

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Feb-17 09:15 PM GMT

### First Of The Year

It's been some time since I posted on UKB, for two reasons. Firstly, it's taken quite a while to recover, both physically and mentally, from writing 'The Butterflies of Sussex'. I've seen the proofs and don't even remember writing half of it! Fortunately, I've already managed to shed more than a stone of the weight I put on, as the result of Red Bull fuelled all-nighters. Two weeks in Fuerteventura should complete the healing.

Secondly, I've spent a very large amount of time outdoors, performing more hands-on conservation work than I've ever done before, mainly for my *Fritillaries for the Future* project – I've even taken up coppicing. More on this soon.

But this post has been prompted by that magic moment that we all share each year – the first butterfly of the season. A walk around Rewell Wood today produced two Red Admiral and two Peacock, one of which was in near-perfect condition.



For the lovers of butterflies, orchids and other wildlife there are a few gems on offer on TV next week (see below). I did much of the wildlife guiding for the making of 'South Downs – England's Mountains Green'. One of the many great sequences we got was of Short-eared Owls on the Norfolk Estate. There are, of course, some of my favourite butterflies on show.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 18-Feb-17 10:26 PM GMT

Peacocks are the 'laziest' overwinterers, Neil, so you've done gloriously well to get one in mid-February.

Perhaps it was reward for what you've suffered over the past few months, although any activity that leads to a stone in weight loss is a business opportunity in itself!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 19-Feb-17 04:10 PM GMT

Ah ! It was Red Bull then !.

The way you charged through those saplings with the chainsaw at Park Corner, struck me as being a bit super Human !. Your bonfire gang that day are still recovering.

Lovely Peacock.

Trevor.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by badgerbob, 21-Feb-17 02:04 PM GMT

I recognise that view behind Peter!!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Susie, 21-Feb-17 10:39 PM GMT

Cracking programme Neil! I missed the start, loved it, saw your name in the credits at the end and went to iplayer to watch the beginning- even better than the rest of it and a lovely surprise. Made me nostalgic for summer.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Feb-17 08:29 AM GMT

Thanks, Susie. I reckon the producer and Peter did justice to the beauty of the South Downs. With only an hour to play with it's a shame that so much great footage inevitably failed to make the cut. There was enough material to make a full series.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Feb-17 09:13 AM GMT

#### **BC *Fritillaries for the Future* 2017 Update 1**

This winter has seen a vast amount of conservation work done in the woodlands of Sussex, for my BC *Fritillaries for the Future* (FFTF) project. There has been so much going on that I've had little time for blogging, but here is just a selection of some of that work.

#### **Rewell Wood**

A large quantity of new Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) habitat has been created this winter. Two Sweet Chestnut coppice coupes have been cut by a contractor, including one adjacent to the W-E ride at the southern end of the wood, which has public access. BC Sussex and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) jointly funded the mulching of a 1.25 hectare clearing, which once supported PBF but has long been swamped under Silver Birch scrub. SDNPA staff, its Volunteer Ranger Service and BC Sussex volunteers have continued a rolling programme of scallop and glade creation. A corridor has also been opened up to connect permanently open habitat with recently cut coppice coupes. There will be guided walks here, morning and afternoon, on 6 and 7 May (details will appear on the BC Sussex website). I am grateful to the Norfolk Estate for allowing access for these walks, and for its generous support for the project.





#### **BC Park Corner Heath Reserve**

The clock has been turned back to the 1980s here, with the implementation of a much more aggressive management programme. A quantum leap in the amount of Bracken and scrub control has been largely achieved through the training of volunteers in the safe use of brushcutters, funded by my FFTF project. A vast quantity of Buckthorn and Silver Birch has been cleared to recreate a much more open structure, and thick blankets of old Bracken have been broken down. I'm now chainsaw-certificated, so have thinned out some of the trees along the stream bank, to create humid glades with dappled sunlight/shade. Aside from our BC Sussex work parties, we have been greatly assisted by visits from the Brighton Conservation Volunteers. I would also like to thank Trevor (Rapley) and Doug Neve, for providing assistance and support while I used powertools here over the Christmas and New Year period. I believe this is the dawn of a new era on the Sussex reserves, with hopefully some further major developments still to come.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Feb-17 01:25 PM GMT

### BC *Fritillaries for the Future* 2017 Update 2

#### Clapham Wood

Over the winter I've been working with both a commercial Hazel coppice worker (a rare beast these days), Marcus Clear, and a group of local volunteers affiliated to the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service, although unlike most SDVRS, they work exclusively on this one site. They have been resident for more than 15 years, under the leadership of ex-commando Ron MacKenzie. The separate coppice cycles they work on have been adjusted, in terms of their coupe sequencing, to suit the Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF), while still maintaining cuts more appropriate for the Hazel Dormouse. PBF today only

flies on a single Hazel coppice site in the UK. I hope to improve this situation, which would have seemed unthinkable in the mid C20th.





#### **Angmering Park Estate**

With the kind cooperation of the Angmering Park Estate, which lies between Rewell Wood and Clapham Wood, I have been given permission to start a new Hazel coppice cycle at Poling. I've caught the coppicing bug and now have a smaller chainsaw specifically for cutting overstood (overgrown) coppice. I've been working alongside Chris Letchford of the National Coppice Federation and we've finished the first in a sequence of eight coupes. We will start re-cutting the first coupe when halfway round the cycle, to keep four compartments suitable for PBF breeding at any time. This will maximise the potential of a relatively small area. PBF flew here until the early 1990s. After the 1987 blow-down the coppice was cut back to allow the clear-up, but the butterfly was inevitably lost when it again became unmanaged. I expect PBF dispersing from Rewell Wood (in years when the population peaks) to find this area relatively easily.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Feb-17 02:48 PM GMT

### BC *Fritillaries for the Future* 2017 Update 3

#### Cowdray Estate

A small colony of Pearl-bordered Fritillary (PBF) has persisted in a wood near Fernhurst for many years, due to intensive management led by BC staff and the South Downs National Park Authority and its volunteers. However, like most remaining PBF populations, it suffered terribly at the hands of the near-tropical temperatures experienced during December 2015, and its future hangs in the balance. The Cowdray Estate has a new Head Forester, Richard Everett, with a great reputation for balancing commercial operations with the needs of wildlife. A very wide ride of 1km length has been cut over the winter, and the original ride which has supported PBF has been re-coppiced. If the butterfly has managed to hang on here, its future will look considerably brighter.



#### Tottington Wood

For some years now I've been helping the owner of part of Tottington Wood (Longlands) to manage his compartments. This site has developed into one of the most beautiful woodlands I know of. Last year I wrote an article for *Smallwoods* magazine based largely on our experiences here, as it demonstrates what can be achieved with a little (OK, quite a lot) of effort, concluding with the remark that the owner's 10% of the entire wood now hosts 90% of the butterflies. The South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service has, as always, been incredibly helpful in providing some muscle. Now that more light has been allowed in the woodland floor becomes a riot of colour each spring. I've used my recently acquired skills with a chainsaw to make a few holes in the canopy.



#### **Private Wood – Pulborough**

The owners of a quite large wood near Pulborough have handed me a rare opportunity; the chance to restructure a sizeable area of naturally regenerating woodland (following large-scale conifer clearance) to an almost entirely wildlife-led design. Generously sized scallops have been cut in the optimum positions alongside the old ride system, and the ride edges will be subject to an annual programme of rotational management. The potential here is huge and I will gain great satisfaction from charting the site's development. I view the generosity of the owners, who funded this extensive work themselves, as a wonderful gift to butterflies and a host of other wildlife.



Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Feb-17 06:24 PM GMT

#### BC *Fritillaries for the Future* 2017 Update 4

##### Vert Woods Community Woodland

I've been working closely with the Vert Woods Community Woodland (VWCW), which covers an area of 69 hectares adjacent to and southeast of the BC reserves in Sussex. This new venture, which seeks to restore a large area of the Vert Wood complex (double the size of Park Corner Heath and Rowland Wood together) to its former glory, presents a huge opportunity for woodland butterflies. Plumpton College students are using the site for woodland management and arboriculture training, at the same time providing a workforce to open up rides and glades. VWCW has held a number of interesting events here, including the benefits of portable sawmilling and the uses of Sweet Chestnut. Over the next few years this area should start filling up with wildlife.



##### Charlton Forest

A project led by Butterfly Conservation and the Forestry Commission was recently awarded more than £20,000 by the Veolia Environmental Trust, an environmental body enrolled in the Landfill Communities Fund. The project will facilitate follow-up work to some major commercial felling within Charlton Forest, performed to a fritillary-friendly blueprint I put together. This is a working forest with very restricted access, but the benefits which it will bring should be visible within the surrounding landscape, at sites including the Graffham Down Trust reserves and Heyshott Escarpment. The images give some idea of the scale of the work, this being just a tiny part.





#### Graffham Down Trust

For many years I've worked closely with the Graffham Down Trust, which has recently made great progress in opening up woodland rides and glades in its varied mosaic of habitats. This area has just been included within a different, new BC project, which will benefit *Fritillaries for the Future* and vice versa, adding value to both.



#### Re: Neil Hulme

by Lee Hurrell, 22-Feb-17 06:42 PM GMT

Goodness, Neil – you have been busy!

Well done on all the hard work; the *Fritillaries* of Sussex stand a far higher chance of continued success. I hope to see you at one, or more, of these sites in the Spring 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

#### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 22-Feb-17 07:11 PM GMT

That is a spectacular amount of work you and your team have managed Neil, and you managed to squeeze in a small book in the downtime... is there such a thing as downtime in your life at the moment 🤔 Here's to some relaxing summertime afternoons enjoying the results of your labours 😊

#### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 22-Feb-17 08:15 PM GMT

I knew you were up to something, having completed "The Atlas" 😊 Really inspiring work there, Neil – many thanks for the update.

Spring cannot come soon enough!

Cheers,

– Pete

#### Re: Neil Hulme

by Vince Massimo, 22-Feb-17 10:10 PM GMT

Fantastic work, Neil and I hope that it inspires others to volunteer and get involved.  
Now, have a great holiday and get ready to observe the fruits of your labour 😊

Vince

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 23-Feb-17 06:59 PM GMT

Good Lord, you **have** been busy lately, Neil. Hope you're not overdoing it.....wouldn't want you succumbing to pneumonia again! 😊

Thanks for the updates along with some overviews of the sites themselves. It's nice to see how things look so soon after the preparatory work. Looks to be some excellent habitat there and I'm certain the butterflies will respond positively.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Feb-17 07:37 PM GMT

Thanks, all. A few more project updates to come, but they'll have to wait until I get back from two weeks in Fuerteventura 😊  
Time to recharge the batteries, in time for what will be a very busy spring.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 25-Feb-17 08:34 AM GMT

What a wonderful job you have been doing Neil. You deserve an OBE - and it certainly wouldn't stand for Other B-ggers' Efforts.  
Who is going to put Neil up for a gong? I would like to start the ball rolling myself but the truth is in my 79th year, I lack the energy these days.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by selbypaul, 25-Feb-17 02:49 PM GMT

This is quite incredible Neil. Huge efforts from you and all that have supported you. The Fritillaries of Sussex are absolutely in good hands

### Re: Neil Hulme

by William, 25-Feb-17 04:07 PM GMT

Extraordinary stuff Neil, look forward to seeing how it all unfolds!

BWs,

William

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 25-Feb-17 09:56 PM GMT

Fantastic efforts Neil - could you have a word with the people that manage Bentley Wood - the Small Pearl had a dreadful season there in 2016 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by dave brown, 28-Feb-17 04:34 PM GMT

May I add my voice to thank Neil for all the hard work he has been doing this winter on behalf of all wildlife, but in particular Butterflies. It looks like many Sussex woods have benefited from Neil and his chainsaw. Lets hope that the weather in 2017 will respond and help facilitate a big recovery in PBF numbers.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 01-Mar-17 04:46 PM GMT

Great Stuff Neil, can we relocate you to Lancashire 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 28-Mar-17 10:11 PM GMT

Neil, how long do we have to wait before your eagerly anticipated book on Sussex butterflies is released? I seem to recall it was scheduled for April. Is there a specific date set aside for the launch?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 28-Mar-17 10:44 PM GMT

**David M wrote:**

Neil, how long do we have to wait before your eagerly anticipated book on Sussex butterflies is released? I seem to recall it was scheduled for April. Is there a specific date set aside for the launch?

<http://sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings/>

I think the above link should provide a rather exact answer to your question David ;)

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 28-Mar-17 11:31 PM GMT

Sooooo Mr Hulme, a Large Tortoiseshell eh... 🐢🐢🐢

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 29-Mar-17 07:27 AM GMT

Thanks, all, for your kind comments.

In answer to David's query: less than three days left to order the book at the pre-publication price <http://www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop/the-butterflies-of-sussex-detail> but I imagine that it will be ready for delivery in late April (just doing the last round of proofing). It's been a very difficult and exhausting process, but I'm delighted with the way it's looking.

Before I provide my final (and exciting) update on *Fritillaries for the Future*, there is the need for an urgent 'sightings' post 😊 – coming shortly.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 29-Mar-17 07:33 AM GMT

[quote]<http://www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop/> ... sex-detail

Unfortunate (but amusing) clipping of the url.

I note the exact time of publication is given to a precision of 0.01 of a second.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 29-Mar-17 07:45 AM GMT

**Spring Off The Mark In Style**

**Monday 27 March**

On Monday morning I had a couple of hours free, so headed to the quiet lanes between Billingshurst and Five Oaks, where David Cook was already staking out the flowery banks of a sun-drenched meadow. He had seen one male Orange-tip before I arrived, but it was almost an hour before I could declare that my own, personal spring had officially arrived. Then there were two, together with a supporting cast of Holly Blue, Brimstone and Peacock. Let's hope that spring lasts forever.



