggs on a single plant is beyond impressive, Bugboy. You also had the satisfaction of seeing a few adults to boot!

Another productive day by the look of things.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Apr-17 08:14 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Good to see someone else training up their Padawan, in years to come perhaps the boards will be filled by young Wurzlettes, Buggy's, Millerlites and OZoids 😊 Lovely sequence of OTs – how do you get the Orange to show so vividly 👨

Have a goodun

Wurzel

The trick I use is to under expose a bit (I do this to most my Whites pictures), and sometimes a bit of tweaking with contrast and exposure on my computer.

trevor wrote:

HI Paul,

Love your male/female OT. encounter, that more than makes up for a lack of Dukes. Would love a shot like that in my portfolio. $\[\varpi \]$

Trevor.

I've got to hold my hands up here Trevor and say that picture was somewhat manufactured, I moved the sleeping female to the males flower with a view

to getting two sleeping beauties in one picture, then the sun came out and woke them up. A couple of pictures and he was on his way after a quick sniff of her and getting usual 'go away' salute!

David M wrote:

11 OT eggs on a single plant is beyond impressive, Bugboy. You also had the satisfaction of seeing a few adults to boot!

Another productive day by the look of things.

I'm not sure impressive is the right word to use David. The reason for the number is simply because there's nowhere else for them to lay. Unlike my local patch there isn't even a substitute Crucifer to use so things don't look good for next year. Luckily they do wander so as long as the Garlic mustard recovers well next year it will only be a couple of barren years before numbers are back to normal, fingers crossed.

30th April staying local

Just a few hours this morning of hazy sun allowed me a little wander on my local Patch. The wind had picked up significantly since yesterday so I quickly made my way to the sheltered paths which are generally the best places in these conditions. Today was no exception, I had a very brief glimpse of a Holly Blue and then the Whites began appearing. From the ones I got a decent look at, they mostly seemed to be Green-veined (with a couple of male Orange-tips thrown in).



I watched one female minding her own business, looking for a suitable plant on which to lay when she was accosted by a couple of wandering males. The chase went on around me for a good few minutes, with me taking snaps at suitable moments. Turned out they were both Small whites.





Adding a splash of colour to the morning was a female Comma, who was in fine fettle considering her age and a Peacock who was looking a little more its age.







As the cloud thickened the Whites settled more often, a female posing well on some Hoary Cress.









The final butterfly seen was a particularly fine looking male



by bugboy, 02-May-17 11:27 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, I got more Orange-tip this afternoon 😊, but more of that later, first the morning! (hopefully I don't break UKB)

2nd May Denbies

I fancied another session with some Green Hairstreaks today, and the weather looked rather good, for the morning at least, of I popped down into Surrey. The walk from the station along the North Downs Way looked particularly springlike in the morning sun, the Bluebells now being in full flower. The occasional Speckled Wood fluttered around in sunny spots, mostly a little worse for wear but my eye was drawn to a little Blue fluttering along the damp path. I followed him along for some time until he finally settled, revealing a male who had seen a things in his short life.



He moved on to lick a leaf, whilst unbeknownst a female was looking down on him a couple of feet above.







After that it was just a few Specklies and what I think is a Cream Wave Scopula floslactata.



Arriving at Denbies I was immediately greeted by a Grizzled Skipper and my first Small Heath of the year. Normally getting a decent shot of a Small heath is hampered by their unerring ability to find blades of grass to hide behind, but today this one seemed quite bold.



A few Dingy Skippers flew up from the path as I headed over to the Green Hairstreak hotspot and I was pleased to find the hotspot was living up to its name. There was probably half a dozen or so but it seemed like a lot more, buzzing around like maniacs. It's interesting how the same basking spots are utilised throughout the season buy a succession of adults, king of the castle today was this handsome 'two spotter'.



After getting a load of shots I wandered around the Hawthorn which seems to act as a Master tree here, only to find my two spotter again, this time feeding on the blossom.





I took occasional breaks from the Hairstreaks to focus on the Skippers and Small heaths which were active along the steps, again the Small Heaths being remarkably cooperative.





A different Hairstreak, sporting a full 'streak' was occupying the favoured spot as I left to explore the rest of the hillside



Small Heath and Dingy Skippers were the commonest butterflies today, with a few Grizzled mixed in and every now and again a Brimstone would drift past.





The first 5 Spot Burnets are also out here, given the time of year these are most likely the rarer Zygaena trifolii ssp. Palustrella



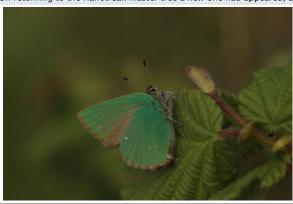
A few Beetles also caught my eye, this Click Beetle was quite common, Agrypnus murinus I think



And these Weevils were everywhere, *Phyllobius sp.*



On returning to the Hairstreak master tree a new one had appeared, a tri-spotter.



Before leaving I popped down to the lower path where a few Gorze bushes have sometimes attracted the Hairstreaks in the past. None today but I did manage a few Brimstone pictures.





Added to the species count on Denbies today was a single Orange-tip, a single Comma and a couple of Peacock playing on the path as I left. I'm sure its only a matter of days before the Adonis are out here.



More from today, tomorrow 😀

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 03-May-17 07:32 PM GMT

Great picture of the numerous Orange-tip eggs on the Garlic Mustard – what a find 🖲

Mike

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 03-May-17 08:28 PM GMT

Great reports and a good selection of species lately Bugboy 😊

You seem to be doing well down there.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-May-17 08:31 PM GMT

Great report there Buggy \Theta Apart from the open winged Holly Blue 🐨 it's a very similar scene to what I've been finding, I'm finding it hard to not count spots on Greenstreaks as well 🗓 📦

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-May-17 10:53 PM GMT

Thanks guys 4 here's how the afternoon panned out

2nd May Bookham

Like my last visit two weeks ago, I planned to spend the afternoon at Bookham, hoping that the forecasters would be wrong again and the promised cloud would fail to appear. There was no Suzie today so I had time to enjoy the walk back to Westhumble station. Just across the road from Denbies car park an Oak tree was alive with Longhorn Moths and I watched three do some synchronised aerobatics as they came in to land. I didn't get a close look

at them but they were most likely Adela reaumurella.







Just a little further on, opposite the church is a large patch of Bluebells which in past years have proved quite fertile. It's where I got my best ever open winged shot of a brimstone last year and my backlit Orange-tip on Bluebell two weeks ago. Today I found a Peacock in a feeding frenzy. In my haste to get close enough for a few snaps, and trying not to ruin the carpet of blue, I failed to notice a Red Admiral which flew up from my feet. It vanished but the Peacock couldn't care less about my presence. A Brimstone passed through briefly and then a Speckled Wood posed for me too.





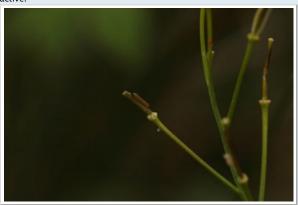
Well I'd dawdled for longer than I'd intended by this time and looking up it seemed that for once the forecasters were right! A few hours later I was at Bookham under a thick blanket of grey, foreboding clouds so there wasn't a hope of anything flying. But if you look hard enough there'll always be something to see.

Over the winter I'd managed to find in excess of thirty Brown Hairstreak eggs. One of the first discoveredwas on a small, isolated Blackthorn close to the train station and it was this one I've kept a close eye on, on all subsequent visits in the hope of following it as it developed. Two weeks ago I'd noticed it had hatched but failed to locate the (most likely) microscopic larvae. Today after a bit of searching though I managed to find a small, pale green speck on a developing leaf. Nearby the tell-tale signs of nibbled leaves hinted I'd found what I was after but it took a few snaps to zoom in to before I was able to confirm I'd found my first ever Hairstreak larvae. Not the best pictures in the world but not bad considering its hand held in poor light.





That find alone made the trip to Bookham worthwhile but it was still early so next on my hitlist were some Orange-tips. Every Cuckooflower was carefully inspected for sleeping beauties, finding plenty of first instar larvae and still plenty of unhatched eggs, some still fresh indicating adults are still active.

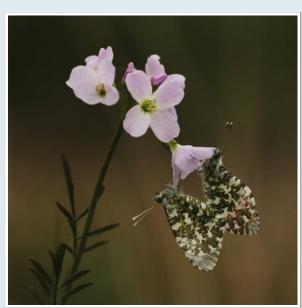


During my searches, I found a mating pair of Ruby Tiger Moths.



The search for Orange-tips finally came up trumps though, a mating pair. The female was hanging so I carefully poked her until she could grasp the flower he was attached to. This seemed to settle them down and I was able to clear the background a bit.





Half an hour later I discovered another male



And a last find for the day was a web of Small Tortoiseshells.



A thoroughly satisfying end to a day 😇

by Padfield, 03-May-17 11:01 PM GMT

Congratulations on the brown hairstreak larva, Buggy! Now you've got your eye in you'll find them much easier to spot. Good pictures, too.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 03-May-17 11:13 PM GMT

Well done Buggy on that hairstreak larva. You captured the hairiness beautifully. A great example of making the most of a cloudy afternoon – there's always something if you look hard enough.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-May-17 11:12 AM GMT

Thanks Guy and Dave 🔴

6th May Pearls, Whites and Walls

I've been itching to go and see the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries at Abbots Wood for a week or two but I wanted to leave it until I was sure they were out in reasonable numbers, my days off this May are thin on the ground having used most my annual leave this year to go hunting for my remaining lifers later in the season. The forecast suggested that there would be some sun in that part of the world today so trains were booked and I left bright and early with plans to bag three new species for the year. Abbots Wood for Pearls before popping down to Eastbourne and Beachy Head to see if the Walls are out on Wall Brown Alley. Large Whites are usually reasonably common at both sites and since I have yet to find one this year it would be a good tick that one off as well.

At Abbots Wood, just like last year, I got a bit lost. Everywhere looked familiar but I wasn't entirely sure what paths lead to the clearings, but Greenveined Whites were plentiful and kept me company.



Finally finding the main clearing at around 10, I was quite surprised to have the place to myself and even more surprised to not find any Fritillaries. Part of the clearing looked to have been quite severely cut back this year. I searched further afield, along the scrubby edges and parts that hadn't been cut back and finally saw one basking on some bare ground, an aged animal with some sort of scale defect on the hind wing. The promised sun was starting to burn through the thin cloud now and I quickly found another Pearl, this one a fresher animal but he only posed for one shot before shooting off.





I searched around for another 10 minutes but found no more here so I decided to make my way to the smaller clearing.

Along the now sunlit paths Red Admirals appeared regularly, many showing close shaves with bird attacks, no doubt the brightly coloured wing margins saving them by drawing attention away from the body.





Approaching the second clearing another Pearl zoomed past me and I stopped to chat with another butterflyer who told me there was a count of twenty Pearls at the main clearing earlier in the week \mathfrak{S} .

The next sighting was a large, rather pale looking Pearl which turned out to be a Painted Lady, most likely a fresh immigrant judging by the way it was guzzling Bluebell nectar like it was going out of fashion!



Real Pearls were active along the rides and paths surrounding the now overgrown clearing, all in feeding mode and made for perfect targets. There seemed to be lots but once I'd checked my photographs this one with the nibbled forewing tips was the one I photographed on several separate occasions.







In total, there was probably only three or four, plus one dead one. Not sure of his cause of death but we can be sure it wasn't old age.



Several Peacocks were active, mostly looking somewhat weather worn and possibly only just clinging on to life, this is probably the best conditioned one I saw



The lack of numbers though was more than made up for by the following beauty. I was just lining up a Brimstone when he fluttered into view, In my opinion a more beautiful individual than that Bentley Wood show off last year!









I'd be willing to bet those markings are down to the cold snap a few weeks ago.

Well that was events up to 11 $\stackrel{..}{ ext{$ ilde{ heta}}}$



by Maximus, 07-May-17 12:39 PM GMT

That's a stunning Pearl, Bugboy 😊 👨 Brilliant photos in your posts and a great shot of the Brown Hairstreak larva 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Susie, 07-May-17 02:58 PM GMT

Well done, buggy. That pearl's a beaut!

Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 07-May-17 04:14 PM GMT

Nice pictures from Abbotts Wood Buggy. Those Pearls are smashing.

I was planning a long trip there from Ipswich today, but the weather seemed a little hit and miss. Your photos suggest it may have been a faux pas on my part 💗

Regards Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 07-May-17 06:37 PM GMT

I have found two dead Pearls over the years, just like yours, in otherwise perfect condition. A complete mystery, how a fresh, intact Butterfly can suddenly die. Both examples I saw were, again like yours, found open wing as though basking.

Re: Bugboys mission

by SimonC69, 07-May-17 06:50 PM GMT

Wow! Those PBFs are beautiful, especially the Ab! Not sure I'll get them this year, but never say never....

Re: Bugboys mission

by Gary.N, 07-May-17 06:54 PM GMT

It was good to put a face to the name. I didn't find the Abs you found, but I tried. You got some really nice photos from Abbot's. 🖰



Gary

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 07-May-17 07:37 PM GMT

Quite often dead good condition butterflies havnt joined their tongues on hatching, for various reasons, like one half gets hooked around a leg, or disturbed while in the joining it process. This means they dont feed, even with a slight forked tongue, so live a day or two, then die.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-May-17 10:49 PM GMT

Cracking Pearl ab Bugboy 😊 Though it still has some way to go to do a 'Bentley' 😉 Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-May-17 05:42 PM GMT

That's one hell of a PBF, Bugboy....better possibly even than the ones posted from 2016. I share your view that those two days where we had unexpectedly cold nights could have been responsible.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-May-17 06:28 PM GMT

That is a splendid PBF aberration, Buggy! More subtle than last year's, which was a bit over-the-top black, perhaps. Yours has particularly attractive border markings. Wand most certainly.

by bugboy, 08-May-17 06:40 PM GMT

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-May-17 07:38 PM GMT

6th May Pearls, Whites and Walls part 2

Having found out that there were twenty Pearls seen earlier in the week I decided to head back to the main clearing. The sun was now warming the day up nicely, it was certainly high teens if not 20 degrees so I was certain I couldn't miss anything that was active. Red Admirals and Green-veined Whites kept me company again along the paths back but I had very similar results at the clearing, just two active. One may well have been the same fresh animal seen earlier, the second a melanistic ab that often turns up here. I've been told this ab is a sign of inbreeding depression. If true it's probably not a good thing that it regularly turns up here $\underbrace{0}_{i}$.









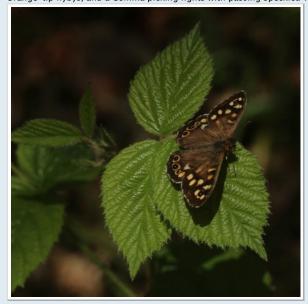
After finding no more I decided to make the move the Eastbourne and on to Beachy Head but as I walked around a corner behind the main clearing a couple of Whites caught my eye, one noticeably larger than the other. I was only able to grab a couple of record shots of my first Large White of the year though, I was distracted by a rather clumsy pair of Pearls in cop who crash landed in the middle of the path. In normal circumstances, I would have taken what pictures I could and left them alone but in this instance, I felt compelled to step in. There were several families and dog walkers out today and their choice of resting spot could well end in disaster. I carefully coaxed them onto my finger and moved them to some Bluebells at the edge of the path where they posed for me.







Time was getting on so I made my way back through the wood, not getting lost this time. Red Admirals and Green-veins being joined by a couple of Orange-tip flybys, and a Comma picking fights with passing Speckled Woods.









A couple of hours later, approaching Beachy Head the weather had changed for the worse (Gone was the warm sun, obscured by thickening cloud, and a chilly gusty breeze buffeted along Wall Brown Alley. I wasn't particularly hopeful but thankfully there were still a couple of males active. The chilly air had certainly slowed them down and I was able to approach closely as they tried to bask in what was left of the sun. When that failed, they took to shivering to keep their flight muscles up to temperature. I must off arrived just on the cusp of what can keep a Wall active as not long after I noticed they started to look for roosting spots in the scrub along the edge of the path.







I normally go Wall hunting in the afternoon, after their midday maniacal behaviour since the colonies I know of are all too far away to get to early in the morning to catch them waking up and its interesting that they always look to roost on the south facing side of this path, rather than follow the sun. This deliberate behaviour is almost certainly so they get hit by the morning sun so they can wake up bright and early.



I did hang around for some time hoping the clouds would clear. They did but it was too little too late, leaving the path and therefore most of the Walls in the shade. I did find a couple of other things to distract me though, a Tortrix moth, *Epiblema sp.* It does look like it may be *E. cnicicolana* which is quite rare but I'm not experienced enough to confirm, there are a lot of little Tortrix moths that all look very similar.



Finally I found a web of young Lackey Moth larvae.



by kevling, 08-May-17 08:18 PM GMT

Buggie, Those mating PBF are beautiful. You certainly manufactured a nice spot on those bluebells.

Regards Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 08-May-17 09:38 PM GMT

Wonderful pics Bugboy! You had a good day. I hope they will be around for me when I go to Dorset in 10 days' time!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-May-17 11:04 PM GMT

I think we'll have to agree to disagree over the ab ³ A great shot of the mating Pearls ¹ These and SPBFs are the only British Frits I've still got find in cop so have aother ¹

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-May-17 09:03 AM GMT

Thanks everyone,

They were very well behaved **Kevling**

With a bit of sun you should get plenty of Pearl action Janet

l'Il concede that the Bentley one had a good underside Wurzel, this one's was normal. Also you'll have to hang out with me more often, I got both PBF and SPBF in cop last year

7th May, Walthamstow Marshes

After yesterday's long trek across Sussex I treated myself to a nice long lie in, awaking to find thick grey clouds so any butterflying seemed out of the question. Things changed in the afternoon however, the sun came out and things warmed up quickly so I grabbed my camera and shot out to my local patch to see what was about. Yesterday I'd gone all the way to Sussex to find, amongst other things, Large Whites, so it shouldn't come as any surprise to hear that the very first butterfly I saw as I walked through the kissing gate was, yes, a male Large White! He didn't hang around for a picture but turning the corner I was greeted by a corner filled with fluttering whites. Closer inspection showed I had four Orange-tip, two of each sex, at least one Small white and several Green-veined at my disposal. They were all in feeding mode, probably having only recently awoken, and made easy targets as they gorged on Rape nectar.















Context

I stayed with them for about 15 minutes until the inevitable patrolling (or hiding if it were a female) set in so I moved on to check on the rape plants where I'd found Orange-tip eggs on a few weeks ago, on the way stopping to take some snaps of a Cardinal Beetle, managing to get him just as he was about to take off.



I found a single caterpillar who looks like he's been feeding well. Sadly I live in a part of the world where people think flowers are put on this earth to be picked, even with this being a SSSI site many parts of my patch show a fair bit of negative human activity, litter being the main problem, but I fear many of the eggs I found a few weeks ago have gone due to the simple selfish act of picking flowers 3.



I wandered further to see if any Common Blues have appeared in their regular corner of Hackney Marshes, the same spot a Small heath turned up last year, but nothing was flying. On the return walk I was accompanied by several unidentified Whites and a few Orange-tips.

I found one female flitting around, who had taken a liking to Common Vetch flowers, and watched a passing male harass her. Expecting the usual abdomen salute from her, she certainly wasn't a freshly emerged female, I was very surprised when she accepted his advances and they settled down to make babies. Can Orange-tip females mate more than once? This suggests they can.







I was also rather surprised to find at least four male Commas defending territories, not only that but they all looked to be in very good nick.





The final find was a healthy batch of Small Tortoiseshell larvae.



by Goldie M, 09-May-17 08:20 PM GMT

Unusual, shot of the mating Pearl's Bugboy, I've never seen them mating, I don't think I've seen many shots on UKB's of mating Pearls, they never seem to stop long enough to get shot's of single Pearls let a lone mating, great shot. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-May-17 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks **Goldie**, that's my second mating Pearls now, saw them last year as well but they were tucked away amongst the bluebells so the pictures were just record shots. Like most butterflies they hide away (or try to) when mating since they are vulnerable to predation when in cop.

9th May, Hutchinson's Bank part 1

Over the past few days the forecasters have made allegations to varying degrees of sun in the afternoon. With that in mind I plumped for an afternoon exploring Hutchinson's bank again, targets being Small and Common Blues which have both been seen here recently. Of course, there was also that taras Grizzlie I saw last time... I know, clutching at straws with that one $\widehat{\bullet}$!

For the first hour or so, the clouds hung like a bad omen, out of the breeze it wasn't exactly cold but it didn't feel warm enough for any activity and so it was that nothing was seen. I bumped into another butterflier during my wanderings, (whose name now escapes me but he'd come all the way up from Sussex) chatted for a bit and then joined forces looking for roosting Skippers and Blues. We wandered around slowly from the cutting over to the main scrape and it was here that we finally disturbed something. A tiny silvery butterfly fluttered low and landed a short distance in front of us. The clouds seemed to be thinning and after a while our first butterfly of the day, and my first Small Blue of the year even tried to bask, letting us know he was a very fresh and attractive male, most likely just having taken his maiden flight.



He fluttered around for a bit allowing us a range of snaps before we left him in search for more.





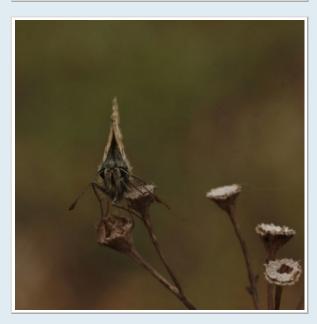
We separated in the scrape and I finally noticed a roosting Grizzlie. As I was kneeling down to photograph him I glanced to my side and nearby, on a dead knapweed flowerhead was a Dingy. I noticed the Dingy had a little friend hanging around





As we took snaps we could feel the air temperature slowly creeping up, with chinks of blue sky now appearing. At one point I stood up to stretch my ageing legs and, stepping back, I glanced behind me to find perched in plain sight an aged looking Grzzlie ab. taras ! Now I have no way of knowing if it was the same one as last time (that would make him at least 14 days old) but he did look tatty enough and he was in the same corner of the site.







My acquaintance had to leave shortly after, leaving me with the place to myself and with the clouds breaking up I had a good feeling I'd be seeing more goodies.

The intermittent sun had awoken a couple of Small Heath, who I found frolicking in the scrape along with several more Dingy Skippers and another, tiny Grizzled Skipper, barely larger than the Small Blue I'd seen earlier. One of the Dingy Skippers was a beautifully marked female, looking anything but dingy.





An aged male also took a liking to her, for somewhat more nefarious reasons no doubt, but she managed to lose him.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-May-17 08:46 PM GMT

9th May, Hutchinson's Bank part 2

The warmed air had by now also woken up a few Peacocks and Brimstones, females and males respectively, but just as I was tempted by a basking Peacock a flash of blue scooted down the slope and vanished from sight. I followed in the general direction only to see it coming back up towards me and settle nearby, low down in the turf. I managed a few record shots before attempting a bit of gardening to get a clearer shot. Thankfully a passing cloud had calmed him down and I was able to get some nice shots of target number three of the day.





Butterflies seemed to be emerging all around me, this Dingy Skipper an attractive dark individual was quickly followed by another Small Blue, the underside spotting confirming it was indeed a second individual.









Ten minutes later I had my third Small Blue of the day, another fresh male.





Having got my fill of Blues I decided to make the move home, stopping briefly for a couple of willing subjects.



My attempt at an early start home though was thwarted when I saw a male Orange-tip on the path back up to the Tram stop. A passing female entered the scene and there followed the predictable shenanigans which had my finger glued to my camera shutter button.



They finally left each other alone only for a Holly Blue to appear, then a second and a third. Two females and a male. Their encounters were much briefer than the Orange-tip's, a quick fluttering of wings sending the male on his merry way. They all flitted up and down the path, the females settling occasionally allowing me some nice shots, the best Holly Blues I've had this season... and I didn't even whisper to them Θ !









A good end to a day that certainly exceeded expectations

by MrSp0ck, 10-May-17 09:21 PM GMT

Some great sightings again, I will have to find the Grizzled ab for myself. A second trip without Mr Spock on site, thats another rare event.

There was a Surrey BC walk today, waiting to hear if they had as much luck as your visit.

The next few weeks should be good at HB, upto the Gatekeepers, when the season drops off so quickly.

I know you wander into Frylands Wood, the coppice area at the far end is now full of Bluebells and 1000s Early Purple Orchids



by bugboy, 11-May-17 08:55 PM GMT

MrSp0ck wrote:

Some great sightings again, I will have to find the Grizzled ab for myself. A second trip without Mr Spock on site, thats another rare event.

I'm sure I'll bump into you next time, the Glanvilles will most likely be out then $\stackrel{ ext{ }}{\oplus}$

10th May, Dukes

I'm finding it hard to keep up with my own diary at the moment never mind about anyone else, I seem to have managed to squeeze in a lot of trips into not much time 😌 .

Anyway I was meant to work today, 8 til 6 but somehow managed to wangle a half day and after seeing that SimonC69 had seen some Dukes at Bison Hill, there was only one place on my mind to head for and an hour later I found myself arriving at Tring. Unlike most visits here I didn't hang around too long at Aldbury Nowers, wanting to get to the Dukes before they had finished for the day. Orange-tips were active though, one of whom had had a rather eventful emergence, and for the first time this year I saw good numbers of Brimstone, close to double figures by the time I got to the other side of the reserve.

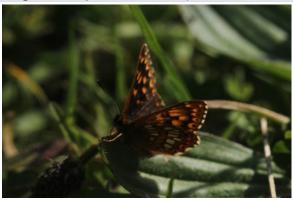


A few more sprigs of Garlic Mustard have popped up here and there, still mostly pathetic looking stunted growths but everyone fully loaded with Orange-tip eggs, laying opportunities for them are still at a premium here and even the sprigs in full shade are being used.



I made the walk to Ivinghoe beacon in record time, the glorious weather filling me with hope. I had several false starts on the paths leading up to the open scrub behind the car park, Dingy Skippers were out in good numbers but just turning the corner into the first hotspot a small dark butterfly flew across the path and settled, he was very dark and very fresh looking but unmistakably todays target. Once he settled I

managed a few snaps before he vanished, so fresh was he that he hadn't even had time to set up a territory!





Searching all the usual sunlit sheltered corners turned up no more so I moved into the sheltered gullies and scrub behind the actual Beacon, more Dingy's catching my eye and I stopped to chat to a man who had just started doing his Duke transect. I found out he'd seen one here already and that he'd seen the first one this year a few weeks ago. I quickly found the one already seen, another freshly emerged male, who like the first one hadn't yet set up a territory and was busy flitting along the path.



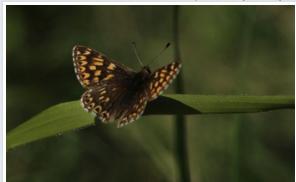
I then stumbled across another one, quite possibly the one from a few weeks ago, holding a territory and behaving like a typical angry Duke, chasing every bird, bee or butterfly that passed by.

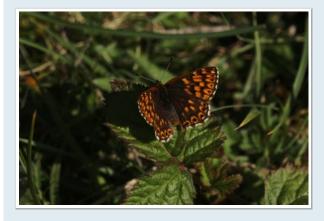


Then the young whipper snapper appeared and they vanished like a whirlwind into the air. 30 seconds later the victor reappeared, the newbie. He buzzed around, stopped to feed and then left. Young Dukes nowadays, don't know their born 😇!

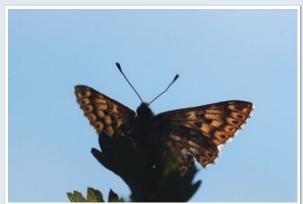


I wandered around for the next hour or so, eventually finding a total of six to end the day with, including a Duchess.















Also around were a couple of Green Hairstreak which proved impossible to get anywhere near to capture on camera, which was a shame since as far as I could see they were opposite ends of the spectrum, one was completely streakless whereas the other looked to be as fully endowed as the one posted by **Kip** recently.

The young Dukes were still active well after 4, typical youths, staying up late but I eventually I tore myself away and wandered back to Aldbury Nowers. The sun was quite low by now but the Orange-tips were still active and I found the same unfortunate individual as in the morning, fluttering weakly along. Despite his appearance, he had managed to navigate to the other end of the path, a 10 minute walk for me, very impressive!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-May-17 10:24 PM GMT

A very nice selection of Dukes, Buggy - and the most determined Orange Tip I've seen in a while! Amazing resilience. I think a visit to the Chiltern Duke sites is definitely overdue!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-May-17 10:48 PM GMT

Indeed as Dave says a great selection of Dukes Bugboy 😊 Also interesting to see the taras Grizzlie, cracking set of markings 😊 👨



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 12-May-17 12:41 PM GMT

Your so Lucky Bugboy, you've got a Grizzlie ab and I'm still looking for my first Grizzlie 😇 🐨 Goldie 😌

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 12-May-17 04:23 PM GMT

You're lucky to get to the right places on the right days, Bugboy! Great photos and I'm looking forward to finding my first Dukes soon. 😊 Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-May-17 09:37 PM GMT

Thank you everyone for your comments 🐸

12th May, Bookham's Babies

I had another half day on Friday and was in two minds as to whether to go out or not for the afternoon. It was grey and somewhat damp for most the morning but I decided to put my trust in the forecasters and hope the promised sun would appear.

Upon arrival, it would seem my luck was in with a few chinks of sun breaking through. My first thought was to check on the Brown Hairstreak cat I found on my last visit. Something rather odd was going on there which can be seen in a thread I started last night. http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=9306

At first I thought he was dead but zooming in on my photo's it looks plump and alive. I checked it just before leaving and it hadn't moved 🤨 .

Orange-tip cats were predictably easy to find and there's still plenty of eggs and the first butterfly I saw was a female Orange-tip. As I followed her around, hoping to get a snap of her egg laying a tiny orange thing flashed from under my feet, Bookham's first Copper of the year $\stackrel{\bigcirc}{\omega}$. He was very flighty so I only managed a few shots before he vanished across the swaying grass.







The afternoon was brightening up by the minute and next on the seen were a couple of egg laying Comma's and another Small Copper.







Last time I was here I also tried to find my hatchling Purple Hairstreak but failed. Having seen Pauline's pictures I felt sure that if it was still alive I should be able to find it. Well I looked and looked, easily finding the hatched egg but couldn't for the life of me see the cat. Turns out it was looking straight back at me, I wasn't expecting it to be so big 😂 🖰 !



 $I \ took \ a \ wander \ into \ the \ wood \ and \ was \ most \ pleased \ to \ find \ a \ Red \ admiral \ gorging \ on \ Bluebell \ nectar, \ looking \ stunning \ in \ the \ sun.$





In the next glade I found a couple of male Comma's fighting and basking



And then what I at first took to be a Holly Blue stopped by, dropping out from the trees.



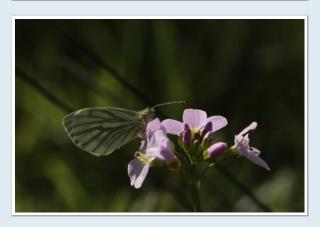


When he went back into the trees, presumably looking for a nice meadow, I decided to try and find a White Admiral cat, still never having seen one in its post hibernation green livery. It didn't take long at all to end that duck! Pictures simply don't do them justice at all, spectacular beasts! I would say freshly moulted into final instar?



Returning to the scrubland a few more coppers were active, mostly looking pristine and whilst looking for Orange-tips during the cloudy periods I found a couple of Green-veined Whites, one still wet and only hours old, the other a more mature lady of perhaps a week old who I managed to capture just as she was about to take to the air, giving me my favourite image of a GVW to date.













Turns out I made the right decision on how to spend the afternoon and if the Coppers continue to emerge at this rate I may have to borrow Hoggers Copper-o-meter 🕒!

by Pauline, 14-May-17 06:14 AM GMT

Your diary is always of interest Buggy. I am impressed at you finding PH larva in the wild – something I have not yet managed despite having a colony in the garden. Happy I was able to help tho and reassuring to see it at the same stage as my captive ones. If you visit again before it pupates I'd love to hear about it as they don't seem to move far.

by Wurzel, 14-May-17 10:30 PM GMT

Great report Buggy and a lovely set of shots – Common Blue doing impersonations, Red Admiral on Bluebells and capped off with a lovely looking Blue Badger $\stackrel{\longleftarrow}{\oplus}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-May-17 10:57 PM GMT

Great to see a Comma again, Bugboy, and even better to see a Red Admiral nectaring from bluebells - something I've never witnessed before.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 14-May-17 11:17 PM GMT

Lots of little green faces, Buggy! To tovely Small Coppers (especially the second to last one), a splendid chubby White Admiral caterpillar, and the Purple Hairstreak caterpillar too. Excellent range of things.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 15-May-17 10:03 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, you've always got a great range of Butterflies which I enjoy in your posts and envy 😇 😇 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-May-17 07:06 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

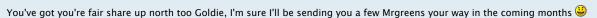
Your diary is always of interest Buggy. I am impressed at you finding PH larva in the wild – something I have not yet managed despite having a colony in the garden. Happy I was able to help tho and reassuring to see it at the same stage as my captive ones. If you visit again before it pupates I'd love to hear about it as they don't seem to move far.

Thanks Pauline . Had I not found the egg over the winter though I wouldn't have known where to start. Even so it took me ages to find it, even though it was in plain sight! I do hope to visit again before it pupates.

Thanks Wurzel, David and Dave it turned into a very productive afternoon 😃

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Bugboy, you've always got a great range of Butterflies which I enjoy in your posts and envy 😇 😇 😉 Goldie 😂



15the May, Local patch

I was half day today but since it was particularly wet and grey I spent most the afternoon at the cinema. However when I left things seemed to be clearing up a little bit, not exactly sunny but perhaps worth an hours wander. Although I found nothing with wings I did check on the Orange-tip cat that I found on Rape, it seems to be doing rather well and so does a friend close by.





It's interesting that they seem to be favouring the newly developed seed pods rather than the plumper ones further down the stem.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-May-17 10:46 PM GMT

16th May, Denbies

This week's weather didn't look too promising at all but I decided to risk a trip to see the Adonis, and hopefully some Brown Argus, on Denbies Hillside. It seemed to be touch and go as to whether I was going to get drenched or not but It hadn't rained by the time I got to the hillside a little before 10 and the clouds were beginning to break. It was however, rather windy, windier than the average Denbies day in fact.

A few Dingy Skippers and Small Heath were active on arrival, getting battered in the wind but I couldn't find any Green Hairstreaks, most likely hunkered down somewhere safe.

Moving out onto the hillside proper I began to get a bad feeling, the wind was gusting very strongly across the valley and even though the sun was beginning to appear and warm the air, what was flying was mostly being whipped past me or being blown ragged and dumped in the turf. Just when I was thinking my luck was out though, one of the things getting unceremoniously dumped in the turf was blue! He was doing his best to go about his business though.



A few minutes later another one got blown past, this time a brighter blue, at last 🚇 . Like the Common, he was doing his best in the adverse conditions too.





After him they started to appear with increasing regularity, usually from under my feet, the wind forcing them to bask down in the turf so I didn't see most of them until it was too late. Overall though, dogged determination succeeded in getting better results than I was expecting from the dozen or so males I managed to see.







I also came across a beautiful female Common Blue, and I wasn't her only admirer, a male Adonis thought her equally beautiful and spent a fair time gazing longingly at her whilst she fed before chasing after her when she moved on Θ .



I managed a couple of female Adonis too, both beautiful ladies.





I wish all Adonis females had that much blue scaling around the lunules, it would make things so much easier in their second brood, sifting them out of the Chalkhill ladies!

And then a mating pair of Common's.



It was at this point that I met up with my Chauffeur for the rest of the day, **Susie**. Before leaving for the next port of call we had another look for Green Hairstreak, finding two who weren't particularly cooperative and loads of Rose Chafers.





A Male Brimstone stopped by and posed for me whilst Susie was otherwise occupied



then we moved to a more sheltered spot lower down the slope for one final search. A single Grizzled flew past, the only one I saw, a female Green Hairstreak darted around and finally I got my second target of the day, a couple of Brown Argus taking my year's total to an impressive 25 species!



One thing I will say, the recent rain has done the world of good to the site. The ground still looks a little on the dry side but it looks significantly greener than my previous visits this year. Fingers crossed it's enough to feed the summer generations that are currently munching their way towards pupation!

It was gone 11 now and time to head off to look for species number 26...

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-May-17 09:02 PM GMT

16th May, Part 2

So where to next? Well the time had come to tick off another lifer, the destination, Chiddingfold Wood. Target? Well obviously Wood Whites. I had intended to visit last year but since the wood seems to occupy some sort of public transport black hole and the 'Weather God's' failed to align up with the 'Time Off From Work Gods' **Susie** was unable to help me get there last year. We'd debated all week about today but in the end we just decided to take the plunge and risk it.

Over the past few years I've read countless reports about this legendary place, the fabled 'Botany Bay Entrance' and whispers about a 'Triangle' where these little butterflies lurk, so I was quite excited about finally being here. The weather seemed to be on our side too with plenty of sunny intervals to keep them active but not too active, and being woodland, the wind wasn't going to be much of a problem.

With Susie leading the way we wandered down the path and it didn't take long for Susie to spot one up ahead, a wanderer from the main hotspot. I took a few record shots of my first Wood White on British soil (I saw a few in Slovenia many years ago) and then moved on, Susie promising me there would be plenty more.



True to her word more did appear, the first batch seeming to favour the shady half of the path so didn't give me many photographic opportunities but after that they were mainly on the sunny side, flopping around like little drunk fairies without a care for our presence.













We spent about an hour and a half here in the end and I managed to get the full Wood White experience: plenty of egg laying females,



several courting pairs







and a mating pair being harassed.







Seeing the courtship made my day, I've read about it and seen pictures but watching the male flick his head from side to side as he whips his chosen lady with his tongue is quite a bizarre and comical thing to see $\stackrel{f \Theta}{=}$.

There were other butterflies around, a couple of Peacock, a Speckled Wood, a Green-veined White, a Red Admiral and several Brimstone were active, of them though only a courting pair of Brimstone drew my camera away from the Wood Whites, he was VERY persistant!



And on the return trip I was very chuffed with a Speckled Yellow posing well for me in a sea of Speedwell.



All in all a exceedingly good day was had in lovely company, thank you Susie, only a year late 🧿

Re: Bugboys mission

by Susie, 17-May-17 09:08 PM GMT

Lovely photos, Buggy. I'll ignore that last comment of yours, cheeky s*d!



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-May-17 09:24 PM GMT

You sure soaked it all up, Bugboy. I daresay the level of satisfaction was all the higher for having waited so long?

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-May-17 10:03 PM GMT

They are a lovely butterfly, Buggy and unique in their behaviour. When you see their little courtship ritual for real for the first time, it's hard to believe. A splendid set of photos as well!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 17-May-17 11:20 PM GMT

Well done in finally seeing the English Wood Whites, Bugboy, and some nice photos too. Also great that you found the Chiltern Dukes and of course the Adonis Blues at Denbies 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-May-17 10:19 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Buggy $\stackrel{ ext{deg}}{\oplus}$ They are probably the most ethereal of the British butterflies and you've certainly captured some of their waif like qualities $\stackrel{ ext{deg}}{\oplus}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-May-17 09:45 PM GMT

Thank you all, they certainly lived up to their reputation of just flopping around nonchalantly, minding their own business and not at all bothered by your presence $\begin{tabular}{l} \end{tabular}$

22nd May, Dukes and stuff (Part 1)

Well it was another half day so another afternoon spent with minor royalty. It was definitely warmer than previous visits this year with Brimstones and Orange-tips active on the walk, not stopping for anyone, but then neither was I.

I got to Ivinghoe Beacon at around 2 to find not too much activity on the Duke front. I spent an hour and half exploring the hot spots but was left feeling a little disappointed (which is silly really considering only two years ago I was over the moon at finding one), finding just six or so Dukes and a couple of Duchesses. Admittedly I was a bit late to the day's party, I'm sure there were many more active earlier in the day. I think part of the disappointment was due to the challenging photography conditions, the brisk breeze was coming from just the right/wrong angle to whistle along the normally sheltered gullies and added to this there was a fair bit of thermoregulation going on due to hot sun, so I'm quite surprised I managed to achieve what I did in the end.













Mixed in with the Dukes were a few Brown Argus, some looking very handsome and worthy of my attention and one with rather pale forewing lunules, ab maybe?









Note the pale forewing lunules.

Other species that popped by included a single Peacock, a Red Admiral, an orange-tip and a couple of Brimstone. Dingy Skippers caused several false Duke alarms but a fresh Grizzled will always draw my attention. I was surprised not to come across any Small Blues though.



Breaking up the Duke watching were some Green Hairstreaks which proved to be almost impossible to get snaps of. Nearly always settling in the most awkward positions, mostly on the ground mud puddling but almost every time with the sun in my face with the narrow path making it impossible to get the right side of them.



By half 3 I decided to call it a day for the Dukes and turned my attention to a more leisurely wander back to Aldbury, things were far from over for the day though...

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-May-17 10:47 PM GMT

That Brown Argus is unusual, Buggy. Was it symmetrical? Funnily enough I've never managed to photograph a Green Hairstreak at Ivinghoe – as you say, they are never in the right position. A nice set of Dukes, though, and I'm looking forward to what appeared on Pitstone Hill and over to Aldbury...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 25-May-17 08:42 AM GMT

Nice Dukes, I am hoping to be at Ivinghoe tomorrow for my annual pilgrimage. And then to a secret small blue hotspot (well secret to me as I can never find it on my own). I look forward to the next bit....

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-May-17 08:38 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

That Brown Argus is unusual, Buggy. Was it symmetrical? Funnily enough I've never managed to photograph a Green Hairstreak at Ivinghoe – as you say, they are never in the right position. A nice set of Dukes, though, and I'm looking forward to what appeared on Pitstone Hill and over to Aldbury...

Dave

I'm not sure dave, I only managed pictures from that angle before I lost him.

Art Frames wrote:

Nice Dukes, I am hoping to be at Ivinghoe tomorrow for my annual pilgrimage. And then to a secret small blue hotspot (well secret to me as I can never find it on my own). I look forward to the next bit....

Thanks peter, I hope you had luck with them, if anything this weather is probably too hot for them so I hope you got there early before they started hiding from the sun!

22nd May, Dukes and stuff (Part 2)

I decided to take the scenic route back, going around the edge of Pitstone Hill where it was somewhat sheltered from the breeze. Being carpeted with Rockrose, it's no surprise to find Brown Argus in good numbers here. Amongst them were a smattering of Common Blue who seem to be having a much better year than last year.

I focused on one male, who in flight at least looked particular fresh and followed him around. He settled regularly to feed but at first refused to sit right for me or open his wings. When he did finally pose for me I got a shock. My first thought on seeing the thick dark border to the wings was "Christ, bit early for Silver Studded!" She has to be the bluest female Common Blue I've ever seen. I followed her around for some time as she posed perfectly for me.









She alone made the trip worthwhile, what an absolute stunner Θ !

A few minutes later a Green Hairstreak fluttered past. She was much more cooperative than the ones over at the beacon and sat patiently whilst I positioned myself fpr a close up.



Leaving her alone I moved along just a few steps to find more Hairstreaks, and then more! It was much like the Hawthorn 'master tree' at Denbies only this colony had taken up residence over several young Hawthorn shrubs, each one seemed to have its own resident male who was defended it with vigour against any interloper. Needless to say, I spent a bit of time watching and photographing them.









It was gone 5 by the time I managed to tear myself away from them.

Not a great deal was going on at Aldbury Nowers, whether it was too late in the day or its having a poor year I don't know. Still no sign of Small Blue here, and slightly more worrying no sign of the kidney Vetch I was photographing eggs on last year. A few Common Blues were about, genuine males this time.



 $And the final \ butterfly \ of the \ day \ was \ this \ Snoozing \ Grizzled \ Skipper \ who \ must \ have \ only \ recently \ settled \ down, \ my \ attentions \ awoke \ her \ and \ she \ and \ she \ she \ and \ she \ sh$

buzzed of to find a brighter patch to bask in the hazy evening sun







Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 25-May-17 08:50 PM GMT

I would have commented on your Green Hairstreaks Buggy as you've got some really nice images there but that female Blue is incredible – surely has to be an ab. but gorgeous anyway. Never seen anything like it!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-May-17 10:19 PM GMT

Definitely one of the most attractive female Common Blues I've ever seen – a veritable jewel! 🥮



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-May-17 10:32 PM GMT

Cracking Dukes Buggy and that really is BLUE female common Blue 😊 🐨 I don't think I've seen one where the blue continues right up to the edge of the hind wing like that – it could almost be the Irish race 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-May-17 11:16 PM GMT

Thanks guys, she was an absolute stunner, even after finding he was a she, she still looked male in flight.

23rd May, Blues and Walls

This 'week's day off adventure' took me down to Sussex again. The years first trip to Malling Down and then off to Wall Brown Alley.

Two years ago when I first visited Malling Down I was blown away by the amount of activity, I wasn't used to this kind of butterfly density having done most of my butterflying in London until then. Last year, as with most sites, numbers were significantly lower and today there was very little going on at all. Having said all that I have only every explored the north side, around the old chalk works.

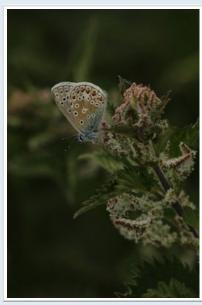
Today there were a few Dingy Skippers, Small Heath and Common Blues active, but not in numbers I had hoped for and pretty soon it clouded over sending most of them back to roost.











It was still quite early though, not even 10, so I took out my phone and looked on google maps to find the path that took me to the south side. On the way a passing male Wall taunted me, flying past but only settling just over the edge of the steep slopes, offering no more than a record shot or risk almost certain death in trying for anything more, pretty sure he was watching my every move, possibly with a smirk!

It felt a bit warmer on the southern slopes and hitting the steep parts, little blue jewels began appearing in the short turf. It was just warm enough to keep the Adonis active with plenty of males dotted amongst the Horseshoe Vetch, the bright cloudy light making them positively glow.



Getting a bit defensive over a rabbit dropping.



I also managed to tick off Adonis in cop. I got the feeling the male was showing of his conquest with the female just quietly sitting there regretting her choice of males!





A few hours later I was down on the coast making my way to see if the Walls were still active. I wasn't holding much hope though, it had descended to a rather cloudy and very windy afternoon with just the odd Common Blue active in the occasional sheltered spot.



However arriving at Wall Brown Alley I was pleased to find it well sheltered from the wind and felt a good few degrees warmer, warm enough for several male Walls to be going about their activities, but not so warm as to make them unapproachable, perfect Θ .













Also here was a very flighty Painted Lady and an ovipositing Red Admiral who seemed only able to find one small patch of nettle, there was about a dozen eggs dotted over a few favoured leaves.



It slowly brightened up as the afternoon wore on and on the return walk back to Eastbourne Common Blues were living up to their name, joined for a few Small Copper.









A slow start but it turned into a very pleasant day indeed 😃

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-May-17 08:49 PM GMT

27th May, Bookham

I spent a few hours wandering around Bookham today but despite the warm conditions it was rather quiet. Last time I was here I found several caterpillars (none of which I was able to relocate today, probably dead or pupated), the Small Coppers had just started to emerge (the first gen seems to be all but over now) and Orange-tips were still active (none seen today although there are still eggs about).

The commonest butterfly today was the Common Blue with six or seven males seen.







Three or four tired looking Small Copper were active





A few Speckled Wood



And singletons of Peacock, Small Heath, Brimstone and Red Admiral.





There were a few other inhabitants to keep me occupied, the wonderfully magnificent Longhorn Beetle, *Agapanthia villosoviridescens* (coincidentally also seen by Millerd today on his local patch)





A tiny sparkling micro moth, Glyphipterix thrasonella



I came across a couple of Buff-tips, a species I last saw when I was at school I think. I think they must have emerged last night and got stranded on the dock leaf. I moved them to a more suitable location, it was interesting how they both seemed to instinctively move to the edge of the broken stick.





Nearby I found a moth caterpillar munching on some Silver Birch, not sure what species yet as I have yet to delve into my books.



And finally there were a few of these wonderful Froghoppers, Cercopis vulnerate, lurking in the undergrowth



I have a feeling the June gap has arrived a week early this year $\stackrel{ extstyle extsty$



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 27-May-17 09:15 PM GMT

A good little selection, Buggy, but I know what you mean about the "gap" feeling.

Strange you should get a shot of the same beetle species as I did, though they are pretty eye-catching with those spectacular antennae.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-May-17 11:49 AM GMT

28th May, Hutchinson's bank

With the very real risk of thunder and lightning this afternoon I decided to stay closer to home and see if I could catch an early Glanville. The muggy and intermittently sunny conditions seemed good for a sighting but all I got were a few reports of "one was possibly seen earlier" and "I've been here 2 hours and no sign of one". There was an open day here and with so many eye's all over the site, if one was posing well it should have been discovered.

Instead the butterfly of the day was the Small Blue, they were literally everywhere and easily numbered in the hundreds, far outnumbering the combined numbers of all other species seen. I've never seen them in such densities. Needless to say, I got to see a good range of behaviours and activities.

















Bottoms up!





This female was desperately trying to lay as the male followed her round in circles.





There were also several Green Hairstreak around, females looking to lay with Birds-foot Trefoil seeming to be the favoured LHP, although I never actually witnessed an egg being laid.



Common Blues were probably second in numbers after their Small cousins and amongst the many males I found another exceedingly blue female.





 $\label{lem:both_sexes} \mbox{Brimstones were reasonably plentiful, both sexes stopping to feed regularly.}$



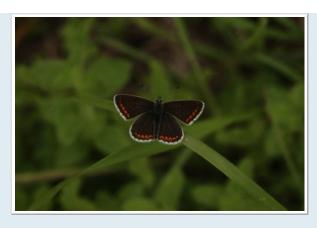




Other species seen were several Small Heath and Dingy Skippers



I left as some dark clouds looked ominously close, stopping just long enough to find a male Brown Argus, a lone Peacock and some roosting Common Blues







Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-May-17 10:05 PM GMT

Great Small Blues and Walls (from previous-previous post) Buggy 😌 😇 I thought the Glannies had started emerging from Hutchinson's?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-May-17 09:09 AM GMT

As of Sunday Wurzel I think there's been three confirmed sightings but they've not hung around where they've emerged

29th May, Walthamstow Marshes

From the window it didn't look very promising today. Low, grey clouds as far as the eye could see but I thought I'd pop out for the afternoon just on the off chance. The overcast conditions belied the fact that it was really rather warm and very muggy and arriving on site I was pleasantly surprised to find a

few Common Blue active, a couple of male and yet again a very blue female.





Several times throughout the afternoon it attempted to rain, rather pathetic light drizzle which didn't really seem to stop the butterfly activity, I found a Speckled Wood and a few Holly Blue during my wanderings as well as an unidentified White





The Orange-tip cats feeding on Rape seem to be doing ok.



I decided to make my way over to Hackney Marshes, on the other side of the River Lea, where I saw a lone Small Heath last year. On my way several more Common Blues were enjoying the muggy conditions, all males.



It had got a bit gloomier by the time I crossed the river, and the drizzle was a little more persistent, no less pathetic though, and for a while no butterflies were seen. Moths were everywhere though, lots of Yellow Shells, Burnet Companions and micro moths. Finally a butterfly joined them, another Common Blue basking in the drizzle. He flew off before I got my camera on him. There were also lots of Damselflies around, mostly Common Blue with the occasional Blue-tailed and an unidentified Dragonfly occasionally zoomed past.





A little later, joining the various orange and yellow moths I saw something buzzing around much faster, my first Large Skipper of the year. I watched him flying around maniacally for about a minute, seemingly very excited by the new flappy growths on the side of his body and although he threatened to land a few times, I finally lost him. Whilst searching for him I disturbed a female Common Blue and then whizzing past me came a large sandy coloured butterfly, a home grown Painted Lady, wings still soft, looking quite glorious in the subdued light.



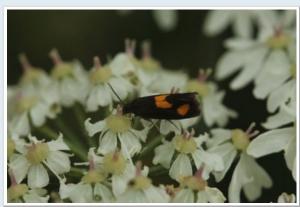


I probably saw about 10 Common Blues in the end, which given the weather and the fact this is east London, not some home county down land, is not too shabby at all $\stackrel{\textcircled{\tiny 6}}{=}$!

A small selection of the moths I found during my wanderings:



White Plume Pterophorus pentadactyla



Pammene aurana



Chrysoteuchia culmella



Yarrow Plume, Gillmeria pallidactyla

by millerd, 30-May-17 09:46 PM GMT

A home-grown Painted Lady is a great find, Buggy. 🚇 It would be good to see a few more... I came across one at Denbies and then one at Bookham the other day, but that's about it.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-May-17 10:16 PM GMT

Love the markings on the Pammene aurana Bugboy 😊 Lovely set of Blues too – hopefully the Glannies will be about at HB in reasonable numbers this weekend, fingers crossed...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-May-17 10:54 PM GMT

31st May, Epping Forest

Well this will be my last report for a couple of weeks, off on some trips which will hopefully mean I have lots of pictures to share and will leave me behind by Wurzel proportions for some months to come! I may just bump into the odd familiar face on my travels as well, but back to today.

It's been a while since I've been to Epping and I had been promised by those people on the TV that I was in for wall to wall blue sky.... HA 😇!



Well at least it was warm if somewhat muggy under they mostly cloudy conditions. For the first half hour or so the only butterfly I saw were Small Heath, they were everywhere but mostly rather uncooperative. A little persistence did pay off though and I managed some standard Small Heath shots, they were mostly past their best but I did see a few fresh animals in amongst them.





I couldn't help but notice Small Ermine moth caterpillars had stripped bare several large patches of Blackthorn. Close up they are mostly pupating, looking like some sort of alien pods.





Once into the woodland Speckled Woods replaced the Heaths, with lots of fresh males dotted around the edges of paths and rides.







I was watching and trying to grab a few snaps (and failing) of a couple of Holly Blues who were mud puddling on the damp path when A female red admiral sailed into view. I was able to quickly train my camera on her as she deposited an egg.



A couple of minutes later I found another Holly Blue doing the same thing and this time managed a few snaps. I had assumed it was a male until it fluttered up onto some leaves to bask revealing a very fresh female.



I'd been hoping for some Small Coppers but found none at the first hot spot, where the Small Heath hang out but at the second one this female settled in front of me, a little aged but displaying some very reduced spotting. A second fresher and more normal looking individual showed up shortly after.







Context shot showing lots of Sorrel
I wandered further but it had started to cloud over a bit more and saw nothing more until I returned to the Small Copper meadow an hour and half later where I was surprised to find three male Common Blue active. I've been exploring Epping Forest on and off for about ten years and I've never Seen Common Blue in this part. I also found another Copper, this one a male.





I saw very little during the rest of the return journey, the skies had darkened substantially, although some Small Heath were still active but of course the law of sod struck as soon as I was on the train home, the clouds broke and suddenly there were large patches of blue sky, enough to tempt me out for

an hour or two onto Walthamstow Marshes. The law of sod was having a good old laugh at my expense today, as soon as I got there the sun vanished to be replaced by a leaden, ominous looking sky.

It was definitely too dark for anything to fly but searching for roosting Blues came up trumps, probably found about twenty in the end which is quite remarkable considering last year I was hard pushed to find one here on a warm sunny afternoon! They were almost all males apart from a single female whom I disturbed, yet another very blue female but you'll just have to take my word for it this time.









an ab. with reduced spotting



I also found one Small Copper, my first one here this year, hopefully the first of many.



I consider Latticed Heath honorary Butterflies 😃



by millerd, 31-May-17 11:02 PM GMT

My turn to contribute a for that female Holly Blue, Buggy! I haven't seen one for a few days now. And more Small Coppers! I still haven't found a single one... You'll have to let me know where your Bookham hotspot is.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-May-17 11:21 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

My turn to contribute a for that female Holly Blue, Buggy! I haven't seen one for a few days now. And more Small Coppers! I still haven't found a single one... You'll have to let me know where your Bookham hotspot is.

Dave

I'm honoured 🗡!

As for Small coppers at Bookham, anywhere in the open scrub between the train station up to the main path that leads to the Brown Hairstreak hotspots. You might have to wait until the second brood appears there now though, only found a couple worn individuals on my last visit. It seems about a fortnight behind Hoggers lot on Dungerness so keep an eye on his diary and time it from there I reckon.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jun-17 02:30 PM GMT

1st June, Black Hairstreak

Well it seems like an age since I last posted anything on here, travels and limited internet access have kept me out of the loop apart from the occasional peek. Not quite sure when I'll be able to catch up on everyone else's reports as well as catch up on mine.....soooooo mnay photographs to trawl through!

Anyway on the 29th May I was tipped off by **PhiliB** that the Black Hairstreaks at Monks Wood were out, just a couple, but even that was enough to get me thinking about a trip up there before the week was out before my excursions to the 'colonies'. When Phil next reported seeing several more a day or so later the trip was sealed, Thursday, and this year I was determined to see them on my first trip!

I arrived bright and early and within half an hour saw my first Hairstreak, flitting along some Blackthorn and off into the wood, an excellent start to the day. As I stopped to see if it would come back a flash of orange caught my eye and I got my first chance at photographing a Large Skipper of the year, just a few snaps before I set off down to the main path and Hairstreak hotspot.



Phil had giving me a few pointers of where exactly to head and very quickly I found two or three enjoying the morning sun in a recently cleared patch, still not close enough to photograph but nevertheless it was good to watch them jinking around in typical hairstreak fashion. Wandering around the Orchids were also catching my eye, especially a nice Butterfly Orchid in full flower



About an hour after I arrived I met up with Phil, who's expert eyes soon found me one low down feeding on honeydew. He wasn't in the best position to get pictures but considering I only managed three pictures from a very brief encounter last year I was very happy with what I got.







It was difficult to put a figure on the numbers with only three or four seen at any one time but it was great seeing them. Occasionally one would land low down to bask but I was generally not fast enough, although I was silly enough to miss a second good opportunity when I went walkabout only to return to find Phil had been calling me when a female had come down to bask for a while \mathfrak{S} .

I did get a second chance with another low down basker but it never quite sat at the right angle for me, still better than last year though.

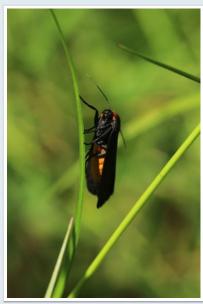




There wasn't too much other butterfly activity other than several fresh Speckled Wood, but a female Common Blue stopped by (another blue one I nearly

mistook for a male) and this Red-necked Footman caught my eye.





In-between periods of Hairstreak action Broad-Bodied Chasers kept us occupied, females sitting up high with a male holding a territory over a puddle.





I will get better pictures next time but I couldn't stay any longer, I had a plane to catch in the morning. all in all though, I left very pleased with myself with what I managed, thanks Phil $\stackrel{ ext{$\Theta$}}{ ext{$\bullet$}}$.

Now to read about other peoples adventures 😃 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 11-Jun-17 06:39 PM GMT

Well done with the Black Hairstreaks and nice photos too. I was there yesterday and it was a great pleasure to see so much action.

Regards Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jun-17 06:52 PM GMT

kevling wrote:

Bugboy,

Well done with the Black Hairstreaks and nice photos too. I was there yesterday and it was a great pleasure to see so much action.

Regards Kev

Thanks Kev, I've been told by the man in the know that it's been a good season for them this year 🔒



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 11-Jun-17 08:00 PM GMT

Well done with the Black Hairstreak, Paul. They would be a lifer for me, but not this year. Other fish to fry, and all that.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 11-Jun-17 09:36 PM GMT

Good for you, Bugboy.

Black Hairstreaks, given their rarity and difficulty to photograph are one of the most highly prized British species. Not many have posted images of them on here so far this year, so well done for getting an audience.

I'll be interested to hear what you've been up to during your absence!

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-17 10:10 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy 😊 👨 – a species I'm really struggling with – they emerge at just the wrong time for me. Oh well one day...

Have a goodur

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Jun-17 07:49 PM GMT

2nd June, Ireland part 1

This is now the third year of my 'mission' and a year where said mission had to be altered slightly. With Large Tortoiseshells now almost certainly back in the UK, the mission was now to photograph all <u>60</u> species. After managing the LT already and then getting the Wood White a few weeks ago I was left with a handful of species which required more than just day trips to find.

The first one on this list was one that does often get neglected, the Cryptic Wood White. For me though it's no less important than any other of our natives even though it supposedly does look identical to it's mainland cousin.

The same work colleague who helped me find Swallowtails last year offered to chauffeur me around Ireland and after some discussion we decided our base of operations would be Galway on the east coast, thinking that perhaps I might also be able to get Irish *sinapis* as well as some of the other species that are confined to the Burren area.

We had several hours in-between landing in Shannon and booking in at Galway so we decided to take the scenic route through the Burren, a wise decision just for the scenery alone, a truly beautiful part of the world with some stunning vistas.



We drove around for a while looking for somewhere to park, not easy on these narrow country lanes but eventually we found a lay-by and got out for a wander. A few rather tatty Brimstones were active but not much else was seen. Nearby we found a small meadow that didn't seem to have any signs saying 'keep out' so we snuck in and walked around the edge. It was a beautiful hay meadow with a rich flora, perhaps being left fallow this year and although we didn't put up any butterflies at first, damselflies and dragonflies were very numerous.









Context
On the return walk though, a solitary Wood White casually fluttered past, not stopping and vanished over the hedge.

Opposite the meadow was a country lane that looked good for a wander and almost immediately we came across a few more Wood Whites going about their business along the edge. I was immediately taken by how different they looked from the ones I'd seen at Chiddingfold a few weeks earlier, noticeably greener/yellower.



A bit further along several more were seen, including a rather popular female.









I did mean to record exactly where I was but completely forgot due to the endless scenery and excitement of finding Wood Whites so quickly. But doing a little bit of research (and much searching on google maps) it looks like, quite by accident, I was just a stone's throw away from the **Lough Bunny** site listed on the Wood White distribution map on here. So, based on location I must be seeing Irish *sinapis*.

We carried on along the lane for the best part of an hour, finding several Large Whites (in fact more than I've seen all season so far) a tatty Small white,





a few Speckled Wood and a lovely fresh male Common Blue. He was very reluctant to open his wings but when he did I was taken by the shade of blue, deeper than English cousins and the darker black border inside the white fringe.





Stopping to chat with some friendly locals we found out we could go onto the Burren landscape itself which was being used to house some horses. I found more Common Blues, all males, all fresh, all unwilling to open their wings and all unwilling to pose for me! A couple of Small Heath were active and I came across a single Dingy Skipper, presumably the paler baynesi race, although how much of paleness was due to its age is impossible to say.





Butterfly wise that was about it. Odonata were again quite numerous though.





Time had vanished and when I checked my phone I found that the hostel we had booked had emailed asking when we were due to arrive. A good start to the trip, now off to dump our stuff and find some good old Irish pub grub Θ !

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-17 10:00 PM GMT

Looking forward to the next installment Bugboy especially as you're trying for the often forgotten butterfly 🖰 How easy was getting to Northern Ireland and the various sites there?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 12-Jun-17 10:46 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff, Buggy. The Burren is a part of Ireland I would really like to see and this looks like a good time of year to do it. I can't wait for the rest of the trip. The lemony hints on those Wood Whites are really noticeable, too.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Jun-17 09:50 PM GMT

We never went to Northern Ireland in the end Wurzel, we stayed around the west coast of the republic. I may not have seen Cryptics in the UK but as far as I'm concerned the Republic still counts as part of 'The British Isles'

I highly recommend the Burren and surrounding area for a destination **Millerd**, it feels like how the English countryside would have looked 100 years ago, just a shame they don't have as many species as we have!

3rd June, Ireland part 2

The second day of the trip didn't look so promising, cool, cloudy and somewhat wet conditions greeting us when we woke up. Nevertheless we set off for the days destination, Ballydoogan Bog, a site listed on UKB as having both Cryptics and Marsh Fritillaries and only a short distance from Galway. We had to dodge some rather nasty looking clouds on the way but when we arrived at the 'site' we couldn't really work out exactly where it was. There were lots of marshy looking meadows around but all seemed to be private land and there was little in the way of parking places. We finally found what seemed like a lay-by and got out to explore on foot but still couldn't find any access points to any of the meadows. All I managed in the end were some shots of a faded Speckled Wood.



Still dodging some rather heavy showers we left, with me feeling a little despondent, and drove a bit further east (away from the Burren so if we did come across Wood Whites we could be pretty confident of their ID).

A short distance down the road my friend decided to turn into an equestrian centre and horse museum, so we could work out where to aim for next (and also use their conveniences). Because the sun had decided to shine we also went for a wander, some of the lanes leading off looked quite promising. It was when we turned onto this lane that hope started to turn into expectation...



and within a few minutes I saw a roosting Wood White in the verge (it had gone a bit cloudy again) which, based on location, I concluded was a Cryptic Wood White. Looking more closely several popped out including an unusual sighting. There was obviously something not quite right about this male but enabled me some easy upper side shots.

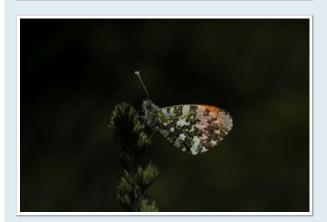




We stayed here for about half an hour, every time the sun came out from behind a cloud they would all wake up and flutter around, probably eight or nine in one short area of sunlit road verge. Like the assumed *sinapis* the previous day, they were noticeably different in colouration to English Wood Whites I've seen. At one point a male orange-tip fluttered by and was immediately accosted by a couple of male Wood Whites. It certainly made up for the disappointment from the first site and the fact that we stumbled across them so easily would suggest they really are as widespread and common as we are lead to believe.







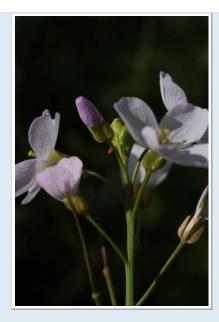








The rest of the day was spent dodging more rain, which began to dominate the day and no more butterflies were seen. At my suggestion we visited Loughrea, nestled on the north side of a large lake and found a nice wildlife area on the marshy foreshore. Although any butterflies present were doing a good job at hiding I did find some Orange-tip eggs. There were plenty of birds around, Reed Buntings were very numerous in particular.







A mixed day but target species and species number 56 successfully ticked of igorimega

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 13-Jun-17 11:18 PM GMT

I suspected you'd been up to something quite spectacular during your absence, Bugboy! Fair play, there aren't many who have made this trip and it looks like you were rewarded with some stunning landscapes as well as desirable butterflies.

By the way, which UK species are you still missing?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-17 09:05 AM GMT

Good to see you able to confirm your 'Tick' Bugboy @WRT to David's comment – is Chequered Skipper one – I can't remember now?

Have a goodur

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 14-Jun-17 09:15 PM GMT

Great Black Hairstreaks 👨 and it looks like you had a brilliant trip to the Emerald Isle too 😉 I guess there's more to come 🧿

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Jun-17 10:17 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Wurzel, I do still have a few reports left to go so I will just have to leave you in suspense 😉



4/5th June, Ireland part 3

On the third day of our Ireland break the weather started off rather gloomy before beginning to re-enacting Bible stories, namely a particular story concerning a big boat.

We decided to go north of Galway this time, I was still hoping to find some Irish Marshies and maybe an early Large Heath, but driving along through what seemed at times to be never ending torrential rain it was quite clear that was rather unlikely. Occasionally the rain would relent and we would even venture out from the safety of the car if there was somewhere to park. It was a real shame the weather had turned on us, we drove past so much wonderful habitat that was just begging to be explored had it been sunny. The scenery at least was pretty breath-taking.











Remarkably I did actually find a butterfly, a Small Heath. I presumed I saw the same one twice but both times I spent some time chasing it to make sure it wasn't actually a Large one





Our flight back to London wasn't until 9pm so we had most of the final day to ourselves and took in some coastal destinations. The Cliffs of Moher (which sounded to me like something from Lord of The Rings) came highly recommended and since I was also hoping to tick of some seafaring avian lifers we set of. The weather had improved slightly from the previous day in that there was much less rain but it was still far from butterfly friendly and so it was to be that the previous days Heath was the last Irish butterfly I was to see.

The Cliffs however lived up to their billing and I was able to tick off Puffins, Guillemots, Fulmer, Chough and Shags to my avian list. We probably also saw Razorbill but our bins couldn't tell from the distance we were at.



The Cliff of Moher!



Guillemots, Puffins and Shags

The Auks were all lower down and could only be made out through our bins but the Fulmers on the other hand were all over the cliff face and regularly drifted up mere feet from us on the top path. I spent quite a lot of time admiring their flying skills and I'm pretty sure I never saw one flap from any bird, just the slightest twist of the tail or tilt had them turning on a sixpence mid-air, remarkable skills.











So ends my Irish trip 🚇 I managed the primary target, saw lots of unforgettable scenery and came back with some good memories. The next day I was shooting off to Scotland 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 14-Jun-17 10:48 PM GMT

Glorious scenery, as you say, Buggy – looking forward to the Scottish adventure... 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-Jun-17 11:14 PM GMT

Well, Bugboy, you saw stunning countryside that day even if conditions weren't butterfly friendly!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-17 08:20 PM GMT

Cracking photos Bugboy. The last time I saw Fulmars was in Iceland and they were a mile in land, nesting on what were once sea cliffs 🥹



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Jun-17 10:24 PM GMT

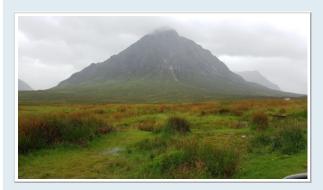
6th June, Scotland

It was only after all the booking for Ireland had been done that the opportunity to visit some Scottish glens during Chequered Skipper season presented itself. Janet Turnbull posted on here that she was going up and asked if anyone wanted to join. Obviously I jumped at the chance and after a few weeks email exchanges things were set, it just meant I had to hop on a 6am train the day after flying back from Ireland to meet Janet in Manchester. Just to add a bit of spice to proceedings the flight back from Ireland was delayed and I didn't actually get home until 1am. So rather than risk missing my train and ruining the whole trip I decided to stay up and go through my Ireland pictures. Thankfully the train terminated at Manchester so I was able to get a bit of kip on that.

The journey up to Scotland was, in a word, wet. That Biblical weather that had tried to ruin my Ireland trip had followed me over to the mainland, only this time it really didn't stop raining for the entire journey. Even so the scenery was once again spectacular and we couldn't help stopping occasionally to admire it through the mist and rain.











The forecast for the next day looked significantly better, in fact it looked like the only reasonable day for our stay. I for one was hoping we could pack the day full of butterflies of a Chequered variety but before then I really needed to get a decent nights sleep!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jun-17 07:49 PM GMT

7th June, Scotland part 2, the main event.

So the first full day in Scotland and our first attempt at looking for some Skippers. Janet had been in contact with the local branch of BC who had recommended Allt Mhuic on the north shore of Loch Arkaig and I had been recommended Glen Loy by PhiliB (and also by Neil Freemans diary posts from last year).

We had breakfast, made a packed lunch and set of for the days search, heading for the ultimate destination of Allt Mhuic. I didn't realise at the time but the route took us straight past Glen Loy and seeing the sign I suggested we turn off and have a look around. We drove down the windy road that followed the River Loy until we came to a bridge and found a parking spot, slathered ourselves in insect repellent and went for a wander. Next to the bridge was, what seemed to my eyes, a perfect little clearing and it didn't take too long for a distinctive skippery insect to flutter past and land on a Bluebell, the golden spangled reason for the trip. Here's a brief interlude in my ramblings...







I tried calling Janet over but unbeknownst to me she had wandered over the bridge and couldn't hear me. I needn't have worried though, there were plenty around and we both managed to fill our boots with insects in a variety of stages of wear and tear. We ended up spending around two hours here.











It was when we decided to move on to Allt Mhuic that the day took an unfortunate twist, we found that we had managed to get a flat tire and were now stuck in the middle of nowhere with no phone signal and struggling to put the spare on (I can't even drive, what use would I be!) Help came in the form of a friendly white van man. As well as helping fit the spare he then pointed us in the direction of a garage to get a new tire which we found would take about an hour and half. What else to do but kill the time back at Glen Loy chasing more Skippers .









By the time we eventually made it to Allt Mhuic, complete with a brand new wheel, it was gone 5pm. bumped into a couple of butterflyers just leaving who informed us very little had been seen all day, perhaps three or four. Within a few minutes I had found one roosting but it took a walk round the whole site for a second to appear, posing on some heather.





Chequered Skipper well and truly ticked off 😊 😇 !

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Jun-17 08:37 PM GMT

Fantastic, Bugboy. I'm so thrilled for you. Shame about the weather and the flat tyre but you got your quarry and have bagged some excellent images

Is that the full set of UK species for you?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jun-17 09:35 PM GMT

Thanks David. Not quite, Chequered Skipper takes me up to 57 out of 60 😃



7th June, Scotland part 2, the support act.

As attractive as Chequered Skippers are, there was also a fair bit else to look at. Before any Skippers showed themselves I noticed lots of Clouded Border moths, almost every step would disturb another one. It's a species that would send Wurzel to an early grave I think, no two are the same...in fact no two wings are the same, they can't even be bothered to be symmetrical!





Green-veined White were also reasonably plentiful. The females, typically for this part of their range, beautifully marked.





Another species I had hoped to see here were Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and again it didn't disappoint. Several were found flying on the other side of the bridge. They were mostly quite flighty and tended to rest down in the turf but I managed a few shots.





Chimney Sweeper moths proved very difficult to pin down and I spent some time chasing an Argent And Sable moth, a Silver Hook moth and what turned out to be a Small Heath (I desperately wanted it to be a Large one).



Argent & Sable



Silver Hook
It would seem that the Common Blue season up here has just started, with only reasonably fresh males seen.



And if anyone knows what type of Orchid this is....



Unknown Orchid



Some sort of Leaf Beetle
At Allt Mhuic, not a great deal else was seen. A Scalloped Hook-tip moth welcomed us at the entrance and Janet found a rather fat Slow Worm



Scolloped Hook-tip



by David M, 17-Jun-17 10:03 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Thanks David. Not quite, Chequered Skipper takes me up to 57 out of 60

Which have you now got left to see?

Re: Bugboys mission

by William, 17-Jun-17 10:36 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy, very jealous! The orchid is one of the Fragrants, my gut is saying Heath, but I don't have any books on me at the moment.

Cheers,

Will

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 18-Jun-17 11:38 AM GMT

Excellent Scottish trip report and photos, Bugboy $\overline{\mathfrak{o}}$ $\underline{\mathfrak{o}}$.

I know the bridge in Glen Loy very well, but we didn't find any Chequered Skippers there during our visit in the last week of May 2013, as they weren't out, we were a week too early Θ still we did manage to see them at Glasdrum Θ

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 18-Jun-17 12:31 PM GMT

Well done seeing the Chequered Skippers, Buggy! 🐨 I really must make the effort one day. 😃

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-17 01:00 PM GMT

Fantastic Chequered Skippers 🚭 🚭 I always think of them as my skipper due to the genus name 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Ps I am aware of Clouded Borders but I make it a rule to ignore them 😼



Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 18-Jun-17 02:29 PM GMT

Love your report, Bugboy! Just as I remembered it.. I must catch up with my own report too!

Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-17 03:29 PM GMT

Sounds like you'd a fantastic time Bugboy well done, 10 out of 10 for the White Van Man has well Goldie 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 19-Jun-17 05:13 AM GMT

Great success with the Chequered Skipper.

A tricky one for us down here, distance, lots of money, time, then the weather.

I can only guess at your excitement on finding that first one \mathfrak{P} .

Trevor,

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Jun-17 09:31 AM GMT

Thank you all, as with many of my other lifer moments in recent years, it was very exciting when that first one appeared 😊

At this stage in proceedings I still had Large Heath, Mountain Ringlet and Northern Brown Argus left David

Thanks William, I had a look and Heath Fragrant looks good 😃

Glad you managed them at Glasdrum Maximus, we decided to avoid Glasdrum because by the time we got to Scotland they'd already been on the wing for the best part of a month there!

Definitely well worth the effort Millerd, just for scenery alone.

It's a wise move on your part to avoid those Clouded Borders Wurzel, they could become very addictive to a weaker individual 🥯







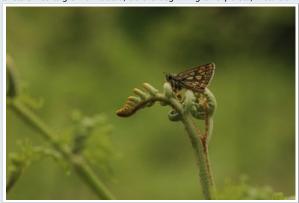
Good to know my memory is still in good working order Janet 😃

Yup **Goldie**, we might still be there if it hadn't been for Mr white van man 😅 🤥
Tricky **Trevor**, but most definitely worth making the effort. I highly recommend a trip up there. The Skippers only seem to need a sniff of sun to come out to play 4

8th June, Scotland part 3.