**Tuesday 28 March**

Having spent a long morning and early afternoon planting Dutch Elm Disease-resistant cultivars at Littlehampton, I was too short on time to chase Orange-tips at my favourite site. Having seen Martin Kalaher's recent posts (BC Sussex website) about North Stoke (which is a lot closer to home), I thought I'd try there. Immediately on arrival, just before 3pm, I flushed a very big female Large Tortoiseshell off the track. She didn't go far in the increasingly cool and cloudy conditions, allowing a close approach. This more than made up for my failed attempts at finding a Large Tortoiseshell in Friston Forest on Saturday. After losing her, I continued my hunt for Orange-tips, finding three asleep on Cuckooflowers.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-17 09:39 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Orange Tips Neil and a Large Tortoiseshell too 🌱🌱 Does this mean they could be coming back to this country , I know they used

to be here at one time ? Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 29-Mar-17 09:40 AM GMT

Many congrats. with the Large Tortoiseshell.  
What's the theory for this Butterfly ? . A UK bred specimen out of hibernation,  
or a 2016 migrant from the continent that overwintered here ? . Whatever, a fantastic find !.

Personally, I've never known such an abundance of species in March before, so far it's been fabulous.

Here's to the rest of 2017 !  
Trevor.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Mar-17 11:02 AM GMT

Thanks, both. The current status of the Large Tortoiseshell requires a short essay ... and you know what I'm going to say – there's one such essay shortly available in 'The Butterflies of Sussex'! 😊 Let's just say this – I went out specifically hunting for Large Tortoiseshells at Friston Forest last Saturday. I'll let you know how the hunt goes over the next few days.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Mar-17 11:23 AM GMT

#### BC *Fritillaries for the Future* 2017 Update 5

The conservation of butterflies is always preferably achieved through the improvement, extension, creation or closer-linking of areas of suitable habitat. However, the distribution of some declining species, including Pearl-bordered Fritillary in Sussex, has now become so fragmented that it is unlikely they will ever be able to naturally colonise some locations which are currently suitable for them. Much of the countryside which separates areas of higher quality habitat has become too hostile to allow their easy passage through the wider landscape.

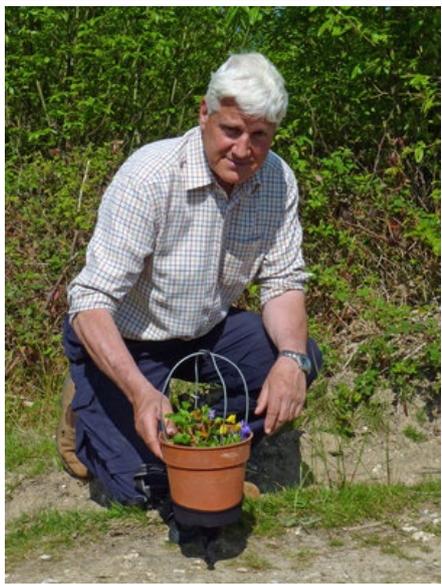
Under circumstances such as these, re-introductions may be the only viable solution in attempting to rebuild robust, self-sustaining populations on a landscape scale. However, it is essential that every proposal is thoroughly researched before any attempt is made, including an assessment of the reasons for absence/loss in the past, and the sustainability of appropriate management long into the future. 'Habitat specialists' are very easy to lose from our countryside, and remarkably difficult to put back.

Butterfly Conservation has published a set of guidelines covering the sometimes contentious issue of re-introductions; the 'BC Code on Introductions and Re-introductions 2010'. Following these guidelines, and with the co-operation and support of landowners at both the donor (I'm grateful to the Norfolk Estate) and recipient sites, I made a re-introduction of Pearl-bordered Fritillary at Stansted Forest in spring 2016. The butterflies were supplied by the Fritillaries for the Future captive-breeding team, comprising Mike Mullis, Theresa Lux and Gary Norman, with additional volunteers set to help in 2017. Theresa and Gary have been involved on an entirely voluntary basis, and their contribution to the project has been immense.

The Stansted Park Foundation, and particularly its Head Forester, Michael Prior, could not have been more helpful in supporting this work, and I believe that Stansted Forest today provides an ideal home for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Three biofuel boilers have been installed on the estate (2008 and two in 2013), being fed by the 110 hectares of Sweet Chestnut coppice within the larger forest (476 hectares). There are several kilometres of well-managed rides and Michael is extending the ride network to better connect areas where conifers are being harvested.

I will be leading a walk here on Saturday 13 May (see <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/events/>) and attendees (from either side of the Sussex/Hants border) will be invited to join the monitoring team. Training will be offered on the day.





Head Forester Michael Prior releasing Pearl-bordered Fritillaries

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-17 12:59 PM GMT

Thanks Neil looking forward to your post 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilBJohnson, 29-Mar-17 04:36 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

It's great and really quite inspiring, how much conservation work you achieve using your expertise. My wife & I are going to get more involved with Butterfly Conservation (BC) (Lincolnshire) asking to join specific work parties having done other voluntary woodland coppicing work this winter. I guess winter woodland work is done now (as seen when I open the very first page of your diary 😊).

I was wondering, do BC do any work mixing gene pools between different isolated populations of the same species, helping make individual isolated

populations more robust for their long term future.

It's good to see your photo of the Large Tort. I have never seen one & am not likely to see one yet in the UK. It is another species we probably did not know enough about when it was lost in the UK. Watching a famous butterfly video sometimes given away for free as a prize 😊, I am told dissecting Wood Whites is the only way to tell the difference between two different species so could it be that the Large Tort lost in the UK, might have been slightly different from the ones found in Europe?

Kind Regards,

Philip

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-17 06:31 PM GMT

A great find with the Large Tort Neil – how do you do it – do you have some in-built butterfly detecting system 😊 Great news about the Pearls 😊, again any chance you could have a word with the people that manage Bentley Wood for the sake of the Small Pearls? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by NickMorgan, 29-Mar-17 09:33 PM GMT

Wow, Large Tortoiseshell, Holly Blues, Brimstones. I can only dream. At least we should be seeing some Orange Tips up here in the next couple of weeks!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 31-Mar-17 10:52 PM GMT

Amazing.

Those last few posts demonstrate why your PD is the most popular thread on this site.

Useful information about a must-have book you've co-authored along with a major conservation update. Even eclipsing those is the meat in the sandwich regarding a UK mainland Large Tortoiseshell.

I know you have spent time on the Isle of Wight in recent years and I'm sure you've done your homework regarding the presence of this species closer to your home.

I'm even more eagerly awaiting publication of your Sussex atlas even if only to read what is contained within regarding a species that is surely not far away from being regarded once more as a British resident.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-17 09:29 PM GMT

Thanks, all, for your comments.

I do have to be a little cautious about discussing issues such as the specifics of site management in areas outside my remit, or expressing views on complex and debatable themes such as genetic mixing, as I need to ensure that my personal views, and those of Butterfly Conservation, cannot be confused. Always happy to discuss on a one-to-one basis, but while I'm an employee I need to use social media carefully.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Apr-17 09:38 PM GMT

#### Latest Out-And-About

**Thursday 30 March:** Although a group outing to locate Large Tortoiseshells at North Stoke proved unsuccessful (hopefuls should search the track between TQ033106 and TQ036103), the number of butterflies on display was impressive. Orange-tips and Green-veined Whites emerged throughout the day, with about 10 and 7 on the wing by close of play. High numbers of Peacock and Brimstone were accompanied by Comma, Red Admiral (egg-laying), Small Tortoiseshell, Speckled Wood and Holly Blue. The early signs for this season are encouraging.



**Saturday 1 April:** Today I joined the main *Fritillaries for the Future* captive-breeding team of Mike Mullis, Theresa Lux and Gary Norman at Abbot's Wood, to discuss plans for this spring and survey the site for violet abundance. Theresa demonstrated her highly impressive Pearl-bordered Fritillary caterpillar-hunting skills, by finding no less than four in about 15 minutes (three final instar and one penultimate). I believe this to be a good omen. If the weather holds up the first emergence of adults should be in the third week of April.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-17 10:24 PM GMT

Fingers crossed for the weather then Neil – it's about time that we had a more normal/decent spring 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 02-Apr-17 12:09 AM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

The early signs for this season are encouraging.

Aren't they just! Those PBF cats look to be full of health and let's hope you're right that the weather plays ball and this species can emerge into benign conditions in 3 weeks.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 06-Apr-17 09:47 AM GMT

**Hunting The Big One**

Yesterday (5 April) at North Stoke – one, possibly two (the images of my first are too distant to be certain), Large Tortoiseshell males. The image undoubtedly shows the same individual photographed by Bugboy.

A linear count of male Orange-tips was later supplemented by three mating pairs, giving a minimum total of 23 for this species – the best showing for years. Good numbers of many other spring species.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Allan.W., 06-Apr-17 07:49 PM GMT

That Orange -Tip Shot is superb Neil,just don,t know how you get such a crisp sharp image,do you use a monopod ? and are you on manual mode ?

Once again brilliant !! regards Allan.W.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 06-Apr-17 08:38 PM GMT

Thanks, Allan.

All my pics are taken hand-held with a Lumix FZ38. I never use a monopod or tripod (although others swear by them), as I like to travel light. For me, there would be too many missed opportunities as I wrestled with a set of bagpipes!  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-17 08:45 PM GMT

Alright Neil I was just wondering could the North Stoke site become a regular haunt for the Large Tort? If there are possibly two males present how did they get here?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 06-Apr-17 09:35 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel,

IMO the short answer is 'yes'. But you'll have to wait until you get your copy of 'The Butterflies of Sussex' to find out why. We're getting it off to the printers in the morning. That's not the wind – it's my sigh of relief.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

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

Fabulous stuff Neil, I'm not going to jinx it by saying it outright (and what everyone else is probably thinking) but could we be on the cusp of the most exciting UK butterfly event of the century....

If your planning on any surveys over the summer count me in 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Apr-17 06:56 AM GMT

Hi Paul

I'll let you know when Project Polychloros starts its campaign. Following your recent performance you've been promoted to Major Atkin.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Apr-17 06:59 AM GMT

**Gorgeous Grizzles**

On Thursday (6 April) I finished work at 4pm and headed to Mill Hill, with the intention of watching Grizzled Skippers go to roost, as this is the time of day when they pose nicely on low vegetation, before closing down for the night. Numbers are still low (I found three), but should start to build next week, when they will be joined by the first Green Hairstreaks and Dingy Skippers.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 07-Apr-17 11:26 AM GMT

This sure is a period of encouraging news.

Lovely mating pair of OTs, Neil, but even they have to be eclipsed by a UK Large Tortoiseshell!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Apr-17 04:01 PM GMT

**UKB Visitor**

I met UKBer William this morning (7 April) to survey for Pearl-bordered Fritillary caterpillars and look at habitat quality in Rewell Wood. Keen to see a PBF cat, Will found one after only about five minutes! This was in a scallop hand-cut by the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service (affiliated to the National Park Authority), proving beyond doubt the immense value of the work they do, to benefit butterflies and other wildlife. And how was the habitat quality? Excellent – violets flushing everywhere.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 07-Apr-17 06:56 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Hi Paul

I'll let you know when Project Polychloros starts its campaign. Following your recent performance you've been promoted to Major Atkin.

BWs, Neil

😊 I shall accept that accolade with pride and await my badge in the post!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 07-Apr-17 10:59 PM GMT

Those are extremely vivid images of the PBF larvae, Neil. I guess we're still a couple of weeks away from the first emergences?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Apr-17 07:26 AM GMT

Hi David

I suspect that a few are already roasting away inside their pressure-cookers. The first might appear in only a week, given the weather. I very much hope that we're going to see a better year for PBF in Sussex – and some exciting developments for my *Fritillaries for the Future* project beyond that. BWS, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-17 08:19 AM GMT

#### UKB Visitor (Part 2)

I spent a warm and sunny day with UKBer William (and others) on Saturday (9 April), starting at North Stoke. Despite the absence of Large Tortoiseshell (hopefully their work is already done) we saw all the usual suspects in good numbers. At Chantry Hill (yet to get going, but looking ready to explode into life) we found a few Brimstone eggs. I finished the day on my own, at a damp Wiston meadow, where 8 Orange-tip, 5 Green-veined White and a Speckled Wood collected by a small stream to roost. This season has a very promising feel to it.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 09-Apr-17 03:49 PM GMT

It's bit slow here Neil, the first Speckled Wood have only just appeared, I hope your right. Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-17 06:53 PM GMT

Hi Goldie

I'm sure spring is on its way to you too!

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 09-Apr-17 06:57 PM GMT

**Green Party**

Green Hairstreak off to a good start at Devil's Dyke, with 9 seen on scrub at the base of the valley. In the same area, 2 Small Copper and a few Orange-tip, Brimstone, Speckled Wood and Small Tortoiseshell, together with numerous Peacock. A couple of Dingy Skipper nearby on Newtimber Hill.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 09-Apr-17 10:15 PM GMT

Those are gorgeous greens, Neil!

No real sign of any wet and windy weather so hopefully you're right, certainly a good start to the season. 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 10-Apr-17 11:58 AM GMT

Agreed. You've captured that vivid sheen perfectly.

I hope they'll be out next weekend round my way.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 10-Apr-17 08:28 PM GMT

Thanks, Mark and David. A scale-perfect Green Hairstreak is hard to beat. The hunt is on for a mating pair.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 10-Apr-17 08:33 PM GMT

**More North Stoke Magic**

Following Paul Cox's amazing sighting of another (different) male Large Tortoiseshell at North Stoke yesterday (9 April), I couldn't resist another visit. Elusive as they always are, it failed to make an appearance, but this site has so much more to offer. A circular walk around the crescent, across the water-meadows, and along the ox-bow, gave a tally of 34 Orange-tip. Also seen were 4 Holly Blue, 5 Speckled Wood, 2 Large White, 2 Red Admiral, 4 Small Tortoiseshell, 5 Comma, 6 Brimstone, numerous Peacock and Green-veined White (including a mating pair) and 2 Small Copper.



Image (c) Paul Cox





### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 10-Apr-17 08:51 PM GMT

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

#### More North Stoke Magic

Following Paul Cox's amazing sighting of another (different) male Large Tortoiseshell at North Stoke yesterday (9 April), I couldn't resist another visit. Elusive as they always are, it failed to make an appearance, but this site has so much more to offer. A circular walk around the crescent, across the water-meadows, and along the ox-bow, gave a tally of 34 Orange-tip. Also seen were 4 Holly Blue, 5 Speckled Wood, 2 Large White, 2 Red Admiral, 4 Small Tortoiseshell, 5 Comma, 6 Brimstone, numerous Peacock and Green-veined White (including a mating pair) and 2 Small Copper.

BC Large Tortoiseshell (c) Paul Cox.jpgImage (c) Paul Cox

BC Green-veined White pair, North Stoke 10.4.17.jpgBC Small Copper, North Stoke 10.4.17.jpgBC Orange-tip, North Stoke 10.4.17.jpg

It just gets better and better 😊!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilBJohnson, 11-Apr-17 08:07 AM GMT

Hi Neil,  
My wife and I really like that Green-veined White picture (pair on a bluebell) & the Large Tortoiseshell news from North Stoke,  
Kind Regards

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 11-Apr-17 08:40 AM GMT

Thanks, Philip. It's one of my all-time favourite GVW shots, but I had to lie on some nettles to get them both in focus – no pain, no gain!  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 05:48 PM GMT

Great shots of GVWs and Greenstreaks Neil 😊 The Large Tort story looks like running – what's the likelihood of them turning up at the same location for the second brood – do they disperse when they emerge?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 13-Apr-17 01:25 AM GMT

Neil, are there any plans afoot to survey key areas for evidence of breeding amongst these Large Tortoiseshells?

Surely, once such evidence has emerged, then we can all start to form the conclusion that this magnificent beast is once again a UK resident (albeit tenuously)?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 13-Apr-17 06:32 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Large Tortoiseshell is only single-brooded and emerges from the chrysalis in late June and through July; most adults will have hibernated by mid August, reappearing in late March and April. If they have bred successfully then there must be a reasonable chance of someone spotting them here in the summer, as their behaviour is likely to be very different at this time of year. They'll be intent on building up reserves ahead of winter, so should spend much time nectaring. There's plenty of Bramble along the base of the river bluff, which will be well worth searching.

Hi David. I'll be giving it a go, but I suspect that locating any larval webs amongst the huge quantity of inaccessible Wych Elm on site will prove challenging. If Dukes finish early this year there should be a quiet week when I can spend a day or two looking.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 13-Apr-17 07:17 AM GMT

It would seem that you have some tough decisions ahead if the LT emerges at the same time as His Majesty!. Seriously, we have always been told that the Large Tortoiseshell is extinct in the UK, but the odd one or two are found in most years, suggesting that like His Majesty, they are elusive and unlikely to be found unless sought out. The loss of our Elms will not have helped their survival.

Best wishes,  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 14-Apr-17 12:04 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Hi David. I'll be giving it a go, but I suspect that locating any larval webs amongst the huge quantity of inaccessible Wych Elm on site will prove challenging. If Dukes finish early this year there should be a quiet week when I can spend a day or two looking.

I sincerely hope you get this quiet week, Neil. I'm sure if anyone can find these larval webs then it is you. If we get continued warm weather then Dukes may well finish earlier than normal, giving you that very window.

Please keep us updated on events. This development is highly notable and one that I hope will be sustained.

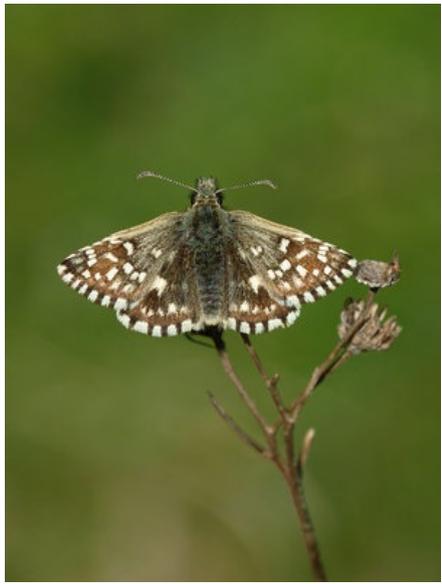
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Apr-17 07:47 AM GMT

### Mill Hill, Shoreham

Having spent much of the day (18 April) at our Park Corner Heath reserve (it's looking absolutely stunning), I stopped off at Mill Hill on the way home. Here, I enjoyed the spectacle of Grizzled Skippers going to roost. This species is clearly enjoying a good start to its season, with about a dozen individuals seen, including the first females. Other species included Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Holly Blue, Wall (female), Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White, Large White, Brimstone, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. Not bad for mid April!





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-17 07:54 AM GMT

Great shots there Neil especially the Batman pose 😊 Good to see Grizzlies are doing well somewhere as here they've barely begun – there's been only a single one reported so far in Wiltshire 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 19-Apr-17 09:43 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Your time will come! A string of cold nights has put the brakes on for early spring species, which isn't such a bad thing. We need a bit of rain soon though, as some larval foodplants will start raising objections before too long.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-17 07:25 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, the Grizzled Skip is on my list for this year. Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 19-Apr-17 08:24 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Thanks, Wurzel. Your time will come! A string of cold nights has put the brakes on for early spring species, which isn't such a bad thing. We need a bit of rain soon though, as some larval foodplants will start raising objections before too long.  
BWs, Neil

I've commented on the lack of recent rain in my PD a few times recently. Some of my regular sites look parched as if it were high summer and on both trips to Denbies Hillside this year I've seen half grown Burnet Moth larvae wandering around on paths. If it carries on like this I can see species like Chalkhills having a tough season!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 23-Apr-17 11:56 PM GMT

I too have noticed things drying up even in south Wales. Let's hope a happy balance can be re-established. A couple of days rain would work wonders, so long as it was followed by mild, sunny conditions, although by all accounts we're about to step into a very cold period.

By the way, Neil, any news on the book? Surely publication is almost imminent?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 24-Apr-17 07:12 AM GMT

Hi David,

I'm guessing that the book should be ready very soon now (perhaps 7 - 10 days?). To be honest, I haven't pursued any news of progress, as I've done my best to forget - I'm still suffering from the insomnia it caused! At least I've shed the two stone I put on while writing my part. I'll post any news as soon as I hear.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 24-Apr-17 07:21 AM GMT

### Sussex Dukes

An afternoon visit (23 April) to Murray Downland Trust's fabulous Heyshott Escarpment reserve was conducted under almost complete cloud cover, with only a couple of five minute bursts of sunshine being just sufficient to encourage a couple of Duke of Burgundy to open their wings. No other species of butterfly were seen, but I still managed to locate 18 Dukes at rest on low scrub, including two mating pairs. I suspect that they've been out for a while here, as St Mark's Fly was everywhere, and the emergence of this species is closely coordinated with the appearance of the first Dukes.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 25-Apr-17 08:06 AM GMT

Pearl-bordered Fritillary is now flying at Rewell Wood, so the *Fritillaries for the Future* walks on 6 and 7 May <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk>

[/events/](#) should catch them at peak. Six males were seen over three areas, including along the public right of way running W-E in the south of the wood, where volunteers have cut scallops into the Sweet Chestnut coppice. Please do not drive through the gate (from the A27) unless you are attending the organised events, as there is a very high risk of being locked in for the night.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Apr-17 08:45 PM GMT

### Stunning Springhead

I only had time for a short visit to Springhead (a.k.a. Kithurst) Hill this morning, and wasn't optimistic given the very low temperature, but this flagship site (managed by SDNPA, WSCC and BC Sussex) seldom fails to delight. It's looking in great condition but, as always, it's preferable to keep to the well-worn paths. With only 9°C showing on the car thermometer, I was surprised that two Duke of Burgundy, two Dingy Skipper and an Orange-tip were doing their best to get on with life. I found one Duke snoozing on a Cowslip, and a little sunshine was sufficient to make him open his wings. The efforts of our conservation partners here are much appreciated.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 28-Apr-17 12:22 PM GMT

Thanks for the update regarding the book launch, Neil. I'm very much looking forward to seeing it.

Your Dukes & Pearls are, as ever, to die for!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-17 06:30 PM GMT

Thanks David. I've been told that the book is currently being bound and will be delivered to the publisher during the first week of May. It will then depend on how fast the elves can get them in the post.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 30-Apr-17 06:41 PM GMT

### Pearls, Orchids And Sleeping Butterflies

Recent visits to Rewell Wood (28 and 29 April) suggest that the Pearl-bordered Fritillary is having a better season here than it has for a few years, with about ten males already patrolling over the volunteer-cut scallops along the W-E ride north of the sawmill. We will be visiting other (private) areas of the wood during my *Fritillaries for the Future* guided walks next Saturday and Sunday (6 and 7 May). The first females are now out and I watched the first pairing I've seen this year.

I then headed to Beeding to photograph some Green-winged Orchids, before meeting Dan Danahar at Mill Hill, to help find some roosting Grizzled Skippers for one of his video epics. By now everything was asleep, but a careful search of the scrub revealed five snoozing Grizzles, two dozing Dingys, three sleepy Small Heaths and a comatose Brown Argus (which may be a national first for the year).









**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 01-May-17 09:22 AM GMT

Good to hear the promising news on the PBF front, Neil.

If the weather forecast is right, they could be in for a largely dry and mild flight season, which would go some way to boosting all the efforts you and others have made over the past few months.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 04-May-17 10:35 PM GMT

**Pearls Aplenty**

Pearl-bordered Fritillaries numbers have built nicely prior to the four *Fritillaries for the Future* walks this weekend (Sat & Sun, am & pm) at Rewell Wood. The females are now appearing in reasonable numbers and egg-laying is underway. The highest concentration of adults is flying over the scallops hand-cut by South Downs Volunteer Rangers and BC Sussex, proving the immense value of the work done by those who give their time so generously every winter. Don't be put off by the lack of sunshine forecast – even if 'they' are correct, we'll still sniff a few out. Good numbers of woodland Grizzled Skippers also seen today.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-17 11:24 PM GMT

Some lovely PBF images here,Neil. Good luck at the weekend. I don't think the weather is looking too bad, to be honest, though perhaps I shouldn't have said that!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 05-May-17 08:59 AM GMT

Some great Pearls there Neil, and some especially chubby looking females – I hope they're as fecund as they seem 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 05-May-17 12:36 PM GMT

Looks like you may have opportune conditions this weekend, Neil. Mid-teens temperatures, light winds, sometimes overcast, othertimes sunny. That's probably better than 23c and clear blue skies with this hyperactive species.

Good luck and I hope it goes well.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 05-May-17 07:58 PM GMT

Lovely Pearls Neill, 🍷 can you send some to Gait Barrow please Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-May-17 08:12 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Mark: I've been enjoying your Cornwall reports. I've been to the Cadgwith Fish Festival before – a great event if you ever have the chance to get along. I'll be down that way in mid August.

Wurzel: Fecund she was – pumping out eggs at quite a rate.

David: I always remember the 'fives Ps' before running my walks – I went down earlier this evening to locate and mark the position of six 'roosters', just in case of poor weather.

Goldie: I'll send them north once their work here is done.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 05-May-17 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. If you do go to Cornwall in August, be sure to check out the second generation SPBF. Kynance Cove and Hayle/ Gwithian Towans are good sites.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 05-May-17 09:05 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

A lovely selection of PBF images.

I have your new book on pre-order and saw a tweet this afternoon that Naturebureau now have them...looking forward very much to reading it.

[quote] I always remember the 'fives Ps' before running my walks ,

five Ps?...I was taught six Ps 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 05-May-17 09:59 PM GMT

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

I always remember the 'fives Ps' before running my walks – I went down earlier this evening to locate and mark the position of six 'roosters', just in case of poor weather.

I wouldn't expect any less of you, Neil. However, I don't think you'll need the 'Ps' as conditions look to be okay for the weekend.

Will look forward to the book arriving soon. 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Buchan Boy, 08-May-17 09:34 PM GMT

Hey Neil,

Massive congratulations on the book, received my copies today, just what Sussex and its beautiful Butterflies deserve.

Just superb. Brilliant effort all round.

Thanks

Dave

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-May-17 09:41 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Neil: I fully recognise and adhere strictly to the six Ps, but this is a family website! 😊

Dave (and all those who have posted in the 'The Butterflies of Sussex' thread): Many thanks for all your kind comments – the pain is easing by the minute.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-May-17 09:48 PM GMT

### *Fritillaries For The Future At Rewell Wood*

Over the four *Fritillaries for the Future* walks held at Rewell Wood over the weekend, a total of 46 participants got to see the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and many saw other species including Grizzled Skipper and Small Copper. It was great to catch up with some old friends and to make some new acquaintances, with some travelling from as far afield as Essex and Hampshire.

Conditions were at times challenging, particularly during the Sunday morning session, which was conducted under leaden skies and low temperatures. It's never taken me so long to find a roosting Pearl and I was beginning to contemplate the unthinkable when a Sweet Chestnut bud finally morphed into a fritillary. The cloud later thinned for just long enough to rouse a couple more, including an immaculate female.

Other walks were more productive and by Sunday afternoon many were flying under the clear blue skies. Thanks, as always, to the Norfolk Estate for granting access for these events, and for their generous support of the conservation work here. I'm also grateful to the South Downs National Park Authority and affiliated Volunteer Ranger Service; there would be far fewer fritillaries flying without their vital input. Same time, same place, next year.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 08-May-17 11:07 PM GMT

That roosting Pearl was definitely worth the effort Neil, cracking 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 08-May-17 11:14 PM GMT

Good to see you out and about enjoying some results of all your hard work you and your team have put in over the past 12 months or so, makes it all worthwhile 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 09-May-17 08:14 AM GMT

Sounds like a great event in spite of the challenging conditions, Neil. Well done to all those who put the hard graft in.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Lee Hurrell, 09-May-17 08:14 AM GMT

Lovely to catch up with you over the weekend, Neil and thanks again. The Pearls were stunning and it was a great afternoon in great company. Here's to the Fritillaries of the Future 😊

Thank you also, and massive congratulations on the Atlas, which arrived yesterday, on my birthday. It's almost as if it was planned! It looks stunning and I'm looking forward to reading it.

Best wishes,

Lee

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 11-May-17 11:26 PM GMT

Just a quick note to congratulate you on the book, Neil. It arrived yesterday and I've currently only read up to page 29, but I have flicked through the entire tome and it looks absolutely stunning.