We awoke on our second day feeling somewhat more relaxed having already achieved our goal. The forecast predicted a cloudier morning and a rainy afternoon but we both wanted to investigate Glen Loy in more detail. The previous day we'd hung around the bridge so today we decided to explore further afield.

We parked the car (with four fully inflated wheels) in the same spot and had a brief search for Skippers where we'd found them the previous day, finding a few of lethargic individuals, before beginning a very slow, meandering stroll along the river.







I was particularly on the lookout for Large Heath, still one of the remaining three species I have to tick off on my mission, the occasional Small Heath just tormenting me relentlessly!

The forecast was true to its word, it stayed resolutely cloudy for most the morning, only the occasional sunny spell brightening the landscape. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary showed up occasionally but despite the cloud they were all very flighty and only allowed the occasional distant record shot... that is until our wandering stumbled across a damp meadow which seemed to be some sort of SPBF Nirvana. I suspect the previous days warm weather had prompted a mass emergence and these ones were all only too happy to pose for us, so much so we stayed for an hour ...

















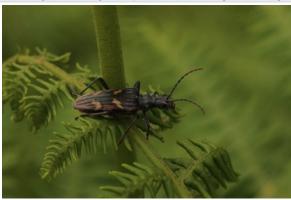
SPBF 'Nirvana' meadow
The occasional Skipper was also present, but unlike the previous day, they were merely part of the support act today.





Chequered Skipper in the style of Padfield, courtesy of my phone:)
When cloud began to thicken we returned to the bridge where we met some fellow butterflyers. I pointed out a couple of roosting Skippers and although it did drizzle a bit, the worst of the rain missed us.

Other things seen during the day were this rather magnificent Longhorn Beetle,



An Argent & Sable ab. (pathological rather than genetic)



And a Dragonfly lifer for me, a Golden Ringed



Another excellent day butterflying in beautiful scenery.



by SimonC69, 20-Jun-17 07:55 AM GMT

Excellent reports and very inspirational (I'll be refering to these in the future if/when I finally get to go up there 9) Any one of those "Chequered Skipper on Bluebell (or bracken)" shots would keep a smile on my face for the rest of the year if I'd taken them.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-17 02:57 PM GMT

I second that , Θ But i also like the SPBF with it's wings spread, Goldie Θ $\overline{\Phi}$

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Jun-17 10:08 PM GMT

Thank you Simon and Goldie 😃, glad I inspire someone 🖰. I can't recommend the Scottish glens highly enough Simon, beautiful butterflies in a beautiful landscape!

9th June, Scotland part 4.

Our third full day in Scotland didn't look too promising, mist, drizzle and general greyness seemed to be the general theme for the day but the forecast did hint at a bit of clear sky at some point. After the Marshie fail in Ireland I was keen to find some Scottish ones and so taking my lead from Neil Freemans diary entries from last year I suggested we check out Cuil Bay and explore some promising looking habitat a bit further south.

We found a working conifer plantation with some public access near North Shian but the weather made sure nothing much was seen for the first few hours, a single roosting Small Heath, some Newts and a few moths were all we found.



Small Argent & Sable



Exploring around though I was hopeful that any sun would wake up plenty of butterflies. After around two hours the promised sun actually appeared, waking up a few Small Heath (still no Large!) and a Chequered Skipper or two.









We watched the one on the Foxglove for a while, licking up the rain drops on the flower, but he was after something stronger and vanished up inside the flower!







A clearing that I had explored in the light drizzle was now lit up by the sun and was alive with skippers and Green-veined Whites. The first one I saw here seemed to be quite heavily marked, possibly verging on ab status.



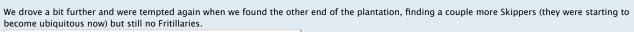




I came over all Wurzelesque with this one!



No Marsh Fritillaries though 😃 .









There was a very tempting meadow in the middle of the plantation which I was sorely tempted to explore. Sadly it would seem to have no public access and was also inhabited by some Highland Cattle, I don't know what their temperament is like, but looking through binoculars the place was covered in Whites, probably mostly GVW but there was at least one male Orange-tip.

Finding nowhere else to explore we drove back up to Cuil Bay where we were forced to wait for some time for some more sun but even when it arrived there was little about. A few Small Heath again, one of whom looked a bit on the large side and was hunted down with some determination.



A rather large Small Heath! We did manage a roosting Green-veined White before leaving



by millerd, 20-Jun-17 10:21 PM GMT

The Skipper disappearing up the foxglove is brilliant, Buggy! 😃 And to have them popping up everywhere when you are looking for something else... 🙃 🙃 is all I can say really. Great record of your visit!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Jun-17 10:22 PM GMT

Superb commentary and images yet again, Bugboy. It's like stepping back in time as the season in Scotland is much further behind than in the south of

Love all the images, but that abnormally yellow Green Veined White is particularly attractive.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-17 06:28 PM GMT

I too like the disappearing Skipper sequence – now you see me now you don't 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Jun-17 08:17 PM GMT

Thank you all, it was a very enjoyable time despite the best efforts from the Scottish weather 🔒



10th June, The Journey Home.

Whilst travelling around the 'colonies' these past few weeks, I'd seen several reports that Mountain Ringlet (like everything else this year) were early and already flying on Irton Fell and I hoped I could persuade Janet to take a slight detour back to Manchester.

She agreed it was worth a shot so we left early and according to the forcast, seemed to have a 50/50 chance of hitting good weather by the time we got to the Lake District. Leaving Scotland was a repeat performance of our arrival, rain of various sorts all the way to the border. Northern England was where things started to clear up and then it was on and off as we travelled through the District.

We found the car park easily enough but sadly the weather was having a little spat, not quite rain but rather breezy and low cloud was being whisked over the Fell. We did climb up to the site, the wooded path is a pleasant enough walk, but the cloud was exactly where the Ringlets are to be found. Needless to say we found no sign of life! Like the Large Heath, the Mountain Ringlet remains on my hit list 😉





Not so much Gorillas as 'Ringlets in the Mist'



The view north east with Sellafield top left

To add to the frustration, we could clearly see Sellafield bathed in sun across the hills and just as a little final encore, when I checked the weather an hour later it had apparently all cleared up and sunny right across the fells 😼 🙃 .

Just like everywhere else I'd been the past two weeks though, the scenary was breathtaking and I take my hat off to Janet for driving us through the Lake District via Hardnott and Wrynose passes in her estate car.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jun-17 09:23 PM GMT

Just catching up on your travels Bugboy, interesting reports from Ireland...the Cryptic Wood White is the only one I need to complete my UK list, or rather it would be if you hadn't now made it 60 species with the Large Tortoiseshell 😉 📦

I really enjoyed the reports from Scotland and especially Glen Loy, brought back memories of my own adventures up there last year Θ . Not sure how far you ventured along the Glen but I found some early Large Heath ssp. scotica there last year. They were a long way past the bridge, on the opposite side of the track to the river.

Sorry to see you missed the Mountain Ringlets...that is the vagaries of the weather up there.

Cheers.

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Jun-17 10:45 PM GMT

Shame about epiphron, Bugboy. You picked the right spot - there are hundreds up there, but as you discovered, they won't fly unless conditions are

by bugboy, 22-Jun-17 08:30 PM GMT

Thank **Neil**, I blame the other Neil for the Large Tortoiseshell! We did wander a fair way along the river past the bridge, just under an hour at normal walking pace I think.

Thanks **David**, conditions on the Fell couldn't have been further from 'bright'. When we reached the point where the Ringlets supposedly start appearing, visibility was down to a few feet!

12th June, back home & into quarantine.

The first thing I did upon returning home was see my doctor. I'd noticed a few small rashes whilst travelling but with no other symptoms didn't take much notice. However, on my last day I noticed some blistering and on consulting 'doctor Google' it would seem I had Shingles (either that or I had 12 hours to live). The real-life doctor confirmed it was the former and so I called into work to let them know I was a disease risk, and finding out that a couple of colleagues haven't had Chicken Pox I was officially banned from work! Luckily, I was suffering very little pain (I understand some cases can be excruciating), just mild stinging nettle like tingling and since my flat warms up like a sauna in hot weather, I decided to go out with my camera. None of the rashes or blistering were on visible areas so at least I didn't look like a plague victim!

I stayed local and took an afternoon stroll on the Marshes. Butterflies were few and far between indicating the June gap was in full swing here but I managed to find a few fresh Large Skipper.



Where last time I had found dozens of fresh Common Blues there were now just a few decrepit individuals.





One thing I was hoping for were some fresh Small Tortoiseshell, so I headed for a hedgerow where they always turn up in the spring from hibernation and there gorging on Bramble was exactly what I was after.





After finding a few more I took a slow meandering walk back and found a couple of first gen Holly Blues, females and just like last year somewhat obsessed on patches of Goats-rue. I watched a female search out the perfect place for her egg and once she had laid and fluttered off I had a quick look at surrounding patches, easily finding several more eggs, some of whom had already hatched.









I was surprised I hadn't seen any *Hutchinsoni* Comma's yet, given the large numbers that had come out of hibernation here, but that changed as I neared the end of my stroll. Waiting for me near the kissing gate at the entrance of the site was this beauty.





by millerd, 22-Jun-17 10:05 PM GMT

l'm amazed you're still seeing the odd Holly Blue, Buggy – they have temporarily disappeared here. That's worth a bit of 😇 . Sorry to hear you're technically ill but glad it is ironically forcing you out into the open air with the butterflies!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Jun-17 10:29 PM GMT

14th June, Essex Heaths.

With my Shingles not getting any worse I decided to go a bit further afield. Due to everything emerging early this year, I had some catching up to do after my trips. It looked like it was going to be a rather hot day and what butterfly above all else adores the sun! I'd missed out on Heath Frits last year, intending to go to the Essex colonies I'd waited for reports unaware that they were deliberately being kept quiet due to low numbers. This year things are looking much better, quite a bit of habitat improvement was done last year and over the winter which looks to be paying dividends, when I found the paths, who's edges were swathed in Cow Wheat they were riddled with them!

If anything it was too hot, and with no cloud cover there didn't seem to be much reason for any of them to stop. Luckily I found a female who was too busy gorging on nectar to worry about my presence.





Most photo's for the morning were snatched opportunities here and I was content to watch them go about their business, which mostly involved invading each other's business.

By the afternoon they had started to settle down into feeding mode again so I was able to start getting the shots I was after.









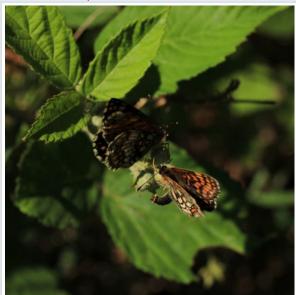


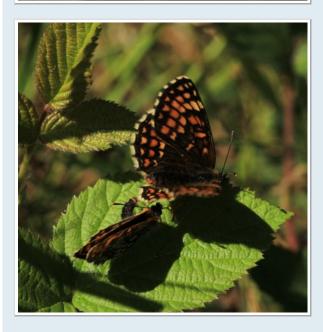


'Courtship' was commonplace,



well I say courtship, if butterflies had lawyers, sexual harassment would far out way all other grievances! I certainly wouldn't get away with this sort of behaviour down the pub that's for sure!

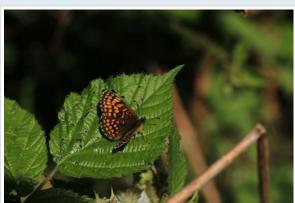












Was it something I said?

There was a lot of other activity apart from the Fritillaries, Large Skippers, Holly Blues, Commas, Red Admirals and Meadow Browns were all in attendance and for the most part all hyperactive in the heat and I caught a brief glimpse of my first White Admiral of the season.





 $I'm\ very\ pleased\ to\ see\ this\ colony\ seems\ safe\ from\ extinction\ for\ the\ foreseeable\ future.\ I\ just\ hope\ the\ habitat\ management\ keeps\ up.$

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Jun-17 10:36 PM GMT

Fair play to your spirit of resolve, Bugboy. I recall Neil Hulme going out butterflying when suffering from pneumonia so for you to do likewise having been diagnosed with shingles is beyond the call of duty!

Respect.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jun-17 06:55 PM GMT

I look at is medicinal **David**, Shingles is often brought on by stress, I can't think of many things more stressful than locking myself away for a fortnight, what's stressful about hunting butterflies in woodland and meadows?

15th June, Surrey Studs.

Next on my hit list was the Silver Studded Blue which had been flying for several weeks by this stage on some sites. I know Chobham Common is quite late for them so I hoped I was on time to find some fresh ones. I needn't have worried, it would seem I was spot on and I found them in a number of spots as I wandered the site, in fact they seemed a bit more spread out than in previous years. It was a day with plenty of cloudy spells making them easy targets for my camera.



















I only managed a couple of females, one of whom gets the award for best studs of the day!



A moth lifer for me came in the form of the Peacock, slightly less eye catching than it's butterfly namesake.



There were Meadow Browns and Ringlet bobbing about but the only other butterfly that I managed were Large Skippers.



As I was leaving I took a slight detour to look for dragonflies at one of the ponds, a few were flying around but something rather large was checking me out. Europes heaviest fly, the Dark Giant Horsefly *Tabinus sudeticus*. Roughly the size of a big wasp. I'm not sure if they stick with biting like other horseflies or remove an entire arm and stash it for later!



I didn't want to try and get her in a better photographic position, I was a bit scared of her 🤡 !

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-17 09:57 PM GMT

Good to see you're still getting out and about Bugboy 😉 I wonder if there are any other contagious diseases that can lead to a week off work? 😃 I could certainly do with catching up with some species myself. 🚭

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 23-Jun-17 11:27 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I look at is medicinal **David**, Shingles is often brought on by stress, I can't think of many things more stressful than locking myself away for a fortnight, what's stressful about hunting butterflies in woodland and meadows?

I cannot challenge a word of that, Bugboy. In fact, I'd say that being surrounded by butterflies in a wonderful setting on a pleasant day renders Prozac obsolete!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Jun-17 09:56 AM GMT

David M wrote:

bugboy wrote:

I look at is medicinal **David**, Shingles is often brought on by stress, I can't think of many things more stressful than locking myself away for a fortnight, what's stressful about hunting butterflies in woodland and meadows?

I cannot challenge a word of that, Bugboy. In fact, I'd say that being surrounded by butterflies in a wonderful setting on a pleasant day renders Prozac obsolete!

And my rehabilitation continues.....

16th June, a day of season premiers.

First stop today was Box Hill, or rather Burford Meadow at the base, I didn't want to push myself too much by climbing up to the top this time (I am technically still ill after all) and my targets can all be found down here anyway.

First was Dark Green Fritillaries. I saw one flying around a large bank of brambles but nowhere near enough for a shot. Although it was quite early it was going to be another very warm day and temperatures were already high enough to turn the Fritillaries into orange torpedoes so I waded into the long grass hoping to disturb a freshly emerged one still learning how to fly. After a few false alarms (Commas) and some more distant sightings I finally happened upon my quarry, coincidentally around the same time as increased cloud cover which calmed him down. He was still a bit flighty but some careful stalking got me close enough. I hoped the cloud cover would cause him to close up for some underside shots but it was still too warm.









After 10 minutes I finally lost him but I managed the second of the days season firsts a lone Small Skipper and whilst taking his picture a couple of Marbled Whites flopped by making it a hat trick of season firsts in half an hour.

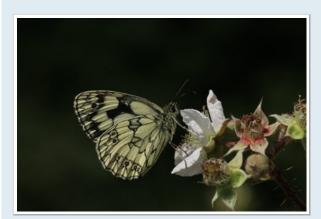


Before leaving the meadow I also found my first female Large Skipper of the year.



Prompted by the Marbled Whites I ventured onto the lower slopes of the hill, immediately finding hordes of Marbled White and, replacing the Meadow Browns from the meadow, Ringlets, new species number four for the day. The Ringlets were unfortunately not in the mood for photo's but the MW on the other hand were more than willing, preoccupied as they were on Bramble Flowers











next stop, Bookham...obviously 😃 !

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 24-Jun-17 10:42 AM GMT

Not a bad idea, using the Dorking area as a convalescent home. Most Doctors, would, I am sure, advise lots of fresh air and avoid that of London.

Great Dark Greens and Marbled Whites. They are on my 'to do' list, once the Emperor has finished with me.

Take care, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Jun-17 10:49 AM GMT

16th June, a day of season premiers. Part 2

So onto Bookham with the prospect of my first Silver Washed Fritillaries of the season and hopefully more than a fleeting glimpse of a White Admiral.

Walking across the 'plains' from the train station numerous Skippers were present, both Large and SmEssex, although none sat still long enough for positive ID's. Small Heath were also rather numerous along with the odd tired looking Common Blue and a very old Comma. Bearing in mind we are in the middle of June this must be one of the oldest Comma's around, particularly notable since Hutchinsoni (and presumably it's offspring) were also on the wing here today!



Ancient Comma!



One Small Heath caught my attention, looking very odd in flight. He was difficult to pin down, and I spent some time trying to get close enough to work out what was going on. Eventually he relented and let me get close enough to see that one of his forewings was bleached. I suspect this was a pathological ab rather than genetic since it only affected the one wing, perhaps a shaft of sunlight hit his pupae as the scales were developing?







same animal from the 'normal' side
I tried in vain to grab an upperside as he took to the air, the best I could manage was this but it's clear enough to confirm it was just the one wing.



Once into the Wood it didn't take long for target species to start appearing left right and centre with Silver Washed Fritillary become the fifth season first of the day and I ended up seeing more White Admiral in this one afternoon than I saw in in the entire of 2016. Over the next 2 hours I had a field day with them .

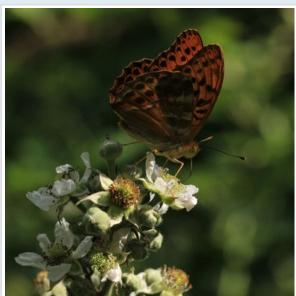














I also found a mating pair of Meadow browns being mercilessly harassed by another male $% \left\{ 1,2,\ldots ,n\right\}$



Leaving I was also able to confirm at least one SmEssex was indeed a Small



An excellent end to a fine days butterflying 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 12:23 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, I missed your reply but yes the wilds of Surrey surrounded by butterflies do make a very good place to heal body and mind 😃



17th June, Essex again

Still playing catchup on my diary so what species next, White-letter Hairstreaks that's what. I headed off for an afternoon at Hadleigh Country Park where I've found them low down in previous years. It was another very hot and muggy day so I was thankful the colony I visit is within 5 minutes of the train station, no long hike needed. In previous years I've found them active quite late in the day, from about 4pm but today they were already active when I arrived at around 2 and in numbers the like of which I was not expecting in my wildest dreams. There were almost too many, constantly flitting and jinking around disturbing each other just as I lined up a shot.







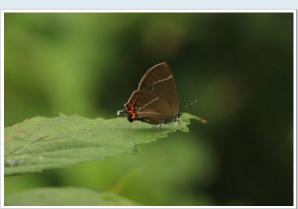


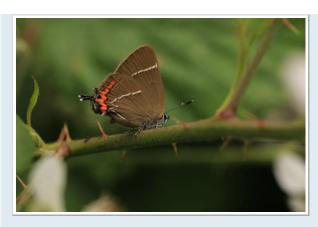


I'd give a conservative estimate of about 30 and given that most were in very good condition numbers were most likely yet to peak.











I spent the best part of 2 hours watching and photographing them before going for a little wander to see what else was about. Golden Skippers, Ringlets and Marbled White where the main players.





Close examination revealed both Small and Essex Skippers. I like finding my debut Essex Skippers in Essex 9.





Obviously I returned the Hairstreaks before leaving who were still as active as when I left them.



This is also a good site for Comma's, I suspect utilising the same Elms as the Hairstreaks





by SimonC69, 25-Jun-17 04:13 PM GMT

Wow. Just wow. Those WLH shots are awesome! Once next summer is out of the way and I've either succeeded or failed in my 50/50 mission I'm going to be going out with the express purpose of improving on existing species. Looks like I might be tapping you for sites and photo hints mate!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 06:13 PM GMT

SimonC69 wrote:

Wow. Just wow. Those WLH shots are awesome! Once next summer is out of the way and I've either succeeded or failed in my 50/50 mission I'm going to be going out with the express purpose of improving on existing species. Looks like I might be tapping you for sites and photo hints mate!

Thanks Simon This site does have castle ruins for the other half. With WLH it's simply a case of finding a site where they come down and then spending as much time as you have spare. In my case my finger is permanently attached to the shutter button so the law of averages dictates some will turn out acceptable lol

Re: Bugboys mission

by SimonC69, 25-Jun-17 06:25 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

.....This site does have castle ruins for the other half 😉

Sold‼ ⊕

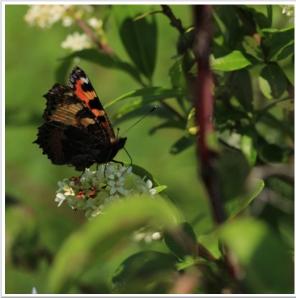
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 10:21 PM GMT

18th June.

I had no specific species in mind today (well perhaps a Glanville but that was a seriously small needle in a huge haystack!). As it turned out I probably should have done what most the butterflies were doing, hiding from the heat. I should have known better than to go to Hutchinsons Bank on such a hot day, a site that regularly gets hotter than surrounding areas as it is!

A few butterflies were braving the sun, but not many and the only ones I could get close to were a few Small tortoiseshell and a female Marbled White.





Standing on tiptoe to stay cool





I ended up trying to cool down in the wood opposite before making the move home. Note to self, woodlands on ridiculously hot days 🤤 !



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-17 11:23 PM GMT

That first Small Tort shot is a cracker Bugboy 😁 You need to be careful as you're getting a little behind on your PD 🤢

Have a goodun Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 11:28 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

That first Small Tort shot is a cracker Bugboy 😊 You need to be careful as you're getting a little behind on your PD 🥹



Have a goodun

Wurzel

I'm trying to catch up Wurzel, 2 posts a day at the moment... Still not as far behind as some though eh 🥹



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 25-Jun-17 11:45 PM GMT

I've a feeling you've something special in the offing too, Bugboy?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Jun-17 09:34 AM GMT

I fear I may be posting quicker than some of you are able to keep up 🧐 WLH, Small Heath ab, White Admirals by the dozen all on the previous page

I will admit I've had a pretty good Purple season so far David 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 26-Jun-17 08:19 PM GMT

The last 2 transect counts of Marbled Whites have been 250+. 2nd Brood Dingys and Small Blues have hatched the last week, and Silver Washed and Dark Green Frits are in Good Numbers in a nearby Wood, White Letter Hs, White Admirals are also flying, at this wood and HB.

I walked home across HB on the hot day, and every bush i disturbed sent about 50 butterflies up in the air, from their shady hiding place. Maybe Next year will be better for Glanvilles, the sightings count was over 12, but they were always bombing around rather than the usual sunning in muddy spots, probably too warm for them to do that this year.

Its never worth a visit to HB when the temp in the shade in over 30 oC

I did have a sighting of a [Dark] Dark Green Fritillary today at HB, but it was a fly by at high speed with no chance of a photo, i will be looking for it again this week.

by millerd, 26-Jun-17 10:22 PM GMT

Just catching up with everything, Buggy – a lot of 🙃 for sure, but especially for the WLH shots. 😃 Still something I need to travel for, just as the weather goes downhill. Which station was it you went to?

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Jun-17 08:54 AM GMT

millerd wrote:

Just catching up with everything, Buggy – a lot of to for sure, but especially for the WLH shots. 4 Still something I need to travel for, just as the weather goes downhill. Which station was it you went to?

Dave

Leigh-on-sea Dave.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-17 09:12 AM GMT

Great WLH 's Bugboy 🙃 🗗 I've yet to photograph them, your doing great with the Butterflies I think by the time I'm in the South in two weeks they'll all be gone being has they're so early especially those lovely Marble Whites 😢 Goldie 😃

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 28-Jun-17 01:15 PM GMT

Having been away it is taking a while to catch up with everything people have been seeing and doing. Sorry to hear of your illness. It is a horrible condition, even though you seem to have made the best of the recovery time.

Many, many of your shots are worthy of especially the WLH. I quickly did a search on the location and it was clear it would be a big expedition and it looks a large site once I navigate there. So I will enjoy your pictures and Pauline's instead. maybe next year.

Typical that whilst in Hungary it was hotter here and when I get back it turns to normal in the UK and hot there... ⁹ perhaps it is me ...I attract rain.

Fine work

Peter

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Jun-17 06:56 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Great WLH 's Bugboy 👨 🗗 I've yet to photograph them, your doing great with the Butterflies I think by the time I'm in the South in two weeks they'll all be gone being has they're so early especially those lovely Marble Whites 😢 Goldie 🚇

Thanks Goldie 😃. You might still get some Marbled White, they should still be around in a couple of weeks 😃

Art Frames wrote:

Having been away it is taking a while to catch up with everything people have been seeing and doing. Sorry to hear of your illness. It is a horrible condition, even though you seem to have made the best of the recovery time.

Typical that whilst in Hungary it was hotter here and when I get back it turns to normal in the UK and hot there... 🥹 perhaps it is me ...I attract rain.

Fine work

Peter

Thanks Peter, I think I got off very lightly with my Shingles, very little in the way of pain thankfully!

Regarding the WLH I can give you exact coordinates which as long as you go at the right time and in good weather will guarantee a good audience with them.

You think you have bad luck with the weather, I'm in the middle of my third UK butterflying trip and yet again plagued with torrential rain!!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 29-Jun-17 07:54 PM GMT

[quote]Thanks Peter, I think I got off very lightly with my Shingles, very little in the way of pain thankfully!

Regarding the WLH I can give you exact coordinates which as long as you go at the right time and in good weather will guarantee a good audience with them.

You think you have bad luck with the weather, I'm in the middle of my third UK butterflying trip and yet again plagued with torrential rain!!!

That would be wonderful. It is an offer that I would love to accept. 😊 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Jul-17 08:42 AM GMT

I've just returned from my third long distance UK butterflying trip, yet again plagued with rain which very nearly made it a complete right off, but more of that later, time to try and catch up again.

20th June, Bookham

Having been signed off work for another week and with the Emperor season starting nice and early this year I figured it was a good idea to get myself down to Bookham to see if I could catch a glimpse. I know it's not the best place to find them on the ground but the past two years I have at least had brief visits from them and today was no different.

I ended up getting there much later than planned, a combination of over sleeping and delayed trains meant I didn't arrive until gone 10. Nevertheless, I did get one appearance as I wondered the main path in between the two master tree's I'm aware off. He flirted with the path for about 30 seconds in front of me before vanishing up into the trees, never to be seen again. He'd most likely already had his days quota of salts and was off to do battle with who/whatever passed by but he was the only one I was to see today. I did spend some quality time watching other species though, SWF, RA & WA all in attendance and I found another freshly emerged Buff Tip moth.









He looks really angry that he's been spotted from this angle :)
Finally, I managed to also tick off the Purple Hairstreak for the year, I saw several fluttering around although I wasn't able to get any pictures.

by bugboy, 02-Jul-17 12:52 PM GMT

21st June, Bookham (No Tuna required!) part 1

The next day I woke up early and with no delayed trains made my way to Bookham again arriving at a much better Purple Emperor friendly time. It was set to be a scorcher again and things were already livening up with mating Dragonflies, Skippers, Browns and Nymphalids popping up and already very active.



Black-tailed Skimmers in cop.





Once into the woods, Red Admirals began appearing along the path, mostly sticking to the shade with their wings closed and each time making my heart skip a beat as it flew up from under my feet.



I saw one dart into the undergrowth at the edge of the path up ahead so I crept up to see what was so exciting only to find it wasn't an Admiral at all, my first ever grounded Bookham Emperor had found breakfast. He was in deep shade and not particularly easy to get clear shot off but I did manage four wing purple!



In trying to get a clearer shot I disturbed him whereby he spent several minutes licking leaves and looking down upon and circling me. I was definitely of interest to him and I soon discovered that I apparently tasted better than dog poo. He wouldn't leave me alone but would always land on my back or the back of my legs. I finally managed to remove my backpack when he was settled and got a shot of him licking whatever it was on it but in trying the move it so he caught the sun better I disturbed him and this time he vanished up into the Oaks.





I waited a while but when he didn't reappear I moved on, only to bump into another butterfly who had had another one down for some time as well. It was still flitting along the path, looking for a spot but never really settled properly for me so I only managed a few distant shots and no purple.



Red Admirals still littered the floor, I've noticed that ab. fructa (with the broken red wing band) seems quite common here



Things were set to get better on the purple front though...

by bugboy, 02-Jul-17 09:48 PM GMT

21st June, Bookham (No Tuna required!) part 2

I stayed with the other butterflyer, admiring each other HIM pictures as we wandered back along the path, unaware things were going to get even better. When we returned to the spot of my encounter, who should glide onto the path in front of us but my one with the nibbled forewing. This time however he didn't stay long enough for a photo and went back into an overhanging Oak, so we decided to set up camp here in the hope of another encounter, since it seemed like a favoured spot. Sure enough we got another grounding quickly enough, from a different, better conditioned one. This male if anything was even more friendly than the last and would settle on both of us, usually in areas that made photography difficult.... or slightly embarrassing. Being one of the hottest days of the year so far it was very easy to encourage him onto sweaty fingers but every time we put him on the ground, close to some dog poo for extra encouragement, he would fly back up onto one of us after only a short time.









It also became clear that it was a little too hot for him, we only got good open wing shots when we positioned him in the shade.





Not my foot







Soon other butterflyers were drawn to us (like Emperors drawn to dog poo) and he ended up having five eager people to choose from, all like me having the best Emperor experience of their lives. I quickly became chief Emperor wrangler, when he needed to be moved I would just wipe my sweaty forehead and he would happily move onto my hand.





We had his company for about an hour in the end and managed a few shots of a greener background which made a pleasant change before he finally bid us farewell to go and pick a fight with whatever was flying around today.





After that I was more than happy to leave early, although I did get the nagging feeling that perhaps I need to review how often I bath 🥯

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-17 10:05 PM GMT

Having only 'seen' His Nibbs for the past three years those sort of shots really grate Bugboy 🙃 🙃 🗿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 03-Jul-17 12:15 AM GMT

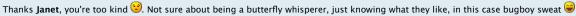
Your photos are absolutely top class, Bugboy! Love the WLH and the cracking shots of the Purple Emperor. I think you must be a butterfly whisperer 📦



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Jul-17 07:56 PM GMT

Sorry **Wurzel**, I'll give you a day off from 'enduring' my Purple pictures... 🧿





22nd June, Looking for Large Tortoiseshells again

After some gentle encouragement from Mr Hulme it was off to North Stoke in search for the butterfly version of a needle in a haystack. I'd deliberately not come in preceding days due to the almost unbearable heat and the fact there's precious little in the way of shade here, but the temperature had dropped significantly today to a more tolerable mid-twenties. I arrived just after midday and found I had the place to myself. Nymphalids and Whites were commonplace but just so as not to lead you all on, the only Tortoiseshells I found in the 4 hours I was there were of the Small variety. Still a fresh Small Tort isn't to be sniffed at so many snaps were taken.







Most of the Whites were also very fresh and some of the Green-veined looked particularly stunning.



A fluky shot where her head stayed in focus at she took off!



Various Satyrids were also present and a mating pair of Meadow Browns were surprisingly well behaved.



Commas provided many a skipped heart beat but nevertheless drew the attention of my camera.





As befits such an extensive search for such an elusive butterfly I'd packed my birding bins and I'm pretty sure I'd scanned every single Bramble and Thistle flower several times before I'd left. Most of the Bramble was in fact still in bud which made me think that perhaps I was too early?

Further wandering threw up a single, very fresh and dusky looking male Small Copper and at the other end of the spectrum a male Common Blue who must surely have been clinging onto life by the very tips of his toes!





I hunted down a few Dragonflies which looked unfamiliar. I found out later at home I'd bagged my first ever pictures of both male and female Hairy



Male



It was only as I was making one last sweep of the path that I bumped into someone with a similar day's mission, who I later found out was our very own Andy Wilson. We had a quick chat and he too thought perhaps we were a week or two early.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 03-Jul-17 08:10 PM GMT

I've missed out this year on the PE experience Buggy – only seen 4 in flight. Looks like you had an amazing time 😇



Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 04–Jul–17 07:39 PM GMT

So glad you got your PE Bugboy, nice shots too ,I don't think I'll be so lucky next week although I did see one once on August 5th so I'm hope full. Goldie 😊

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 09:08 PM GMT

Bad luck on your quest for the LT, Buggy – hopefully there's still time for another go... 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jul-17 10:01 PM GMT

I did indeed **Pauline**, my best Purple Emperor experience to date 😊



Always worth popping in if you're passing Goldie, you never know what you'll find 😐



Indeed there is Millerd, Got to do something in my extended 6 week 'holiday' from work

23rd June, Back to Purple

Well it would be rude not to go back to Bookham after the experience from two days previously. It was another warm day with plenty of activity from the get-go. Skippers and Satyrids skipping and bobbing around, including a rather lost Marbled White, the first I've ever seen here. White Admirals again were making the presence felt



as were Silver-washed Fritillaries, including my first female of the year.



It was whilst walking along the path where the Emperors have been most active this year that something dark caught my eye in the grass at the side. It took a few paces for my brain to process what I'd seen but suddenly all thoughts of Emperors left my mind. I took a few rubbish record shots and then set about seeing what I could do with him, his wings seemed to be fully hardened off but he made no attempt to fly off as I coaxed him onto my finger and moved him to a sunnier spot. Here I spent half an hour with him, making the most of his apparent tameness and getting a good range of shots. The males really are difficult to get the purple sheen. Anyway here's a tiny selection of the shedload of shots I took. I'll admit I got a bit carried away 😉



Under cloudy conditions



In full sun



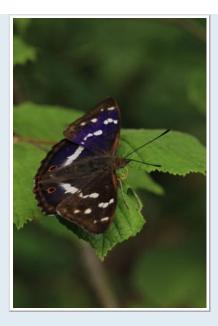






Since he seemed in no mood to fly away I put him in the undergrowth, hopefully out of sight from hungry birds and moved on, quickly coming across an Emperor engrossed in the usual unpleasantness on the floor. After a few average shots he flew off down a side path and played coy with me for some time before finding another smelly mess. He still toyed with me though, alternating between sitting on low vegetation and licking poo.







It was while he was sitting on a higher leaf that I had a brainwave, I kicked the poo into the undergrowth and dampened down the spot with some of my diluted orange squash. It worked a treat, when he next came down he settled quickly and didn't move, unfortunately so settled that he never attempted to open his wings again and ended up being at the wrong angle to get any decent shots. I was happy with what I'd got so I moved on, but not before pointing him out to some other butterflyers who had so far drawn a blank.



I didn't find any more Emperors today, just loads more White Admiral, Sliver-washed Frits and several fresh Commas.





On the return journey I found my Hairstreak was still hanging around, making me thing he wasn't actually 100% well, surely he should be in the tree tops by now. Anyway I took a load more pictures then moved him onto a leaf where he pottered around for a bit before crawling under.





A reverse stain glass window especially for Wurzel :)







That was a day that turned out pretty damn good by any standard 😇!

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 10:54 PM GMT

What an extraordinarily obliging Purple Hairstreak, Buggy. I wonder why it was so dopey – it certainly looks all in one piece. Beautiful purple, too – the shot on the bramble blossom is particularly good.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 05-Jul-17 05:34 AM GMT

You've excelled yourself there Buggy 🐨 I've never been to Bookham before – seems like a visit is long overdue!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 05-Jul-17 09:07 AM GMT

Lovely story and excellent pictures. I think the most memorable pictures come from such a personal hands on experience. Love to have been there which I suppose needs the green heads 😇 😇 Not that I think envy is what I feel. Very happy for you 😉

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Jul-17 08:35 PM GMT

Thank you all, it was just a case of being in the right place at the right time 😃. Not sure when I'll have such a close encounter of one of those again but the pictures and memories should keep me going for a few seasons!

24th June, the Welsh borders

I'd been pondering whether to take a trip to see the closest Large Heath colony to me for a while. 'Closest' is a relative term here, it would involve a train to Crewe where I change to either Whitchurch or Prees and from there I had yet to work out. According to Google maps it was an eight-mile hike but Google doesn't show public footpaths so I'm sure there are ways to cut a few miles off that. In the end I plumped for a train to Whitchurch (the larger of the two towns) and from there get a cab rather than struggle with unknown footpaths with the inevitable getting lost for hours.

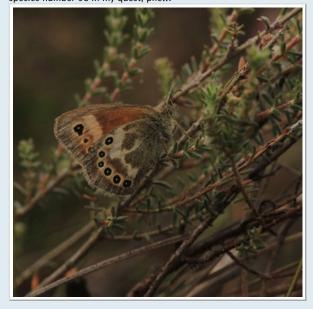
It was a good plan in theory, unfortunately the day came very close to complete disaster when I arrived at Whitchurch and discovered their taxi companies aren't up to much. Of the 8 or so numbers I had, about half seemed to be old or disconnected, and of the rest only one answered and was fully booked for most of the afternoon.

To get the cheapest train ticket I'd opted for a later train and it was now around 1pm. With my return train at 6 I had 5 hours and two options: wander around locally or walk to Whixhall moss. Obviously, I opted for the latter but it meant I would only have an hour at most at the site instead of the afternoon I'd planned and with the weather a bit touch and go it certainly wasn't guaranteed I'd see anything.

Google took me along the main roads mostly without pavements, not the nicest of walks but the final stretch took me down a country track and here I started seeing butterflies, just Large Skippers and Ringlets but it gave me hope that the Heaths would be active too.

After 2 hours, I finally got to the reserve, but it's a big place and I had limited time, where to go now. I strode down a main path looking for some side paths that would take me to suitable habitat. I didn't exactly find a path but I found what looked like good habitat with patches of cotton grass so I did a bit of tentative off-roading, thanking the dry spring for making the bog not quite as boggy as it could have been.

After 5 minutes of random careful wandering I put up something, looking like a Small Heath in flight but greyer. Target acquired it was now time to get a picture to make sure the day wasn't a complete right off. It proved just as annoying as its smaller relative but persistence paid off and finally I bagged species number 58 in my quest, phew.





After that I discovered another corner nearby where several were lurking. There was quite a blustery wind so whenever I disturbed one it was whisked off quite some distance before settling again and this habitat really isn't made for anything other than very careful stepping. Nevertheless I managed to capture two or three more individuals before I had to leave for the long trek home. I could have stayed longer, getting back to the station with nearly an hour to spare in the end but I wanted to give myself enough time just in case I took a wrong turn.









I'm not sure if that was my most frustrating tick or most satisfying but it definitely needs a return visit, with a little bit more forward planning next time!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 05-Jul-17 10:26 PM GMT

Dedication, Buggy, amazing dedication – and it paid off. Great shots of the Large Heath a just reward. By the way, I find Google Maps next to useless (unless you look at the photos of the landscape – which can give a feel for what somewhere looks like) and always use Streetmap as you get the OS maps complete with rights of way in detail, and you can print them off and take them with you.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 05-Jul-17 10:47 PM GMT

Congratulations Bugboy! And like Dave says, what dedication! Θ

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 05-Jul-17 10:54 PM GMT

A great couple of trips out, Paul. You deserved success with the Large Heath after all that travelling. The Purple Hairstreak has given many enthusiasts a thrill this year with their unusual behaviour. Your male PH is certainly a lovely specimen. Well done.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 06-Jul-17 07:25 AM GMT

Well done, Paul.

So what are you going to do after you ticked off all 60 (or is it 59?) species? Write a book about your experiences? Your reports are a pleasure to read and probably encourages a few people to get out a bit more 4

ATB

Peter

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 06-Jul-17 07:24 PM GMT

Well done Bugboy, great shots as well, 😊 I thought I was doing well getting my 50th last week but you've given me some thing to think about now, (I thought there was about 56 species) I'm doing a recount 📦 Goldie 😁

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Jul-17 09:23 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Dedication, Buggy, amazing dedication – and it paid off. Great shots of the Large Heath a just reward. By the way, I find Google Maps next to useless (unless you look at the photos of the landscape – which can give a feel for what somewhere looks like) and always use Streetmap as you get the OS maps complete with rights of way in detail, and you can print them off and take them with you.

Dave

Janet Turnbull wrote:

Congratulations Bugboy! And like Dave says, what dedication!

Thanks Dave and Janet, I'm not sure dedication is a word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing things like this that would have got me sectioned 150 years ago I think in the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use! It's doing the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use it would be a section of the word of the word some of my non butterflyer friends would use it will be a section of the word of the w

trevor wrote:

A great couple of trips out, Paul. You deserved success with the Large Heath after all that travelling. The Purple Hairstreak has given many enthusiasts a thrill this year with their unusual behaviour.

Your male PH is certainly a lovely specimen. Well done.

Trevor.

Thanks Trevor, yes Purple Hairstreaks have had an incredible year. My educated guess is that its a combination of a above average emergence combined with a dry summer meaning there's not enough honeydew to go around. Whatever the reason I'm glad I was able to join in the party 😊

peterc wrote:

Well done, Paul.

So what are you going to do after you ticked off all 60 (or is it 59?) species? Write a book about your experiences? Your reports are a pleasure to read and probably encourages a few people to get out a bit more 4

ATB

Peter

Haha, not sure Peter, with the Large Tortoiseshell there's 60 plus the rare immigrants. I hope my reports have a positive impact on people.

G. You're not the first person to suggest a book but I wouldn't really know where to start.

Goldie M wrote:

Well done Bugboy, great shots as well, ⁽¹⁾ I thought I was doing well getting my 50th last week but you've given me some thing to think about now, (I thought there was about 56 species) I'm doing a recount ⁽²⁾ Goldie ⁽³⁾

Thanks Goldie, a total of 50 isn't to be sniffed at (if you add the Large Tortoiseshell there's 60 species to get including the Cryptic Wood White and the 3 regular migrants).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-17 10:04 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Bugboy – there must be something this time of year as I don't recall it ever being as good for Purple Hairstreaks as this, plus it comes to something when an Emperor gets short shrift in a posting © Congrats on the Large Heath, it looks like DavidM was right about them drawing to a close.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Jul-17 10:25 PM GMT

After that marathon effort, Bugboy, it was only right and proper that your first encounter with this species was a beautifully marked specimen! Well done.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Jul-17 07:53 PM GMT

Thanks guys, it's been a rather hectic few weeks for me but I've managed to come up with the goods 99% of the time thankfully. Talking of hectic, here's the next instalment of my 2017 season:

26th June, Scotland... again! (part 1)

I'd booked this trip around the same time as I'd booked my Irish trip, weeks in advance and relying on hope and prayers for good weather. So it was with complete despair that I watched the weekly forecast on Countryfile the night before I flew up, where it seemed that the entire week looked to be a complete washout \mathfrak{S} ! Only that week though, the previous week was fine and it looked like things would clear up by the weekend, just in time for my flight back \mathfrak{U} .

The target species for this trip was the Northern Brown Argus and I had planned to meet up with the regional expert lain Cowe (IAC) on the east coast border but the way things were looking, that wasn't going to happen.

I'd booked a late morning flight so as to get a half decent lay in and arrive in Edinburgh in time to have an afternoon wander. With the forecast set to descend into farce as far as butterflying was concerned I was a little relieved to find Monday afternoon cloudy but borderline for some activity so I dropped my stuff off at the hostel and headed straight for Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat where there is still apparently a small colony of NBA.

My plan of action was to locate some Rock Rose, which is apparently found in two areas around the southern side of the park, and then look around for some roosting Argus. A good plan on paper but like my plan for getting to Whixhall Moss two days previously, not particularly successful. In fact, I only managed to locate one tiny sprig of the stuff and not a sniff of an Argus.

I did flush, to my surprise, my first Grayling of the year though. Just a few record shots since any more than that would have had me falling to certain death down the cliff face!



As the afternoon wore on the cloud thickened but it stayed pleasantly warm and Ringlets were relatively common in areas where the grass had been allowed to grow. One in particular caught my eye, my first ab. *arete* whom I spent some time following. Despite the poor light it was still rather active and put up a good fight against being photographed, I won in the end though!







A Red Admiral was also swooping around and the occasional Small Heath fluttered around but very little else was seen.

I finished the stroll in the early evening, being watched carefully by a pair of Pheasants as I took some pictures of some moths.





Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet



Probably a Yarrow Plume, Gillmeria pallidactyla



Agapeta hamana
The final target for my camera gave me a fleeting bit of excitement when I caught a glimpse of it roosting. The silvery underside making me think for a second I had inadvertently stumbled across my target.



It was now time to explore the culinary delights of Edinburgh and pray for at least one day with no rain!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 07-Jul-17 08:54 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy, An amazing effort to see the Large Heath, really glad you succeeded in your quest. Well Done 😌



...I'd booked this trip around the same time as I'd booked my Irish trip, weeks in advance and relying on hope and prayers for good weather...

Oh! I know that feeling...all my longer trips are booked well in advance due to having to book the time off work so I am always taking a flyer with the weather as well as flight times that can vary year on year.

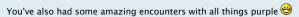
Cheers.

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 08-Jul-17 01:18 PM GMT

Incredible determination on your part to find and photograph the Large Heath 🤒 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Jul-17 11:33 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Hi Bugboy, An amazing effort to see the Large Heath, really glad you succeeded in your quest. Well Done 😊



buabov wrote:

... I'd booked this trip around the same time as I'd booked my Irish trip, weeks in advance and relying on hope and prayers for good weather...

Oh! I know that feeling...all my longer trips are booked well in advance due to having to book the time off work so I am always taking a flyer with the weather as well as flight times that can vary year on year.

Neil.

I've had more than my fair share of dodgy weather on pre-booked outings this year, 3 out of 3!

Maximus wrote:

Incredible determination on your part to find and photograph the Large Heath ²⁹ 😊



You've also had some amazing encounters with all things purple 😊

Thanks Max, yes determination is a word that could be used...



It's been a good year for purple all round I think 😃

27 - 30th June, Scotland... again! (part 2)

Well after Monday afternoons wander Tuesday came and so did the rain, and more rain and more. It just didn't stop all day so I got drenched doing touristy stuff. Edinburgh is a nice city, I'm sure it looks wonderful in the sun.

Anyway Wednesday was still looking like a possibility with no rain forecast so Iain and I decided to risk it. I met up with him at Berwick-upon-Tweed where we hopped on a bus back over the border up to Burnmouth. On the train down I had glimpsed a fair amount of blue sky before it went cloudy again but it gave me some hope that I might just get lucky. At Burnmouth it was just a short walk down to the coast and lain began pointing out some spots where there should be some NBA. It was still cloudy and a little on the cool side so we were having to look for roosting ones. There was certainly no shortage of Rock Rose, unlike at Holyrood Park. The site itself is basically the cliff face looking out across the North Sea, these NBA really must hardy buggers! Anyway at the first spot we found none, despite some mountain goat impressions up the cliff face.

We wandered a bit further along the coast where lain pointed out some more likely spots so up we went again. The sun was doing its best to come out, fighting heroically with the cloud to the point where we even had faint shadows occasionally and suddenly, right under my nose, there magically appeared species number 59 😊 .



And then there were four of them, clustered around a clump of vegetation. One was actually basking in the weak, barely visible sun but fluttered off before I got a snap. The other three were roosting but it was just warm enough for them to respond to our attention and one by one they fluttered off. One, as if to prove lain is some sort of God among the NBA fraternity, settled on his head
.

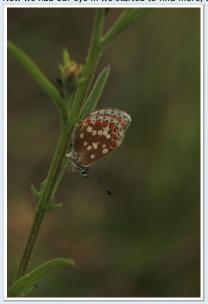






Now we had our eye in we started to find more, some of them deciding it was just warm enough to be active and I got some open wing shots 😃









In total we probably found about ten, which given the conditions we decided wasn't too bad at all!





We also managed several eggs, all interestingly laid on the upper side of the leaf in quite sheltered patches of Rock Rose, tucked under or amongst taller vegetation.





Also seen were some old first gen Small Blues, a single Grayling, plenty of Ringlet and some moths



Thyme Plume



?



?



And a small colony of Razorbill, an avian lifer for me



Huge thanks to lain for his invaluable help, there's no way I would have seen any without his expert finger pointing the way 😂 .

The rest of the week proved as wet as the forecast predicted, in fact the only sun I saw for the entire week was on the train down to Berwick!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 09-Jul-17 12:38 AM GMT

Nice one, bugboy 😊 but what does that leave you for next year 🕡

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 09-Jul-17 10:39 AM GMT

Hi Paul, it's really enjoyable following you on your mission to see every UK species. What will you do when it's mission accomplished? Can we look forward to a new mission?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Jul-17 01:55 PM GMT

Maximus wrote:

Nice one, bugboy 😊 but what does that leave you for next year 🔞

Well that just leaves the Mountain Ringlet which I narrowly missed at Irton Fell on the way back from seeing the Chequered Skipper. It also means I might have a quieter, more restful season next year but NBA and Large Heath do need repeat visits at some point. I Also want to see proper IoW Glanvilles and perhaps I'll start looking for some local races, Great Orme and the Scilly Isles spring to mind. There's still an awful lot to experience out there 😉

Butterflysaurus rex wrote:

Hi Paul, it's really enjoyable following you on your mission to see every UK species. What will you do when it's mission accomplished? Can we look forward to a new mission? 😊

Hi James, glad you've enjoyed my frantic mission 🚇. New mission... well it's a toss up between every UK Lichen or every UK Slime mould.......

As A little addendum to my last post I thought I'd add a few shots of the NBA habitat at Burnmouth:









by bugboy, 09-Jul-17 09:10 PM GMT

I'm actually back to work tomorrow, if I can remember the way arrowsign although because the way my rota works it's just a half day and then I'm off on Tuesday e. but then it's 6 days straight, so that should give me time to catch up on things here. It's definately going to be a shock to the system after these past six weeks, it's been like summer holidays from School. Anyway a week ago...

1st July, Daneway Blues (part 1)

I hadn't planned to go and see Large Blues this year but my 'illness' and the early emergence of most species meant that the first week of July was

technically free having already bagged the usual July purple targets. So, the day after returning from Scotland I left early for the long trip across southern England, train fares and buses dictating that Saturday is the only realistic day I can get there under my own steam. I'd checked Neil Hulme's PD the night before for the date he'd seen the first males and extrapolated that they should still be on the wing. The weather forecast seemed perfect, a warm, cloudy morning breaking to sunny spells by the time of my arrival at around 1pm.

I arrived to find several people walking around with cameras and an official outing (presumably a BC organised or similar event) was just coming to a close and heard that small numbers were indeed still present. It only took a few minutes to hear the call of someone nearby and I watched one flutter over one of the fences towards me, a rather fresh looking female. She never opened her wings but did go through the motions of egg laying (I never saw found egg upon looking after she had left).





In fact virtually all I saw were females, probably six or seven and nearly all were going through the same motions and only the one looked anything more than a day or two old. They were spread quite widely across the site but the same ones kept popping up in the same places





It wasn't until later in the afternoon that they started to open their wings for me, displaying that unique ultramarine blue they have but egg laying (or attempts at any rate) continued right up until my home time.

















by bugboy, 09-Jul-17 09:36 PM GMT

1st July, Daneway (part 2) The support cast

So the Blues are obviously the main attraction at this time of year but the site is a veritable lepidopteran hive of activity with Satyrids, Hesperids and Nymphalids all jostling for attention.

Meadow Browns and Marbled Whites ruled the roost as far as the Browns were concerned with a few Small Heath and (mostly) faded ringlets also putting in the occasional appearance plus the odd Specklie in the shadier corners.



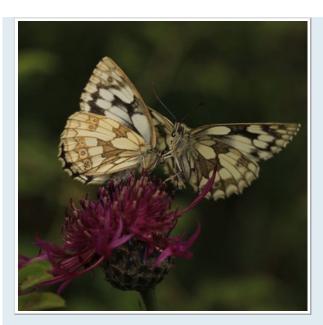


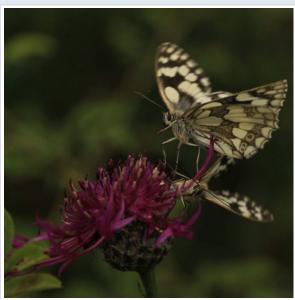






With so many around fights were inevitable...





I only saw Large and Small skippers but apparently Essex were also about as well





Gorging on the Hawk-bits were several gorgeously fresh Small Tortoiseshells and later I found an eye catching hutchinsoni Comma.







As well as the butterflies, there were dozens of species of Moth, most of which I didn't bother with but I spent some time with this magnificent lady!



With so much to see the afternoon simply flew by and I didn't even have time for a refreshing tipple in the pub before leaving, oh well there's always next year 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-17 11:12 PM GMT

Cracking NBAs Bugboy – those are easier to tell apart than salmacis 😊 😇 Lovely set of Large Blues as well with some nice open wing shots, something I struggled to find on my visit due to insane heat 😊 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 10-Jul-17 12:28 PM GMT

I'm trying to catch up with your posts Bugboy but your leaving me breathless 🥮 I envy you your determination and youth 🥯 Goldie 😇 😇 🗑

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Jul-17 01:26 PM GMT

Haha, yea sorry Goldie, best sit down with a cup of tea and a few biscuits before attempting my PD at the moment 📦. Now I'm back to work I'm only a week behind so this time next week my entries may slow down a bit although I do have a week booked off mid July and Mid August...

Also thank you for using the word 'youth', I thought I'd long grown out of that adjective 📦 😇

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 10-Jul-17 01:32 PM GMT

No Bugboy, it's me that's lost the youth. (Just got some hearing aids)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 10-Jul-17 05:07 PM GMT

I hope I shall see some Large Blues in France this summer I enjoy coming across them in the wild there. Nice colours on a lovely fresh insect. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Jul-17 08:33 PM GMT

Good luck in France Peter 🐸

2nd July, White-letter Hairstreak.

I'd had a few enquiries about the colony I visit and given this year's topsy turvy season it was difficult to say whether it was worth a visit, so I thought I'd drop by again and see how close to the end of their season it was. Two weeks ago they were nearly all fresh, just a few tatty males chasing all the

beautiful females, so I figured there should still be some activity.

I left it quite late in the day, knowing they stay active well into the early evening and arrived just before 4 to find a few oldish females flitting around, about half a dozen or so as opposed to the 30+ on my previous visit. They still posed well for me though on what remained of the Bramble flowers and I spent about half an hour with them before moving on to see what else was about.





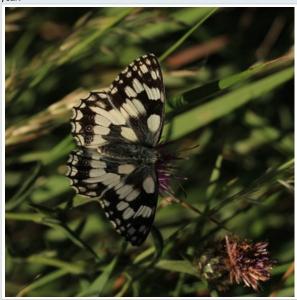


Even though it was late, it was still insanely hot and most that was about was doing it's best to shelter from it. All three Whites were present and Essex made up the vast majority of Skippers that were buzzing around.

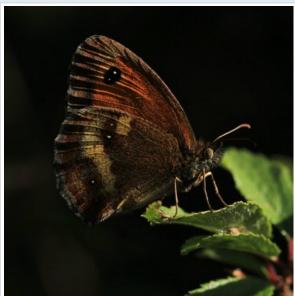




There were still some Marbled Whites, Ringlets (mostly looking rather worn and tatty now) along with Meadow Browns and my first Gatekeepers of the year.







Another first were summer gen Peacocks, which interestingly seemed to be acting like spring animals and holding territories, and were mostly very jittery towards a strange man with a camera. I wouldn't be surprised if we get a strong second generation this year in places.

Also flying were a couple of Brown Argus looking for a suitable roosting spot.



When I finally returned to the Hairstreaks the females had all vanished and had been replaced by five or six males. As ever here Comma's were ever present throughout the afternoon.





by Janet Turnbull, 11-Jul-17 12:51 AM GMT

Sorry bugboy, I accidentally posted my day's hunting on your diary! I think it's deleted now.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Jul-17 08:19 PM GMT

Those WLH look familiar, Buggy! And the Large Blue shots earlier are excellent. 🚇 I shall have to try Daneway as well as Collard next year...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 11-Jul-17 09:01 PM GMT

You have really seen some great butterflies this year Buggy, your achievements made all the more impressive by the amount of getting about you have done by public transport.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jul-17 09:34 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Those WLH look familiar, Buggy! And the Large Blue shots earlier are excellent. 4 I shall have to try Daneway as well as Collard next year...

Dave

Thanks Dave 4. Coincidentally, I thought the same of your WLH 5.

Neil Freeman wrote:

You have really seen some great butterflies this year Buggy, your achievements made all the more impressive by the amount of getting about you have done by public transport.

Cheers,

Neil.

Thanks Neil, I dread to think how much I've spent on fares.... 🥸



4th July, North Stoke

I went down for one final look this year for Large Tortoiseshells but like last time I found none. This by no means they haven't bred here though. All eye's peeled next April for post hibernation animals!

Despite the lack of them there was still an awful lot around to keep me occupied. The remaining few Ringlets and marbled Whites were looking somewhat past their best but there were plenty of fresh Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns around.







Second generations Whites were still emerging on droves







And I found 'father & son' Brimstones





Comma's and Red Admirals were still numerous and were now joined by summer Peacocks although all the Small Torts from a couple of weeks ago had vanished.





All expected Skippers were in attendance







And where last time only a few very tatty Common Blues were seen, their offspring were now brightening up the grassland





Another solitary Small Copper posed for me



Taking a break from butterflies, a large patch of Hogweed was covered in Hoverflies of various species and I found a very fat Crab Spider having lunch.



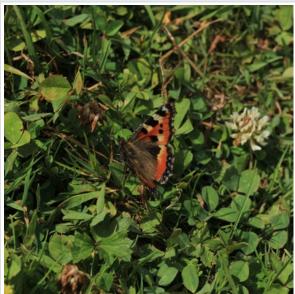
Leucozona latarnaria



Cheilosia illustrata



As I was leaving I found where all the Small Torts had gone with several squabbling over a nettle bed near the gate at the entrance to the site.



One final surprise, sitting on the floor in the middle of the waiting room at the station was another Poplar Hawk. I moved him onto some overhanging trees.



by bugboy, 13-Jul-17 08:03 PM GMT

5th July, Bookham and Box Hill

The summer heatwave was still in full swing so by the time I got to Bookham at 9.30 everything was already actively feeding and super charged.

The usual suspects were jostling over Bramble flowers but I made great effort to grab some shots of a Large White that stopped by, I've hardly seen any this year never mind photograph them.









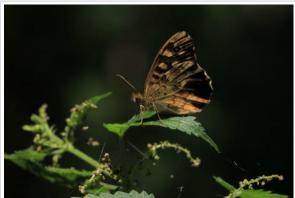




Despite the summer heat this year there are still some damp areas and muddy patches in the open scrub which this year has seen various species mud puddling. Previously I have watched Comma's and Small Whites, today there were a trio of Small Skippers partaking.



Before leaving I spent a bit of time reacquainting myself with Speckled Woods, a species I've not seen a great deal since the spring.





An hour later I was on Box Hill with various Satyrids and Dark Green Fritillaries. Marbled Whites were still out in good numbers and still emerging judging by the condition of some. It's no surprise to find Gatekeepers have started emerging here as well.





I wandered over to Zigzag Road and the Silver-spotted Skipper bank but found no early SSS. A few Small Heath flitted here and there and a male Common Blue sat briefly.



It was the Fritillaries I was mainly concentrating on though. The males were obviously impossible, rarely more than a ginger blur flashing across the hillside but the majority of females could be followed as they searched for egg laying spots. I watched one female go through the whole process, amazed how her abdomen extended to double its normal length as it probed around the lower reaches of the grass stems to find what she was after.









When she flew off I had a careful search and located the egg, never seen one of these before so I was quite chuffed with myself





by millerd, 13-Jul-17 08:45 PM GMT

The DGF egg is an amazing find, Buggy. 😃 I don't think I've got good enough eyes to spot one!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Jul-17 10:11 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

The DGF egg is an amazing find, Buggy. 4 I don't think I've got good enough eyes to spot one!

Dave

Thanks Dave, It's tucked down deep in the turf so had I not witnessed it being laid I wouldn't have found it in a month of Sundays!

6th July, Walthamstow Marshes

I managed to squeeze in an hours butterfly late afternoon on my local patch. It was cooling down and getting a bit cloudy but there was still enough activity to make things worthwhile. Gatekeepers here too are emerging, still only males at this stage.



Skippers were around, large easily identified,



but the Small's and Essex were particularly tricky this evening. First one I'm going for Small here, the second Essex.





The next generation of Small Tortoiseshells are well on there way



Not every flower was being visited, I think this Crab Spider needs to go back to camouflage school!



The Hutchinsoni Comma's are just starting to look a little worn now, but still worthy of attention.





I left when I noticed a very large and very dark cloud drifting in my direction, Thunderstorms had been predicted, so I never got as far as where the Common and Holly Blues have been hanging out this year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-17 11:20 PM GMT

Great find with the DGF ovum Buggy 😊 😇 Egglaying is one of the few behaviours I've not seen in DGFs 🚭

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Jul-17 10:55 PM GMT

7th July, Graylings

I normally wait for a few more weeks before going after Graylings, not visiting Chobham Common for them until the second half of July as it seems to be a late site for these as well as Silver-studded Blues. However, I saw them twice in Scotland and given the trend for 2017 I thought I should go earlier if I was to catch some fresh animals.

On the way to my usual hotspot skippers and Comma's distracted me but I didn't see any wandering Grayling like I normally do in their season.

Arriving at the hotspot, a slight hill... well, more of a large mound really, there didn't seem to be much activity until I disturbed one perched on an ageing, diseased Birch, who proceeded to disturb a second and then a third. They all quickly settled, long enough to see I had three very fresh males before darting off in a flurry of wings again. These three were the only ones I saw for the day but I made the most of them. They were centred around the Birch which seemed to have some kind of fungal disease and was secreting something that was attractive to a lot of insect life (mainly flies, wasps and three Grayling).





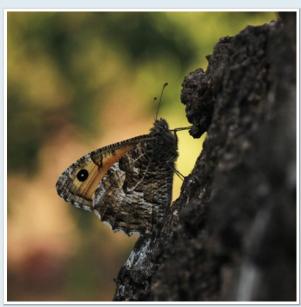
The old chestnut 'Spot The Grayling'







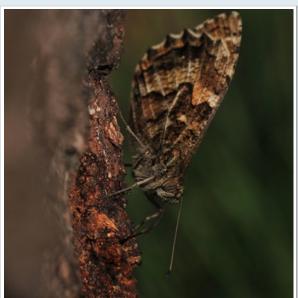
Playing chicken, Who will make the first move?



They are always fun to watch, they do give the impression of play fighting rather than proper territorial disputes. I camped out by the Birch for a couple of hours watching them, thankful for the shade on yet another overly warm day.



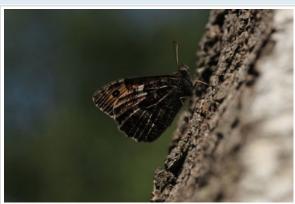






This particular one was probably only hours old and had a very distinctive oily sheen to its wings, this is the best I could get to show it.







There's normally a few Silver Studded Blue still hanging around during Grayling season and today was no different, the vast majority were long past their sell by date but there were a couple of fresher males and a particularly fine looking (and rather plump) female.







An Essex Skipper to finish :)

by bugboy, 16-Jul-17 10:13 PM GMT

8th July, Dorset Lulies

Since I got Chequered Skipper this year I got it into my head that I was going to see all the Skippers in the one season, which obviously required a visit to the wonderfully scenic Dorset Coast. Like my other long distant day trips, extortionately high week day train fares meant that the weekend was the only realistic option. (I seriously cannot fathom how a return flight to Scotland from London is cheaper than a return train fare to Dorset???)

Anyway, it does mean to make it a worthwhile day trip I do need to catch the 6.30am train so it was with sleepy eyes that I set off for a day at the Seaside.

A few hours later I arrived at Durlston and it was yet another scorcher. Having visited last year I was familiar with the place and it took very little time to locate my first Lulworth, the first of many I was to see.





Flirting with a Lady Lulworth



Egg laying





I explored further this year, spending a good 5 hours chasing various species (but mostly the Lulworths obviously). All ages were seen, from ancient dark males to fresh out the box individuals. Unlike last year, when it was well into August, there were other Skippers around today. A few faded Large and several fresher looking Smalls, although unlike Millerd the following day I never saw an Essex. It was interesting to find that the Lulworths were quite easy to pick out even in flight, ironically being noticeable smaller the Smalls and also somewhat darker.

Lulworths were probably the commonest butterfly, closely challenged by Marbled Whites although the commonest Lepidopteran could well have been the hundreds of six-spot Burnet Moths.









Small Skipper



Small Skipper







I bumped into a few other butterflyers (not Wurzel though even though I've heard since he was here on the same day? not sure where he was lurking, maybe he has some local insider knowledge of a secret Lulworth lair). One of the butterflyers was a familiar face though, last time I saw him he had a Purple Emperor licking his Shoe! He'd found a male Clouded Yellow and pointed me in the direction of some second brood Small Blues.

I managed a few Small Blues, just males but they did have a very generous amount of blue scales. Flying with them was a Common Blue and apparently there was also a Small Copper but I never tracked that down. With time getting on (and a two and half hour train ride to look forward to) I only managed a few record shots of my first Cloudie of the year, better than nothing though.









Other species seen were Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Small Heaths, Dark Green Fritillaries and a couple of surprises, two very fresh (and stupidly scatty, hence no shots) male Walls and a single Grayling feeding on a Buddleja.



And there endeth my enforced summer holiday

I do like this part of the world, this may become an annual pilgrimage. Perhaps next year I'll book a hostel and make a weekend of it.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-17 10:23 PM GMT

Great shots of the Lulworths Bugboy Philzoid and I stopped off at Corfe Castle on the way and then found a cracking little place for lunch at Durlston where we were surrounded by Small, Essex and Lulworths. It was a cracking day for us, we didn't get the Grayling or the Cloudy which I was kinda hoping for but we still racked up 22–23 species

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17–Jul–17 09:04 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great shots of the Lulworths Bugboy Philzoid and I stopped off at Corfe Castle on the way and then found a cracking little place for lunch at Durlston where we were surrounded by Small, Essex and Lulworths. It was a cracking day for us, we didn't get the Grayling or the Cloudy which I was kinda hoping for but we still racked up 22–23 species

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I was going to stop of a Corfe but ended up spending all my time at Durlston, 22 species is a pretty good day and sounds like I was right about finding a secret Lulworth lair 😉

15th & 16th July, Work

Yes that's right, work! I have actually been back at work for one whole week now, it's been a horrific shock to the system, but it was made a little easier by catching up on the transects I do there. Thankfully a colleague whose pretty ofay with butterflies has done a good job at keeping things ticking over these past few weeks so only 2 weeks have been missed.

Looking at the figures so far really shows just how different this year has been from last year's disastrous season.

One of the most impressive 'bounce backs' can be seen with the Gatekeeper. Last year I had an end of year total of just 21 sightings over both transects including casual records.

So far, this year we have had 92 sightings $\Theta \Theta$, not including any casual sightings.









Found this chap on a cloudy Saturday...



...The following day I found him enjoying the company of a yound lady :)

A few other species added to the yearly list over the weekend were a Painted lady and a Common Blue, a species that occasionally turns up but has yet to colonise properly, and all three Whites were represented. I'm hoping Large Whites will utilise a bed of Nasturtium that I've persuaded the Horticultural dept to plant specifically for them









by David M, 17-Jul-17 09:19 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Yes that's right, work! I have actually been back at work for one whole week now, it's been a horrific shock to the system...

That ritual must be most unpleasant for you, Bugboy, after your extended period of absence?



by millerd, 17-Jul-17 10:50 PM GMT

Great photos of the Lulworths from Durlston, Buggy. It's one of my favourite places, and combining a morning on the beach at Studland with an afternoon here is a great way of spending a summer's day. Interesting that you found Small, I found Essex, and Wurzel found both! I've seen all three here before, so it's no surprise really.

That's a lovely orangey-pink Painted Lady too. 🐸



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 17-Jul-17 11:10 PM GMT

Back at work! Oh dear. But you've certainly made the most of the summer and I have really enjoyed following your mission 😊 . Lovely picture of the Painted Lady - I have not seen any up here yet. Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Jul-17 08:34 PM GMT

David M wrote:

bugbov wrote:

Yes that's right, work! I have actually been back at work for one whole week now, it's been a horrific shock to the system...

That ritual must be most unpleasant for you, Bugboy, after your extended period of absence?

I myself will be returning to work tomorrow after a full 3 weeks off and I daresay I will be feeling similarly deflated!



I hope you're able to ease yourself back in David, I have another week booked off next week 🥯. Booked months ago but my work colleagues might start asking questions as to my commitment soon...

millerd wrote:

Great photos of the Lulworths from Durlston, Buggy. It's one of my favourite places, and combining a morning on the beach at Studland with an afternoon here is a great way of spending a summer's day. Interesting that you found Small, I found Essex, and Wurzel found both! I've seen all three here before, so it's no surprise really.

That's a lovely orangey-pink Painted Lady too.



Dave

Thanks Dave, I'm sure like me, you weren't paying too much attention to the SmEssex with all the Lulworths flying around.

Janet Turnbull wrote:

Back at work! Oh dear. But you've certainly made the most of the summer and I have really enjoyed following your mission 😊 . Lovely picture of the Painted Lady - I have not seen any up here yet.



lanet

Thanks Janet 🤐. I've only seen five or six Painted Ladys all year, they've certainly been thin on the ground this year.

17th July, Tottenham Marshes

I've not visited Tottenham Marshes since the spring so I squeezed in an hour after work. As you would expect everything was winding down for the night, catching the dying rays of the evening sun as it disappeared behind a bank milky high cloud.

The evening had a distinctly autumnal feel about it, particularly the Comma's basking on dying Hazel leaves.



I've never seen Brown Argus here before so I made an effort to catch up with flighty little chap.



Gatekeepers were numerous as expected and I came across a few Common Blues, two boys and a lady









In amongst all this a Blue-tailed Damselfly stopped off the have an evening snack of a flying ant



Finally I had to wait a good five minutes for this moth to land. I didn't have to move anywhere, he just flew in circles around me, I must smell like a female or something! I think he's a rather worn Gypsy Moth



by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Jul-17 08:42 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

17th July, Tottenham Marshes

As you would expect everything was winding down for the night, catching the dying rays of the evening sun as it disappeared behind a bank milky high cloud.

The evening had a distinctly autumnal feel about it, particularly the Comma's basking on dying Hazel leaves.

Not Autumn already!! Well why not? Everything else has been early this summer. We'll be celebrating Christmas in November this year! lames

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-17 10:13 PM GMT

Well all the butterflies that emerge have been recorded so an early Autumn it seems like, it feels like the season only just really begun 2 It might mean some second and third broods to look forward to, although whether that is a good idea for the butterflies I don't know 2 Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Jul-17 11:06 PM GMT

And Easter in December, who'd have thought butterflies would be re-writing Christianity!

I'll definitely be on the look out for second gen White Admirals this year Wurzel, and I suspect we'll be seeing second gen Peacock and Swallowtails this year too. I wonder how many broods Millerds Holly Blues will fit in...? What about third gen Wood Whites?

18th July Silver-spots and Chalkhills part 1

Several days ago I caught a report on one of the butterfly facebook groups of a Silver-spotted Skipper photographed at Box Hill, the final Skipper in my mini mission to see them all in one season, nice and early as has become traditional this year, so I had a visit pencilled in myself.

The day was predicted to be a little on the warm side so I wanted to get an early start but even at 9.30 it looked like everything had already been up for a few hours. I had a few Fritillaries zoom past and the hundreds of Gatekeepers were busy breakfasting on the Marjoram. Several Common Blues were also active.







Wandering over towards Zigzag road I found a Silver-spotted Skipper almost immediately and I hadn't even got close to the bank they usually hang out on. He was predictably a little bit zippy but I managed to pin him down long enough for a few shots.



A little further down a couple of second brood Small Blues were flitting in the usual spot, living up to their name and being very small indeed. There was also a Small Copper busy stuffing his face with Marjoram nectar.





It had started to get a bit cloudy and I didn't find any more Skippers but the odd Chalkhill fluttered here and there, searching for females, species number 53 for the season... ©

None of these males settled long enough for a picture so this year's Chalkhill debut goes to a more well behaved female.



Crossing over the top zag of the Zigzag I was welcomed by several more male Chalkhill's, a few of whom were better behaved.









I spent a while here and after around 20 minutes the cloud cleared rather suddenly sending the temperature rocketing within seconds and the bank was suddenly alive with butterflies, Common Blues and Brown Argus joining the 30+ Chalkhills now quartering the slope.









A confused female Chalkhill testing a Gentian for egg laying potential...

Normally when an errant insect leaps into the view finder just as I'm lining up my 'perfect shot', it gets short thrift and a few choice words but every now and again it draws my attention. In this case a rather pretty little moth Oncocera semirubella.



Being somewhat more active and less willing to pose now, I moved on from the Chalkhills back down to see if the sun had woken up any more Skippers, it had, only a few and they too were now super charged but settled often and long enough to grab a few more images.







On the return I stopped off again at the Small Blues and Copper who was now picking fights with a Common blue in between feeding. Heading up to the top of Box Hill I stopped off to try for some shots of a female Dark Green Fritillary, I have yet to get anything more than a record shot of a female so this is one of my best ever pictures of one. Definitely need to make a concerted effort to get one next year



before leaving for my next port of call a particularly well behaved female Banded Demoiselle perched by the side of the path, just begging for me to take her picture, well if you insist 📛



next off to Denbies

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Jul-17 11:29 PM GMT

I note your comments regarding the 'autumnal feel' to proceedings, Bugboy. I daresay this is the inevitable downside to an 'early' year? That said, you're still seeing an excellent range of species and who knows, there might well be pleasant surprises in store round your way once autumn genuinely comes knocking at your door.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Jul-17 09:15 PM GMT

David M wrote:

I note your comments regarding the 'autumnal feel' to proceedings, Bugboy. I daresay this is the inevitable downside to an 'early' year? That said, you're still seeing an excellent range of species and who knows, there might well be pleasant surprises in store round your way once autumn genuinely comes knocking at your door.

Definitely still life in the season yet, I wonder what's waiting to come and visit from just over the Channel 🕡 😊



18th July Silver spots and Chalkhills part 2

The wander over to Denbies was rather slow today, hot and muggy weather doesn't mix well with an uphill hike, I was just thankful that there's a fair bit of shade along the way.

Upon reaching Denbies the first thing I saw was a tatty Painted Lady followed by several male Chalkhills, none of whom were interested in sitting still.

Moving down to the Hillside proper a couple of Small Coppers were battling over a patch of path whilst more Chalkhill males searched for females. Predictably there was a brisk wind whistling along the site which, combined with the high temperatures made for somewhat challenging photography and open wing shots were at a premium.







Occasionally a female would appear but invariably she would be bundled into the grass by a group of eager males, it's no wonder they keep themselves to themselves!









There weren't exactly clouds of Blues but most of what I saw were freshly emerged so I would guess numbers are a week or two from peaking.









Mixing in with the Chalkhills were decent numbers of Common Blues, some Brown Argus and the second flush of Meadow Browns seems to be just about to kick off. A few Gatekeeper's and the odd Small Heath completed the butterfly fauna for the afternoon.

Had it not been so warm I would have stayed longer to catch them as they began to roost and searched for some abs, but I was wilting in heat so I set off early. Still plenty of time to play with Chalkhills and I have another week off from Saturday (I know, but I really do have a full time job, honest!)

Re: Bugboys mission

by peterc, 21-Jul-17 07:12 AM GMT

Your employer must be very generous in allowing you to take quite a few days off, Paul 🔪 . No doubt we'll hear of Brown Hairstreak records from you next week which I am looking forward to reading about. No pressure, mind 😃 .

АТВ

Peter

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-17 10:53 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, lovely photos you've got in your post, I've been looking for the SS Skipper here in Kent but no show yet 😇 Goldie 😌

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Jul-17 12:09 PM GMT

peterc wrote

Your employer must be very generous in allowing you to take quite a few days off, Paul 📦 . No doubt we'll hear of Brown Hairstreak records from you next week which I am looking forward to reading about. No pressure, mind 😃 .

АТВ

Peter

Hi Peter, well I have worked here for over 20 years so they do owe me something! Yes I suspect I shall be spending a good proportion of next week camped out at Bookham looking for those Hairstreaks...

Goldie M wrote:

Hi! Bugboy, lovely photos you've got in your post, I've been looking for the SS Skipper here in Kent but no show yet 😇 Goldie Θ

Thanks Goldie, it's still very early for the SSS, as long as the weather holds you might get them next week if you're still around 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-17 10:07 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

David M wrote:

I note your comments regarding the 'autumnal feel' to proceedings, Bugboy. I daresay this is the inevitable downside to an 'early' year? That said, you're still seeing an excellent range of species and who knows, there might well be pleasant surprises in store round your way once autumn genuinely comes knocking at your door.