A first class effort and credit to everyone involved.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-17 08:15 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Much appreciated. Fortunately, it looks as if the smaller fritillaries of Sussex are starting to show their appreciation. Some good news to come shortly, and I suspect some even better news to tell by midsummer.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-May-17 09:02 PM GMT

## News In Brief

My *Fritillaries for the Future* project and Duke of Burgundy monitoring are keeping me very busy at the moment, so here are just a few recent highlights.

The very small but ever-productive site at Springhead Hill is again punching well above its weight, with up to a dozen Duke of Burgundy seen during short visits, including several mating pairs. On 8 May I photographed my first common Blue of the year, posing beautifully in overcast weather.



On 9 May I travelled to the New Forest, to make a short promotional film on BC's work to help the Pearl-bordered Fritillary here. While walking towards the meeting place I came across a lovely couple, with ID guide and binoculars in hand. As I was wearing a BC sweatshirt they enquired "excuse me, is this a Pearl-bordered Fritillary?" It was – and it made the day for all three of us. I'm pleased to report that I later saw a great many more.



I counted 28 Duke of Burgundy at Heyshott Escarpment the following day, which was a slightly disappointing count for this site. Hopefully the numbers will build significantly during the next week. Several females were out egg-laying, but the Cowslips would certainly benefit from a little more rain.



On 11 May I visited Rewell Wood, where the scallops cut by volunteers over the winter are out-performing the much larger, commercially-cut coppice coupes. Females are still emerging in good numbers and I found a mating pair quite late in the day.



Tomorrow, Saturday 13 May, I'll be leading a walk around Stansted Forest, right on the West Sussex/Hants border. I'm pleased to report that a re-introduction of Pearl-bordered Fritillary, conducted as part of the *Fritillaries for the Future* project, and in compliance with the 'BC Code on Introductions and Re-introductions 2010', has started well. UKB's Andy Brown was the first to spot the progeny of the adults I released here last spring, on 25 April. Although it is still early days, and the monitoring results in spring 2018 will decide the issue, I have seen sufficient to remain optimistic of success.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 12-May-17 10:41 PM GMT

That's great news Neil on many fronts 😊 Long may it continue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 13-May-17 12:26 AM GMT

Wonderful image of the mating PBF pair, Neil. Usually, I can separate male from female in these images, but on this occasion I'm not at all sure.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 13-May-17 11:51 AM GMT

Those are cracking shots Neil, I hope every thing goes well with the Pearls in the future. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-May-17 11:24 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

David: There are a couple of clues in that image. The lower butterfly is older (it's lost its fringe hairs), and as the females are grabbed almost immediately after emerging, this suggests that the male is below. Also, if you look at the eyes, the lower butterfly has the larger set – a clear indication of sex. Mate location in PBF is largely visual.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-May-17 11:28 PM GMT

#### Foxy Moths

Despite seeing 33 Duke of Burgundy, more than 20 Grizzled Skipper and at least a dozen Brown Argus today (14 May), the show-stopper was this stunning pair of Fox Moths, discovered during a late afternoon visit to the northern part of Rewell Wood. About half-a-dozen males were also belting around the ride system in their search for females. I also saw 5 Drab Looper flying over stands of Wood Spurge.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 16-May-17 09:24 PM GMT

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

David: There are a couple of clues in that image. The lower butterfly is older (it's lost its fringe hairs), and as the females are grabbed almost immediately after emerging, this suggests that the male is below. Also, if you look at the eyes, the lower butterfly has the larger set – a clear indication of sex. Mate location in PBF is largely visual.

Fascinating, Neil. Yes, I see what you mean regarding the fringe hairs but I had no idea about the eye size being a factor.

Nice image of the Fox moths too. Not sure if I've ever seen those before.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-May-17 09:04 AM GMT

#### Dukes And Old Hags

On Tuesday (16 May) I met Mark Avery for a walk over the slopes of Heyshott Escarpment, to talk about the conservation of Duke of Burgundy in Sussex and publication of *The Butterflies of Sussex*. Despite the marginal weather conditions we saw about a dozen Dukes and a supporting cast of Green Hairstreak, Dingy Skipper, Small Heath, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Brimstone, Large White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Red Admiral, Peacock and Speckled Wood. We also looked at some of the site's more impressive orchids, including Fly, Greater Butterfly and White Helleborine.



In the afternoon I headed over to the Downs around Storrington, to look at a few Duke of Burgundy colonies. The cold snap early this spring has undoubtedly strung-out the emergence of many species, including the Duke, which is still probably a week to ten days from peak on some sites. I suspect it will still be flying in late June this year. I saw a few freshly emerged Mother Shipton moths on my travels – always a pleasure to see 'the old hag'.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-May-17 08:15 PM GMT

### Mill Hill Blues

As reported on the BC Sussex website by others, Adonis Blue numbers are impressive at Mill Hill this spring. During a fleeting visit this morning, the lower slopes were peppered with these jewels and I rapidly located six mating pairs within a 50 metre stretch.

It was good to catch up with Mark Bunch from Essex (thanks for your kind comments about the atlas) and to show North Yorkshire 'Dukes man' Robert Parks his first Adonis for many years. The spectacle of numerous male Adonis and Common Blues in good condition won't last long, so the site is well worth a visit in the next week. At one point I had three Painted Ladies in sight, so it does appear that we might be seeing the start of an influx.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-May-17 07:39 AM GMT

#### Mark Avery's Blog

A very generous piece on the Dukes of Heyshott on Mark Avery's blog here <http://markavery.info/2017/05/18/dukes/>.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-May-17 08:51 PM GMT

#### Wet Springhead

Despite challenging conditions at Springhead Hill today (18 May), with the weather initially showing promise before collapsing into torrential rain, Robert Parks (on loan from N. Yorks.) and I managed to winkle out 7 Dukes, including a rather tatty ab. *albomaculata*, and a few Small Blue, Common Blue, Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak. Amongst the mainly faded Dingy Skippers was an immaculate, recently hatched male. Now that we've had the much needed rain, please can we have the sun back.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 18-May-17 10:26 PM GMT

That really is a neat Dingy Neil, I don't think I've ever seen one with such a clear demarkation between the brown background and the 'carpet' markings, a really lovely individual 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-17 11:12 PM GMT

Great to see you yesterday, Neil. I wasn't sure whether to risk a visit from Essex, with the weather only just suitable, but Mill Hill turned out to be a yellow and blue paradise!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 19-May-17 05:33 PM GMT

Thanks for the link, Neil. That looks a likely butterfly haunt if ever I saw one! Love the Dingy too. Now and again you come across one that has clear, bright silver set against a dusky brown background. These are so much prettier than the rapidly fading specimens that usually make up most of the numbers.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 20-May-17 07:44 AM GMT

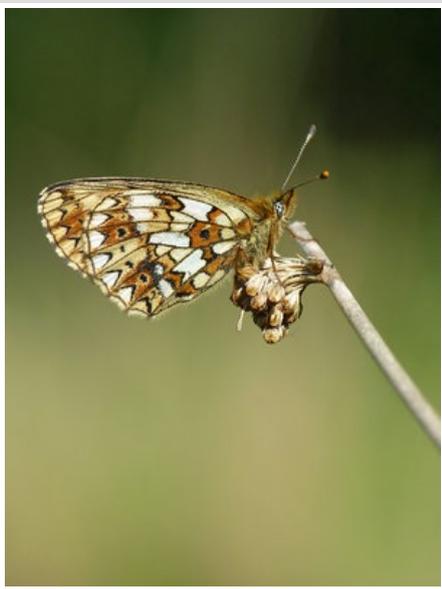
### Busman's Holiday

Having recently become reacquainted with the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries of the New Forest, through my work for Butterfly Conservation, I returned (19 May) to look in more detail at some of the great work being conducted here by BC and the Forestry Commission. This busman's holiday was very much a 'trip down memory lane', as the previous visit had rekindled happy memories in search of New Forest butterflies with my father, 45 years ago.



I then moved on to Bentley Wood Eastern Clearing in the hope, rather than expectation, of seeing Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. It was encouraging to find both a male and female, and from their interactive behaviour it was clear that these two had already got to know each other rather well.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 20-May-17 12:19 PM GMT

Excellant to see the SPBF are still there after last year's worries. I wonder if these are the offspring of last year's pairing we saw 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 20-May-17 03:31 PM GMT

Let's hope SPBF numbers pick up , both naturally and with a helping hand.  
I've not seen one since 2012. Enviaible shots too.

Best wishes,  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by PhilBJohnson, 29-May-17 04:53 AM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Thanks, all, for your comments.

I do have to be a little cautious about discussing issues such as the specifics of site management in areas outside my remit, or expressing views on complex and debatable themes such as genetic mixing, as I need to ensure that my personal views, and those of Butterfly Conservation, cannot be confused. Always happy to discuss on a one-to-one basis, but while I'm an employee I need to use social media carefully.

Hi Neil,

Being a lower profile member of Butterfly Conservation, I don't have a big problem in expressing my views publicly.

I went for a guided walk around Chambers Farm Wood in Lincolnshire recently led by a team member of the Forestry Commission who seemed concerned about a recent appearance of the Purple Emperor there.

In the past I think commercial forestry has had a tendency to overlook or not fully understand the importance of the Spring Flowering ground flora, some of which our vulnerable UK species depend on.

One of concerns in Chambers Farm Wood is the use of Lawson Cypress. It is the Commercially grown hybrids I particularly have a problem with as they offer such little habitat value other than the evergreen, light blocking dense foliage properties that might help a few species in preference to others. I don't agree with everything which was said about that tree on Wikipedia (including it reaching a height of 60 meters or metres 😊).

Using Course Fishing as an example, generations of *Cyprinus carpio* (Common Carp) have been selected so that the fastest growing heaviest individuals are bred to pass on that trait to a future generation.

I see no reason why butterflies cannot be scientifically bred so that the strongest flying individuals pass on that characteristic to a future generation within a species group where that has been a big problem in relatively recent history.

Kind Regards,

Philip

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-May-17 06:11 PM GMT

Hi Philip,

Thanks for your thoughts. I can't really comment on Chambers Farm Wood, as I don't know the site.

The genetics issue would require a full-blown essay to even scratch the surface!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-May-17 06:54 PM GMT

#### Late May Catch-Up

Things have been so frenetic recently, as my BC (Heritage Lottery Fund-supported) *Fritillaries for the Future* project reaches its most important few weeks, that I haven't had time to post much. There's some very exciting news to come, when the dust settles.

An overcast and wet day has allowed me a little time to look back over the late May period. Pearl-bordered Fritillary has had a much better year in Sussex, particularly at Abbot's Wood. Although peak counts never exceeded 60, due to the protracted emergence resulting from the cold spell we experienced, the species is still flying in good numbers nearly six weeks after the first emergence. Amongst them was a heavily marked ab. *transversa*.



On 23 May I led a group from the Arun to Adur Farmer's Group on a tour of the Downs near Storrington, to discuss management for the Duke of Burgundy. This species has had a much more modest season after last year's fireworks, but still did quite well on most sites. The big disappointment was Heyshott Escarpment, where numbers crashed. The culprits were the large numbers of crows which ripped the moss beds to shreds over the winter, clearly focussing on searching-out overwintering pupae. Other species were also affected badly here. While the butterflies were having a hard time, the fabulous Heyshott orchids provided some compensation, including a beautiful Fly Orchid var. *ochroleuca*.



On 25 May we held the book launch for 'The Butterflies of Sussex' at Brighton & Hove's wonderful Booth Museum of Natural History (image by Nick Linzasoro). We were honoured by the attendance of over 100 guests, including Mark Avery <http://markavery.info/blog/> and Sir Charlie and Lady Issy Burrell from the Knepp Castle Estate and its Wildland Project <https://www.kneppsafaris.co.uk/>. Unfortunately, Matthew Oates couldn't attend, as he was getting his knee fixed, hopefully with sufficient time to recover ahead of the Purple Emperor season – which may come early this year.



The sunshine should return tomorrow, and the work on reinstating fritillaries to Sussex will be back in full swing.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 29-May-17 10:32 PM GMT

Cracking shots as ever Neil, hopefully the Duke will bounce back next year 😊 Thanks also for the heads up about His Nibbs possibly making an earlier entrance this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Jun-17 10:09 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. I reckon HIM will be out well before the longest day, possibly mid June.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Jun-17 10:13 PM GMT

#### Start Of Summer

Today (1 June) I performed my first butterfly survey of the year on the Knepp Castle Estate Wildland. I always consider my first Meadow Brown of the season to mark the official start of summer, and half-a-dozen were seen flopping around the meadows and hedgerows. Other species included Large Skipper, Large White, Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell (early summer brood), Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Small Heath, Speckled Wood, Small Copper, Holly Blue and Common Blue. Also seen were a good number of Beautiful Demoiselles.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-17 11:19 PM GMT

The blue triangles really stand out on that Small Tort Neil 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 02-Jun-17 10:49 PM GMT

Good to see the new brood of Torties emerging, Neil. Looks like we're a little ahead of the game in the UK at the moment.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

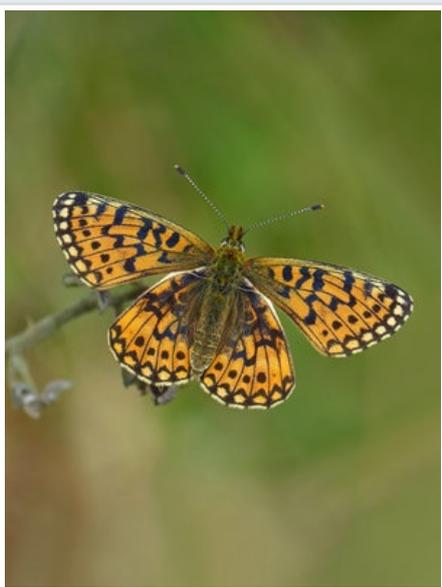
by Neil Hulme, 05-Jun-17 08:13 AM GMT

**Bentley Revival**

Bearing in mind the very low ebb that Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary had slumped to at Bentley Wood Eastern Clearing last year, I had been encouraged by my sighting of both male and female butterflies way back on 19 May.

A follow-up visit on Saturday 3 June gave cause for greater optimism, as the majority of the seven individual males and two females I saw were in excellent condition and had clearly emerged over the previous day or two.

As others have observed, there is a period at the start of the SPBF flight season during which nectar sources are quite restricted (Bugle is usually 'going over' by this time), but this species is quite mobile and there are stands of Wood Spurge to supplement the Ragged-robin which tends to grow in the more central parts of the breeding area. However, the Bramble which is now flowering will be more than sufficient to service the needs of particularly the females, through the second half of the species' flight season.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 05-Jun-17 10:27 AM GMT

Good to see a pair of SPBF in the midst of providing offspring for next season.

Of course any found in East Sussex next year will be cause for celebration, as they will have made it on their own.

Exciting times ahead ( and in a few weeks time ! ).  
Trevor.

PS. There's still time to rebuild your JCB.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jun-17 05:29 PM GMT

### Farewell To The Duke

Yesterday (5 June) I paid my annual visit to watch another Duke of Burgundy season slip away. Having taken so many photographs over the years, these are now the only occasions when I point my camera at anything other than pristine individuals, but the resultant images tell a story. A search over a wide area of the Downs near Storrington revealed a total of just four males. In a traditional display of defiance these bleached and ragged fragments of butterflies were dutifully beating the living daylights out of freshly emerged Large Skippers. The Sussex Duke had a rather average season in 2017, and far inferior to its 2016 *annus mirabilis*.

I later headed to a site near Madehurst, where I photographed my first Frog and white-form Bee Orchids of the year. I hope there will be more to come over the next few weeks.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Allan.W., 06-Jun-17 06:20 PM GMT

Hello Neil.

Stunning White Bee orchids there Neil ! ,never seen those before ,was lucky enough to find around 30(normal Bee,s) ,on an arable field edge last weekend , made my morning ! Regards Allan.W.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-17 10:05 PM GMT

Good to hear that the Dukes are still slugging it out with anything that moves fiesty little buggers 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 07-Jun-17 10:43 PM GMT

This is a time of year I recognise....that moment when you lament the passing of the Duke of Burgundy, Neil.

Yes, it's all but over for another year, but I doubt if there are many (perhaps any) who are contributing so positively to its future prospects than you are.

Like the annual demise of the Orange Tip, it is a bittersweet moment...but it will be back to delight us all next spring. 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 08-Jun-17 08:04 AM GMT

Thanks, all; particularly for your kind words, David.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 08-Jun-17 08:09 AM GMT

**Caterpillar Hunt**

A visit to Springhead Hill yesterday (7 June) confirmed that we are firmly in the 'June Gap', when spring species have either disappeared or are on the wane, but the delights of summer are yet to appear in force; a good time to go hunting for caterpillars.

I soon located a medium sized Emperor Moth on Bramble, a small Vapourer Moth on Dogwood, and a very large number of Brimstone larvae on Purging Buckthorn.



I later moved on to Abbot's Wood, where FC Ranger Stuart Sutton had located a male Silver-washed Fritillary. 7 June is the earliest I have ever seen this species.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 11-Jun-17 10:32 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

I later moved on to Abbot's Wood, where FC Ranger Stuart Sutton had located a male Silver-washed Fritillary. 7 June is the earliest I have ever seen this species.



Dark Greens are barely out yet.....and I have today heard the first High Browns have only just been spotted on the Welsh site, so SWF is quite a shock!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 12-Jun-17 09:11 PM GMT

***Fritillaries for the Future Update - Job Done!***

Firstly, I would like to reiterate my thanks - see report <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/news/#50> - to the dedicated captive-breeding team of volunteers Theresa Lux and Gary Norman, working under the guidance of Mike Mullis. After a long journey, during which many setbacks were suffered and overcome, yesterday (11 June) saw the successful completion of the first part of a programme to reinstate the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) to Sussex.

More than 400 SPBF have been released, as either final instar larvae or adults, into carefully prepared habitat networks at both the BC reserves in Sussex (Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood) and FC Abbot's Wood. These reintroductions form part of a strategic, landscape-scale project targeting sites where sustainable management plans are in place.

I would like to thank our members for heeding the request for restraint in pursuing the butterflies too enthusiastically in this first season, and for allowing them to go about their business unhindered.

On 26 May an event was held to celebrate the project, attended by former reserve managers and volunteers who had served 'above and beyond the call of duty' in the past. Needless to say, this was a very happy day that put smiles on many faces. I feel that we have done everything possible to resurrect the fortunes of this species in Sussex, but only time will be the judge.



Male



Female



Pairing



ab. *transversa* + ab. *consuta*



Theresa and Gary at work



Release event



Communal roost

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 12-Jun-17 10:07 PM GMT

Congratulations one and all 😊! What's next then, project *polychloros* 😊?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-17 10:08 PM GMT

Fantastic work Neil and all other involved 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Andy Wilson, 13-Jun-17 12:02 AM GMT

I've had the pleasure of observing and photographing Small Pearls at both Park Corner Heath and Abbots Wood in the last couple of weeks. Thank you Neil and all the team for the fantastic job you have done. It looks like it's been a reasonably good flight period for them, so I sincerely hope they have done what comes naturally and "gone forth and multiplied" for next year. With luck, I'll be back and so will they!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 13-Jun-17 06:54 AM GMT

Well done to Neil and the team. Terrific effort and good to see that the SPbF is doing well. One day I will get down there and see for myself 😊

ATB

Peter

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 13-Jun-17 11:24 PM GMT

Excellent work, Neil. You and your team have worked wonders and it's so satisfying to see the butterflies repaying you...including that unusual ab.!



I now fully expect you to move on to Emperor-related activities! 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jun-17 10:28 PM GMT

Thanks, all. We've given them every possible chance. I'm very happy with the way things have gone, but it's up to Mother Nature now. BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Jun-17 10:34 PM GMT

#### BC Reserves, White-letters And Emperors

On Wednesday (14 June) I spent the morning looking around our Park Corner Heath and Rowland Wood reserves with Dr Dan Hoare. We were there to look at Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary breeding habitat, but also saw 6 Silver-washed Fritillary, 2 White Admiral and a Dark Green Fritillary.

In the afternoon we visited Littlehampton Golf Course, where Dan showed why he's BC's Head of Regions by finding a White-letter Hairstreak pupa on an English Elm. This only took 10 minutes, so he's now retired on an average find-rate of one White-letter Hairstreak pupa every 10 minutes. Adults started emerging here on 13 June, when I recorded just one. When I arrived this afternoon Colin Knight had kindly lined one up for me. The main course is still a few days away yet.

Other news from the front line – Matthew Oates today (15 June) saw the first 3 Purple Emperor of the Sussex season at Knepp. Expect more.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-17 08:25 PM GMT

Fantastic Whitter shot Neil 😊🇬🇧 I might need to check Bentely for them next week...hopefully there might be some Purps about too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 16-Jun-17 10:39 PM GMT

Congratulations on the SPBF re-introduction, Neil. My experience in Cornwall suggests they require cooler, damper conditions than PBF, hopefully the right habitat can be maintained. Good luck and well done.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-17 11:00 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel and Mark.

In this heat I think you can now expect to see Purple and White-letter Hairstreaks anywhere that they occur in our region. Summer is coming in a rush. You're right Mark - I think SPBF will only be able to survive in the more humid and lush woodland habitats of the South East in the 21st century. BWS, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jun-17 11:33 PM GMT

### Daneway Banks 2017

With the Purple Emperor season running ahead of schedule, I thought it wise to get my Large Blue 'fix' in early this year, although I suspect I'll be back for another go in the company of my father.

The weather forecast looked cloudier for Daneway Banks than Collard Hill today (16 July), so I chose the former, as warm Large Blues don't sit still. Daneway Banks is a later site (females are yet to emerge), and numbers are still quite low, but the few males flying did pose nicely this morning.

It was great to meet up with both familiar and new faces involved in monitoring and protecting this species from harm, and to drink-in some of the magic of this beautiful site. As always, with such an inviting hostelry so close-by, I left rather later than planned.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by peterc, 17-Jun-17 09:04 AM GMT

Fantastic images, Neil.

I bet you would love to have the Large Blue in your neck of the woods – is it possible or feasible to introduce it in Sussex? The larval foodplant, Wild Thyme, as you no doubt know, grows in the county but I know it is a lot more complicated than that.

ATB

Peter

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 18-Jun-17 08:36 PM GMT

I read your post first thing on Saturday morning, Neil, and I worried that I'd possibly not see any Large Blues at all on my own trip to Daneway. Fortunately, there were a few about, including a mating pair, but I definitely agree that cooler, cloudier conditions are preferable if one wishes to take open wing shots of this species.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-17 10:34 PM GMT

Greta images Neil 😊 When I visited Daneways last year the cloud, and mizzle certainly helped me get the shots. Thanks for the info about Daneways being a 'later site' I was wondering why the reports were almost non-existent.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 19-Jun-17 10:39 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

I was wondering when we might see any potential Large Tortoiseshell down North Stoke way? What would your expert opinion be? I do have some spare time in the coming weeks... 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jun-17 11:05 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Peter: as you point out, re-introductions (or in this potential case, introductions) are "complicated" – very, if done properly, and even then success can never be guaranteed – the best plan is not to lose species in the first place. The benefit of hindsight! There is no (substantiated) historical evidence that Large Blue has ever occurred in Sussex, so our conservation priorities should lie elsewhere. However, we should celebrate what has been achieved by those who have worked so hard to reinstate this species in the West.

Bugboy: please go and have a look, soon. I'm desperately short of time at the moment, and would love to be looking, but it's up to you to cover yourself in glory. My gut feel is that you have a 60:40 chance of success. The circumstantial evidence is encouraging, but LT is a difficult species, and always has been.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jun-17 11:11 PM GMT

#### Hot Stuff At Knepp

It is still too early to judge how well Knepp will perform (for Purple Emperor) this season, not least because it's too damned hot. The intense heat is really suppressing activity (and the counts) and areas known to be well-populated can appear to be bereft of emperors for long periods, only to burst into life when a wisp of cloud takes the sting out of the sun, or as the evening cools.

Yesterday (18 June) I made a count of 32, including a respectable 20 on the green lane transect. One came down briefly to a fox scat. A remarkably early egg-laying female was also seen at close range.

I was absent this morning, but Andy Wilson photographed a pristine male on the deck, and saw several more perching low in the shallows. By the time I arrived, mid afternoon, things were very quiet. It was after 6pm before I finished the green lane transect, having seen just 11, plus 6 elsewhere. However, things started to liven up and as I searched different areas the total rose to an encouraging 36. They were still active at 7.30pm and attacking Purple Hairstreaks with typical enthusiasm. Just a single empress seen today.

Purple Hairstreak numbers have been low until today, but by 7pm they were forming bundles of up to half-a-dozen. In all, about 40 seen.

As the sun threw its magical evening light low across the oaks, and with the place to myself, I experienced Knepp at its best, to the soundtrack of Cuckoo, Turtle Dove and distant Longhorns. But it took a lot of patience today. Can we have a little light cloud please?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-17 03:08 PM GMT

I was thinking of going to Feryn Wood Neil, I went last year about 17th July will this be too late this year and should I go earlier do think.? Goldie 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 20-Jun-17 08:06 PM GMT

### Neil Hulme wrote:

Bugboy: please go and have a look, soon. I'm desperately short of time at the moment, and would love to be looking, but it's up to you to cover yourself in glory. My gut feel is that you have a 60:40 chance of success. The circumstantial evidence is encouraging, but LT is a difficult species, and always has been.

BWs, Neil

I'll give it a few days until this heat wave ends I think, there's not a great deal of shade there and I might well put myself in hospital if I wander the site for a few hours in the predicted 34 degrees tomorrow!

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-17 10:15 AM GMT

Hi Goldie – get ready to go to Fermyn when the weather next looks favourable.

Hi bugboy – go, go, go!

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 22-Jun-17 10:22 AM GMT

### Midsummer Madness As British Emperoring Record Tumbles

Exeter University student Harry Drew had never seen a Purple Emperor before arriving at Knepp, for what must inevitably become an unforgettable summer as a resident research volunteer.

I met Harry rather late in the morning, for an introduction to Knepp and its emperors, but wasn't expecting the fireworks we were about to experience. This was about to become a Midsummer Day I will never forget, and nor will he. I had already commented that this year's population size was hard to call, as the searing heat over previous days had clearly suppressed activity – but by how much?

Heat again subdued activity, but this time only between 3pm and 6pm, with the slight breeze preventing burn-out before this period of quiescence. Our meticulous and methodical count, between 10.30am and 8.00pm, of 148 individual Purple Emperors could thus have produced even more.

Of the 148, only 6 were female, and almost every butterfly appeared to be in excellent or good condition. We saw 6 or 7 different bundles of 4 males, and between 15 and 20 bundles of 3. Some oaks hosted clusters of 4 and 3 simultaneously – the air was at times thick with them.

The Knepp emperors are now coming to ground with increased regularity. We witnessed 3 groundings and I'm aware of another 3 on the day. We watched one 'rejection drop', with the disgruntled female being pursued by a couple of males. Chaffinch, Great Tit, Chiffchaff, Jay and large dragonflies were attacked.

As the light of the longest day began to soften, and the oak crowns became alive with twisting clouds of Purple Hairstreak, the emperors finally decided that they'd done enough to confirm that Knepp is now one of the most awe-inspiring parts of the great British countryside.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 22-Jun-17 11:50 AM GMT

148 Emperors 🤩 That sounds like an amazing amount 😊🍷 Harry had better be warned that it's not always like this...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 22-Jun-17 01:52 PM GMT

That's a truly staggering number, Neil. No wonder you haven't got the time to monitor potential Large Tortoiseshells.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 22-Jun-17 05:55 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Hi bugboy – go, go, go!  
BWs, Neil

I went, went, went! Best part of 4 hours produced good numbers of nettle feeding Nymphalids today but nothing that has a preference for Elm. Still early though and most of the Bramble is still to come into bloom so if any emerge in the coming weeks there'll be no shortage of nectar sources when

combined with all the Thistles.