Definitely still life in the season yet, I wonder what's waiting to come and visit from just over the Channel 復



And if you want to extend the season a bit, head further north, although still an early season it is not so advanced around my patch as it is further south and from what I have seen from reports the northwest is not far ahead of where it usually is.

There has definitely been a south east/northwest split in the weather a lot of the time this year and here in the midlands we seem to have been one side or the other at different times.

Cheers.

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 22-Jul-17 11:59 AM GMT

Good stuff from Box Hill, Buggy. 😃 Which bit of the area were you looking at? There are several areas to explore and most have a few SSS, but I wonder if I've missed a bit as I've never seen more than one Small Blue before. I've also never managed to bump into you there! 😃

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Jul-17 01:25 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Good stuff from Box Hill, Buggy. ^(a) Which bit of the area were you looking at? There are several areas to explore and most have a few SSS, but I wonder if I've missed a bit as I've never seen more than one Small Blue before. I've also never managed to bump into you there!

Dave

Sent you a PM but yes, I have no idea how we nearly always miss each other at all these Surrey sites we both visit! 🕡



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Jul-17 06:01 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

bugboy wrote:

David M wrote:

I note your comments regarding the 'autumnal feel' to proceedings, Bugboy. I daresay this is the inevitable downside to

an 'early' year? That said, you're still seeing an excellent range of species and who knows, there might well be pleasant surprises in store round your way once autumn genuinely comes knocking at your door.

Definitely still life in the season yet, I wonder what's waiting to come and visit from just over the Channel



And if you want to extend the season a bit, head further north, although still an early season it is not so advanced around my patch as it is further south and from what I have seen from reports the northwest is not far ahead of where it usually is.

There has definitely been a south east/northwest split in the weather a lot of the time this year and here in the midlands we seem to have been one side or the other at different times.

Cheers,

Neil.

Not sure my bank account could cope with <u>another</u> northern trip this year, especially now its' peak holiday season!

21st July, Work

A very exciting find on one of my transects yesterday, two very fresh male Common Blues. I'm hoping the this is a sign they are about to, or have colonised here. There's no Birds-foot Trefoil close by so I'm presuming any breeding going on will be on the White Clover here. Whatever's going on it looks promising, that's three individuals seen this year now 띁





22nd July

I'd originally planned to go Hairstreak hunting at Bookham today but the forecast seemed to get progressively worse whilst Sundays improved so I treated myself to a lay in, did a bit of shopping and popped out for an hour on my patch. The biggest surprise was a single Brown Argus. I've only seen them here before once a few years ago and it seemed at the time a bit odd, several appearing out of the blue in a corner of a meadow with no sign of any foodplant and I suspected an ill thought out release, especially since I haven't seen them since. This one was in another meadow and there is a bit of Dove's-foot Cranesbill growing so just maybe there is a tiny population lurking here.



There were also a few Common Blues here, but apart from a couple of Whites it was Mainly Browns today.







I left when the sunny spells were mostly replaced by rain clouds, I'm glad I took notice of the forecast!

by Janet Turnbull, 22-Jul-17 08:37 PM GMT

That's good news if there are new colonies of CBs and BAs! $\stackrel{\textstyle \bigoplus}{}$ Janet

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 08:19 PM GMT

Great set of reports recently Bugboy ON wow that I've finished work for a bit I can finally start catching up I too noted the autumnal feel the other day – but mainly in the nature of the weather – it was wet, windy and cold OHOpefully this will slow things down and so there will still be some butterflies around through August

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jul-17 10:06 PM GMT

Indeed it is Janet, keeping my fingers crossed 😀

Thanks Wurzel . This week doesn't look too good, rain and cloud predicted in my part of the world, I think out your way though you may have better luck!

23rd July, Brown Hairstreak 1 - Bugboy 0

Of the two days this weekend, Sunday seemed to be the better bet for Hairstreak hunting. As it turned out the weather wasn't actually much better, slightly less rainy perhaps, but more grey cloud than sun meant there wasn't much chance of finding any Brown Hairstreaks today. That obviously didn't stop me from looking though, concentrating on the places where I found clusters of eggs over the winter. I figured on a day like this my best chance would be finding a freshly emerged one. I didn't find any.

There was however plenty of other stuff to keep me occupied. Gatekeepers were by far the commonest butterfly, probably numbering into the thousands, several flying up with every footfall in places.





On Banks Common (where there seemed to be clouds of Gatekeepers) I came across a single Small Copper living dangerously in a sea of thorns.



Both Small and Essex Skippers were around in small numbers, all looking rather tired now, as were a couple of hutchinsoni Commas.





Common Blues were relatively numerous, popping up here and there whenever the sun decided to appear as did the odd Small Copper, four in total.







Back on Banks Common I found two female Common Blues at either end of the colour spectrum flying together.





and a few fresh Painted Lady, perhaps half a dozen, one of whom had rather extensive orange markings.





The final sighting of the day was a Millerd, also having not much luck with the Hairstreaks. We chatted for a bit, both concluding that it really wasn't a good Hairstreak day, but perhaps we'd have better luck with Chalkhills at Denbies, it was cloudy but it was still by no means cold...

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 10:52 PM GMT

Unfortunately they still haven't been recorded from Shipton this year...but maybe tomorrow? 😉 That's if I can manage to escape the maniacal DIY plans of Mrs Wurzel and her 'Never-ending List of Jobs... 🙁 😇 📦

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Jul-17 11:27 PM GMT

That second Painted Lady is definitely missing some black markings compared to the first, Buggy. Lots more of that lovely fresh salmon-pink. Great shots of both of them. 🤩 It's a shame I missed seeing them before the sun disappeared. Good to see you today – Denbies worked out well for part two, I'd say. 떝

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jul-17 11:47 PM GMT

Oh dear, that doesn't sound too promising Wurzel, you must live in some sort of mansion by now with all this DIY you do! They've not been reported at Bookham either as far as I'm aware so it was a long shot from every angle really.

Thanks Dave, and thanks for the lift to Denbies, it certainly was worth it 😊



23rd July, The Blues of Denbies

It was raining when we arrived at Denbies, just a light drizzle but we set off down to the hillside anyway and it didn't take long for us to start finding roosting Chalkhill and Common Blues. Most of the Blues we saw were on the wing though, being disturbed as we walked along, it certainly wasn't cold enough to put them into a torpor, the occasional brave soul even attempting to bask.











The drizzle kept up for about half an hour or so before gradually it began to brighten up a bit, causing activity levels to also slowly increase until finally a large patch of blue sky drifted over us waking up all the Blues.

Dave found a male Chalkhill that looked paler than the rest, who also happened to be extremely well behaved.





As at Bookham earlier Common Blue females varied greatly, the males were also looking particularly glorious in the sun and a male Brown Argus also paid me a brief visit.









The sudden warmth provided by the sunny spell obviously acted as an aphrodisiac. I followed this pair but only managed one shot when I heard Dave shout "Adonis!" Sure enough a male had been woken up and was showing off his colours to us. He was getting battered in the breeze and we only had him long enough to get a few record shots before the wind took him over our heads.





Also active during our wanderings were Meadow Browns, a few Small Heath and just a couple of Marbled White, looking and acting rather pathetic in the



The trip to Denbies turned out to be rather good idea 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 11:53 PM GMT

I'm in the closing stages now Bugboy – that it until Mrs Wurzel decides that we need to freshen the place up 😌 A great set of blues there Bugboy which must have been very good compensation for missing the Brostreaks – especially the Adonis 😊 🙃



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Jul-17 12:17 AM GMT

I'm confident you'll get your Brown Hairstreaks eventually, Bugboy. It's just a matter of time, weather and patience!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 09:30 PM GMT

It was a very good decision to go to Denbies, Buggy! It just shows that perfect sunny weather is not necessary to see some good stuff. Incidentally, take a look at the very first picture you've posted - the female underside. I have a similar shot, and noticed that it seems to be a Silver-studded Chalkhill Blue... The marginal black spots have blue/silver scales in their centres, just like a SSB. I think this feature has been noted before in previous years, and no doubt is a named variation/form/aberration.

I think you got the better Adonis shot too – the colour of that butterfly was stunning. 🔑



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jul-17 09:39 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

It was a very good decision to go to Denbies, Buggy! It just shows that perfect sunny weather is not necessary to see some good stuff. Incidentally, take a look at the very first picture you've posted - the female underside. I have a similar shot, and noticed that it seems to be a Silver-studded Chalkhill Blue... The marginal black spots have blue/silver scales in their centres, just like a SSB. I think this feature has been noted before in previous years, and no doubt is a named variation/form /aberration.

I think you got the better Adonis shot too - the colour of that butterfly was stunning. 🚇

Thanks Dave, I see what you mean about my Silver-studded Chalkhill Blue, I remember you mentioning that ab on Sunday! Btw, have you looked in the July sightings thread yet 🤇

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 10:26 PM GMT

Yes, Buggy, I just did... 👽 well spotted! Still – it was a lot sunnier today... I think Saturday is my first chance now.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Jul-17 10:41 AM GMT

25th July part 1, Brown Hairstreak 0 - Bugboy 2 (1-2 agg)

Tuesday was widely predicted to be the best of a rather rubbish week weather wise and as you've probably already surmised it was back to Bookham. An early start meant I arrived under mostly cloudy conditions and it took a few hours before breaks in the cover began to give me anything more than fleeting glimpses of blue sky. Nevertheless it was warm enough for plenty of activity whilst searching the thistles and Fleabane for the object of desire. Gatekeepers were again everywhere, and still emerging from the looks of things. One of these fresh animals was a rather attractive female.





Other species seen were a single Green-veined White, a handful of Small Coppers and Common Blues, several ovipositing Red Admirals, some Commas and the occasional female Silver-washed Fritillary.

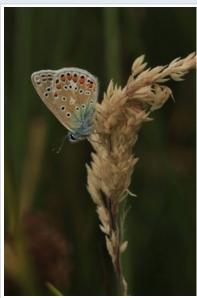














I saw my first Brown Hairstreak after about an hour, he'd made that fateful error we've all made at some point and mistaken a Gatekeeper for the object of his desire. It was kind of amusing to see a male Gatekeeper to get a taste of his own medicine but neither settled until the Hairstreak realised his error and bid a hasty retreat over the shrubs.

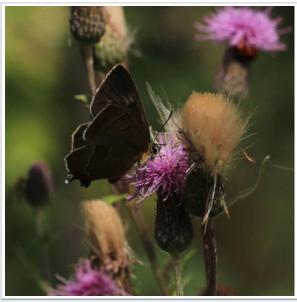
My next sighting was a couple using a small Sycamore as a master tree. I didn't see any activity around a similar sized Ash closeby.



After about 2 hours, I was just standing up from snapping a female Common Blue on the ground, not far from where I'd bumped into Millerd two days previously, when it literally fell out of the sky onto a thistle, the sandy orange colouration indicating that like other sites this year the males were coming down.







He sat politely for me for a few minutes before the constant pestering from Gatekeepers became too much and he fluttered off over the hedge.

A few minutes later I came across another one (or was it the same one?) It looked a bit brighter but, too my eye's at least, not as bright as the females I've seen in previous years so I'm putting this one down as a male as well. Looking at the images later on my computer it was obvious he was indeed a separate insect

I had this one for a little bit longer as I was able to follow him over the hedge where he managed to find a Bramble flower not being used by a Gatekeeper. The Gatekeepers if anything were becoming pests now. They're normally tailing off when the Hairstreaks start appearing but the thing with a male Gatekeeper is, if its orange/brown and moves, it's fair game!







After he decided all this attention was too much I only caught fleeting glances of Hairstreaks as they fluttered along the hedge, almost always with a Gatekeeper or two in tow.

Without a Hairstreak to focus on it was difficult to decide what to point my camera at, there was so much activity.













By lunchtime it was started to cloud over again and since the Hairstreaks habitually have a bit of a siesta anyway I decided to go caterpillar hunting into the woods

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Jul-17 03:15 PM GMT

25rd July part 2, more from Bookham

Leaving the Brown Hairstreak Hotspot the first thing I came across was an ovipositing Small Copper, I'll never tire of seeing these amazing tiny sculptures that come out of their bums.





A couple of Common Blues were still active and so was a particularly attractive and fresh Small Heath, I don't think I've ever seen one with white pupils in the vestigial ocelli on the hind wings.



As the cloud cover became quite extensive the woods became rather dark and murky with only a few Meadow Browns and the occasional female SW Frit braving the dull conditions.

I set about looking for the tell-tale signs of baby White Admirals, which proved harder than expected given the amount of adults that were on the wing a few weeks ago. Four or five suitably gloomy stands of Honeysuckle turned up nothing but finally I found a couple quite well developed, I think both freshly moulted 2nd instar.



2nd instar

Moving on the patches I've found larvae on in previous years I found several more, including what looks suspiciously like a 3rd instar. 3rd instar in the second half of July must surely mean a 2nd generation is on the way.



3rd instar



two 1st instar



1st instar with the remains of the egg shell on the right edge of the leaf In total I found around 10.

I then switched to Nettles and quickly found a handful of late instar Comma cats.



Close to final moult

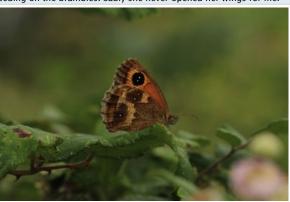


final instar

Things seemed to be brightening up a bit as I made my way back, SW Frits were appearing more often so I decided to see if any more Hairstreaks were active.



I saw none but did find a very eye-catching female Gatekeeper, the enlarged forewing ocelli making her stick out like a sore thumb amongst the hoards feeding on the brambles. Sadly she never opened her wings for me.



The wander back to the train station was again filled with various butterflies, Skippers (Small, Essex and a single Large), Peacocks, Blues, Coppers and the occasional Speckled Wood in amongst all the Gatekeepers.













Can you believe I've ticked of 54 species this year and its only July!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 26-Jul-17 04:36 PM GMT

Some nice finds in the last couple of posts Paul. I particularly like that last image of the BH and the 2nd instar WA larva. 🖰 🖰 I am sure Wurzel will be interested in the Hedge Brown which surely has to be an ab.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Jul-17 04:45 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Some nice finds in the last couple of posts Paul. I particularly like that last image of the BH and the 2nd instar WA larva. 😊 😊 I am sure Wurzel will be interested in the Hedge Brown which surely has to be an ab.

Thanks Pauline 🚇 , I had a look around and there's some pictures on the species page of a very similar one, it's an ab. anticrasipuncta.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Jul-17 09:53 PM GMT

That's one hell of a Hedge Brown, Bugboy....and the last Small Copper is pretty striking too....wonderful lighting.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 26-Jul-17 09:58 PM GMT

Nice Hairstreaks, Buggy - I must have another crack at Bookham with the sun out this time! You also found much greater variety in the Gatekeepers/Hedge Browns than I did – some really unusual ones there. And as David says, that last Copper really glows! 🤩

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-17 09:43 PM GMT

Cracking set of Brostreaks Bugboy although easily beaten in my book by that even more cracking Hedge Brown 😊 👨



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Jul-17 07:13 PM GMT

27th July, Summer Walls

I've not taken my little Padawan butterflyer work colleague out for a few months. Last time it was May so there's lots of new species to introduce her to now. She's still holding a grudge at Holly Blues and their frustrating habits so I decided to introduce her to Wall photography.... does that make me a bad person ?

It looked like the south coast might avoid the worst of the showers predicted so it was an early stsrt for a day at the seaside. It was rather cloudy when we arrived at Eastbourne and there was a rather stiff breeze whistling along the coast but out of the wind it was pleasantly mild, mild enough for some activity in fact. Surprisingly one of the first butterflies to appear were a few Walls in an area I've not seen them before. A bank beside one of the paths at the start of the South Downs Way had been cleared of scrub and bobbing along were half a dozen or so males and, in the cloudy conditions, we both managed a few passable shots, I really wasn't expecting it to be this easy!



Moving on my keen eye's spotted a few more lifers for Padawan, Common and Chalkhill Blues, both desperately clinging on for dear life along the edge of a windswept path.





We found a few more blues dotted here and there along with the occasional Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper attempting flight, which kept Padawan occupied as well. Both Browns she's seen at work but until now no idea what they were.

As we headed up to Wall Brown Alley the clouds began to clear and Blues started to appear more often, a foreshadowing to how the day was going to

turn out.

Walls were, as expected, active on the Alley but I got very excited when I spied my first female of 2017 (I only saw males in the spring), she was flying very sluggishly and when she landed it was clear to see why, her consort was hanging limply behind her. This is the first time I've seen mating Walls so that's another tick for me and made the day worthwhile on its own. They didn't sit particularly well for us and I was having to hold the camera at arm's length and hope auto focus knew what it was looking at, but in the circumstances, I'm happy with what I got. Along the Alley, which is well sheltered from the wind, things were livening up nicely, Blues, Browns and the occasional White were all active and keeping little Padawan happily occupied.





Gone noon, it was getting really rather warm, meaning most things were too active and since we'd decided on a fish 'n' chips lunch, as you do at the seaside, we wandered back to the seafront. The walk back was littered with Blues and we witnessed the brief courtship and resulting pairing of some Commons. By the time we got back to the road I'd surmised Common Blues were going to be the commonest butterfly of the day, that doesn't happen very often these days!











With belly's full we returned and quickly found another lifer for Padawan, a Painted lady on the same bank as the first Walls were seen.





Where's the butterfly?

We headed back to a spot where I suspected the Blues would be congregating. A patch that's slightly more sheltered than surrounding areas that's always yielded results on previous visits, disturbing a male Clouded Yellow along the way who got caught in the wind and practically vanished before our eyes.

The spot came up trumps for Blues with dozens feeding up, settling down and catching the last rays of the sun as it began to cloud over again. Mixed in with the Commons and Chalkhills were a few Brown Argus meaning I was able to point them out and explain to Padawan that these are one of the Blues but they aren't blue. Another lifer for her came in the form of several Small Copper.









Back on the Alley, although it was now mostly cloudy the path was still warm enough to attract the odd Wall down to soak up the dying heat, again allowing us reasonable shots. We also found a freshly emerged male Meadow Brown. He was definitely still wearing his 'L' plates when he fluttered off and to finish, another Painted Lady who'd decided the edge of the path was the perfect place to spend the night!







A very successful day with not a drop of rain and yes, Common Blues did outnumber all other species, and my Padawan came away with a good handful of lifers... and pictures of Walls at the first attempt!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Jul-17 10:19 PM GMT

That was a really rather good day by the seaside, Buggy! And rather better weather than there was round here as well. Nice Wall Browns shots too 😉



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Jul-17 10:47 PM GMT

Nice to see second brood Walls on the menu, Bugboy. If only the weather would clear up in south Wales I'd be able to go hunting them myself.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Jul-17 11:53 PM GMT

I ditto DavidM's sentiments Bugboy – as I'm off to Wales on Sunday 😃 Mating Wall's are a real bonus – it's one of the few times that they're easy to approach and sit still long enough for a photo 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Jul-17 10:04 PM GMT

28th July Brown Hairstreak 0 - Bugboy 2 (agg 1-4)

Despite the best efforts of the weather, the lure of the Brown Hairstreak was just too much. The forecast of a merest hint of sun in the morning was enough to take me back to Bookham for another attempted dose of them. It was actually quite close to an 'own goal' since the merest hint of sunshine was just what it said on the tin, several merest hints followed by big fat grey clouds which, added to the near gale force wind at times, proved rather challenging. Despite this, in the more sheltered nooks it was plenty mild enough for activity, the Gatekeepers remaining the most numerous species by a significant margin, as expected.





As usual during Brown Hairstreak season everyone got a second or third glance and several got the picture taken. As well as the target species, I was also on the lookout for some Gatekeeper abs. after my success last time. I found a few pathological/mechanical,





a worn male with reduced forewing eyespots,



male ab. antiparvipuncta
and another female with enlarged eyespots. I thought perhaps it was the same one as last time but comparing underwing shots shows it is clearly a separate animal. Today though I got an upperside view!

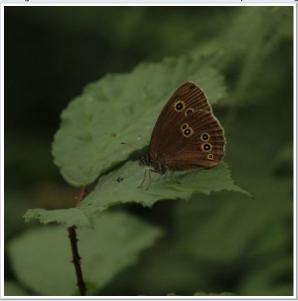


female ab. anticrasipuncta

Not everyone was in good health though. This looks at first glance like an innocent image until you notice the sinister 'claw' clutching at the deceased male $\stackrel{\bigcirc \circ}{\circ}$.



Amongst them were a few Meadow browns and some very ancient Ringlets, but I was very surprised to find this remarkably fresh one!



I made several rounds of the area of Tuesdays sightings, Small Coppers and Common Blues becoming active whenever the sun peeked out and regularly flying up from my feet during the extended cloudy spells, but after a few hours I was starting to think I was going to draw a blank on the Hairstreak front.





In desperation, I switched tactics and looked for any potential master trees. It was actually glaringly obvious: a youngish Ash, isolated from other trees in the hedgerow, overlooking the spot where I photographed the two on Tuesday and I only had to glance up to see two or three Hairstreaks dancing around the middle of the tree. In the interests of not wanting to go home empty handed I ended up taking a run of shots as they fluttered about, coping surprisingly well in the gusty grey conditions, it would seem temperature is the primary governing factor for activity.





The forecast was for things to descend into thick cloud and rain for the afternoon so having bagged a few pictures of Hairstreaks (not exactly what I was after but better than nothing), I proceeding to do just one final circuit before heading off. and there he was, getting absolutely battered in the wind. Somehow, he was managing to cling on and feed but getting pictures was close to impossible since he'd decided to feed in the most ridiculously windy spot he could find. It was just a case of point and shoot and hope for the best. Out of about 30 I managed 1 in focus before he attempted to fly off and

got unceremoniously slammed into the undergrowth. This happened a few times until a lull in the wind enabled him to flutter off in the direction of the master tree.



Pleased with myself at getting something I'd all but given up hope in obtaining, I took one step and my eyes were drawn to a bright orange sail swaying on a Hogweed. There was no mistaking the intense orange colour of a female. Again, capturing the moment was very hit and miss but I managed a few





She had the same issues when she too tried to return to the tree tops, one attempt causing her to fly into my head!

Now it really was time to leave but as I was leaving a white moth fluttered past my head and landed in the lower part of an overhanging Sallow and proceeded to lay a couple of eggs (the first one can be seen in the picture).



I'm really not sure what species she was, she was very pale with very little in the way of markings but I think that was largly down to wear and tear. If anyone has any ideas as to what she is...

A final surprise before hopping on my train was a late Large Skipper.



Moral of the day: like me, they only need the merest hint of sun to get out and about 😃 .



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 29-Jul-17 10:48 PM GMT

I love your aggregate totals in the ongoing battle between Brown Hairstreak and Bugboy! I'm sure you'll hit back with a few strikes over the next couple of weeks and expect you to take the lead in due course!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jul-17 08:43 PM GMT

David M wrote:

I love your aggregate totals in the ongoing battle between Brown Hairstreak and Bugboy! I'm sure you'll hit back with a few strikes over the next couple of weeks and expect you to take the lead in due course! 😊

You have it the wrong way round **David**, I'm currently streaking away to a romping win, 4-1 up. In strict sporting rules though the home team score goes first and as much as I would love to live at Bookham (sometimes it may seem I do), the Hairstreaks go first, hence 1-4. Of course the scoring rules I've invented are greatly skewed in my favour, I get a point for every one I see, they get a point for every visit I see none... my game, my rules 😊 😇 🥪

30th July, Bugboy to the rescue!

I had an email waiting for me yesterday morning at work. A colleague had sent me a picture of some caterpillars that were eating her Nasturtiums. She didn't want to kill them but also didn't want to watch here Nasturtiums vanish in this fashion. I Knew what they were going to be even before opening the attached picture, and in the afternoon rescued the naughty Large White caterpillars so I could translocate them onto a patch that has been planted specifically for them by our horticultural dept. With the weather yesterday afternoon being pretty dire, I delayed the move until this morning, keeping them in a tub overnight.

This morning, having eaten most of the leaves I'd left them with overnight, I duly transferred the forty or so hungry caterpillars to their new abode. At the end of the day I checked on them to find they had settled in very well and were busy demolishing their new home.



A quick look over the rest of the patch revealed a younger batch already here and a solitary Small White caterpillar. I'm very glad I persuaded the gardeners to plant this patch, I'm trying to collate as much evidence as possible of butterflies breeding on site for my end of year report to the bosses, I have lots of circumstantial evidence but that's two more certainties 😊 !





Also today, I found another fresh Common Blue, I'm now convinced I have a colony here, albeit small.



Nearby a Red Admiral was soaking up the evening rays.



31st July, Walthamstow Marshes

I had a dentist appointment this afternoon so I went out chasing butterflies after to cheer myself up. As so often happens on sunshine and shower days, the sun mostly vanished the moment I got my camera out! Thankfully it didn't rain though.

Gatekeepers were unsurprisingly around in reasonable numbers, as were Meadow Browns although they were all thoroughly uncooperative!



Biggest surprise was several Small Whites, mostly freshly emerged, it's the most I've seen on one day all season.



The only white that wasn't Small was a dead Green-veined.



I had a few Speckled Wood encounters, looking rather autumnal perched on some blackberries and a few fresh and not so fresh Common Blues were loitering around.









The local Song Thrushes seem to be eating well, perhaps some fledglings were being shown how to feed by their parents?



I always hope rather than expect Holly Blues here and over the afternoon a few toyed with me in the upper reaches of hedges but, nearing the end of my jaunt I found a female fluttering around a Dogwood that was putting out a few late buds. The most noticeable thing about her (apart from being a right little stunner) was her size, barely larger than a Small Blue. She posed nicely with her wings closed but only I managed the one upper wing shot before she joined the rest of her kin out of reach up high.





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 10:59 PM GMT

Great Hedge Browns Bugboy 😊 🚭 That Small White look more like a 'Small Yellow' 🥸 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 31-Jul-17 11:09 PM GMT

Aah! Second brood Holly Blues! Something to look forward too if the weather ever clears up! 😩



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Aug-17 10:17 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes that Small White was very fresh 😃



If the long range forecast is to be believed things may improve in time for the weekend David 😃



1st August, Brown Hairstreak hunting again (part 1)

The forecast today looked particularly good, lots of sun and significantly less wind than my last visit. I arrived as usual nice and early and spent a good while wading through Gatekeepers looking for the Holy Grail. Numbers seem to be falling but they are still around in numbers to make a nuisance of themselves. I didn't find any not worthy abs today but there are still a handful of fresh animals in amongst all the aged ones.



Both Common Blue and Small Copper numbers on the other hand seem to be increasing, with several fresh of both species.







A few aged Skippers were also hanging on, I'm having a stab in the dark and going for Small for this one!



After a couple of hour's the familiar figure of Dave (Millerd) wandered over, enjoying his first day of retirement, so we joined forces again.

The only Hairstreaks I'd seen so far were about half a dozen flitting around the Ash master tree and things weren't looking much better with two pairs of eye's still drawing up a blank. We did find a lovely Painted Lady and an equally fresh Peacock though.







It was just as we were thinking of calling it a day when I spied the bright orange sail of a female, perched on a hogweed again. I called out to Dave, who was pre-occupied with a Copper, but she took off before either of us could line her up for a snap, dammit! With a single low level sighting but no photo

I was resigned to it being a one all score draw in my ongoing battle with them $\stackrel{\textcircled{2}}{=}$. We did get an unexpected bonus Hairstreak prize though. Dave found a Purple one when we tried to relocate the AWOL Brown one $\stackrel{\textcircled{e}}{=}$.



We decided that one more circuit would be a good idea so we wandered along the hedge and back again. Gatekeepers were still fighting over every available Bramble flower and Dave noticed a particularly nicely marked Meadow Brown.



Somehow I managed to walk straight past her this time but Dave pointed her out next to me \bigcirc \bigcirc , perched on the Hogweed again where she had been 20 minutes previously. This time she however she behaved herself, feeding and occasionally fluttering around, and we had her for a good 10 minutes during which time we both filled our boots with images \bigcirc .





















Good to see you again Dave 🚇. Amazing how one single butterfly can make the whole day worthwhile! Halftime score Brown Hairstreak 0 – Bugboy 1 tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-17 10:23 PM GMT

A cracking set of images Bugboy 👦 and good to see that they seem to be keeping in good nick, only three more days...just three more days 🤩

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Aug-17 11:00 PM GMT

That second Small Copper is very boldly marked, Bugboy, and your Brown Hairstreaks are, as ever, envy inducing.

I can't wait to get out and find some myself!



Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 02-Aug-17 07:43 AM GMT

Some nice photos of the Brown Hairstreaks Bugboy. Still waiting to see my first ones of the year. Hopefully won't be too much longer.

Regards Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Aug-17 08:48 PM GMT

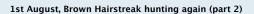
Thanks Wurzel, the weekend is looking promising 😃



Yes he was David, Dave and I spent a few minutes trying to pin him down. He was a typical male, picking fights with everything that moved 😇 !



There's lots about Kev, I doubt you'll have too many problems finding one or two as long as you pick the site well and get the weather 😃



By 1, Dave had to go to make sure the offspring hadn't burnt down the house or something equally silly, leaving me to go and see if any of the White Admiral larvae I found a week ago were still alive. Barely 2 minutes after saying goodbye a Clouded yellow zoomed past me at a rate of knots, settled just long enough on some Fleabane, and Zoomed off, never to be seen again.



A few aged Silver-washed Fritillaries were active as well as a couple more irresistibly fresh Peacocks.



It was as I wandered along one of the wide tracks leading into the wood I caught sight of a sandy orange coloured sail perched on some Hogweed. He sat well for a couple of minutes before I spooked him trying to move an offending piece of bramble that was having a fight with my leg!





Incoming!



Still, can't really complain, another male to add to this years tally.

Once into the woods I switched to immature stage hunting, finding even more Comma larvae than I did last time and also a smattering of pupae as well.





Freshly moulted.



The first couple of White Admiral larvae were MIA, presumably predated. Had I not spent a couple of minutes looking for them though, I would have seen something you don't see every day. The next Comma I found had literally just moulted into the pupal stage, I must have missed it by no more than a minute.





Context shot. It was about 5 feet of the ground and VERY obvious!

20 minutes later it had started to look more like a Comma but still had the same unexpected colouration and patterning.



During the intervening 20 minutes I found a few WA larvae,



a 1st instar preparing to moult.



And another 3rd instar (the 3rd I'd found last week was another MIA victim today)

Elsewhere it was becoming a bit like the Serengeti in miniature, it's a tough life being an insect out there, even other insects want to eat you!



An Emperor Dragonfly making a meal of a Honey Bee



A Robber fly making a meal of a Hoverfly Full time: Brown Hairstreak - 0 Bugboy - 2 (agg. 1-6)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-17 09:41 PM GMT

More great shots Bugboy, though it would be nice if you left some Brostreaks for the rest of us 😉 🙃



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Aug-17 10:49 PM GMT

You're rubbing it in now, Bugboy, with Brown Hairstreaks accompanied by Clouded Yellow!!



Nice larval shots. I always enjoy seeing a few 'cats' in the mix.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Aug-17 06:30 PM GMT

Don't worry **Wurzel**, there's more than enough to go round this year 😁



Sorry **David**, they just can't help falling out the trees in front of me 😃



5th August, Silver-spots and Adonis

Having had a fair bit of luck with Brown Hairstreaks recently, I decided to catch up with a few other species today, first stop Box Hill for the Skippers. It was a relatively cool morning but there was enough sun to hopefully wake them up. Gatekeeper numbers are dwindling now, being replaced by the second wave of Meadow Brown emergents and Common Blues are still living up to their name for a change with a good range of females on display.



Finding the Skippers took a bit of time, perhaps it was a bit early and cool for them, or maybe numbers are yet to peak but eventually I started disturbing the odd one close to the path. The early morning air was quite still so their favourite perches, Field Scabious flowers, were quite still, making photographs easier than usual as long as I could get close enough.













There were plenty of Chalkhills active as well, mostly males visible but there were good numbers of females lurking.





Having spent a couple of hours here I made a move to Denbies to see if any more Adonis had emerged, as usual Speckled Woods keeping me company along the way and the top slope of Denbies Winery seems to have a thriving colony of Brown Argus amongst other things.





Again Chalkhills were numerous at Denbies, probably equal numbers of males and females active but it took a while before I saw the flash of electric blue. He escaped my lens though. All females I got close enough to turned out to be Chalkhills but I did find an attractive female with nice sprinkling of blue scales.





Common Blues and Brown Argus added to the mix along with a few Small Heath and a single Silver-spotted Skipper. I watched as this female Argus settle near the male and then proceed to tell the confused chap she wasn't interested... women Θ !





There were a couple of other butterfliers on the hillside and it was one of them that eventually found an Adonis willing to pose, possibly the same one I'd seen earlier. I'm not sure how I managed to make him glow like this. It must have been the lighting at the time, I've done nothing but cropped and tweaked the exposure a fraction in post processing, but it looks like it's been plugged into the mains!





As I was following him around a Clouded Yellow tore past me and I toyed with chasing him since it was clouding over, making it very likely he was going to settle. I changed my mind though when I took more notice of the clouds, they had a rather dark and foreboding look about them so a beat a hasty retreat... not hasty enough though. I got drenched down to the under-crackers by a monsoon like downpour that my raincoat was woefully ill prepared for. It lasted the entire 45-minute walk back to the station, stopping exactly as I arrived, sods law has impeccable timing sometimes!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 06-Aug-17 07:14 PM GMT

Love the vibrant blue of your Adonis, Paul.

Sorry to read about your soaking. I experienced one of the heaviest rainstorms I have ever known, then the hailstones came and the road disappeared under water. Luckily everyone was sensible. Happily we saw our Butterflies before the rain came.

Pleased you finally found some Brown Hairstreaks. Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-17 09:55 PM GMT

Great report Bugboy - I'll have to keep an eye out for the Adonis over this way as we're about a week behind...although I'm slightly more than that with my PD 😉

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Aug-17 12:37 AM GMT

That's a fine selection of late summer species, Bugboy. You certainly live in a rich area of the UK. There can't be many who have such a range within striking distance of their own doorstep!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 07-Aug-17 10:25 AM GMT

That's a fantastic shot of the Adonis Bugboy, it certainly brings out it's gorgeous blue colour, it's my turn to be green now. 😊 👨



Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 07-Aug-17 11:08 AM GMT

Lovely to see your brown hairstreaks and to hear reports of numbers. Not one we get in Northants so I need to travel, which would be easy apart from I have stopped trusting any weather forecast!! And reports from Oxfordshire are not as strong as from other spots...All of which has played into my inertia....So keep posting 😊 🥪

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Aug-17 08:47 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, it's only rain at the end of the day 🤐, feel more sorry for a couple of families I walked past as I was leaving who were on their way down

to have a picnic and didn't seem to have anything to have anything to protect them from the rain!

Behind in your PD Wurzel 🤡 who'd have thought it! I reckon you have a few weeks grace for Adonis, I've only seen two second brood so far 🐸



Thanks **David**, hopefully there's still plenty more to come before the season closes ^(a)



Thanks Goldie, I think I just got lucky with the lighting with that Adonis 🖳



I gave up relying on weather forecasts a while ago Peter, I find the old fashioned method of looking up to see if the Sun is out equally effective 😌 📦



6th August, Chobham's Graylings

On my last visit I caught the beginning of their flight period, just three immaculate males so I was hoping I'd timed it right to find them in full swing. Like sod's law the previous day, my timing was impeccable and I found 30+ active.

The diseased Birch which was the centre of attention last time had one aged male guarding it against all comers, Red Admirals and Hornets being the main issues he was having. The tree itself seems to be getting worse, you can smell it from a fair distance, a rather strong scent of fermenting something or other.

The Graylings this time were centred on what is most likely a Grayling nursery, lots of isolated Bristle Bent grasses with plenty of sun baked bare ground in-between.



Males were mostly lurking along the paths on the edge with the females inhabiting the nursery itself. Since it wasn't a day with ridiculously blistering heat and regular cloud cover both were relatively easy to approach. Most of the females were fresh out the box, with that oily sheen of a fresh emergent, and one particularly large female was especially reflective. I followed her around for a while, she was a good poser.













I was also hoping to find more than just the usual Graylings blending in with the background or nectaring. I have still to get an open wing shot and other behaviour. Open wings are best obtained during courtship and although I came across a few pairs they didn't sit well for me and got carried off in the gusty wind whenever I got close enough. I did however manage to watch egg laying a few times. I missed capturing the act by seconds but a did get a few snaps of the eggs.





Graylings were by a long way the most numerous species with a few Gatekeeper, a couple of female Common Blues and some old looking Large Skippers. Large Skippers here do seem to hang on to the bitter end.



As I was leaving I couldn't resist a few snaps of a male Southern Hawker who settled right in front of me



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Aug-17 08:59 PM GMT

To see a Large Skipper in your part of the country, at this time of the year, is quite amazing, Bugboy! Round here, in much cooler climes, they've been absent for several weeks!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 07-Aug-17 09:22 PM GMT

Great Graylings, Buggy. So much better to see them on Heather, rather than in the grass or a Rabbit scrape, which is the scenario with the local population around here.

That reminds me, must go up there and see them soon !Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 08-Aug-17 06:28 AM GMT

Not quite sure how I missed your post of 1 Aug Buggy but what an interesting read! Especially the immatures and dragonfly - some great finds captured well 😊 If all this is happening at Bookham (?) I'm definitely missing out 😕

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-17 09:42 PM GMT

A Large Skipper this late is a great find Bugboy – great set of Grayling shots as well 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-Aug-17 10:48 PM GMT

Just catching up, Buggy, after a trip to Yorkshire... You've been busy! A splendid selection from all over the place, and I'm particularly envious of your Clouded Yellow sightings. 🛡 And the Graylings... 🐸

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Aug-17 04:54 PM GMT

As north and west of the country enjoys the sun, here in the south east it's definitely a day for catching up with other peoples posts, started raining about 9 and hasn't stopped yet! I'd actually booked today off some time ago to use up a lieu day which we can't carry over to next year but then forgot and turned up for work this morning, so in an odd manner I'm kinda glad I didn't waste a good day $\stackrel{f \omega}{=}$.

David, Large Skippers always seem to go on into August at Chobham, I've no idea why. I don't normally visit until the Silver-studded Blues are out so couldn't really say whether they emerge later here. Maybe it's something about lowland Heaths, perhaps being so open and exposed puts them back a few weeks in the spring? That's mere speculation of course, I have no evidence and other species seem to have 'normal' (whatever 'normal' is these days)

Thanks Trevor, Graylings are like Silver-studded Blues in that respect for me, they only look 'right' when surrounded by Heather. I'm so used to seeing them on Heathland that they don't seem to fit in anywhere else. The Grayling I saw at Durlston feeding on Buddleja looked particularly odd to my eyes!

Haha Pauline, keep up!! It's no real surprise really though, I have been posting at a rate of knots these past few months! Bookham is a great site though with a good range of species, all year round there's something to find $\stackrel{ullet}{\epsilon}$

Cheers Wurzel, I had near perfect Grayling weather, warm but not too warm, some clouds but not too many, and I caught them at their peak I think 😊



Yea sorry about that Cloudie Dave. I almost called out you name but figured you had probably gone out of earshot at that stage and in any case it only stayed for about 30 seconds

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Aug-17 09:33 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Large Skippers always seem to go on into August at Chobham, I've no idea why. I don't normally visit until the Silver-studded Blues are out so couldn't really say whether they emerge later here. Maybe it's something about lowland Heaths, perhaps being so open and exposed puts them back a few weeks in the spring? That's mere speculation of course, I have no evidence and other species seem to have 'normal' (whatever 'normal' is these days) flight times

That deserves further research, IMO. Even in normal years, Large Skippers in south Wales have disappeared by late July; in fact, I don't think I've ever seen one in August, so for them to be reliably present at that time in a warmer part of the UK must mean strange forces are at work.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Aug-17 09:48 PM GMT

David M wrote:

bugboy wrote:

Large Skippers always seem to go on into August at Chobham, I've no idea why. I don't normally visit until the Silverstudded Blues are out so couldn't really say whether they emerge later here. Maybe it's something about lowland Heaths, perhaps being so open and exposed puts them back a few weeks in the spring? That's mere speculation of course, I have no evidence and other species seem to have 'normal' (whatever 'normal' is these days) flight times

That deserves further research, IMO. Even in normal years, Large Skippers in south Wales have disappeared by late July; in fact, I don't think I've ever seen one in August, so for them to be reliably present at that time in a warmer part of the UK must mean strange forces are at work.

Well I've only got circumstantial evidence from the past 3 years, since I got back into butterflies properly, but I've just checked some dates from previous years:



3/8/15. remarkably fresh for August!



26/7/16. This was my last visit here in 2016 as I went up to Arnside the following day and had already had a good few days with Graylings but this ones condition certainly suggests at least a week was left for them.

Maybe I should pencil in a visit when I see my first one next year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 10-Aug-17 12:10 AM GMT

I've noticed this at Chobham before as well, Buggy. There were reasonably fresh ones last year on 31st July, and on 13th July in 2014. This year there were several brand spanking new ones on 6th July, a month after the first ones local to me. The whole site always seems to be late for the species for some reason.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-17 09:51 PM GMT

WRT to the Large Skipper, it could be something to do with the exposure of the site – I've noticed that they tend to linger more on the coastal cliffs in Dorset as well could it be something to do with wind chill?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Aug-17 08:27 PM GMT

Work...

It always gets in the way! It seems like an age since I last posted anything but the recent bit of sun we've had in my part of the world has allowed me to do my work transects. Being central London there's no big surprises and things seem to be winding down, Gatekeeper sightings are now down to a trickle and there's only the odd decrepit Meadow Brown grasping on to life. Other species are having a late summer flourish though, the latest brood of Speckled Woods are dipping into double figures and there are some lovely Commas around. Small Whites also seem to have bounced back, both here and other places I visit, after a practically non-existent first brood! The highlight for me however was finding an egg laying Common Blue, the first solid evidence of breeding on my transect site. It was very close to the neighbouring park where she undoubtedly originated but she was on my site so it counts!











Coomon Blue egg laid on Black Medick (Medicago lupulina)

14th August, Walthamstow Marshes

It seems like an age since I've managed to get out properly so once I'd done a few chores and run some essential errands I managed to fit in a few hours on my local patch. On the whole it was a rather disappointing event, a definite end of season ambience. Only a few tatty Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers flitting lazily around the meadows, no Blues or Coppers.

The hedgerows didn't offer much more. I would normally expect a good range of Nymphalids at this time of year but all I found was a single Comma and Red Admiral. The surprise of the afternoon was the Comma though, it was an ovipositing *Hutchinsoni*. If we get an indian summer this year there may well be a late flush of fresh Commas here.





Nearby a small number of Holly Blues were active, very active and I only managed a few snatched shots. These were all along the hedgerow that contains all the Goats-rue that was being laid on earlier this year so it's likely they are the result of those eggs.



The only other butterflies I found were several Whites, an even split of Green-veined and Small as far as I could tell.





We may not have had much of a June gap this year but August seems to be making up for it!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Aug-17 12:02 AM GMT

I'm finding it the same round my way, Bugboy. I think this shocking three week spell of weather, which has including heavy rain and unseasonably high winds, has taken its toll on butterfly numbers. It's a real shame as things had been looking promising until the last week in July.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Aug-17 08:28 AM GMT

I could be that everything is spent after a hectic and jam packed July? Saying that there are still butterflies about just earlier than expected – loads of Peacocks and Red Admirals etc

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-Aug-17 08:38 PM GMT

Chin up Bugboy, some times we have better weather in September, I'm hoping so because that's when I usually see the Small Tort's Goldie

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Aug-17 08:41 PM GMT

The hutchinsoni Commas have persisted for quite a while this year – and yours looks really fresh as well as still laying eggs at this late stage. It could well be October before they are butterflies... in hoping for some third broods to brighten things up, and hopefully some more Clouded Yellows (I still haven't seen one this year...)

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Aug-17 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks David, Wurzel, Goldie and Dave. I do have a sneaking suspicion we may be in with a late flush before the season really does end though, perhaps even an explosion of activity if we get a warm September $\stackrel{69}{•}$

15th August, Brown Hairstreak hunting again.

Yes, it was time for another trip to Bookham Commons. Unfortunately, it wasn't all plain sailing, I got caught in the middle of all the fiasco of yesterday's train mishaps. A points failure and a derailment causing complete chaos where no one anywhere seemed to know what was going on. I left my flat at 7 but only managed to get to Bookham at 11, most of the intervening time spent on station platforms listening to pointless automated announcements!

So having missed any early morning activity I set about looking for nectaring Hairstreaks, having seen most so far this year mid to late morning on flowers. Nothing! In fact, like my local patch the previous day there was again a very end of season feel. Where there were hundreds of Gatekeepers there were now tens mingling with the odd aged Meadow Brown.

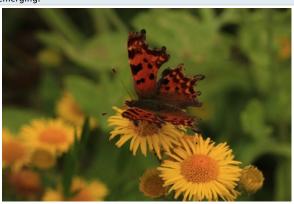


Copper and Blue numbers were also down from my last visit here and all looking somewhat aged too.





There were a few fresh looking butterflies, a fresh Comma with a particularly ragged look about him and a new batch of Small Whites seems to be emerging.







I spent a good 2 hours searching for Hairstreaks but I never even got a fleeting glance of one, even the master tree seemed empty of them (I must have arrived at siesta time).

I did have other inhabitants to check on though so I wandered into the wood. A wood noticeably bereft of butterflies, I didn't see a single one along the rides, I would have expected a few Red Admiral and Comma at least. Some rather over-zealous strimming had also removed most of the nettles where I'd found the Comma larvae and pupae last time. Hopefully most had managed to venture further into the undergrowth to pupate.

Again, the third instar White Admiral caterpillar from last time was MIA. It's difficult to say whether it's been eaten or just wandered higher up out of sight. Elsewhere, although there were plenty of abandoned platforms but only three were occupied, all second instar so I reckon these will all hibernate.



Returning back to Banks Common where I've seen all this year's Hairstreaks, the Comma was still feeding on the same patch of Fleabane but any Hairstreaks remained very illusive, the few remaining Gatekeepers still causing many a swift glance as they fluttered past. It was only as I was making plans to cut my losses and leave early that a suspiciously bright orange 'Gatekeeper' darted out from some blackthorn suckers and settled on some concealed bramble. This required some further investigation and having a minor fight with a mixture of Nettle, Bramble and Blackthorn I managed to see that my suspicions were correct, at last, the day was worth it after all!









I wasn't able to get close to her and after a few minutes she fluttered of further into the hedge and out of sight, still mission accomplished, just 😃 .



It was still early and normally I would hang around longer but with the trains still in a state of chaos I decided it really was time to make a move and try and get home. I stopped off here and there, the Small Copper nursery from last year is again attracting attention, about half a dozen eggs littering the leaves today. A few Common Blues were enjoying the afternoon sun and another fresh Painted Lady was busy guzzling nectar like it was going out of fashion, ready for the long journey south.











I had a bit of a wait for the train but whilst waiting I found another Comma caterpillar on some nettle overhanging on the platform. Once I'd taken its picture I bent the offending stem over, hopefully to avoid it being removed completely.



For quite a while I was thinking about calling for a stewards enquiry with my ongoing battle with the Brown Hairstreak, had they nobbled the trains 🕄 but perseverance won the day, 0 - 1 win to me for the day (1 - 7) agg lead for the season so far Θ

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Aug-17 09:06 PM GMT

Dedication wins again, Buggy! I toyed with going down to Bookham again today, but bad traffic on the M25 made me choose Chobham instead and a dose of Graylings. Looks like it may have been a wise decision. It's amazing how quickly those Hairstreaks get torn to bits - I suppose crawling through the thorn bushes all day is what does it. She's otherwise pretty fresh-looking. 😉

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Aug-17 09:11 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Dedication wins again, Buggy! I toyed with going down to Bookham again today, but bad traffic on the M25 made me choose Chobham instead and a dose of Graylings. Looks like it may have been a wise decision. It's amazing how quickly those Hairstreaks get torn to bits - I suppose crawling through the thorn bushes all day is what does it. She's otherwise pretty freshlooking. 👑

Dave

I was on Chobham today, we missed each other again!!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Aug-17 09:53 PM GMT

Your Brown Hairstreaks are starting to look jaded, but that shouldn't detract from the joy of seeing them. If you can add Comma and White Admiral larvae as well then that constitutes a successful day in my opinion.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Aug-17 10:21 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Your Brown Hairstreaks are starting to look jaded, but that shouldn't detract from the joy of seeing them. If you can add Comma and White Admiral larvae as well then that constitutes a successful day in my opinion.

I've come to realise any day with a Brown Hairstreak is a win, no matter how they look. There should still be a few fresh ones around for a while yet I reckon, definitely worth a few more visits 🐸

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Cracking shots of the Painted Lady Bugboy and your Brostreak wears it well regardless 😬 Hopefully they'll hang around for a bit longer now the fresher weather has set in.

Have a goodun

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Aug-17 08:47 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I reckon we have a couple more weeks of them yet 😀



16th August, Chobham Common

The original plan for the day was a trip down to Newhaven Tidemills but an unintentional lie in scuppered that idea so the backup plan was used. I'd intended another visit to Chobham anyway for a couple of reasons. Firstly, following on from the Large Skipper discussion on the previous page in my diary I wanted to see if they were still going and secondly, after watching Grayling lay eggs I wanted to attempt to capture the act.

The journey was as messy as the previous day, the train issues from the previous day still causing trouble to the line but I was in no hurry to get there, as long as I could get a few hours in the afternoon I should be able to find what I was looking for.

By noon I had finally arrived and headed for the patch of Thistles where three Large Skippers were active last time. A few Gatekeepers and various Hoverflies were active but amongst them all was a single male Skipper. Considering the time of year, he's in pretty god condition!



Next to find a Grayling going about her business. They have spread out a lot since my last visit, all paths containing several, mostly tired looking males.



The best chance of finding what I was after though was to head for Grayling nursery. Very quickly I began disturbing females, good numbers too. Like most species this year they seem to be having a good season. I wanted to find a nice fresh female who would still be full of eggs and so here is my chosen target



She watched me with all her eyes while I moved some offending grass stems to get a clear shot. She was a nice large girl, about Red Admiral size.

So, quarry found, now to stalk her. Like last time the weather was perfect, warm but not hot, mostly cloudy but with sunny spells. The trick now is to follow her and stake her out when she settles down during a cloudy spell. It only took a slight improvement in light levels to stimulate behaviour, a jerky shuffle on the ground signals she is searching for something to lay on. They don't seem particularly fussy either, any old stem, dead or alive will do. There's no real need to be fussy, in this patch of habitat the only plant growing is the foodplant so which ever direction the hatchling larvae crawls it will find it's home for the next nine months within a few minutes.











They become rather single minded and focused during this behaviour and are not bothered by your presence, the normal skittishness of the species vanishing. It looks like she finds a stem by sight, shuffling around in circles until one catches her eye, and then uses the tip of her abdomen to fine tune the position the egg will finally be laid.

After capturing the first egg I followed her around and managed to get another one from a different angle. Due to the way the abdomen is curled when laying the egg comes out upside down, ensuring it can be positioned safely on the underside of the stem

















I'm pretty chuffed with myself after that and after achieving both goals for the day I set about heading back and finding out how easy the journey home was going to be. These plans were halted when I found a small brown butterfly. Finding a late large Skipper was on the cards today but a Silver-studded Blue was definitely not in the script!



I stayed with her for a while, hoping she might start laying eggs as well but sunny spells had vanished so she was intent on just trying to stay warm.

It was a slow wander back through the Common. Along with the Gatekeepers there were several fresh Speckled Woods in the shadier spots, a Comma appeared briefly and a rather worn Small Copper sat on the path waiting for the sun.





I found an unusual fungus firmly attached to the ground, looks like some kind of bracket fungus, it was quite tough and woody.



A spider was poised to strike in amongst some mint



And in the same place the Southern Hawker settled last time, a Migrant Hawker posed for me.



A very successful day out, although I'm not sure how I missed Millerd, we must have been at opposite corners of the Common 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Aug-17 09:32 PM GMT

Not sure how I missed you, either, Buggy! I was there between two and four, but it is quite a big area so it is possible we weren't that near each other. (I was around the area centred on SU972652.) Your shots of the egg-laying are just excellent, and it's amazing that the butterfly is clearly completely undisturbed by your presence. 😐 🐨

Dave

(PS – finding a SSB as well as the Large Skipper deserves another as well, I think...)

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Aug-17 10:04 PM GMT

Not sure how I missed you, either, Buggy! I was there between two and four, but it is quite a big area so it is possible we weren't that near each other. (I was around the area centred on SU972652.) Your shots of the egg-laying are just excellent, and it's amazing that the butterfly is clearly completely undisturbed by your presence. $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{\oplus}$

Dave

(PS - finding a SSB as well as the Large Skipper deserves another 😇 as well, I think...)

Ahh that explains things, I wasn't that far away from you here, SU974658, but I'd started to leave around 1.30 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Aug-17 10:33 PM GMT

Excellent observations with the Graylings, Bugboy, and yet another Large Skipper!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 18-Aug-17 06:48 AM GMT



Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 18-Aug-17 09:53 AM GMT

Well done Bugboy, it's not often you get the goal you set out for, great shots too. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-17 10:17 AM GMT

Fantastic sequence of shots Bugboy 😊 😇 Although having recently watched Aliens there does seem to be more than a passing resemblance to the Queen Alien 🥸 📦

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Greenie, 18-Aug-17 01:42 PM GMT

Away from the excellent butterfly shots , I think your fungi is Coltricia perennis . Even more interesting was your spider, which looks very similar to the Raft Spider / Dolomedes fimbriatus, that I photographed 'walking on water' in one of the ponds on Ashdown Forest yesterday . Pic attached .



Was there water around?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pete Eeles, 18-Aug-17 04:38 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I'm pretty chuffed with myself after that ...

... and so you should be; fantastic sequence of shots and a sight that I suspect few have witnessed first hand! Thanks for sharing!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 18-Aug-17 07:15 PM GMT

A fantastic sequence of photos of the Grayling egg laying 😊 Amazing how she contorts herself to lay on the underside of the grass stem when it would be far easier for her to lay on the top or side of the stem.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Aug-17 08:32 PM GMT

Thank you for all the comments everyone but I can't take all the credit, she was a very well behaved butterfly 😃. Next time I might try for a proper close up, they really are easy to get close to when egg laying.

Greenie wrote:

Away from the excellent butterfly shots, I think your fungi is Coltricia perennis.

Even more interesting was your spider, which looks very similar to the Raft Spider / Dolomedes fimbriatus, that I photographed 'walking on water' in one of the ponds on Ashdown Forest yesterday . Pic attached . [attachment=0]_MG_7025.JPG[/attachment] Was there water around?

Thanks for the ID's Greenie, I hadn't actually got round to looking up the spider. At the time I thought it was a rather fat Pisaura mirabilis, but when I looked at the pictures on my computer I could see she wasn't one of them. Yes there was a large pond close by. That's another lifer for me 🤩

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Aug-17 07:12 PM GMT

18th August, Down South

I got up early enough to make a trip to the south coast worthwhile today. The year's first visit to Newhaven tide mills after Clouded Yellows mainly but also on the outside chance anything else had decided to hop over the channel. As it turned out I had under estimated the strength of the wind which was gusting at a ridiculous strength to the point I was a mere spectator to most of the Lepidoptera goings on. Not a Cloudie was seen in the couple of hours I stayed. The commonest by far was the Small Heath which if spread evenly across the site probably got close to three figures. I did manage a few pictures in the slightly more sheltered spots showing a range of markings.







Looks like this ones left forewing didn't expand properly, either that or its a gynandromorph... probably the former though!



Common Blues were also present in varying conditions.



A few Small White did their best to keep out of the wind and finishing off the butterfly count for the morning were singletons of Painted Lady, Red Admiral and Speckled Wood.



After a few hours, it became clear it was far too windy here so I cut my losses and decided to head to Malling Down overlooking Lewes. Yes, I know this was going to be even windier in places but I was confident I could find some more sheltered spots.

Again though, it was rather a disappointing few hours overall. Silver-spotted Skippers numbered maybe half a dozen at most, perhaps double figures of Blues (Chalkhills and Common combined) and a single solitary Adonis. A few Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper were also avoiding the wind







I feel sorry for female butterflies, the things they have to put up with, there's just no subtlety about their romance at all!







On the plus side I got my first ever pictures of hummingbird Hawkmoths. Two were basking and one let me get up close. Whenever they took flight they were ruthlessly chased off by a skipper, not sure what he had against them, perhaps jealous at the speed they can flap their wings!







I bumped into a friendly novice butterflier and confirmed some of his images. He'd only ever seen Common Blues before so was really chuffed when I confirmed some Chalkhills for him. I was a bit jealous when a little later he showed me another picture, he'd found an Adonis. I also got a Red Arrow flyby e , only just enough time for a quick shot before they were gone.



This all happened on the relatively sheltered North side, around the abandoned chalk pits. Over on the south side overlooking the allotments things were rather different. It was taking the full brunt of the wind and despite the sun and warmth only the odd unfortunate Meadow Brown was seen at first, as it got swept past like a dead leaf.

A bit of searching at the base of some marjoram revealed a few Blues sheltering including my only Adonis of the day who decided to clamber onto my finger. I used my body to protect him from the wind before popping him back.



At the base of the hill some trees were acting as a windbreak and here was a little bit of activity, a single Small Copper, a few Chalkhills and a mating pair of Small Whites.



Had it not been for the wind I'm quite sure I would have had a bountiful day, oh well. Turns out I did make the right decision though, when I got back to London I discovered it had been torrential rain all afternoon here and in some of my favourite Surrey sites.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 19-Aug-17 10:08 PM GMT

Good decision, Buggy. $\stackrel{\textbf{(i)}}{\bullet}$ It was very wet indeed here yesterday on the western fringes of London, with thunder and lightning to boot. At least you got to see a few things Down South. That Chalkhill male has the orange marginal spots that make it ab. *suavis*: these pop up at Denbies quite often. The HBHM shots are terrific – it's almost impossible to get so close to one! $\stackrel{\textbf{(i)}}{\bullet}$

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 19-Aug-17 11:05 PM GMT

Good work Buggy, I too like your Hummingbird Hawkmoth photos as I have never seen them still. Well spotted Millerd too with the ab. suavis. I had never heard of them before but thanks to you and this website I will be looking out for them!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-17 08:59 AM GMT

Dave beat me to the ab spotting but fair play he actually knew the name Θ Great set of shots of the Hummingbrid Hawk Moth, they look like a totally different species when you see them grounded and still Θ

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Aug-17 12:04 PM GMT

Some interesting images there, Bugboy, but my favourite has to be the one of the mating Small Whites, with the female showing those wonderful lemon-yellow undersides.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Aug-17 07:53 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, I did actually notice the red spots when I photographed that Chalkhill but then forgot to mention it in my post electron I got lucky with that Hawkmoth I think, there were two who more often than not saw me way before I saw them, took me ages to get up close to a settled one! Thanks **Katrina**, I think it was Dave who helped with the ID one one I'd photographed a couple of years ago

They look more like some top secret alien stealth bomber up close **Wurzel**, I do like a nice close up that puts a different perspective on the subject lands **David**, it's easy to overlook the common or garden species isn't it!

19th August, a romping victory at Bookham!

There were no train themed disasters today so I managed an early start at Bookham. It was a bit windy but substantially less so than the previous day but despite the mostly blue sky, butterflies were yet again thin on the ground. Gatekeeper numbers have dropped to the point where Meadow Brown's probably outnumber them now, and they are still emerging from the looks of things.



A few Common Blues are still around as well as one or two Coppers but I'm still waiting for the late flush of Commas and Red Admiral to appear here. A fair few fresh Speckled Woods were also emerging with some lovely females enjoying the sun.





The main event for the day also took a while to show itself but a female Brimstone kept me occupied for a while, to preoccupied with feeding to worry about me getting up close and personal.



I wasn't alone today, I got chatting to a couple who had never seen a Brown Hairstreak before so I gave them some tips on what to look for and where. It was shortly after we separated that one flew over my head and the hedge. I darted over and quickly located a female fussing around low down in the Blackthorn. This tatty little lady soaked up a few rays amongst the leaves in between laying eggs.



I also just about managed some shots of an egg being laid. Like Pauline the other day I was hampered by various types of thorns whilst trying not to disturb her so they're not going to win any prizes but interestingly they show the egg coming out coated in some form of liquid. The top of her abdomen hovered over the freshly laid egg for 10 or 15 seconds before she pulled away, possibly exuding more of this substance, is this liquid some sort of glue like substance to help adhere the egg in place? I lost her shortly after another egg was deposited and going back the first one the liquid had mostly gone (dried/evaporated?) and now looked quite normal.





I wandered back along the path to find the couple had found their own female, a better conditioned one with just a few nicks. They were both very excited about finding one.

The three of us continued our search and I called them over when an exceptionally large fresh female appeared in front of me. She didn't sit perfectly for us but we got some acceptable snaps nevertheless before she fluttered off across the field out of sight.







Nearby I found the fresh Meadow Brown from earlier had found herself an equally fresh new friend!



Our next sighting was the second one reappearing, recognizable from the nicks in her wings and she set about laying an egg in front of us in a very un-Brown Hairstreak position, a rather old blackthorn stem seemed to suit her.





All this egg laying and I hadn't even had my lunch yet, so much for egg laying being an afternoon activity. I set off to go and see what's going on with the White Admiral caterpillars, munching on a sandwich when another female flutters down in front of me, my forth of the day and the couple's third, a good result for Bookham!





I searched all the usual spots for White Admirals but today only one third instar was located. I've no idea if it's one that I'd found before who's moved leaves or one I've missed. Also not sure if this one will try and go through to adult this year or hibernate, he's cutting it a bit fine if it's the former.



During my searches I did however locate an egg, my first. I presume this is one that was laid during the main flight which failed rather than from a second brood animal. I'll check on it on my next visit though.



All this recent rain seems to have caused a minor fungus explosion in the wood. I don't really know my fungi but I couldn't resist this fairy playground landscape 👑



On my way back to check on afternoon Hairstreak activity my only Nymphalid of the day caught my eye, a bright fresh one.



Unfortunately the sun had all but gone by this time and I didn't see any more Hairstreaks, still a 0-4 win for me though, no complaints from me 🗡 (a 1-11 agg lead)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 21-Aug-17 08:07 PM GMT

It's good to know so many Hairstreaks are still about – some nice shots Buggy 🥮



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 21-Aug-17 09:39 PM GMT

It's obviously still worth a visit or two, Buggy – nice shots. Even some fresh-looking ones as well. 😀



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Aug-17 09:07 PM GMT

Thanks **Pauline** and **Dave**, yes still worth a visit for a week or so yet I think $\stackrel{ ext{\textcircled{40}}}{ ext{\textcircled{40}}}$



After a lie in and catching up on a few essential chores I managed a few hours down on Denbies hoping the Adonis had started emerging properly. Arriving at around 2, I had the usual Denbies breeze to contend with but my spirits were lifted when I passed a group of three photographers just

through the gate who had found a fresh male. I left them to it, confident that if they were this far up the hillside then I shouldn't have to look very hard. A bit further on I noticed a familiar figure walking towards me, Millerd! Dave's become a bit like a bus, not big, red and with two floors, but we've missed each other all season then bump into each other 3 times in quick succession! He'd been here most the day and was just leaving but I found out that the target was indeed out in good numbers and mostly freshly emerged.

As promised it didn't take long for electric blue jewels to start catching my eye, even older specimens still looking vibrant $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{\oplus}$.







I spent about 2 hours wandering the hillside and in the bright cloudy conditions they shone like beacons in the grass. I saw many a fresh animal still expelling miconium as the basked trying to get warm enough for a maiden flight.















Chalkhills were still on the wing making finding females tricky but I managed two definite female Adonis.



Chalkhill female





Adonis female



Adonis female
A fair few Silver-spotted Skipper were on the wing, making use of the paths to keep warm as the clouds slowly thickened.





This male had a few issues emerging but could still, remarkably, fly well enough to get around.



The same couldn't be said for this Skipper though, I popped her on a stemless thistle where she immediately began feeding. Perhaps a male will find her and she'll be able to lay a few eggs?



I wonder if the recent strong winds have had an impact on emerging butterflies?

by millerd, 22-Aug-17 09:29 PM GMT

You found some lovely Adonis after I left you, Buggy – great shots that certainly capture their glorious colour. 😃 Not sure I can compete... 🙂

I thought they must still be still emerging, but you've confirmed it. I think the weather has drawn the process out.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Aug-17 09:45 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...I wonder if the recent strong winds have had an impact on emerging butterflies?

I'm sure it doesn't help, Bugboy, particularly if there is heavy rain around too.

Thanks for that glorious sequence of electric blue. The good old Adonis really does lift our spirits at this time of year.

by bugboy, 23-Aug-17 08:18 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and David, I'm glad they've finally started to emerge here, I saw the first second brood male here back on the 23rd July, almost a month ago!

22nd August, Bookham

I was looking forward to my day off this week, there was an alleged brief return to summer with blue sky and temperatures in the mid-20s predicted. By Tuesday morning though these dreams had evaporated to a promise of some breaks in the cloud at some point during the day. This too never really happened so I was at Bookham hoping rather than expecting to add to my seasons tally of Brown Hairstreak. Unfortunately, it wasn't to be, they got one over on me this time. Nevertheless, there was ample compensation.

On the way I'd stopped off to have a look at the Small Copper eggs I'd found a week or so ago. There was some feeding damage but upon investigation I only found some imposters, several Sawfly larvae and no Coppers. I have no idea whether they would out compete or even eat the Copper cats. I shall keep an eye on any developments.



Speckled Wood continue to emerge and seemed to be enjoying the muggy, cloudy weather.



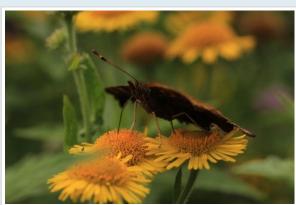
There were still a few Gatekeepers hanging on and some Meadow Browns were still looking reasonably fresh, but it was some other fresh emergent that caught my attention today. The female Brimstone (probably the same one as last time), was feeding in the same spot and was today joined by an immaculate Red Admiral and a nearly so Comma.













Joining these were several fresh Green-veined Whites.



During the few hours when the Hairstreaks supposedly take a siesta I went to have a look at the White Admiral cats, on the way finding a rather old female Holly Blue.



I found the third instar one from last time easily enough although I can't work out whether he's fixing his leaf ready to make a hibernaculum or making a silk pad for moulting, he seems to have done both. The thoracic segments do look slightly swollen as though moulting may be on the way? It'll be at least a week until I can visit again so I should be able to find out what happened as long as he avoids all the hungry Tits!





I also relocated another one, not sure if it's a large second instar or young third.



The egg from last time was still intact.

I returned back to Banks common, hoping to find something orange and brown. It had started to brighten up a bit but that was short lived and merely gave me false hope. All the fresh emergent were still feeding on the same clumps of mint and fleabane though, hopefully a sign of a final flourish to the season.





It was during this brief bright spell that I witnessed a Hornet (there are loads here) effortlessly pluck a Gatekeeper from mid-air and quickly dismember it ready to take back to the nest to feed to the hungry grubs. It was very quick and by the time I managed to get my camera on them two wings had already been snipped off. Gruesome but fascinating to watch. After only a couple of minutes all that was left of the unfortunate butterfly was a chewed up pulpy body.







Brown Hairstreak 1 – Bugboy 0 (Agg score 2–11)

by David M, 23-Aug-17 09:46 PM GMT

Nice mix of images there, Bugboy. I particularly like the first Green Veined White.

For your hornet/hedge brown pics, is the hornet in mid-air or is it holding onto something? It looks like there's some appendage connected to the thistle leaf.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Aug-17 10:35 PM GMT

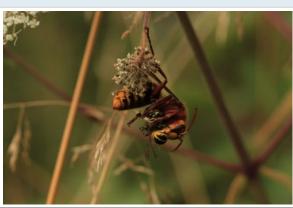
David M wrote:

....For your hornet/hedge brown pics, is the hornet in mid-air or is it holding onto something? It looks like there's some appendage connected to the thistle leaf.

Thanks David. The hornet is hanging by one hind leg and uses the other five to manipulate her prey. It's not the first time I've witnessed this, I meant to post these pictures a couple of weeks ago taken again at Bookham whilst after Hairstreaks.

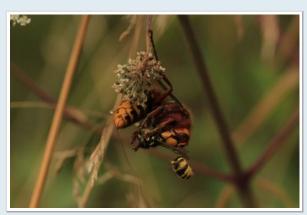












It really shows just how big they are compared to their smaller cousins. All unnecessary parts are removed, wings legs and abdomen in this case. The high protein contents of the thorax (where the flight muscles are housed) is the primary target.

I also saw one capture a bumble Bee on Box Hill a few years ago, again hanging by the one hind leg.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 23-Aug-17 10:46 PM GMT

Thanks for that, Bugboy. Fascinating stuff. It's amazing how they can suspend their entire body with one leg whilst transforming an insect body into a compact ready-to-eat bundle.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Aug-17 09:10 PM GMT

Indeed it is David, nature will never cease to amaze me 😃



25th August

Today was a beautiful day to go butterflying..... I was at work though, but I finished at 4 so I was able to nip out to the Marshes for a bit to catch a few butterflies before they all went to bed.

 $The \ commonest \ butterfly \ were \ Meadow \ Browns, \ varying \ from \ somewhat \ haggard \ to \ very \ fresh.$





I also found one that was almost missing pupils in the eye spots, I only managed one shot though, she was a bit camera shy,



There were several Whites patrolling, Large and Small identified but Green-veined almost certainly present as well.

A handful of Common Blues were found, mostly impossible to pin down but a couple of females sat for me, the latter of the two a particularly attractive fresh one.





Also catching my eye were lots of Latticed Heath including this 'fresh out the box' individual.





It was only half an hour but it was worth it 😃

by millerd, 25-Aug-17 09:35 PM GMT

Fascinating sequences with the hornets, Buggy. 4 I saw one dismember a Small Tortoiseshell many years ago, and I've seen wasps do similar things to butterflies too. Amazing insects.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-17 10:21 PM GMT

Great set of images recently Bugboy and those Hornet behaviour shots are great, I didn't know that they'd go for butterflies but they're just another predator that butterflies have to face. I watched one the other day and it flew round eyeing each bee almost as if it was working out whether the individual would be worth 'coping' with before moving onto and sizing up another potential victim.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 26-Aug-17 06:40 AM GMT

A friend had just called to tell me she'd seen and photographed a Hornet dismembering and eating a large fresh Red Admiral – in a garden centre – when I saw your shots Buggy. I've had them in the garden before (a nest) and it's amazing how quick they can demolish apples off the tree too. You must have been quick off the mark to get such shots

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-17 09:27 AM GMT

Great shots Bug boy we don't seem to get many Hornets here, well I've not seen many, unless they call Hornets Horse Fly's around here and we get them at Arnside and GB 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 26-Aug-17 11:33 AM GMT

Buaav.

A little late catching up with the diaries this week. Love those Adonis Blues from Denbies, they're stunning electric blue colour takes your breath away.

Regards Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Aug-17 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments concerning the Hornets. I'm amazed there's any insect life left at all at Bookham, they really are everywhere!

Goldie M wrote:

Great shots Bug boy we don't seem to get many Hornets here, well I've not seen many, unless they call Hornets Horse Fly's around here and we get them at Arnside and GB \oplus Goldie \oplus

I'm not sure they are found as far north as you yet **Goldie**. I know they are spreading north though like many of our butterflies so they are probably not far off from colonising your part of the world 9

kevling wrote:

Buggy,

A little late catching up with the diaries this week. Love those Adonis Blues from Denbies, they're stunning electric blue colour takes your breath away.

Regards Kev

Thanks Kev, bright cloudy conditions really do make them glow!

Work

A glorious couple of days was spent at work this weekend. I did however manage to fit in my transects and checking on the Common Blue egg I saw being laid a couple of weeks ago I found it had hatched, very recently



by trevor, 28-Aug-17 01:30 PM GMT

Queen of Spain in Sussex, day off next week !. Go for it Paul, go for it !. I'm always thrilled to find them in France.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Aug-17 07:54 PM GMT

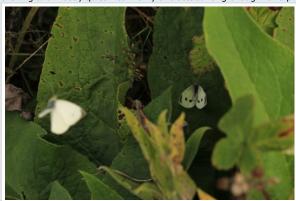
trevor wrote:

Queen of Spain in Sussex, day off next week !. Go for it Paul, go for it !. I'm always thrilled to find them in France.

an early night for a crack of dawn start has already been planned Trevor 🧿

28th August, The Marshes

A sunny bank holiday Monday means only one thing on my local patch, too many people . So although I finished at 12 today I didn't pop out with my camera until early evening, when most of them would hopefully have moved on to the local pubs. The Sky by then had turned a bit milky but it did give me some wonderful colour saturation for what was still active. Small Whites have really recovered locally since the spring, double figures were seen this evening and mostly quite fresh. Only one settled long enough for a picture though, a female trying to avoid an amorous male.



I found a Green-veined playing peek-a-boo around some Michelmous Daisies.



The late flush of Meadow Browns is still emerging, mostly females were disturbed plus two mating pairs. I followed one pair for a bit and was rewarded when the female opened her wings, a real stunner by Meadow Brown standards.







No Common Blues today but I'm sure I was being watched by them somewhere!

Fingers crossed tomorrows day out comes up with the goods 🥹

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Aug-17 08:56 PM GMT

Good luck for tomorrow, Buggy! 😃 😇 (I have to go to Cardiff... 🙁)

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Aug-17 09:22 PM GMT

That's a beautifully marked Meadow Brown female, Bugboy, very like the ones in the south of France.

Good luck with the QoStomorrow. I'd love this butterfly to establish itself here....it has to be one of the likeliest contenders!

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-17 10:11 PM GMT

Bon chances with the Queen tomorrow Bugboy, from reading Neil's report you've just to turn up and they're there 😇



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-17 10:32 AM GMT

Looking forward to your shots of the QSF Bugboy 🚭 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Aug-17 07:55 PM GMT

Piddinghoe (what a great name!)

Thanks for all the wishes of luck, although upon arriving at the site and hearing Neil was again in residence not much luck was required! Just sifting through a couple of hundred images but suffice to say it was worth the train fare 🤝

more to come...

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 29-Aug-17 08:54 PM GMT

Glad you made it down here for the QOS Paul, did you walk all the way from Newhaven station and back! It's good you made the journey today, it's going to tip it down tomorrow.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Aug-17 08:44 PM GMT

Butterflysaurus rex wrote:

.....Glad you made it down here for the QOS Paul, did you walk all the way from Newhaven station and back!....

Haha, you are talking to the fool that walked for 2 hours along main roads with no pavement to find Large Heath, this was child's play 😊 !



29th August, Piddinghoe's Queen.

The original plan for this week's day off was a few hours at Bookham, the forecast looked good (not that that really means much this year) and of course Brown Hairstreak will still be around but after the news over the weekend that plan was quickly shelved. A quick check to make sure the site was near enough to a train station and an early night later and I was off!

Before making my way over to the site I had a wander round Newhaven Tidemills, taking the advice from Neil to check out nearby sites. Small Heath and Small White vied for the most abundant species, along with a healthy dash of Green-veined Whites and several freshly emerged Red Admirals. There was however not a sniff of any Clouded Yellow, which given that Queen of Spain immigrants are often associated with Clouded Yellow migrants, probably means there aren't any Queens here.







So off it was to Piddinghoe and then the field with a bonfire site. Not too bad a walk by my standards, and there was a pavement all the way!

I was still some distance away when I saw the destination, several people seemingly wandering aimlessly around a field. From a distance not looking a million miles from a scene from the Walking Dead!

Arriving I quickly discovered my target was still showing well and walking around the corner it was quite obvious where to find it, in the middle of a friendly huddle of other butterfliers. Neil was obviously in attendance, the end of his three-day residency here before the awful weather of today. MrspOck and Trevor were also here as well as a couple of other familiar faces. As I've come to expect from our kin, it was a very friendly and well-behaved affair, no doubt helped by the exceptionally well-behaved centre of all our attention. I'm not sure how long he was around before I arrived but I had him for over an hour, during which time I think I managed to get his picture from every conceivable angle

























Of course there were other butterflies around as well, it looks like a nice site, and I saw Brown Argus, Common & Adonis Blue, Small Copper, Small & Green-veined Whites, Clouded Yellow, Meadow Brown, Small Heath. There were undoubtedly other species present as well.