Magnificent HIM results. I had at least 4 grounded at Bookham, with 2 landing on me, the other day which by Bookham standards is exceptional I think. It's looking like an exceptional year almost everywhere for them 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Andy Wilson, 22-Jun-17 06:14 PM GMT

I guess that was you I met at North Stoke, Bugboy, at about 4 pm. I was there only for an hour, and the weather had already started to cloud over and get cooler, so I gave up about half an hour later. I didn't see LT and the only nymphalids I saw were Small Torts, Commas and Red Admirals. Also plenty of Meadow Browns bumbling about, together with Ringlets.

Of course that doesn't say they are not there. I might be a poor observer or they are very shy. It's an extensive site, and most of it is inaccessible. More likely, IMHO, is that if there are any there, we are still maybe a week or so too early. There is a huge amount of bramble, but most of the flowers are not yet out (it seems to be a very good year for it). There are also many thistles, and soon the Hemp Agrimony will be out. Thus, plenty of nectar will soon be available for butterflies to feed up and hibernate.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Jun-17 10:34 PM GMT

### Fermyn Filming

On Thursday (22 June) afternoon I headed to Kettering, in readiness to film the Purple Emperor with Matthew Oates and the legendary John Craven. The weather throughout Friday was challenging, and at best borderline, but we managed to secure some of the best footage imaginable. This will be aired on Countryfile on Sunday 9 July. I won't be providing a 'spoiler', but it was an honour to meet one of my childhood heroes. John is every bit as genuine and personable as his appearances on TV over his long career suggest. Very few emperors descended that day, but they came down in the right place and at the right time.

Matthew and I stayed overnight, in the hope that the gloomy weather forecast for Saturday was pessimistic – it was. Strangely, Fermyn was very quiet and we never saw more than half-a-dozen butterflyers in Lady Wood all day. The cloud occasionally thinned and we even enjoyed a few sunny spells, but numbers initially appeared to be modest and the emperors were reluctant to come to ground. However, as local BC stalwart Andy Wyldes and I accompanied Matthew back to the Lady Wood junction (he had to leave early afternoon), Fermyn exploded into life. We saw a very conservative minimum of 50 emperors in the air, with two confirmed pairings, along just a 300 metre section of the eastern ride.

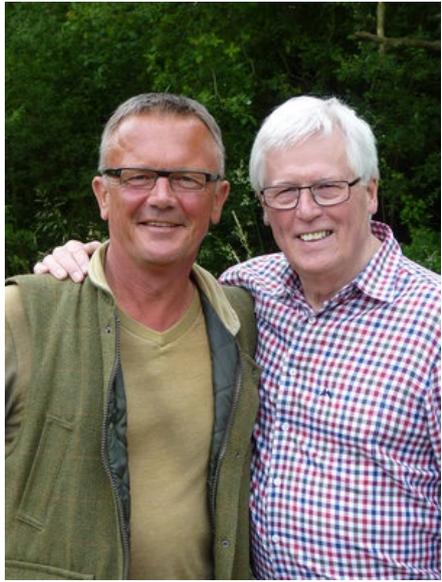
When Andy and I made the return journey we saw very few! But then they suddenly started to drop and, as is often the case at Fermyn, it was difficult to know which one to point the camera at. After that, groundings became intermittent, but I was still finding one or two on the deck just before heading back home shortly after 6pm. I had several visit my boots (requiring considerable flexibility to achieve the selfie) and was thoroughly 'trousered'.

There were plenty of other butterflies on offer, including more White Admiral than I've seen there before, a few Silver-washed Fritillary and White-letter Hairstreak, the odd Black Hairstreak (Matthew photographed an egg-laying female), and a great many Comma. My advice: get there as soon as the better weather returns.









**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-17 11:25 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Neil 🍷 And meeting John Craven as well 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 26-Jun-17 12:59 PM GMT

You must have seen more Emperors over the past week than most of will see in our lifetime!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by peterc, 26-Jun-17 06:32 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

**Midsummer Madness As British Emperoring Record Tumbles**

Exeter University student Harry Drew had never seen a Purple Emperor before arriving at Knepp, for what must inevitably become an unforgettable summer as a resident research volunteer.

I met Harry rather late in the morning, for an introduction to Knepp and its emperors, but wasn't expecting the fireworks we were about to experience. This was about to become a Midsummer Day I will never forget, and nor will he. I had already commented that this year's population size was hard to call, as the searing heat over previous days had clearly suppressed activity – but by how much?

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BC Purple Emperor male 1, Knepp 21.6.17.jpg BC Purple Emperor male 2, Knepp 21.6.17.jpg BC Purple Emperor male 3, Knepp

21.6.17.jpgBC Purple Emperor male 4, Knepp 21.6.17.jpgBC Purple Emperor female 1, Knepp 21.6.17.jpgBC Purple Emperor female 2, Knepp 21.6.17.jpg

Fantastic images and what a spectacular day it must have been, Neil.

I noticed that the antennae of some of your Emperor shots are blue. Several photos of both Emperors that Bob (Clift) and I took on Wednesday also showed blue antennae which were quite striking in some cases. Is this unusual or is it the trick of the light?

I look forward to watching Countryfile on 9 July.

ATB

Peter

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 27-Jun-17 05:02 AM GMT

I hope they still have that episode of Countryfile when I return from France on 15th July. Forget Hall & Oates, how about Hulme & Oates, introduced by John Craven!! 😊

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-17 11:03 AM GMT

Hi Wurzel and David. It really was a pleasure to meet John and I'm sure this will make great TV. It should be available online when you get home, David. Hi bugboy – plenty more where they came from!

Hi Peter. The antennae do have a bluish sheen but, like the wings, it only shows in some light conditions. BWS, Neil

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jun-17 11:09 AM GMT

#### **Purple Paradise**

On Monday I joined Matthew Oates and Exeter University student Harry Drew, to monitor Purple Emperor and other butterfly numbers over the Knepp Castle Estate Wildland. This was another very thorough and widespread survey, extending over much of the Southern Block, starting at 9.00 am and continuing until the emperors finally stopped flying at 7.40 pm.

Using the 4x4 'mule' we were able to penetrate deep into the seldom-visited parts of the wilderness, to experience a grand finale of 'big sky' and spectacular sunset, as an already-mated empress spiralled to the ground, in an attempt to shake off her suitor. At times being at Knepp can really feel like being in Africa.

The hard-won tally for Harry and I reached 138 Purple Emperor, with Matthew seeing a very similar number, having taken a slightly different route at times. The species has reached peak but the numbers are so vast that the season will run for some weeks yet. Only 8 of those seen were females, several being on sap-runs. Activity was suppressed by heat for much of the day, but things became really lively after 6.00 pm. During our travels we also saw 3 Silver-washed Fritillary, 2 White Admiral, 2 White-letter Hairstreak and my first Gatekeeper of the year.

There has also been a huge emergence of Purple Hairstreak, which is best seen in the early and mid evening. We found 6 freshly emerged male hairstreaks on the ground during the morning, which seemed to be searching for moisture amongst the Fleabane and grasses. The numbers seen after 6.30 pm were simply phenomenal, with bundles of up to 15, and 20 – 30 seen simultaneously on some trees. Matthew commented that this was the best showing he has experienced since the long, hot summer of 1976. This is the year to look for this species.

One wonders just how good the Knepp Wildland can get. There is simply nowhere else quite like it.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by peterc, 27-Jun-17 12:45 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil, regarding my PE 'blue' antennae query.

ATB

Peter

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 27-Jun-17 05:43 PM GMT

What a coincidence, Doug Neve and myself photographed a lovely female Purple Hairstreak yesterday ( one of five seen low down ), and you found a male. A real treat for all concerned.

Superb image,  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 28-Jun-17 12:09 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Hi Wurzel and David. It really was a pleasure to meet John and I'm sure this will make great TV. It should be available online when you get home, David.

Thanks for the heads-up, Neil. I'll check it out when I get back.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-17 08:38 PM GMT

**Knepp Wildland Update**

The Purple Emperor safaris have run post-peak season this year, due to the exceptionally early emergence. However, numbers have still been very impressive, with 56 emperors seen on Saturday 1 July and 62 on Sunday 2 July. It was great to catch up with UKBer Susie on the second walk. Matthew Oates, Harry Drew and I continued our surveys into the evenings, adding a further 16 and 5 to these counts. There are still plenty flying ahead of the coming weekend, but the action is likely to tail-off during the following week.

The Purple Hairstreak has performed just as well as the Purple Emperor this year, with vast numbers observed particularly after 6.30pm. They have been unusually cooperative in dropping down into low vegetation, to either search for moisture or nectar on Bramble blossom. The first of this year's emperor eggs have been located and during our travels we've seen good numbers of Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Comma, Small and Essex Skipper, together with a few Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral and Small Copper. We've also spotted unusually early Peacock and second brood Holly Blue. Other highlights have included Elephant Hawk-moth and a very photogenic Roesel's Bush-cricket.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 08:57 PM GMT

The Purple Hairstreak pair of images is breathtaking, Neil, just exquisite. One day I shall spot one low down before I disturb it! 😊

Dave

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 04-Jul-17 09:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Dave. If it's any comfort (probably not!), I've fluffed a fair few myself this year. It's not too late to get a really good one this season, but this species really requires a dedicated, fully focused search, if the 'oops, oh \*\*\*\*!' scenario is to be avoided. Good luck.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 04-Jul-17 10:12 PM GMT

The Purple Hairstreaks this year have been astounding, never known a year when so many have been captured low down!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Janet Turnbull, 05-Jul-17 11:07 PM GMT

Your Purple Hairstreak picture is wonderful, Neil – it will be my ambition to get one anywhere near as good!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 05-Jul-17 11:21 PM GMT

Thanks, Janet. That's what keeps us coming back for more. Purple Hairstreak images are usually hard to come-by – but this is the year to get them. As the great Purple Emperor hunter, I.R.P. Heslop, once wrote: "To the woods, without breakfast!" – and that's what I'll be doing tomorrow! Good luck – perseverance always pays off in the end.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 06-Jul-17 07:13 AM GMT

**More From The Wildland**

The Purple Emperor is still going strong at Knepp, although hot and sunny mornings can be very slow now. Today followed this pattern, but by the time I'd bumped into John Woodward, of Steyning Downland Scheme <http://www.steyningdownland.org> fame, things were livening up. We got some fantastic views of His Imperial Majesty through John's telescope. I later met a couple I know through Steyning U3A, just in time to share a point-blank view of an empress dropping to the ground in an attempt to shake off an over-enthusiastic male; later repeated by another female in exactly the same spot. At one point I saw three females laying eggs in a sheltered sallow grove, and by the time they'd stopped flying I'd seen a total of 47 individuals.

The highpoint for me today was watching a pair of males doing almost non-stop battle over the pond beside the barn on the green lane. I was mesmerised for an hour, during which they were in combat flight for about 45 minutes. And I won't forget the White Admiral which I spent an hour photographing as it repeatedly perched within a metre of where I stood. I'll be back again as soon as possible to drink in more of Knepp's magic.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 06-Jul-17 12:22 PM GMT

I am in awe of your Purple Hairstreak images from Knepp.

Do you have any theories about their behaviour this year?. It's not just a localised event, eg. There have been sightings of them on low down vegetation from as far apart as East Blean, Fermyn, Knepp, Abbots Wood, and all places in between I shouldn't wonder.

All the best,  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 06-Jul-17 09:45 PM GMT

I too am envious of those purple hairstreak images, the only British species I've never got a good picture of!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 07-Jul-17 04:18 PM GMT

It must be something affecting UK Purple Hairstreaks only, because the ones here in France right now are buzzing around the canopy as per usual!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 09-Jul-17 06:39 PM GMT

Ah, the great year of 1976. Your reports Neil remind me very much of Bentley Wood that summer with Purple Hairstreaks actively seeking the shade on the ground and any patches of slightly moister soil..

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 10-Jul-17 12:55 PM GMT

Great PHS shots Neil, I hope they're still coming down at Fermyn and East Blean, ( I'll be there this week end ) 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

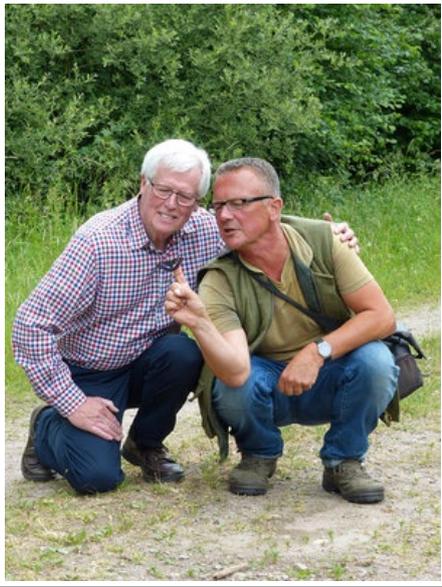
by bugboy, 10-Jul-17 01:28 PM GMT

Nice footage on Countryfile last night, good to see butterflies getting some prime time BBC1 action! 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jul-17 09:43 AM GMT

Thanks, all. The Countryfile piece on Purple Emperor is on BBC iPlayer <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b08y72pv/countryfile-northants> at 51.20 mins.



I think this season's great fall of Purple Hairstreak is due to several factors. Firstly, the population has exploded this year, with vast numbers being seen particularly in the evenings. They're usually quite tricky to spot in the middle of the day, when they are at their least active – but not this summer. The hot weather has also played a part, and many will have been driven down in the search for moisture. There's probably been a 'run' on honeydew too, with unusually large numbers seeking sustenance from Bramble and Creeping Thistle.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jul-17 12:49 PM GMT

The best part of 100 years later, Heslop and Co with their long Emperor nets are still being talked about.

Oates and Hulme with their Emperors' breakfast will I am sure be remembered in 2100.

Thanks for the fun chaps.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Pete Eeles, 11-Jul-17 02:50 PM GMT

A very nice piece ... hearing The Clash playing "White Riot" on a butterfly-related snippet was the highlight for me 😊

Cheers,

– Pete

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jul-17 04:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Jack and Pete. I managed to mention Iggy Pop during the filming, but that part didn't make the cut. Old punks never die (OK, a few have done just that) – in fact many are still playing! Off to see Penetration later in the year.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by peterc, 11-Jul-17 05:17 PM GMT

So you and Pete like the punk stuff? Not surprised if you were 13 or 14 years old at the time 😊 .

ATB

Peter

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 11-Jul-17 06:17 PM GMT

Thanks, Peter. A couple of years older than that, although I'm yet to fully mature. 😊  
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 11-Jul-17 06:31 PM GMT

Neil admits that he is ~~:[quote]~~yet to fully mature! I'm 22 years older than you Neil but I am nowhere near being mature yet. Not sure I want to be.

PS. I have just recorded some Elvis 🎵  
*But at least my car CDs don't include any Bing Crosby* 😊

Jack

## Re: Neil Hulme

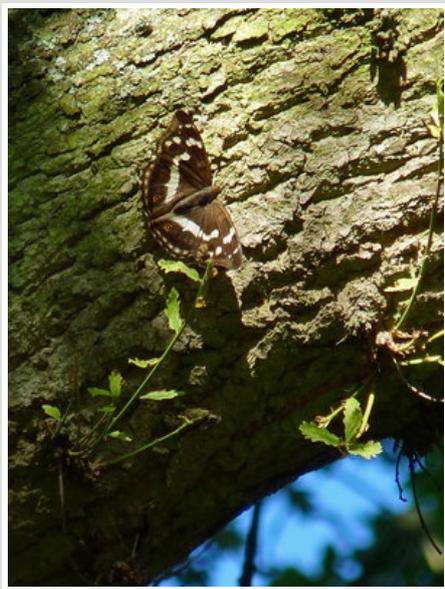
by Neil Hulme, 12-Jul-17 10:42 PM GMT

### Last Orders At Knepp

Sadly, tomorrow (13 July) is the last of this year's Knepp Purple Emperor safaris, and we're set to go out with a bang. Of the last three events, run on 6, 8 and 9 July, we only had to struggle on one, but still saw 16 individuals. On the other two walks we were blessed with emperors in abundance, attacking birds, dragonflies and other butterflies. Even today Matthew Oates recorded 24 individuals in just a couple of locations.

Much of the action is now centred on 'feeder trees', where the tippie of oak sap is causing violent brawls as closing time draws nearer. Up to half-a-dozen emperors (both male and female) are congregating around these trees, and some of the inebriated butterflies seem barely capable of level flight as they depart. Yesterday we watched a middle-aged couple meet on a sap bleed, before tumbling to the ground in a heap.

The emperors of Knepp may no longer be pristine and full of power and grace, but they're still entertaining the crowds and will do so for at least another week. A few are still coming down to meet the visitors, with one lucky chap enjoying a double-trousering today. It will soon be over for another year, so get there if you can.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 14-Jul-17 11:29 PM GMT

### Final Knepp Purple Emperor Safari 2017

The last Knepp Purple Emperor safari of the year was a great success, with a total of 26 individual emperors seen on Thursday afternoon. We were treated to a superb grand finale, when an already-mated female performed a spectacular rejection drop from a great height, with two amorous males spiralling down in pursuit. Several times she tumbled to the ground, only to rise up once more and repeat the process; the males sometimes take a while to get the message. We had some very good photographers with us and some amazing in-flight images were taken (to be posted here once forwarded). As always, His Imperial Majesty entertained the crowd, by chasing birds, rival emperors and Red Admirals.

There were plenty of other butterflies on show, including three species of hairstreak; Purple, White-letter and Brown. The Brown Hairstreaks (3) were in excellent condition and included a freshly emerged female. A male Essex Skipper was particularly obliging, allowing us a close-up look at the key identification features.

The 2017 Purple Emperor safaris have been a joy to lead; Matthew Oates and I will probably increase the number next year, as they seem to be getting more popular every season. Thank you to all those who came along; I hope you enjoyed it as much as we did.





Last image by David Hasell

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 16-Jul-17 12:53 AM GMT

Great to catch up on your breathless last couple of weeks, Neil. The Emperor may be on the wane but it looks like Brown Hairstreaks are set to take its place!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-17 09:28 AM GMT

Hi David  
You hit the nail on the head there!  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-17 06:29 PM GMT

#### Hairstreak Heaven

The Purple Emperor season may now be waning, but there are plenty of other reasons to visit the Knepp Wildland. The place is currently awash with hairstreaks and on Friday (14 July) I saw three species sitting within a couple of metres of each other. Purple Hairstreak numbers have fallen from peak but are still very high, while only a few, tatty White-lettered are still flying.

Most of the excitement is now being provided by the Brown Hairstreak, the males of which are dropping down to feed on Fleabane and Creeping Thistle. I suspect that this unusually co-operative behaviour is being driven by a shortage in the arboreal food-supply, caused by this long, hot summer. I joined a search team of Matthew Oates, Derek Longhurst (visiting from Australia) and Harry Drew to look for these beauties, with a combined total of 16 male Brownies being recorded at low level.

Many people were caught out by this year's unusually early Purple Emperor season; I would encourage Brown Hairstreak fans to head out next weekend.







## **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Jul-17 08:35 PM GMT

### **Butterfly Conservation Big #ButterflyCount**

18 people joined me for today's (16 July) BC Sussex walk to Eartham Wood, during which we performed a 15 minute count for the Big #ButterflyCount. That short period provided us with 10 species, including a female Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary.

It was pleasing to see so many White Admiral (c.17), reflecting the best season for this species since 2010. Other butterflies included Large Skipper, Brimstone, Large White, Green-veined White, Brown Argus, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Ringlet. One of our group also found a very nice full-grown Comma caterpillar. Given the generally overcast conditions, I think we did rather well.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-17 10:15 PM GMT

Fantastic set of Brownies Neil 😊 Looks like Shipton next week will be the place to be 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by PhilBJohnson, 17-Jul-17 10:10 AM GMT

"Willow Island"

Dear Neil,  
I hope those future experiments with Purple Emperor in "native Willow only woods" go well.

Kind Regards,

Philip

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 17-Jul-17 09:49 PM GMT

Wow! This is ridiculously early for Brown Hairstreaks, Neil, and you are resetting my natural calendar as to when I can go to observe this precious species in Pembrokeshire.

Normally, the second weekend in August is the best time, but given the season in 2017, I fear that the last weekend in July will see them about, which is almost stupefyingly early!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jul-17 10:27 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Time to throw a sickie and head to the ranges. 😊

Hi Philip. I don't believe in monocultures, so we'll retain a few oaks. 😊

Hi David. Don't get caught out by this super-early year. We're not seeing female Brownies yet, and they need a while to really get going in the Blackthorn, but they'll be dropping before the end of this month.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 17-Jul-17 10:55 PM GMT

### Heaps Of Hairstreaks!

The Brown Hairstreak season is now well under way on the Knepp Wildland. Matthew Oates and Harry Drew headed out early to count the males around 'master trees', while I spent several hours in one place, observing hairstreak behaviour. 'Master trees' are usually Ash or Field Maple but at Knepp, perhaps unsurprisingly, they also use willows.

The willow in my image held at least a dozen males this morning, which zipped around this and adjacent trees until retiring to the crown and becoming inactive just before 10 am. After resting for an hour they began to drop into the Creeping Thistle and Fleabane to nectar. At one point I had four males feeding within a patch of flowers little more than a metre square. The combined total of male Brown Hairstreaks this morning was 51.

Matthew and Harry also saw a male Wall, this being the 34th species recorded on the Wildland since 2005. Purple Emperor activity continues to wane, but a female-heavy count of 20 was eventually achieved, with many visiting sap bleeds.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Janet Turnbull, 18-Jul-17 11:05 PM GMT

Stunning photos of the Brown Hairstreaks, Neil!  
Janet

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 18-Jul-17 11:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Janet. I've never seen so many male Brown Hairstreaks down low before – they're dropping like flies. Bring on the girls!  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 18-Jul-17 11:50 PM GMT

**More From The Knepp Wildland**

The fixed route, timed count survey I performed today (18 July) demonstrates very clearly how the Knepp Wildland project is benefiting the butterflies (and other wildlife) of West Sussex. Of the 24 species recorded, highlights included Purple Emperor (10), Brown Hairstreak (8), Purple Hairstreak (43), Silver-washed Fritillary (2), White Admiral (1) and Clouded Yellow (1).

Most of the emperor action was again centred on oaks which are bleeding sap, as the now exhausted and ragged females take on life-extending nutrients. One of these 'feeder trees' hosted four females and a male at the same time. A few empresses still have a little left in them yet, and retain their regal looks while perched low amongst the oak leaves, while others look ready to make their final flight.

Brown Hairstreak males continue to drop in unprecedented numbers and may be found wherever Creeping Thistle grows close to the Blackthorn-rich hedgerows. Over the last few years the improvements in the Knepp butterfly fauna have accelerated; this place is now fast becoming exceptionally good.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 19-Jul-17 10:13 AM GMT

Brian White's Emperor Images

Here are some of the fantastic images of the 'rejection drop' taken by Bolton photographer Brian White <http://brianwhitephotography.co.uk/index.htm> on the 13 July Knepp Purple Emperor safari. An already-mated female is seen trying to out-maneuvre two amorous males.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 19-Jul-17 03:16 PM GMT

Brian White sure is quite a photographer.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 19-Jul-17 03:31 PM GMT

I think our trusty old FZ38's would have a problem capturing that sort of action !.

Spectacular !  
Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 19-Jul-17 11:02 PM GMT

Those are spectacular views of airborne Emperors, Neil. So sad they'll be gone in another week....but Brown Hairstreaks will fill the gap till early September, so all is not lost!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 24-Jul-17 11:40 AM GMT

**Knepp Excels Again**

On Sunday (23 July) I made a brief visit to the Knepp Wildland, before leading an afternoon event for small wood owners. I met Matthew Oates, who was just leaving, but had counted a total of 52 male Brown Hairstreak around Master Trees during an early morning survey. I then bumped into Dave Sadler and we performed a search for Brown Hairstreaks at low level, nectaring on Creeping Thistle. We rapidly located 6, including an early female. During our travels we also found some very nice Brown Argus.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 27-Jul-17 09:11 AM GMT

Dutch Copper

As I imagine many others are, I'm starting to get withdrawal symptoms from the marvellous summer we were enjoying. Here's something to brighten up these dull days, while we wait for better weather to return.

My brother, Mark, who lives in Belgium, recently sent me some images of Large Copper he'd taken, while visiting the De Weerribben–Wieden National Park in the Netherlands. This one is straight from the Guy Padfield school of photography. It takes a lot to lure me away from a Sussex wood in July ... but this might just do it next year!



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 27-Jul-17 12:17 PM GMT

Competent photographers must run in the Hulme family.

Neil. Have either of your youngsters picked up a camera yet?

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 27-Jul-17 10:57 PM GMT

The word 'competent' doesn't do it justice, Jack. I'm still having palpitations over Neil's brother's image a couple of years ago of an in-flight Southern Swallowtail!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by kevling, 28-Jul-17 06:35 AM GMT

Neil, Beautiful shots of the Brown Hairstreak and in such large numbers too. I hope I get to see some before Summer's out.

Regards Kev

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 28-Jul-17 09:27 AM GMT

Thanks, all.

Jack: My brother is a far better (and more versatile) photographer than I. The FZ38 + close-up lens is a one-trick-pony, but a very good one. Taking nice images of butterflies and flowers is all I really aim to achieve. The problem is keeping Jacob (not yet three years-old) away from my camera!

David: I think it's a corker too, and tells the story of how easy it is for people to idly pass-by some of nature's gems, without even knowing they're there.

Kev: Even at Knepp, where the season started very early, females are only just starting to show. Plenty of time yet. Good luck.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Padfield, 28-Jul-17 11:20 AM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

**Dutch Copper**This one is straight from the Guy Padfield school of photography.

😄 It is indeed a shot I love getting: rare butterfly lurks unnoticed in the grass while the world cycles obliviously by. It's often better that way.

Guy

### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 28-Jul-17 06:44 PM GMT

That is a wonderful image that really does speak to you 😄 .

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 28-Jul-17 10:49 PM GMT

#### Padfield wrote:

...rare butterfly lurks unnoticed in the grass while the world cycles obliviously by. It's often better that way.

Ain't that the truth, Guy?

Perhaps they're simply unaware of the fauna sharing their pathways?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-17 08:26 AM GMT

#### Wonderful Weekender

With the family away on a mini-break, and workload returning to a more manageable level, I managed to spend the entire weekend in pursuit of butterflies.

On Saturday (29 July) morning I visited Mill Hill, to snatch a couple of hours butterflying before the predicted collapse in the weather. Second brood Adonis Blues are only just starting, with about half-a-dozen seen. Just before leaving I watched a female Adonis make her maiden flight, but she only managed about five metres before being accosted by an amorous male.





On Sunday (30 July) I met Katrina for a hairstreak hunt on the Knepp Wildland. Conditions were very tricky, with high winds and long periods of cool, dull weather, but we eventually managed to find a total of 11 (6m, 5f), with the best action being reserved for the final half-hour. In one small area we found three females, two of which were in perfect condition. One specimen was particularly obliging, repeatedly dropping out of the Blackthorn to pose for us.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 09:58 PM GMT

Stunning shots Neil 😊👍👍 But a whole weekend spent butterflying? 🤔 That deserves even more envy 🍷🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-17 10:38 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Let's keep this between us – they'll never know. 😊  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 31-Jul-17 10:53 PM GMT

**The Orgy Of *Orgyia***

This morning (31 July) I released two adult female Vapourer Moths at Springhead Hill, these being the progeny of Vanessa the Vapourer, which my daughter Mia bred through from a caterpillar last year (see <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?p=114242#p114242> for photo story).

I placed the two virgin females on Bramble leaves, about a metre apart, and started the stopwatch. By 4 minutes 20 seconds both had been paired, demonstrating the species' incredible powers of pheromone attraction. By 5 minutes 30 seconds a total of seven males were on the scene. It is common in Lepidoptera for rival males to attempt to usurp a copulating male, by forcefully trying to part him from the female, but things are rather different

with the Vapourer. Before long, one of the females was joined to two males, and the other to three! I carefully checked to confirm that they were all fully engaged.