A particularly heavily marked female GVW







left at 2, not because I'd had enough although the Fritillary hadn't been seen for a few hours at this stage, but because I'd drunk all my drink and was feeling rather parched, so I walked back to Newhaven to top up on fluids. I had another wander round Tidemills finding nothing new before setting off home, exceedingly happy to have encountered another rareity. My first ever Queen of Spain and on British soil to boot, 2017 really is becoming a bit of a golden year for me, 55 species and August has yet to end!

Huge thanks to all the people who have made this encounter possible, special thanks off course going to the landowner, I don't think I met you but you're a star!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 30-Aug-17 09:20 PM GMT

Good to see you yesterday, Paul.

More importantly your investment of time and rail fare paid off big time!. As you say, it was a very friendly gathering, with many familiar faces present. You have some great shots of what may have been a once in a lifetime chance of seeing a Queen of Spain in the UK.

A brilliant day !. Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 30-Aug-17 09:26 PM GMT

We checked tidemills on the way back, and saw nothing much of note, and had a quick look at the everlasting pea there, was surprised to see no Wall Browns on the old buildings.

We also visited Park Corner Heath on the way back up the A22, and didnt see much there either, the last Sm Pearls were seen on the 24th.

Not many days will top the QoS Frit.

It was good to bump into a few regular UKBers again, and we were well behaved in the scrum, i think everybody got their fill of photos. 😊 🙃



Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 30-Aug-17 09:29 PM GMT

It's lovely to see your shots of QoS Paul. It brought back the memories of when they turned up at Chichester some years ago (a mating pair!). I can still remember the excitement and will be eternally grateful to Richard Roebuck who supplied me with a spare battery when mine expired. Really pleased you all had a great day 📛

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 30-Aug-17 09:32 PM GMT

Well done Paul. I admire how you get around by train! Great photos!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Aug-17 10:04 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Bugboy 😇 😇 😁 Fingers crossed it's not a once in a lifetime event 🙂 😃



Wurzel

Have a goodun

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 30-Aug-17 10:29 PM GMT

Another marathon effort, Bugboy, and I'm so glad you were rewarded with a precious audience with a Queen of Spain Fritillary.

There must surely be more out there along the south coast. Wouldn't it be nice if a few overwintered successfully?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 31-Aug-17 03:49 PM GMT

Nice one, bugboy, you made the effort and were rewarded with some great shots of the Qos 😊 🙃

My fingers are crossed with Wurzels that it's not a one-off 😉 📦



by millerd, 31-Aug-17 08:14 PM GMT

Great shots of the QoS – a lovely butterfly, Buggy. 😃 😇 I wonder how long they will persist there? I've missed out by being in Cardiff this time! 🙁

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Aug-17 09:30 PM GMT

Thanks for all the Comments Θ it was a wonderful few hours and another highlight for the year!

Katrina wrote:

Well done Paul. I admire how you get around by train! Great photos!

I suspect the train companies 'admire' me even more

Wurzel wrote:

Cracking set of shots Bugboy 👦 🔀 😌 Fingers crossed it's not a once in a lifetime event 😉 😃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

There seems to be a prediction for a warm September so best keep your eyes peeled, quite possible we'll see some other exotica before the season is over 💝 😇

millerd wrote:

Great shots of the QoS – a lovely butterfly, Buggy. 49 to I wonder how long they will persist there? I've missed out by being in Cardiff this time!

Dave

Keep an eye on the Sussex sightings page Dave, these ones seemed quite settled here and this recent blip in the weather may well keep them put for a few more days and Saturday currently looks good. I'm sure Neil will let us know if they are still around

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 31-Aug-17 09:42 PM GMT

Tidemills is weirdly bereft of life at the moment, as you say not even a Clouded Yellow there. It's been like this for weeks, now yet there are Clouded Yellows not much further inland and now QOS. It's almost as if migrants are avoiding the costal sites! Perhaps they've all heard about the 'mysterious toxic plume' we had along the coast here last week!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 31-Aug-17 10:14 PM GMT

Butterflysaurus rex wrote:

Perhaps they've all heard about the 'mysterious toxic plume' we had along the coast here last week!

Butterflies are far more sensitive to these things than we humans, so there may be an aspect of truth in this!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Sep-17 09:39 PM GMT

2nd September, a three-nil win at Bookham!

Whilst the butterflying fraternity of South East England has been camped out in a field in Sussex the Brown Hairstreaks of Bookham have been quietly going about their business. With their early flight period this year, today's trip may well be my last Hairstreak hunt for the year so I was glad the weather forecast for once proved be pretty accurate.

There was a definite autumnal nip to the air to start with and not a great deal on the wing, singletons of Green-veined White, Meadow Brown, Small copper, Small Heath, Common Blue and a few Speckled Wood for the first hour or so.









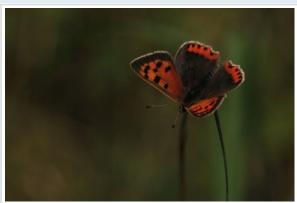


The Sawfly larvae are still active on the Sorrel with no sign of any Copper larvae but a few fresh Coppers did turn up as the day slowly warmed up.



Despite the growing warmth though, there was still depressingly little butterfly activity and I struggled to reach double figures by lunch. I'd been wandering around the top end of banks common looking for Hairstreaks without much luck, just a few Meadow Brown and Small Copper. One of the Coppers was a familiar chap, first seen on the 19th August (the very distinctive chunk out the wing was taken quite early in his life). He was a bit paler today but in reasonable condition considering his age. He had a couple of bouts with a young whipper snapper but always successfully defended his corner of hedgerow.





A young whipper snapper! Not far away a small Crab Spider was having a late brunch.



I decided to look for White Admiral caterpillars and as I was leaving a particularly orange looking Meadow Brown caught my eye, flopping lazily around a clearing and since I was struggling with numbers today I decided to take a closer look at her. Turns out it was a Hairstreak! Even closer views of her in flight I was fooled as to her identity, her flight pattern was that lazy. A bit faded but still in reasonable condition, she was quite restless and only allowed a few record shots but at least I knew they were still around.





There was very little on the wing on the way to the WA cats. A female Small Copper was looking to lay, found a Sorrel leaf which she seemed to like then oddly crawled onto a neighbouring seedling (not sure of the species, perhaps a Speedwell, but definitely not Sorrel) and laid her egg?

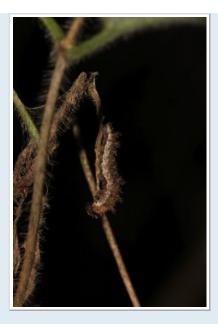




Elsewhere a few Speckled Wood were enjoying sunny cleanings but in response to Pete's thread concerning Comma parasitism I kept an eye on the nettles along the paths. I've found an inordinate number of larvae recently but very little in the way of adults. I found two healthy looking pupae today, and only one fleeting visit from a fresh adult. Red Admirals are also unusually thin on the ground here and have been for some time now, very unusual for Bookham in my experience.



I managed to locate my two remaining WA cats, the older one looking like he's about to moult into fourth instar, the younger a healthy looking third.





The old egg I found is still firmly attached to the leaf.

It had warmed up considerably now but even so, apart from the Speckled Woods the only butterfly seen was a Red Admiral who was disturbed by a passing couple and vanished over the trees.

The warmth hadn't woken up many more butterflies at Banks Common, a sprinkling of Whites to add to the Brown's and Coppers. I did see another (maybe the same) Hairstreak but this time she stayed out of camera range.



 $A slow \ meander \ back \ to \ the \ station \ produced \ a \ definite \ second \ Hairstreak, \ again \ looking \ for \ all \ the \ world \ like \ a \ meadow \ Brown \ from \ a \ distance.$



Half an hour later, close to the station I found a comma willing to pose, pretty sure it was an old *Hutchinsoni*, and it acted its age too, struggling to sit comfortably as though it was losing the use of its legs (I know that feeling in the mornings!)



A couple of minutes later another pretend Meadow Brown appeared. She sat for a bit before fluttering off only for a Hornet to show a bit too much interest in her and she made a sharp exit over the hedge.





Brown Hairstreak 0 - Bugboy 3 (agg 2-14) 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-17 09:55 PM GMT

Great work with the Brostrak Bugboy 😊 Great Small Heath ab as well, with the extra spot under the 'eye' 😊 🙃

Have a goodun





by David M, 02-Sep-17 10:23 PM GMT

Great variety of themes, Bugboy. Fair play for concentrating on the whole rather than just the 'celebrity' element.

It always pays to look out for Brown Hairstreaks. I've seen females in early October in the past so I'm sure they'll still be active for at least a couple of weeks yet.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Sep-17 07:40 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great work with the Brostrak Bugboy 😊 Great Small Heath ab as well, with the extra spot under the 'eye' 😊 🙃



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel, Those pesky Hairstreaks always demand a bit of work, all the more satisfying when you get one though 😃. I think it's stretching it a bit to call that Heath an ab. though, it's literally just two scales. I noticed it when I took the picture but for me a Small Heath has to do a bit better than that to be classed as an ab 📦!

David M wrote:

Great variety of themes, Bugboy. Fair play for concentrating on the whole rather than just the 'celebrity' element.

It always pays to look out for Brown Hairstreaks. I've seen females in early October in the past so I'm sure they'll still be active for at least a couple of weeks yet.

Thanks David . Last year I got a good conditioned female at Bookham on the 28th September, although with this years early showing I'm not sure how long they will last this time round!

3rd September, Denbies

I'd saved the predicted cloudier Sunday this weekend for another trip to see the Adonis, knowing how well a cloudy day brings out their colour. A lie in meant I arrived at around 11, probably an hour too late as the earlier milky sky had begun to turn a bit grey. There was the odd brighter interval which did keep Meadow Browns and Small Heath active but Blues were harder to find. The 'Denbies Wind' was in full swing today so the Blues were hiding low down in the vegetation. The first few I did disturb were quickly lost in gusts but one reasonably conditioned male decided to try and bask.



Females turned out to be easier to find today, not sure if they now outnumber the males or they were just able to stay more active in the cooler conditions, but I managed to track down three or four as well as a few aged Chalkhills, clinging on both literally and metaphorically



Adonis



Adonis



Chalkhill



Adonis



Chalkhill
I'd been here for about an hour when the rain started, just occasional spitting but I found a nice male roosting on a sheltered Forget-menot so there was still stuff to find if you looked hard enough.



The paths always attract life when it cools down, radiating the stored heat as they do, and one last circuit gave me a Red Admiral hugging the earth who allowed close inspection and the opportunity for a more unusual angle.



Denbies saved the best 'til last though. Near the Red Admiral was a pristine female Adonis with a generous dash of blue scaling, very beautiful



A day of quality over quantity

by millerd, 03-Sep-17 08:01 PM GMT

That last Adonis is a real beauty, Buggy. 😂 🖶 As you say, sometimes easier to find on a cloudy day – in the bright sunshine on Friday they were very active and not opening up much. Good to see there are still a few Hairstreaks at Bookham too, plus new Coppers and Common Blues. I shall try and visit again this week, should the sun return... 😃

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-17 10:45 PM GMT

It's easier to write "ab" than "variation" Bugboy 😉 That really is a lovely female Adonis, that blue scaling is beautiful 😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 04-Sep-17 10:50 AM GMT

Great series of shots Bugboy, it's good to see that you've had a great season so far, I hope some more foreign Butterflies show up for you to target before the years out. 😂 Goldie 😂

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Sep-17 09:55 PM GMT

I love that last Adonis female, Bugboy. She's definitely a candidate for the insect edition of 'Vogue'.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Sep-17 08:18 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, **Goldie** and **David**. It seems like an age ago since I saw that Adonis, she's probably looking a little haggard by now if she's still around at all!

12th September, Bookham

10 days without butterflying is a long time for me so I was very glad the weather behaved itself on this week's day off. With it being a few days the wrong side of payday one of my regular Surrey destinations would have to do, but then Bookham always has something to offer.

At this time of year most things have a lie in so arriving at just after 9 I was in time to find the first signs of butterfly life, a fair few Coppers looking resplendent in the early morning sun.



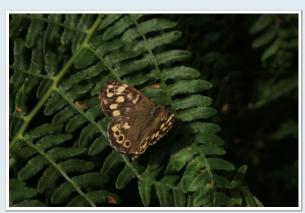






Speckled Woods were also awaking, some fresh, some not so...





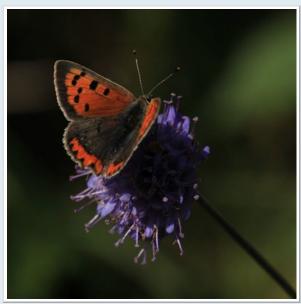
Obviously, I was keeping an eye for the resident Autumn stars of Bookham but no Brown Hairstreaks seemed to be active this morning despite the warming sun. Further afield a single Green-veined White stopped by and the odd Small Heath and Meadow Brown fluttered around but it was definitely a Small Copper day.





I wandered back to Banks Common to find the familiar figure of Millerd searching the hedgerow up ahead. We wandered some more but even the extra pair of expert Hairstreak hunting eyes didn't turn up any so we settled for the ever-increasing numbers of Coppers.





A single Small white dropped by, briefly breaking up the orange monopoly



Approaching lunchtime something small and orangey brown flew up from under our feet, over our heads and off over the hedge. We both concluded it was most likely a Hairstreak... oh well

Shortly after we found a freshly emerged Comma.





I parted company with Dave at Noon to go and see if I could find my White Admiral cats. Of the two left from ten days ago I managed to locate the older one, now a 4th instar, so it's definitely trying to go all the way this year. Hopefully I can keep an eye on him and more importantly, I hope we get an Indian summer for him to enjoy!



I wandered back with just the occasional Specklie for company when something fluttered over my head and down into the scrub at the edge of the path. It looked exactly like the earlier possible Hairstreak and upon landing she confirmed our earlier suspicions. She was in egg laying mode so I only managed the one record shot before I lost her further into the undergrowth. This brings my years tally here up to a very respectable 15 at Bookham 3.



5 minutes later I found Dave again, just about ready to leave for the day so I pointed him in the direction of where my Hairstreak had appeared before

making one final circuit myself.

No more Hairstreaks were seen but the Coppers, it would seem, were still emerging, as this sparsely spotted female proved.





I did see a few Red Admirals throughout the day, although they had invariably seen me first, so no more than the odd distant record shot was obtained. Still not a bad day all things considered, Bookham rarely fails! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-17 08:35 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I love to see Butterflies on Blackberries, your Copper shot is great 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 13-Sep-17 08:45 PM GMT

Fresh Small Coppers are without doubt one of the jewels in early autumns crown. Hopefully we'll see a bumper 3rd brood as they seem to have had a very good year. At least around these parts. Lovely photos btw. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 13-Sep-17 09:31 PM GMT

Bookham certainly is a great place, Buggy, and the Coppers really shine here – your shot of the one on the blackberries is a corker. 🚇 I also missed that last gem of a new female, unless it was the "one that got away" from the amorous male I saw... 😉

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-17 08:44 PM GMT

Some lovely fresh and glowing Coppers there Bugboy 😁 🐨 Nice to see the Brostreaks are still about, there was one reported over my way yesterday 😃



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-Sep-17 09:49 PM GMT

Maybe your Brown Hairstreak was a late emerger, Bugboy, as she looks to be in decent condition given the time of year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Sep-17 09:26 PM GMT

16th September

I went to Bookham again today, this time accompanied by padawan who's never been here. It wasn't the best choice weather-wise, and trains did their best to further ruin the day but we managed to get there in the end!

Cool and grey conditions greeted us, not too promising but within a couple of minutes we spooked a fresh Red Admiral who fluttered lazily off.

Cloud cover thinned occasionally but no more butterflies showed themselves for a while until off in the distance a White was seen fluttering round a patch of Devil's-bit. Funny how even the commonest butterfly can get you a bit excited on drab days.



After getting a few snaps we made our way back to the path only to disturb a fresh third gen Common Blue. He tried basking but finally decided it was a lost cause and went back to sleep so we left him and wandered off.





Over the next hour or two the weather improved ever so slightly, just enough to encourage some Speckled Woods and Meadow Browns to pose for us, and a fresh Comma to escape our lens's.







It was also warm enough for a single Small Copper to risk some activity. Only barely though, after feeding he shut up shop again.





With just the occasional Speckled Wood active we moved on to check on my one surviving White Admiral caterpillar. Sods law struck and as we wandered the woodland paths things brightened up considerably, had we stayed in the open areas we would surely have had dozens of Small Coppers, Blues and perhaps a wandering Brown Hairstreak to point our cameras at. As it was the woodlands were bereft of butterflies and sadly my WA cat was also missing. It's possible he could just be well hidden but my gut feeling is he made a meal for one of the hundreds of Tits that are active. Whilst searching I did however find hibernaculum (I'm not sure if it's occupied or an old one from last year) and a small Geomatrid larvae.





Hoping to catch some activity on Banks Common before things clouded over again we scurried of back through the woods, stopping to creep up on a Comma guzzling away on some over ripe Blackberries.





This was the last butterfly we were to see though since as we neared Banks Common sods law reared its head again and the heavens opened, essentially ending the day for us . Given the forecast though I saw more than I expected so I can't really complain.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Sep-17 09:55 PM GMT

Glad to see there are Common Blues appearing for another round down there – you were unlucky with the weather, Buggy, as not that many miles to the north we were dry all day (though not really very sunny). Shame about the WA caterpillar e – it may just have moved somewhere else of course (here's hoping!)

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-17 07:35 PM GMT

Lovely Copper shots Buggy 😊 I've not seen a Meadow Brown for a while now, I think they're pretty much done for the season over this way so it was interesting to see such a fresh looking one 😊 I know what you mean about a sighting on a drab day, it fair lifts the heart 😌

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Sep-17 09:51 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

..Funny how even the commonest butterfly can get you a bit excited on drab days.

Absolutely agree, Bugboy, and perhaps never more so than at the end or the beginning of the season.

Still, you ended up seeing a fair range, so you did right to venture out.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Sep-17 10:15 PM GMT

Thanks guys, here's some more common species to brighten up a mediocre day weather wise including some nice Meadow Browns just for you Wurzel

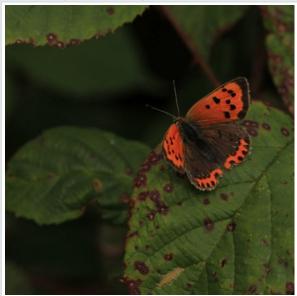
18th September, local patches

The forecast wasn't particularly wonderful today but there seemed to be enough of a chance of sun to venture out so I spent the day exploring a couple of East London patches, Walthamstow and Tottenham Marshes, dodging showers and trying to be in the right place at the right time when the sun did shine.

It was predictably quiet, with just a handful of Whites flitting around when the sun warmed the air.



The first surprise happened when I was closing in on a female Small White when I spotted a female Small Copper right under my nose. She was quite docile since it was the start of an extended cloudy spell and sat well, fluttering of only a short distance when my attention got too much only to alight on some nearby Michealmas Daisy.





It took a while for the next sunny spell to appear but an hour later I returned to this sheltered corner, hoping to catch her in the sun. Instead I found a male, tripling my yearly total for this site!



Small and Green-veined Whites were active here, enjoying the daisies but the end of the sunny period prompted me to move on.





My next calling point was the set aside corner of Hackney Marshes just over the river Lea that has a small but reliable population of Common Blues and Brown Argus amongst other things. I timed my arrival to perfection, a large patch of blue sky arriving at the same time. It took a while for the warmth to awaken anything up and in the end no Blues or Argus seemed to be present, must be in-between broods or perhaps settling down for hibernation. There were a few Meadow Browns active though, some surprisingly fresh .









I followed one around for a bit and managed to capture some egg laying. The behaviour was almost identical to that I witnessed of the Grayling last month. Some jerky shuffling until she finds a suitable stem, then the abdomen is curled forward and the egg is laid underneath the chosen stem. Like the Grayling she a dead stem was chosen. I suspect the chosen location, in this case a small exposed hollow at the base of a clump of grass, was to give the developing egg a bit of warmth. At this time of year I'm guessing they need to be laid in slightly more exposed areas with warmer micro climates to aid development than in high summer.



The egg itself is a pale yellow when freshly laid.



I was quite surprised not to have seen any Specklies yet, having been through all their usual haunts, but on the return, I spied one perched on the undergrowth by the side of the path.



At the other end of the path is a big clump of lvy growing over a now dead tree which I'd seen several Holly Blue flying around a month or so ago, so I stopped to investigate the now fully developed flower buds. I didn't find any caterpillars but I did find a couple of holes which could have been made by some.



Nearby flying around a Buddleja was a single Large White.



The sky was darkening quite significantly now so I decided to use the time to wander along the canal to Tottenham Marshes. As I made my way to the canal a Cetti's Warbler announced his presence nearby and I managed some relatively decent views of him as well as a grainy, soft focus head shot!



An hour later it had stopped raining and I was exploring a quiet, sheltered corner of Tottenham Marshes that usually comes up with the goods and today was no different. A fresh Comma plonked itself down next to me, looking resplendent in the hazy afternoon sun.



Elsewhere a Small white was busy making the most of the sunny spell but my attention was fully taken by a gorgeous little female Common blue. I had to wait a good 15 minutes for the sun to become warm enough to awaken her but it was definitely worth the wait.







A good finish to a pleasant and interesting day

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 18-Sep-17 10:28 PM GMT

That was a lovely female blue to finish off with, Buggy. 4 The Meadow Brown shots were interesting – I've yet to find an egg – and the open-wing female looks pretty fresh too. 4

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-17 09:53 AM GMT

Thanks for the extra Meadow Browns Bugboy, funnily enough I found my own at Larkhill yesterday 😊 That is a lush female Blue, often nicer than the 'bluer' ones as the dark background really offsets the blue colour 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Sep-17 05:33 PM GMT

That's a really nice female Common Blue, Bugboy. That slightly reduced pattern of blue seems to make the effect more appealing.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Sep-17 10:24 AM GMT

Thanks guys, it's always nice to find a little gem like her at this time of year $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{=}$

19th September, High and Over

This place seems to be a bit of a Mecca for south eastern butterfliers at this time of year (Trevor seems to have taken root there)!) so I figured it was about time I ventured out to see what all the fuss is about. Directions were helpfully provided by B'rex and Trevor and so with a crack of dawn start it was off to Sussex once again. Walls were predictably the main attraction and target for the day but wandering close to the car park I couldn't resist stopping and watching the several fresh Red Admirals gorging on the lvy.



The next resident I bumped into was B'rex who was able to point out a few hotspots for me as well as giving me a guided tour of the general area throughout the day. Male Walls were rather active in their own frustrating way. If anything there were too many, constantly disturbing each other just as you got in range for a snap! Not that I'm complaining, it's great to see this declining species doing so well here, even if I do have to travel so far these days.



Shortly after bumping into James, the familiar figure of Badgerbob popped over the horizon and offered to point out an egg he's keeping an eye on making it 3 species of Brown eggs I've seen in the past few weeks... the start of a new mission perhaps... 😂 .



It was only a flying visit from bob but James and I persisted with the energetic males, and with the temperature increasing they began closing their wings to prevent overheating which, after several failed attempts, enabled me to get my best underside shot to date.





VERY happy with this shot, especially as I initially thought I'd overexposed it!

Exploring further afield we found several Peacock gorging themselves silly for hibernation.







Back to the Walls we began searching for the illusive females, in the end finding around half a dozen and with the sun becoming somewhat hazy a few proved to be good sitters and very fresh looking as well. We even managed to see one lay an egg although we were too far away to get a picture and couldn't actually locate the egg in the end.



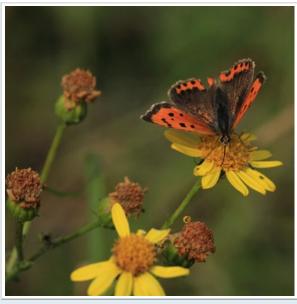


Other species seen were Common Blues, Brown Argus, Small Copper, Large White and a few Meadow Brown.





A very boldly marked female we followed for some time whilst she was looking for Sorrel to lay on.



A thoroughly satisfying day in good company with beautiful scenary, thanks for the guided tour James and nice to see you again Bob 👙





Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 21-Sep-17 11:15 AM GMT

Bugboy, delightful pictures and lovely colours on show there. And so many fresh looking insects especially the Copper.

Can I ask do you deliberately expose for a dark looking background? It works well on some images with vibrant colours. Just wondered if you take them like it or tweak later?

Maybe it is the way my computer sees them and everyone wonders why my pictures are too light?

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 21-Sep-17 11:29 AM GMT

Glad you got down there to see the Walls, Buggy - it's a great spot and you got some lovely shots too (the underside one in particular - you can almost feel the breeze blowing around it! ^(a)). I'd have joined you, but had to be back up here by half two so it would have been a bit of a fleeting visit...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Sep-17 06:17 PM GMT

Art Frames wrote:

Bugboy, delightful pictures and lovely colours on show there. And so many fresh looking insects especially the Copper.

Can I ask do you deliberately expose for a dark looking background? It works well on some images with vibrant colours. Just wondered if you take them like it or tweak later?

Maybe it is the way my computer sees them and everyone wonders why my pictures are too light?

Hi Peter, thanks for the compliments, I'll be completely honest and say the ONLY thing I deliberately do in my photography is get the target in focus, everything else is down to luck I think. I don't consider myself a 'photographer' as such, it's just an extension to my butterflying 😃. I'm pretty much self taught, never gone on any photography courses so there is most likely many gaping holes in my.... ummmm.... 'skills'. As for tweaking, I generally err on underexposing in the field since it's easier to 'rescue' I find.

I know what you mean about pictures looking different on various screens, when I drop in at work on here (during my lunchbreak!) they look much darker than here in my front room or on my phone, and they also look vastly different if it's daytime or night when I'm browsing. And of course I've never seen a picture on my camera look the same when I load it on my computer!

millerd wrote:

Glad you got down there to see the Walls, Buggy - it's a great spot and you got some lovely shots too (the underside one in particular – you can almost feel the breeze blowing around it! 🤑). I'd have joined you, but had to be back up here by half two so it would have been a bit of a fleeting visit...

Dave

Thanks Dave, it's probably best we didn't meet again, people will start talking 😌 🤤. That picture does look quite breezy now you mention it. In fact it was totally still there, sheltered from the breeze by the hedge at the top of the slope

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 21-Sep-17 07:55 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I generally err on underexposing in the field since it's easier to 'rescue' I find.

There is a schoolboy joke in there about exposing in the field – but I am not going to go there...or did I just do it anyway... 🥯



I'll try to underexpose a bit. With mirrorless camera you get to see what the sensor sees through the eyepiece. So I do tend to try and get it 'right' when maybe darker is better. If it helps I'll report back.

thanks

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 21-Sep-17 08:35 PM GMT

I'm really pleased you had a good day over here Paul, Wall Browns can be hard work (especially in warm weather) but the challenge makes it all the more fun – well in my opinion anyway! I'm delighted you got that side shot you wanted – I didn't think it was over exposed. 😅

It was really nice of Bob to relocate the egg for us too, if the day was a cake then that was the cherry on top!

It was a pleasure showing you around, another great day in great company. 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by badgerbob, 21-Sep-17 09:14 PM GMT

Good to see you too Paul. That underside Wall is a right cracker. Too think you were down this way exactly one year ago today when a certain Shrike

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 21-Sep-17 09:25 PM GMT

Glad you made it to High and Over, and made the most of what the site has to offer.

Those female Walls earn you a temporary mrgreen, which will be withdrawn if I find one tomorrow. 🐨 .

Great stuff.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Sep-17 09:50 PM GMT

Art Frames wrote:

buabov wrote:

I generally err on underexposing in the field since it's easier to 'rescue' I find.

There is a schoolboy joke in there about exposing in the field – but I am not going to go there...or did I just do it anyway... 🥮



Yes you went there, but I would expect nothing less from you 📦 🙂

Butterflysaurus rex wrote:

I'm really pleased you had a good day over here Paul, Wall Browns can be hard work (especially in warm weather) but the challenge makes it all the more fun - well in my opinion anyway! I'm delighted you got that side shot you wanted - I didn't think it was over exposed. 😊

It was really nice of Bob to relocate the egg for us too, if the day was a cake then that was the cherry on top!

It was a pleasure showing you around, another great day in great company. 😊



They are fun, frustrating but fun and that makes the results all the more satisfying, a bit like chasing that Peacock 🥯



badgerbob wrote:

Good to see you too Paul. That underside Wall is a right cracker. Too think you were down this way exactly one year ago today when a certain Shrike showed up!!

Wow, how time flies, I wonder how Sid is? Wouldn't it be great if he/she made it a regular stop over 😊



trevor wrote:

Glad you made it to High and Over, and made the most of what the site has to offer.

Those female Walls earn you a temporary mrgreen, which will be withdrawn if I find one tomorrow. $\overline{f w}$.



Great stuff.

Trevor.

Thanks Trevor, good luck with the females tomorrow 🙂



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Sep-17 10:33 PM GMT

Lovely female Wall there Bugboy and the Small Copper was beautifully marked $oldsymbol{\Theta}$



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Sep-17 04:52 PM GMT

Glad you found your Wall Browns, Bugboy, but almost as satisfying must have been that lovely looking Brown Argus?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Sep-17 08:30 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, yes that Copper was almost banded the spotting was so prominent!

Thanks David, it's a wonderful site, just a shame it's a bit of a trek for me to get to, perhaps a once a year treat for me in the future 📦



26th September, Autumnal Bookham

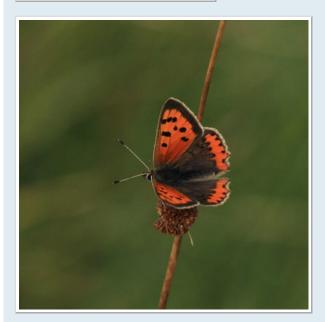
Good weather fell on my day off this week so it was off to my second home again. This time last year the Small Coppers, who had been next to nonexistent all season, were on the verge of a third gen explosion so I was keen to find out if we are in for a repeat performance this year.

There weren't many around, hopefully it's still early and October will be kind and allow a good third brood again, but what I did come across was in quite spiffing condition!











I think this pair had recently disengaged from mating and were waiting for the sun to return before going their separate ways

A single Common Blue distracted me for a few minutes





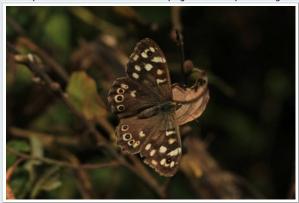
And I managed to creep up on a handsome Comma



There were a few other Nymphalids around, a couple of Peacocks, a Red Admiral and a (probable) Painted Lady but only one Peacock sat still long enough for me, most likely the result of a second brood.



A few Speckled Wood were active in varying conditions plus a single Meadow Brown and a Small Heath

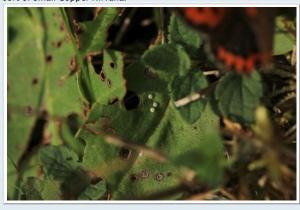




On the way back to the station, I stopped off to see if there was any action going at last year's Small Copper nursery. On my previous visits it has been

inhabited by some imposters in the form of Sawfly larvae.

Turning the corner, perched on a leaf was a Small Copper, presumably basking after an egg laying session but as I drew closer it was the amount of eggs that drew my attention, on the two small plants, as well as surrounding vegetation, were well over 50 eggs . It was impossible to do an accurate count since I was mostly unable to turn over leaves to look under them for fear of crushing the ones I could see. This patch really does seem to some sort of Small Copper Nirvana.









A bit of context with the two plants ringed. they are at the base of a Blackthorn thicket facing south

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 28-Sep-17 08:38 AM GMT

Your second Small Copper image is gorgeous, and a nice closed wing study. How did you get to High and Over in the end ?. Time consuming I should think, from London.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 28-Sep-17 08:54 AM GMT

Beautiful Small Coppers. I wish I lived nearer some of these sites they look marvellous.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Sep-17 02:42 PM GMT

Some more lovely Coppers, Buggy – and that "nursery" is quite something. There must be something special about that little spot. 🔒



Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

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

More lovely Coppers Bugboy $\stackrel{\textcircled{\position{4pt}{1pt}}}{\position{4pt}{1pt}}$ I'm wondering what's so special about that little patch, it must be the perfect microhabitat/microclimate for them – but how can they tell instinctively? It's a marvel $\stackrel{\textcircled{\position{4pt}{4pt}}}{\position{4pt}{4pt}}$

Have a goodun

Wurzen

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Sep-17 09:20 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, that's one of my favourite shots from this year 😉. I went the route you and James suggested, it was about 3 hours from leaving my flat to arriving at the car park... not the longest day trip I've had this year though

Thanks Art, I have similar thoughts when I see you posting pictures of your local Wood Whites and you're somewhat closer to Fermyn Wood than me, swings and roundabouts!

Thank **Dave** and **Wurzel**, it does seem to be some sort of Mecca at this time of year, and interestingly only at this time of year. Over the past two years it's only the third brood females that seem to pepper these plants in such abundance. Definitely something about that spot and/or those particular plants.

Re: Bugboys mission

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

bugboy wrote:

...it does seem to be some sort of Mecca at this time of year, and interestingly only at this time of year. Over the past two years it's only the third brood females that seem to pepper these plants in such abundance. Definitely something about that spot and/or those particular plants.

Fascinating. I remember you pointing out the abundance of the foodplant in the meadow where many of them fly, but I take it from your description that this is not in the same area. Maybe at this time of year more of the other vegetation has died back and more sun gets through – they look fairly exposed.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 30-Sep-17 10:55 PM GMT

That's a truly amazing tally of Small Copper eggs, Bugboy. There MUST be a reason why the females are so drawn to this spot?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Oct-17 03:14 PM GMT

Yes Dave, this spot isn't in the meadow, it's in the scrubby area on the way to the station, quite exposed but sheltered at the same time.

Indeed it is **David**, as to why I can only make educated guesses. South facing tucked up against the base of a Blackthorn thicket means it's both sheltered from most inclement weather but receives maximum sun so I'm guessing it's has a relatively mild microclimate.

30th September part 1

Like a moth to flame I was once again drawn down to Sussex by various reports, this time to Mill Hill just north of Shoreham-by-sea. Like High and Over it's another new place for me, but unlike H&O significantly easier to get to.

In order to save a few pennies (I've spent a considerable amount this year chasing butterflies) I'd booked my train tickets in advance, trusting the weeks forecast that Saturday looked half decent Θ . By Friday this had changed to mostly cloud with a healthy dash of rain on the menu as well, "insert sigh of resignation here".

It was quite dull at 9.30 when I arrived at the site but I did start disturbing the odd Meadow Brown as I explored the hillside, a species that would become the most numerous for the day so it's no surprise I came away with a fair array of individuals with an impressive amount of variety in markings. They were mostly females but the odd male was also present







I've never seen one with such distinctive banding on the underside. Sadly she was more nimble than me at navigating the steep slopes here so this was the best I could get.



A particularly orange female
As the morning wore on I was blessed with enough sunny spells to warm the air and the second species to appear was a male Wall warming himself up on a stump.



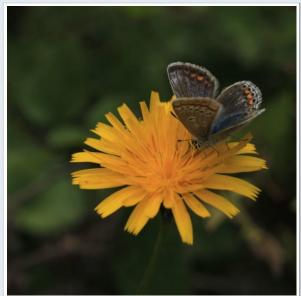


The sunny spells slowly helped to warm the air enough to wake up a nice variety of the species, and with the wind picking up they became corralled to a sheltered corner at the bottom of the slope so by late morning I was enjoying the company of several species.

















One species though, one that was a major draw for this site, was rather obvious in its absence. I had yet to find a Clouded Yellow despite the reports of several here earlier in the week. Indeed, it wasn't until gone noon that one finally turned up, although he wasn't in the best of condition.





Also seen throughout the morning but avoiding my careful stalking were several very fresh Red Admirals and an equally fresh Comma. Considering the weather and the lateness of the season, that is a pretty decent haul although I was slightly disappointed at not finding more Cloudies!

During my exploration I found an unusual looking flower, looking like a cross between a thistle and a knapweed. I've since discovered it's called a Red Star-thistle and is a very rare plant found in a few spots around Sussex, although there seems to be some question as to whether it's a truly native species, possibly introduced during Roman times?



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Oct-17 04:47 PM GMT

30th September part 2

I still had a few hours before my train home and I was still after a nice fresh Cloudie, so I took a chance and decided to track down Trevor's patch on Shoreham Harbour. Using a cunning combination of Google maps, guesswork and blind luck I ended up at a small, overgrown patch near lots of moored boats and yachts. I was guessing I had found Trevor's spot and when the sun came out for a little bit so did the Clouded Yellows, only two but they were in much better nick than the Mill Hill one.





Flashing me a hint of forewing like a saucy Victorian lady exposing her ankle!

The sun didn't stay out for long though so once they had vanished again I explored a bit further, finding a fresh Red Admiral that was actually prepared to sit for me and a couple of Common Blues.







I'm sure had I seen a bit more sun I would have seen more butterflies, but at least I'd managed a fresh Clouded Yellow at last!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Allan.W., 01-Oct-17 05:39 PM GMT

Hello Bugboy,

Great find ,with the Red Star thistle! was half hoping to stumble across this plant myself when I was in Sussex a couple of weeks back never noticed it at Mill Hill, but I did find Round Headed Rampion which I was very pleased with, I'll be back!!
Glad you caught up with a fresh Cloudy as wellnice shots! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Butterflysaurus rex, 01-Oct-17 09:06 PM GMT

Life goes on despite the weather, it's often surprising what you can find in unpromising conditions. Good to see you succeeded against the odds. Great Copper shots on your previous post, I particularly like the closed wing photo.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-17 10:47 PM GMT

Some cracking shots there Bugboy and those Cloudies from part 2 look resplendent! $\stackrel{\Theta}{\oplus}$ $\stackrel{\Phi}{\oplus}$ A very unusual Meadow Brown from a little it back – a double pupil, unusual markings on the fore wing and plenty of extra orange on the hind wing – a multitude of variation $\stackrel{\Theta}{\oplus}$

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 03-Oct-17 10:41 AM GMT

Your still finding some great Butterflies bug boy, lovely Cloudies in your last post. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Oct-17 09:34 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, Clouded Yellows do seem to reflect sun in a a very unique way don't they and yes, there was certainly a bit of variety in the Meadow Browns down there

Thanks Goldie but I do need to travel to see something now, my local patches seem to have dried up for the year 🤩!

3rd October, Autumnal Bookham Coppers

Another trip to Bookham Commons turned rather predictably in to a lovely coppery morning. I got there early and quickly located several Coppers, some looking a bit tired but most rather fresh. I think this is when Small Coppers look their absolute best, basking in the early morning sun of Autumns day ...





















Apart from the Coppers I saw a couple of flighty Comma's, a few Speckled Wood, a single Red Admiral flying south at break neck speed and three male Common Blues.









I also checked on my Copper nursery where there were less eggs than last time, something's been eating the leaves 🥹 !



A couple of easy 'spot the butterfly' pics





I left when things turned rather cloudy shortly after lunch but it was a very pleasant way to spend a few hours nevertheless.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 03-Oct-17 09:42 PM GMT

I very nearly joined you, Buggy - but I hadn't quite enough time today and needed to have a proper go of my local patch. Great Copper photos - as you say, they are ideally suited to Autumn and the colours that come with it. 😃 With some decent amounts of sunshine, they'll be around for a little while longer I hope.

Dave

PS - Two Speckled Woods I'd say... 🤨



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Oct-17 11:19 PM GMT

These images are making me green with envy.





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-17 09:29 AM GMT

Those Coppers make it seem like Nature saves the best til last Bugboy 😊 🙃



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-17 10:14 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I may be seeing some Butterflies but your getting a good variety down there, great shots of the Copper, I love that little Butterfly! Goldie 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Oct-17 08:59 AM GMT

Thanks Dave, I saw my last Small Copper in this very meadow last year on 2nd November so if it stays warm we definitely have a few weeks left yet! Sorry about that **David**, if its any consolation I am having to travel to find them myself 🥰

Thanks **Wurzel**, they are little autumnal jewels aren't they
Thanks **Goldie**, there does seem to be a very obvious north/south divide at this time of year as to which species are still on the wing.

14th October, Down South again

Work and rubbish days off have done a particularly good job at keeping me away from butterflies recently, but the prospect of a pleasant weekend meant I planned in advance and booked myself a return trip to Shoreham earlier in the week, which pretty much guaranteed the midweek sunny forecast wouldn't pan out quite as hoped. Sure enough, I was greeted with a nice blanket of grey at my first stop off, Trevors Shoreham Harbour Cloudie nirvana. Persistence did however find three roosting Common Blues. The promised sun taunted me a mile or two off shore but some kind of meteorological witchcraft made the cloud cover hug the coastline with just the occasional thinning getting mine (and the Blues) hopes up.







I cut my losses after a couple of hours and made my way to Mill Hill. Here if anything it was even Cloudier but in the same sheltered pocket as my previous visit the air temperature was enough for some activity and I managed to tick of eight species. I was really after Clouded Yellows though but given the lack of sun I wasn't holding my breath, until one stopped by and then began the all too familiar 'Cloudie chase'. The weather was on my side though and he stopped regularly to feed and rest so I soon had a nice stack of images to sift through later.



A few Meadow Browns were still active



The Common Blues looked a bit more weather worn than their coastal cousins







Just the one Wall visited me today, a female



Thats a female Common Blue hanging underneath









3 Coppers were active



A mighty fine looking female
A little while later I came across another one, in better nick and so it begun again....







I was hungry now so I went back into town to satisfy that need and noticed things had begun to brighten up a bit. Back to the Harbour it was then (I still had a few hours before my train home anyway). I got back there to find my first real sighting of the sun all day but alas not a single Cloudie was seen. There were however enough to watch and while away the time including a particularly fine female Common Blue and a nice egg laying Speckled Wood.

Trevor, what have you done with your Clouded Yellows?











Not quite the day I had hoped for but certainly not to be sniffed at for mid-October!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 15-Oct-17 06:09 PM GMT

Sorry you missed the Cloudies at Shoreham, they do need the sun to get them active. I called in at Shoreham on 12th (last Thursday) and about six were flying, including a *helice* seen a week earlier.

Might be worth another trip.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-17 06:17 PM GMT

A few 👦 🚭 for the Cloudies but that female blue is a real gem, dazzling 😊 🚭

Have a goodun

by millerd, 15-Oct-17 07:52 PM GMT

I'm glad you saw a couple of nice Cloudies at Mill Hill, Buggy – a bit of compensation for missing out by the seaside... Unit Those blues are terrific, though, especially that last female. Unit may be an always as well! Those blues are terrific, though, especially that last female.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Oct-17 09:08 PM GMT

There was definitely enough sun in the afternoon **Trevor**, and given they were flying on Mill Hill in much cooler, greyer and breezier conditions I suspect the Shoreham gang have buggered off across the channel! Not sure if I'll be able to visit again this year, I'm very much dependant on good weather falling on my days off now with no more holidays left, and this week doesn't look promising, particularly for one of my long distance trips.

Thanks **Wurzel** and **Dave**, she really did sparkle in the sun that Blue 😊

15th October, Bookham

As it so often does, Bookham beckoned me today. It was about as far as was likely to get anyway with several train lines closing for maintenance, it actually took longer to get to Bookham than it took me to get to the south coast yesterday! Anyway it was a bit brighter than yesterday and a few Coppers welcomed me on arrival.





Keeping in with the autumnal theme was a spiffing Comma who I found patiently awaiting a break in cloud cover.





There were about eight Coppers on the wing along the hedge on Banks Common along with a single Common Blue and a Speckled Wood who had seen rather better days,



But it was a couple of immaculate Red Admirals that really delayed my departure for further wandering. Both intent on gorging on some late flowering Alexanders.











There were a few more Red Admiral in the wood but the main inhabitant today were Darter Dragonflies, every sunny glade had dozens of them, mostly Common Darters as far as I could tell like these two synchronised baskers.





I also found this Mushroom, anyone know what it is, it looks like it is a relative of Fly Agaric?



At the Copper nursery many of the eggs have now hatched and some very careful investigation uncovered one larvae, the many 'windows' in the leaves hinted that many more were active.



Nearby I found a male Copper, perhaps even the proud father of some of the eggs, who had a generous amount of orange dusting around his blue badges.



Waiting for my train to arrive I killed the last half hour or so with some more Coppers and another Common Blue





A lovely, peaceful afternoon 😃

by Greenie, 16-Oct-17 08:30 AM GMT

My best shot on your fungi would be Lycoperdon perlatum , assuming it was growing on the ground . The very similar L.pyriforme is found growing on rotten logs or stumps , neither having common names to my knowledge .

Not related to the Fly Agaric , but to the Giant Puff-ball , L.gigantium , which can grow to 80 cms. across .

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-Oct-17 03:18 PM GMT

Lovely shots Bugboy, I love the Admiral's on the White flowers they really show the lovely darkness of the Admiral and set off it's red bands 😊 Goldie 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

Greenie wrote:

My best shot on your fungi would be Lycoperdon perlatum, assuming it was growing on the ground. The very similar L.pyriforme is found

growing on rotten logs or stumps, neither having common names to my knowledge.

Not related to the Fly Agaric , but to the Giant Puff-ball , L.gigantium , which can grow to 80 cms. across .

Thanks **Greenie**, it was indeed growing out of the ground. A google search comes up with several common names such as Common Puffball, Warted Puffball, Gem-studded Puffball and Devil's Snuff-box.

Goldie M wrote:

Lovely shots Bugboy, I love the Admiral's on the White flowers they really show the lovely darkness of the Admiral and set off it's red bands 😊 Goldie 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, my pictures don't do them justice, they were both stunning in the flesh $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{ ext{ ext{$}}}$



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Oct-17 09:08 PM GMT

A very good selection from Bookham, Buggy – Coppers going strong still, and some fresh ones among them. 🚇



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Oct-17 07:14 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, yep, looks like the Coppers will be around for a week or two yet 🚇 . I notice you had some more activity on your patch this morning. I was on my patch around the same time and had just one fleeting glance of a Speckled Wood.

17th October The Marshes

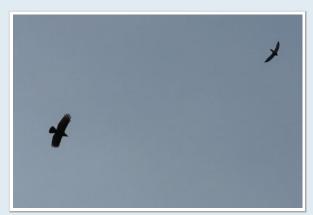
Not much in the way of butterflies despite the sun and relative warmth but I did watch a Kestrel getting one over on a stroppy Crow











In the end it was the Crow that left in a hurry leaving the Kestrel playing in the breezy conditions. Good to see a Crow get a taste of it's own medicine for once 😃

Re: Bugboys mission

by Allan.W., 17-Oct-17 08:24 PM GMT

 $Hello\ Bugboy\ ,$

Meant to comment a day or two back . That's a stunning female Common Blue(5th to last shot 15/10) Nice find !! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 20-Oct-17 10:17 AM GMT

Nice pics bugboy, love the Common Blue.

I went to Mill Hill for the first time this year, not made it to the harbour location yet.

Another thing on the list for next year.

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Oct-17 01:54 PM GMT

It's nice that you're still seeing Blues & Coppers, Bugboy. As for the crows....we get the same here only it's Red Kites usually on the receiving end of their harassment. I've yet to see a Kite lose it's temper but I'm sure if one did its harasser would soon be an ex-corvid.

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Oct-17 12:51 PM GMT

Been playing catch up on your posts Bugboy – I'm impressed how many butterflies you've seen of late, especially the coppers. We hardly seem to have had any here all summer. Gorgeous photos as always! I agree with Greenie that your mushroom is most likely a Common puffball (lycoperdon perlatum).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 24-Oct-17 08:08 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy...some great late season butterflies in your recent reports 😊 😇 The last butterfly I saw around my patch here in the midlands was a solitary Red Admiral last week.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Oct-17 06:49 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, 😃 if it's any consolation to those not lucky enough to live near the south coast, they are making me work for it!

28th October, Essex

I fancied a change today and went for a little jaunt into Essex, my WLH hotspot and surrounding areas, hoping that the sun would be warm enough to temp something out for me to admire.

My first spot to explore was a new one for me but one I've been meaning to visit for a year or two now, a nature reserve called Two Tree Island. It's a patch of reclaimed land in the mouth of the Thames estuary, surrounded by saltmarsh and mudflats.

The wind was a rather chilly easterly today which was unfortunate since many of the paths run east/west here so sheltered spots were few and far between. There was plenty of birdlife though and had I not forgotten to pack my bins I'd have spent a fair amount of time picking out the various waders I could hear out on the flats. Closer in the creeks that run through the saltmarsh I disturbed several Little Egret, some wintering Teal and a single Common Sandpiper amongst the numerous Gulls.







It was an hour after arriving that a butterfly finally fluttered past me and around the corner. I followed and after a bit of searching I spied the bright orange of a Comma, making the most of the weak, hazy sun, deep in a thicket of Nettle and Bramble.



Another hour or so exploring found no more butterflies but as I was leaving I stopped to watch an Egret looking for lunch.



It's definitely worth more visits, especially for some winter birding.

Next it was back over the road and train track to explore some more familiar hunting territory. Again, most the paths run east/west but I know the place well enough to know the best spots and sure enough I found another Comma, a rather rotund female.



When she gave me the slip I moved on and nearly stepped on a Red Admiral.

This one was quickly joined by two more further up a scrubby slope. There was some occasional interaction which looked very flirtatious, but the female would reject the advances. I got the impression this little gang was quite settled here though, particularly when the female started egg laying, or at the very least was testing for suitable shoots, the chosen nettles were too deep in the scrub for me to inspect.





Not too bad for a windy last day of British summertime.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-17 10:22 PM GMT

Good to see you managed a two species day, at this stage of the season you can't rely on even seeing one butterfly 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Oct-17 11:27 PM GMT

If birds are trumping the butterflies then you just know the season is on its last legs!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 29-Oct-17 10:42 AM GMT

Well done, you found some Butterflies Bugboy 😊 keep them coming, seeing nothing here now to shoot, what I have seen was flying South quickly 🤤 Goldie 😇



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Oct-17 07:49 PM GMT

Thank Wurzel, another two species day today, in fact a two butterfly day! Definitely ${\bf David}$, today was a hard fought battle! Thanks Goldie, I'm trying but I fear I'm fighting a losing battle now 🤨 Roll on March 😀

29th October, Bookham

So what did the first day of winter have in store for me, not a great deal to start with. Despite a sunny start I was followed out of London by a huge swathe of murky, nasty looking clouds and by the time I arrived it was spitting.

Immature stages it was then and it didn't take much effort to locate a dozen or Brown Hairstreak eggs



This twig seemed to have been rather popular, 6 in total.



And at the Small Copper nursery I found four chubby larvae busy demolishing the leaves.





Note all the hatched eggs
All this searching was to the sound of foraging flocks of Tits and newly arrived Redwing, as if we need reminding about the imminent arrival of winter!

I was keeping one eye on the sky and close to midday I could see some breaks in the cloud coming my way so I headed to Banks Common where the

Coppers seem to be hanging on the most this year. The first thing I did here was spook a small gathering of Roe Deer, probably the same group I've seen a couple of times here this year.



The sunny spells however failed for the most part to materialise and I remained butterflyless for some time despite several circuits hoping to put one up.

It was a brief thinning in the cloud that finally brought one out, a fresh male trying his best to make the most of the conditions, perhaps wishing he was still a fat caterpillar waiting for spring to wake him up. A 30 second spell of actual sun caused him to take to the air and have a little flutter around.









That seemed to be it though and seeing no more breaks I decided to make the trip home. But no, approaching the station the sun came out again and looking up I was greeted with a clear blue sky behind me, the bank of cloud that had accompanied me for most the day so far finally getting blown southward.

With the sun came the warmth, it now certainly didn't feel like the first day of winter but even so I didn't find any more Coppers, nor even relocate the earlier male. For the second time I decided to make the move home and as if to say farewell, a Comma casually glided past me and taunted me for a minute or two whilst it decided whether to land or not. It did and turned out to be a well behaved subject.



I wonder if this is my final butterfly of the year? I have a few days off over the coming weeks but unless I can magic a sunny day on the south coast somewhere I have a feeling my season has finally come to an end. It's certainly been a long and eventful one though and one that I certainly wont be forgetting for a while

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 29-Oct-17 10:20 PM GMT

A very nice Small Copper there, Buggy – that one wasn't around the other day...

That Comma seems to have very broad borders compared to some – interesting. It's great to see the 2018 season in the making as well...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Oct-17 10:28 PM GMT

There are still a few sites performing down here Paul, Mill Hill is probably the best, also High and Over and Shoreham Harbour are worth a look. All three sites have their own suntraps if it is chilly elsewhere. How far into November we get depends on Jack Frost, and Winter storms.

Happy hunting!

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 29-Oct-17 11:35 PM GMT

Yes, don't give up just yet. If there is any sunshine, a trip to the south coast, or even Canvey Island, would be worthwhile. If you visit Two Tree Island this winter, the scrapes at the western end should be full of waders at high tide, including sometimes thousands of knots.

by David M, 29-Oct-17 11:51 PM GMT

You're still seeing some good stuff, Bugboy, and by that I include the fleeing deer!

Nice to see a few early stage images to fill in the space which adult butterflies would fill in the midst of the mainstream flight season.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 30-Oct-17 11:41 AM GMT

A great couple of days Bugboy, very nice Copper.

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Oct-17 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks Dave, yes he was definitely only a few days old at most that Copper. Hopefully he survived last nights frosts and had a good day today, there's still plenty of flowers there to keep him going $\stackrel{•}{\sqcup}$

Yes **Trevor**, those sites are in my mind but I need the magic combination of good amount of sun predicted on a day off to make it worth spending £30 on the train, or even, if I'm feeling brave, booking in advance based on a dodgy forecast to get a cheaper fare... it's in the lap of the Gods at this time of year!

Thanks for the info on Two Tree Island Essex, I'll definitely visit again in the chilly months ahead. Where exactly on Canvey Island are you still seeing Cloudies?

Thanks David and Andrew, there's always something to see if you make the effort. Always beats a day in London that's for sure!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Oct-17 08:44 PM GMT

31st October, 1 trip too many

Well after everything I said yesterday, I plumped for a trip down south again, based primarily on persistent allegations on my phone weather app of some sunny spells in that part of the world, had I magicked one final day butterflying, well not really. There was a bit of sun, mostly of the hazy variety but it did get warm enough for me to remove my coat but at Mill Hill there were only a couple of Red Admiral flying around and a Comma as I was leaving, non of whom were in anyway cooperative. I actually spent a fair amount of time trying to avoid the dog walkers, there seemed to be some sort of convention going on!

Perhaps I should have gone to the Shoreham Harbour site first, by the time I got there the sun had become a lot dimmer and cooler so if there were any Cloudies around they were most likely tucked up for the night.

In the end I came away with a grand total of three images! I found a slight detour to Mill Hill on my first visit a month ago, a footpath that goes around some horse paddocks who's owners seem to have made some effort to encourage wildlife. Small fenced off patches seem to have been left to grow wild and I've seen plenty of Red Admiral along the path, every single one of which has seen me long before I saw it so not a single one of these dozens has been snared by my camera. Today was going the same way, with three or four fleeing me both on arrival and as I was leaving but finally I got lucky, one fluttered down on a post as I was stood watching the local Jay population planting Oak trees. So here is the most expensive Red Admiral picture this year... could have at least have had the decency to have been an extreme ab!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 31-Oct-17 10:29 PM GMT

How very frustrating, Buggy. Hazy sunshine at this time of year just doesn't seem to do the trick, even when it's not cold. Unfortunately tomorrow looks as if it might be similar... Still – that Red Admiral is a nice individual.

Dave

Sorry your day didn't pan out down there Bugboy, nice RA though $\stackrel{ ext{@}}{\cup}$



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-17 11:13 AM GMT

At least you got that cracking image as some consolation Bugboy 😊 🙃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-Nov-17 01:30 AM GMT

Seems like it's 'pot luck' down your way, Bugboy. Any other site may have returned Holly Blues, Commas, Clouded Yellows, et al. Still a couple of weeks to squeeze them in before the frosts descend!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Nov-17 10:17 PM GMT

Thanks guys, yes very much lap of the Gods at this time of the year, but I'm glad to say they were on my side today 😊



6th November, yes that's right I went butterflying 50 days before Christmas!

A week ago I was tempted down to the south coast by a slightly less than accurate forecast and came home with 3 pictures on my camera, a week later and with far superior weather, I returned home with around 300 to sift through 🙂 .

The small strip of greenery on the seafront at Southwick was my first stop and almost immediately a butterfly fluttered weakly past me. Not a Cloudie or a Red Admiral though but a rather fresh male Small White. It was still only around 9.45 and although bright and sunny there was still a bit of a nip to the air so he was really struggling to stay active.



The same couldn't be said for the next butterfly to zoom past me, Clouded Yellows don't need much warmth to get their engines fully revved up, just a bit of sun! According the weather app on my phone the air temperature was just 4 degrees but in this sheltered patch with its steep south facing bank it was probably closer to 8 or 9. The Cloudie zoomed off leaving me in his wake so I wandered along hoping he had settled somewhere around the corner. He had but I spooked him before I saw him so the next butterfly to get the honour of my camera pointed at its face was a Red Admiral, in fact several, at least three, one of whom was an egg laying female. They were centred around a couple of fenced off areas, profuse with nettles and still flowering Ivy. The fencing itself was acting like a storage heater adding further attraction to this spot.









A little later I managed to catch up with a Cloudie who was busy stuffing his face on Oxetongue and Clover.







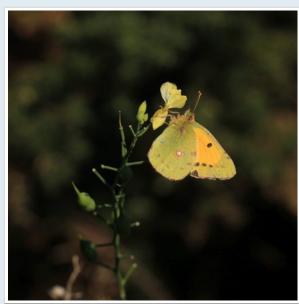




A second more worn specimen allowed me some nice closeups too.







Several more Red Admirals were also seen giving me a conservative estimate of six or seven in total



So I left Shoreham harbour shortly after noon with three species in the bag and made my way over to Mill Hill for what I hoped would be more of the same...

by millerd, 06-Nov-17 10:24 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Cloudies, Buggy! 😀 😇 Long may they continue down there... 😃

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 07-Nov-17 09:23 AM GMT

That Shoreham spot sure is delivering, great shot of the White, and Cloudies.

I know what you mean about coming home with 100's of pics, I'm the worlds worst at sorting through them!

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Nov-17 01:19 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew, yup the frost free south coast is still worth a visit if you happen to catch a sunny day with nothing to do 🥹



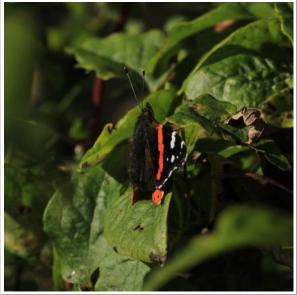
6th November, Part 2

Even before I got to Mill Hill I was seeing Butterflies. Waiting for the train at Southwick, I watched a pair of courting Red Admirals flying around the station and then walking up to the reserve more were seen. The footpath that circles the Horse field produced several more, all of whom flew up from my approaching shadow, but I saw enough to see at least one was very fresh.

At Mill Hill the first thing I saw was a Fox, or rather he saw me, and we had a stare off for a minute before he skulked off into the undergrowth. Since I was still watching his rear end when he vanished into the shrubbery I awarded myself a win for the stare off!



A few steps later I found myself in the middle of a Red Admirals territory, who circled me a few times before settling.



As I was taking a few snaps a couple of cars slowed down out of curiosity to what I was doing, the first drove of but I heard my name called from the second one. Rather embarrassingly I failed to Recognise Dave Cook at first $rac{G}{2}$.

After a quick chat he drove off up to the top car park and I had a brief encounter with species number four of the day, a Comma sailed gracefully over my head and over the hedge, never to be seen again.

I wandered down to the sheltered bottom corner where I'd had most luck on previous visits and found three Cloudies, one of which was my first female of the year.



Meeting up with Dave again near the top car park I found out the driver of the first car was a friend who had come up specifically for the Cloudies, and he wasn't going to be disappointed!

We stayed on the upper slopes for a couple of hours and came to the conclusion we had double figures of Clouded Yellows around us, mostly males but also two females, in varying states of disrepair, although one male was probably only a few days old at most.















There were also a couple of Whites, one a presumed Small and the other Dave was able to get close enough to confirm a female Large making a total of five species for the day. Safe to say it was a vast improvement to the previous visit

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 07-Nov-17 03:02 PM GMT

At least that second rail ticket to the South coast was value for money!. It's amazing how those Cloudies hang on into November.

Great report, Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 07-Nov-17 11:51 PM GMT

Well I'm glad you finally got lucky! The low November sunshine is very weak, as we are only a few weeks away from the shortest day. So any kind of high cloud means nothing gets through.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 08-Nov-17 12:01 PM GMT

Great days still to be had, nice one Bugboy 😃

All these end of season reports are amazing to me, I had no idea how long things went on.

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-17 07:34 PM GMT

Those shots could almost have been from August Bugboy 😌 😊 🛱 I just can't seem to presuade my wife that a trip to the seaside is just what we need so I might miss out on Cloudies this year 😂 🤤

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Nov-17 05:31 PM GMT

Nice to see the Cloudies still going, Bugboy, along with a fair few others for November too.

by bugboy, 09-Nov-17 06:04 PM GMT

Yes **Trevor**, much better value, works out not far of £1 a butterfly (a), excellent value for early November!

Thanks Essex, yup I magicked a glorious sunny day on a day off 😃

Thanks Andrew, a few years ago neither did I!

Out of the wind it could have been a cool summer day Wurzel, I was in shirt and sunnies by noon 😇

Thanks David, there's still a few sunny days predicted down here too, maybe time to squeeze in one or two more sighting before Xmas!!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Nov-17 06:04 PM GMT

12th and 13th November, the dying embers of 2017

Two sunny mid-November days, not the most obvious days to go out hunting butterflies, especially since I have my winter woolly's on now, but in this day 'n' age you never know what may appear. It was a toss-up what day to go where, two days and two sites in mind, no prizes for guessing what those sites may be ...

In the end I plumped for Shoreham on the Sunday, hoping that the south facing slopes and banks would shelter me from the arctic breeze. Not much luck in the respect unfortunately since the northerly wind had a distinct westerly twang to it and was circumnavigating the otherwise sheltered sunny sites and put a very firm lid on the temperatures.

A bit of wandering down on the harbour did turn up a solitary Red Admiral in the same spot they seem to be hanging around.





 $\label{lem:condition} A \ cursory \ look \ round \ on \ the \ nearby \ Nettle \ growth \ added \ several \ more \ eggs \ to \ the \ previous \ visits \ total.$



The only other things flying here were birds, lots of birds. This little spot does seem to punch above its weight in the biodiversity stakes. Wrens, Dunnock, House Sparrows, Goldfinch, Robins, Meadow Pipits and Greenfinch were amongst the avian life seen in and on the dense undergrowth





A pair of Kingfisher were darting along the water's edge, too nippy and nervous to grab a picture though.

On my last visit I also noticed some Kidney Vetch in flower



and today I had a proper look around, discovering good amounts of the stuff on the path and the water's edge. I'm not sure if Small Blue have been recorded here but there is definitely enough Vetch to support a small colony. (A look in a book called *The Butterflies of Sussex* by a couple of blokes called *Blencowe & Hulme*, there does seem to be a small blue square smack over Shoreham in the Small Blue entry)

Mill Hill, as I expected, was rather windswept. Had it not been for the strong wind I'm sure I would have seen a Clouded Yellow or two as on the odd occasion when the wind abated you could feel the warmth of the sun, but sadly, these breaks were few and far between and very short lived.

Monday felt decidedly colder. Bookham was bathed in a mixture of low weak sun and crisp frosted leaves and I certainly wasn't going to find any butterflies but there's always eggs and larvae to find.

Even so I was surprised to find two active Small Copper cats in their little nursery. Of course 'active' is a relative term in this context, at temperatures only a few degrees above freezing I imagine any feeding was happening in slow motion. But with these leaves being frost encrusted only a few hours previously, you gotta hand it to them, they are tough little things!





Elsewhere, and for the third year in a row on the same low hanging branch of an Oak I found a Purple Hairstreak egg.



I keep meaning to stake out this tree one summer afternoon in the hope of catching a female egg laying, maybe next year...

Like yesterday birdlife was numerous, flocks of Redwing could be heard in the Blackthorn thickets and various small birds were busying around looking for small morsels to keep them going. One of the most numerous (and you can't say this very often nowadays) was the Marsh Tit, they seemed to be everywhere today!



As usual at this time of year I also kept my eye out for Brown Hairstreak eggs, finding around 30 new ones scattered far and wide. Like the Small Copper's they are tough little things. This is the same egg before and after defrosting!





Last time I discovered a cluster of around a dozen on a particularly popular Blackthorn sucker, but unfortunately, the ongoing work to encourage Nightingales here, (removal of dense scrub to promote fresh growth), had nearly destroyed this particular Blackthorn. It had been well and truly trampled by whatever heavy machinery had been used recently. A bit of rooting around though uncovered nine. I'm not sure if they are all still viable, several suffering varying amounts of superficial damage to the outer shell but as of today I have seven rescued eggs living in the back of my fridge. The remaining two were attached to the main 'trunk' of the shrub and I couldn't remove them with destroying them.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-Nov-17 10:59 PM GMT

Good to see Marsh Tits Bugboy – they're underrepresented I reckon 😊



Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

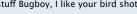
by David M, 13-Nov-17 11:33 PM GMT

Things seemingly going a bit slack everywhere now, Bugboy. These recent frosts have finished off most of the butterflies that remained so even a Red Admiral is notable right now.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 14-Nov-17 09:36 AM GMT

Interesting stuff Bugboy, I like your bird shots $\stackrel{\textstyle \mbox{\ensuremath{}}}{\cup}$



Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 14-Nov-17 09:06 PM GMT

That's a great selection of "other stages" from Bookham, Buggy. 😃 I wish I had the patience (and better eyes!) to scour the vegetation and turn up all those. I really should try a bit harder...

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Nov-17 08:23 PM GMT

Thanks guys 🕘. My season seems to have finally come to an end but I'll still find time to potter around my favourite sites with camera in hand just in case something catches my eye.

Talking of coming to an end here's a bit a review and some highlights of my 2017 (very much an abridged version). It's been somewhat hectic to say the least and I came a whisker away from completing the Mission, only those pesky Mountain Ringlets escaping me this year and if I am to believe the weather reports on the day, only by an hour or two 9! Still, ending the season on an impressive 55 species isn't to be sniffed at, only four years ago my life list sat at around 35!

Three trips to incredibly beautiful parts Ireland and Scotland saw me ticking off three more lifers, Cryptic Wood White, Chequered Skipper and Northern Brown Argus, with invaluable help from Janet Turnbull and lain Cowe, despite the best attempts by rather inclement British summer. A day trip to the Welsh borders nearly ended in disaster but dogged determination bagged Large Heath and I finally managed to make it to Chiddingfold with the help of Susie to see some English Wood Whites. And who could ask for a better pair of lifer bookends on British soil than Large Tortoiseshell and Queen of Spain Fritillary!!!



Finding eggs is, with a few exceptions, obviously rather difficult but following ovipositing females makes things somewhat easier and I managed to add a few more species to that particular list, including recording the moment with a Grayling Θ . Taking that process one stage further I also found my first ever Brown Hairstreak larvae



Amongst the other highlights included coming across a meadow full of SPBF in Chequered Skipper country, my White-letter Hairstreak colony exploding in numbers with probably around 40-50 seen low down in one day, another glorious day spent chasing Lulworth Skipper down on the stunning Dorset coast and finally filling the gaping hole in my personal sightings of mating Orange-tips. Finally, along with a lot of others, the colour purple features highly in my memories of 2017 and I had my first full on proper Purple Emperor encounter, i.e. I was used as food



There's so many more encounters I could mention but I'd still be typing into next week if I tried to list them all. I'm not sure how 2018 could beat all that but I'm more than willing for it to give it it's best shot! However, I suspect my June will be focused somewhere in North West England or central Scotland!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 23–Nov–17 10:21 PM GMT $\,$

You've had a great year, Paul, and I've no complaints either !. Unlike you I've still to track down species not found in the south. 2017 was a remarkable year for Hairstreaks, some of your images of them earn you a belated mrgreen ! $\overline{\mathbf{o}}$.

Next year we'll do it all again, bring it on !!. Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Nov-17 10:25 PM GMT

A brilliant season, Buggy. 55 species is pretty good, especially when you see what it included... Like Trevor says, the Purple Hairstreaks really stand out. 😈 Hard to follow, really. 😉 📛

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 24-Nov-17 08:37 AM GMT

What a fantastic season Bugboy! well done. 😊

Great shots of beautiful butterflies, hard to pick a favourite, they are all

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 24-Nov-17 08:46 AM GMT

Some great highlights of 2017, Bugboy. You certainly got around. All the best for 2018.

Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Nov-17 08:06 PM GMT

You had a fantastic season Bugboy, here's hoping that 2018 is just as rewarding, if not more so 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 24-Nov-17 08:10 PM GMT

What can I say...not only is 55 species an achievement in it's own right but to include Large Tortoiseshell and Queen of Spain Fritillary in the same year as well. I bet that is a club with very few members 😊 😇 🐨 🕏

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Nov-17 10:31 PM GMT

A very impressive year, Bugboy, but you earned it with all the hard work you put in.

Large Tortoiseshell & Queen of Spain Fritillary were icing on the cake. 🐸

It's nice to see your highlights presented in such a artistic way too. I've a feeling next year's will have a Mountain Ringlet or two? 😜



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Nov-17 05:09 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor** and **Dave**, I think 2017 could be regarded as the year of the Hairstreak 😐

Thanks Andrew, I'm not even going to try and pick a favourite, there's just too many!

Thanks Chris, yes it was certainly a hectic year for me, bizarrely 'helped' when I came down with Shingles mid season. A mild case so not painful but it kept me off work when the Purple ones emerged early 🤒

Thanks Wurzel, I'm sure it will be 🐸. My main focus is nabbing that one last elusive tick but I'm sire other stuff will present itself for me 😊 It is certainly a very exclusive club to be in Neil, especially this side of the millennium!

Thanks David, although my 'artistic presentation' as you put it was blatantly stolen from Paulines end of season roundup 🤒 🥮



Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 01-Dec-17 01:02 PM GMT

You have had an exceptional year by any standards as others have said. I think you deserve an award for what you have achieved using public transport I hope your presentation was a success this week and that next year is as good or better and that you achieve your goals 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

Paul Harfield wrote:

Hi Bugboy

You have had an exceptional year by any standards as others have said. I think you deserve an award for what you have achieved using public transport

I hope your presentation was a success this week and that next year is as good or better and that you achieve your goals 😊



Thanks Paul, I'd settle for a freedom pass of some sort from one or two of the train companies 🥹 I'm sure I've earned one by now!

The presentation went down rather well by all accounts although it's a complete blur to me. I had to wing it as well since I was unable to read my notes on the laptop screen as they came up microscopically small Θ .

I have two main goals next year, Mountain Ringlets and a slightly more relaxed season... 📦



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Dec-17 06:12 PM GMT

9th December, Bookham

A crisp, sunny winters day tempted me out to my favourite Surrey spot. The chilly recent weather has certainly brought out the local birds with lots of small birds foraging in the canopy, no doubt countless Hairstreak eggs and White Admiral caterpillars disappearing into their hungry tummies! A Nuthatch come down close enough for a few snaps and I spent some time (mostly unsuccessful) stalking my favourite species of Thrush, the Fieldfare. Just about managing a few passable heavily cropped shots in the end.



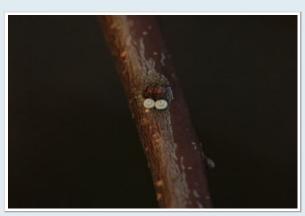


As usual I also kept my eye's peeled for some immature butterflies, finding just one possible White Admiral hibernaculum



and the usual selection of Hairstreak eggs





I also came across a single, solitary Red Admiral egg in a sunlit glade where an early emergent adult can usually be found.



I had a quick look at the Small Copper nursery, unsurprisingly not finding any larvae but there were still a few eggs dotted around. They look fresh but almost certainly now dead and just preserved by the cold.



Jack Frost was certainly a busy boy last night 😃



Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 11–Dec–17 09:35 AM GMT

Is that the 'Bookham Commons' Bugboy ? Looking at the map I've been close, Fetcham Downs/Norbury Park, but never made it over there. I'll have to give it a go next year.

Interesting stuff. 😀

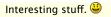
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Dec-17 04:57 PM GMT

Andrew555 wrote:

Is that the 'Bookham Commons' Bugboy? Looking at the map I've been close, Fetcham Downs/Norbury Park, but never made it over there.

I'll have to give it a go next year.



It is indeed Andrew and I can recommend a visit at anytime of the season. It has a very good range of species from early spring until the first frosts and as any regular reader of my diary will testify, I'm there quite a lot 🐸!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Dec-17 10:16 AM GMT

Lovely set of seasonal images – Fieldfares, Nuthatches in exposed trees and Brown Hairstreak eggs 😊 That last image is a beauty! 😊 😇

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Dec-17 10:44 PM GMT

Good to see you're diversifying in the absence of butterflies, Bugboy. There's still much to see at this time of year (although practically all of it is warm blooded).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 13-Dec-17 07:57 AM GMT

Thanks Bugboy. 😃

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Dec-17 10:42 PM GMT

I've kept myself busy on these cold dark evenings when not enjoying the merriment of the season, updating my mission in pictorial form 😃 ...





2014



2015



2016



2017

just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 28-Dec-17 06:40 AM GMT

I imagine your next challenge will be an image of both sexes of each species. That'll keep you going for a bit longer!.

All the best for 2018,

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Dec-17 08:41 PM GMT

trevor wrote:

I imagine your next challenge will be an image of both sexes of each species.

That'll keep you going for a bit longer!.

All the best for 2018,

Trevor.

Possibly, although of that 60 I'm only missing females of Purple Emperor and Large Tortoiseshell (and obviously the Mountain Ringlet). Currently I'm branching out on immature stages of which I added White-letter Hairstreak today

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 29-Dec-17 06:55 PM GMT

"just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!" You could put Queen of Spain Fritillary in the gap.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-17 03:31 PM GMT

""just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!" You could put Queen of Spain Fritillary in the gap." Or a Long-tailed Blue 😉 Are you going to set up camp on Irton Fell and not come down until you see one, that's my plan for getting this species (in about 15 years once the girls have left home and my wife has been treated to numerous holidays abroad)?

Have a goodun

by bugboy, 30-Dec-17 05:49 PM GMT

MrSp0ck wrote:

"just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!" You could put Queen of Spain Fritillary in the gap.

Wurzel wrote:

""just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!" You could put Queen of Spain Fritillary in the gap." Or a Long-tailed Blue are you going to set up camp on Irton Fell and not come down until you see one, that's my plan for getting this species (in about 15 years once the girls have left home and my wife has been treated to numerous holidays abroad)?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I could... but I would be breaking the self imposed rules of my 'mission' 😀 . All occasional vagrants are automatically disqualified. The addition of the Large Tort this year (which conveniently fills up that page to nice 6 rows of 10 (I admit those 59's were really bugging my OCD)) is due to all evidence pointing to a small resident population hanging on in deepest, darkest Sussex.

Yes Wurzel, Irton Fell is looking like a nice place to spend a few weeks of June 😂 (the second half of which is already safely booked off from work) and I may have a lift to get me there as well, fingers crossed 😉

Re: Bugboys mission

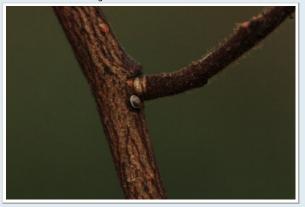
by MrSp0ck, 31-Dec-17 04:39 PM GMT

Queen of Spain has been resident when it was at Minsmere for several years, so is similar to the Large Tortoiseshell's small resident population at times status, along with the Continental Swallowtail, and Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell that are trying to establish too.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Dec-17 07:00 PM GMT

Last week, on the only sunny day, I found myself with half an hour spare at work (ssshhhhh) so I decided to have a look at some Elm suckers in a disused corner, something I planned to do last year but never got round to it. As it turned out it was a worthwhile use of my time, I discovered a single WLH egg, my first ever in the flesh Θ . I didn't have my camera on me at the time so I've been waiting for a bit of sun all weekend to grab some shots, this is the best I could get for now.



Two of the suckers are around 20 feet tall so I reckon old enough to flower, the rest are significantly smaller, between 5 and 10 feet and it was on one of these that the egg is situated. I shall keep a close eye on things and come June I will be using one of my half days camped under them with some binoculars to see if I have a small colony on my doorstep or just an occasional wandering female at this stage. It does mean though that my transect site in central London boasts records for 20 species now