Mating with more than one male appears to be a method of ensuring that genetic diversity is maintained. As the females are flightless, and don't ever move more than a centimetre or two after hatching, it is quite likely that the first male she mates with is a sibling. However, by accepting more than one male there is a much greater chance that less closely related genes are also transferred. The Vapourer truly is a weird and wonderful moth!



First come, first served



I was here first



It could be worse, I could be over there



I wish I was over there



This is getting ridiculous!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 31-Jul-17 11:19 PM GMT

You sure didn't waste your weekend, Neil. What a haul and those Hairstreaks are absolutely divine.

How lucky we are in this country to have such a butterfly to usher in the finalé to the regular season!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Pete Eeles, 01-Aug-17 07:20 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

This morning (31 July) I released two adult female Vapourer Moths at Springhead Hill

Nice work, Mia 😊

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Mating with more than one male appears to be a method of ensuring that genetic diversity is maintained. As the females are flightless, and don't ever move more than a centimetre or two after hatching, it is quite likely that the first male she mates with is a sibling.

A few thoughts to add to this – 1) Males emerge earlier than females, but I'm not sure what the "delta" between emergence times is for the Vapourer, but that would reduce in-breeding, possibly to the extent that there is none, 2) If there is overlap in emergence times then the second and subsequent matings could also be siblings! ... and 3) The females will also benefit from the "nuptial gift" (various nutrients) that are passed from male to female, along with the necessary ;-) I guess it's all down to probabilities ... someone should look into this!

Cheers,

– Pete

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Aug-17 09:10 AM GMT

Hi Pete

This is a fascinating species and I would love to see more research into this aspect of its autecology. I'll dig deeper in the winter, but can presently find very little in the literature.

Looking at the data from Mia's Vapourer farm, we've seen a tendency for females to emerge ahead of males (ratio bias, not absolute division); unusual in most Lepids, but interestingly the case in the autumn brood of Long-tailed Blue (but that's another story). This in itself may give males from unrelated (earlier) broods a better chance. Although some male caterpillars will complete their growth ahead of females, this ratio bias is probably at least partly maintained by the longer period spent in the pupal state in males (longer to form functioning wings etc.).

I agree that second or third pairings could also be with siblings, but the timespan available for copulation with any female does at least provide an opportunity for males flying in from 1km or more distance.

I'm not sure that 'nuptial gifts' (life-extending nutrients harvested by males in some species, then transferred to females via copulation) would be either available or advantageous in the Vapourer; individual lifespan is so short that neither sex feeds. Once she's laid the last egg her life starts to ebb away 🙄.

As it would be quite easy to study and elucidate this further, I can see a very interesting school project here. Mia's probably a little too young just yet, but her thesis awaits.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Aug-17 09:14 AM GMT

**Cissbury Skippers**

An afternoon (1 August) visit to Cissbury Ring confirmed that the relatively new colony of Silver-spotted Skipper (south side of ramparts) remains healthy, with a total of 28 seen. However, spotting them in such blustery conditions was highly challenging, so I suspect that numbers are significantly better than this. Other highlights included Clouded Yellow (3), Oak Eggar and Hummingbird Hawk-moth.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by PhilBJohnson, 02-Aug-17 12:01 PM GMT

Fritillaries (two days ago)

Hi Neil,

"I think this is a strain of Silver Washed Fritillary (The big one) which we recorded two days ago, fresh and locally in Sweden on the local flora. I don't know what the equivalent "common dog violet" might be in Sweden"  
Please let us know what you think.



Kind Regards,

Philip with Melissa

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Aug-17 12:53 PM GMT

Hi Philip

Looks good for a male SWF.  
Hope you're having fun over there.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 03-Aug-17 12:08 AM GMT

Good news about the embryonic Silver Spotted Skipper colony, Neil. Even better that your visit also saw 3 Clouded Yellows. I wonder if we'll see an influx this year?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by PhilBJohnson, 04-Aug-17 04:28 AM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Hi Philip

Looks good for a male SWF.  
Hope you're having fun over there.

BWs, Neil

Hi Neil,

Melissa and I had a superb time. If you or other BBC, UKB or BC colleagues are looking to have a short break or "working holiday", a friend of mine (Sandy) has a spacious detached Swedish Cottage on Airbnb. Here is the link:

<https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/9113196?location=Hagfors&s=rpwn5jYW>

Sandy has some local knowledge but not necessarily specifically "Butterflying knowledge"

"This year, I was told "Snow melt" was in mid-May and then the landscape changes rapidly within weeks.

Right of Public Access laws are exceptional for Butterflying in Sweden:

"You are free to go just about anywhere along Sweden's shores, and in it's lakes and watercourses. We are all guests in nature and must be considerate and responsible"

For on-line information, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency includes much information:

<http://www.naturvardsverket.se>

Kind Regards,

Philip & Melissa

**Re: PhilBWright**

by jenks, 04-Aug-17 09:47 AM GMT

[PhilBWright quoted ..

"Right of Public Access laws are exceptional for Butterflying in Sweden:

"You are free to go just about anywhere along Sweden's shores, and in it's lakes and watercourses. We are all guests in nature and must be considerate and responsible"

What a wonderful and enlightened attitude to nature. What a pity certain farmers in Cumbria ( and for that matter in Wales) don't possess the same attitude. Here in Wales, between Cardiff and Newport, some farmers block the entrance along Public Footpaths allowing access to Wales' Coastal path, because the footpaths cross their fields. This is despite receiving a grant from the Welsh Assembly Government to host the footpath !

Loving your diary entries and photos, Phil.

Jenks.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Pete Eeles, 04-Aug-17 03:46 PM GMT

Just wanted to thank you for the extensive response to my comments re: Vapourer, Neil! Apols for not responding sooner.

Without exception, I find every species absolutely fascinating!

Cheers,

– Pete

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 05-Aug-17 10:08 PM GMT

### Brownies Galore

My last two visits to the Knepp Wildland, the most recent being today (5 August), have proven highly productive for low-level sightings of Brown Hairstreak, with a total of 54 individuals seen. Most are now nectaring on Fleabane, as the Creeping Thistle has gone over. During the previous visit I recorded 16 females and 17 males, with today's split being 12:9. The majority of females are still in mint condition. A total of five different females are shown below.

The population at Knepp has exploded this year, as a reduction in browsing pressure has allowed the Blackthorn-rich hedgerows and scrub to attain a more suitable condition for Brown Hairstreak. I suspect that Knepp now hosts the largest population in the UK, to add to its Purple Emperor crown.







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 05-Aug-17 10:37 PM GMT

Amazing stuff Neil, although it makes my running total of 6 low level Brownies at Bookham seem rather pathetic 🙄

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 06-Aug-17 02:01 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil, 🍷 I've yet to see one but hope too soon . Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 07-Aug-17 12:47 AM GMT

54 Brown Hairstreaks is amazing, Neil!!! I don't think I've ever topped 20 in a day at the best site in Wales so you may well be right regarding Knepp being the best UK location for this precious species.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-17 08:34 AM GMT

Thanks, all.

David - I'm keeping a close eye on this species at Knepp, as the population explosion is providing some interesting data in relation to browsing pressure. So far I've collated 212 records of Brown Hairstreak (10 observers) nectaring at low level, with best day counts of 36, 33 and 32. This represents a vast increase over previous years.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 07-Aug-17 08:43 AM GMT

**Late Summer Jewels**

On Sunday (6 August) I visited four sites, primarily to check on numbers of Adonis Blue and Silver-spotted Skipper. The second brood of Adonis at Mill Hill is now well underway, with 30 - 40 males and a few females now flying over the upper, middle and lower levels. I photographed several newly hatched males which were still ejecting meconium; it's always a thrill to sit patiently by these individuals, so as to see their beautiful wings as they are opened to the world for the very first time.

A thorough search of the entire site produced only 11 Silver-spotted Skipper; to say that they are widely and very thinly distributed would be an understatement. This species seems to be taking a long time to become strongly established here, although I'm not sure why. Other species included two second brood Dingy Skipper and a Clouded Yellow.

Anchor Bottom was disappointing, with only half-a-dozen Adonis Blue and Silver-spotted Skipper and very low numbers of other species. I will be looking into the management of this site, to see if some of its former glory can be re-instated. A brief stop at Steyning Rifle Range produced a single Adonis and a couple of female Brown Hairstreak in the fenced reserve.

I finished off at Chantry Hill, finding 19 Silver-spotted Skipper and a second brood Dingy. A few female Dark Green Fritillary were still in surprisingly good condition, and laying eggs at a remarkable rate.



Perfection



Lancing College from Mill Hill

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 07-Aug-17 09:31 AM GMT

When I see such a perfect photo of a gorgeous butterfly (the male Adonis) I really wonder why so many people still claim that you can't take a decent photo unless you have a DSLR. (I presume you used a trusty FZ38 Neil?)

Another point is often overlooked: if you drop your bridge camera or leave it on the roof of the car, you will be seriously annoyed at the waste of £200 or so. If you did the same with an SLR costing ten times as much, you might need a visit to the psychiatric clinic 😊

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 07-Aug-17 10:17 AM GMT

Your image of the Adonis is one of the few I've seen on here, where a pair of dark glasses should be worn.

All the best,  
Trevor.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 07-Aug-17 10:43 AM GMT

That's a beautiful shot of an Adonis Neil 🍷 I seem to just miss it every year, may be next year I'll hit just right. Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 07-Aug-17 09:29 PM GMT

Agree with the other comments, Neil. That Adonis Blue is positively electric!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 07-Aug-17 11:02 PM GMT

Glorious images Neil, especially those Brown Hairstreaks on fleabane from Knepp– now I've got to visit that place. If the weather ever improves!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-17 07:39 PM GMT

Thanks, all. More lovely Adonis to come!

Jack – yes, still using the trusty FZ38. After more than seven years of hard use it's looking rather battered, and must be worth less than a trip to the curry house! But that lens is good.

Mark – happy to give you a tour of the Knepp hairstreaks, but timing would be better for next year. By the time I'm back from a holiday in Cornwall they'll be well past their best.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-17 07:51 PM GMT

#### More From Mill Hill

I couldn't resist another visit to Mill Hill on Monday afternoon (7 August), as the male Adonis Blues are providing such a wonderful spectacle at the moment, as they mingle with Chalk Hill and a few Common Blues.

I also found another pocket of Silver-spotted Skippers, but they required considerable mountaineering skills to reach. As I sat looking out over the Adur Valley, surrounded by all these little gems, I couldn't help but think how lucky I am to live in this glorious part of the world.

One of the many advantages to living in Sussex is the number of exotic visitors we are increasingly seeing. Just in the last few days we've had Monarch, Continental Swallowtail and Long-tailed Blue; I'm expecting more.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-17 08:50 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just been catching up on your diary, some lovely images of the Brown Hairstreaks and Adonis Blues, and not forgetting the Silver-spotted Skipper 😊

I found your comments on the Vapourer Moth very interesting. I found a single caterpillar in my garden last year from which emerged a female as reported here <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=5424&start=1820> and from which I reared a number through this year. In my case the eggs hatched over a period of a week or so and the resulting larvae developed at differing rates, so much so that the first adults were emerging before the last few larvae had pupated. In fact I still have a few final instar larvae that have still to pupate. The first to emerge was a male, followed later the same day by a female and there has been a succession of emergence's over the past couple of weeks since, mostly males with just a couple of females.

Looking forward to the results of Mia's eventual project/thesis 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-17 09:47 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil.

Prof. Mia will report in due course.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 08-Aug-17 09:59 PM GMT

### *Fritillaries For The Future Project Update*

I'm delighted to announce that Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF) has produced a second brood in Sussex, following the re-introduction of this species (performed in accordance with the 'BC Code on Introductions and Re-introductions 2010') to the BC reserves and FC Abbot's Wood earlier this year. They were first spotted during a Bracken management work party at Park Corner Heath on 21 July and have since been seen flying over both our reserves, including egg-laying females. Smaller numbers have been sighted at Abbot's Wood.

County historian Colin Pratt (2011) recounts that partial second broods flew in about a quarter of the years during the 21st century, usually following a strong first brood and in warmer summers. However, to see a partial second brood so soon after the initial re-introduction, must surely bode well, and surveys have revealed widespread and abundant caterpillar feeding damage to violets. It is too early to claim success, so we must wait until next year before getting too excited, but there are clearly grounds for optimism.

This year we have endeavoured to keep reporting to a minimum, so as to allow the butterflies to get on with their business in peace. However, we will be very keen to hear of any sightings in 2018.

Once again, I would like to pay tribute to our captive-breeding team of Theresa Lux, Gary Norman and Mike Mullis, and all who have supported the *Fritillaries for the Future* project, through financial donations and attendance at work parties. My thanks also go to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-17 10:07 PM GMT

That's a fantastic result Neil, and like you say bodes really well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 08-Aug-17 10:55 PM GMT

Thanks Neil, next year it is then!

If you are going to Cornwall, be sure to visit Kynance Cove, where Clouded Yellows and plenty of second generation SPBF were flying at the weekend, though it looks like you have seen those already!

Give my regards to Ann. She makes a good pasty does Ann!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 09-Aug-17 04:14 AM GMT

Q: is Small PBF double brooded in all of parts of mainland Europe?

And [Large] PBF is apparently sometimes double brooded in southern England. Presumably no reports this year?

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 09-Aug-17 07:52 AM GMT

More good news, Neil. I'm not surprised that SPBFs have generated a second brood this year. The season was 'early' at the time of their first emergence, and apart from the last 10 days or so, conditions have generally been good since.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 09-Aug-17 05:05 PM GMT

That's fantastic news about the SPBF. I look forward to enjoying the fruits of all the hard work you and your team have put in next year 😊

With all these continental visitors I can feel the pull of the south coast again, Newhaven Tidemills might become a second home again 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 10-Aug-17 11:07 PM GMT

Thanks, all. The SPBF situation is very exciting and I'm keeping everything crossed for next year.

Jack – SPBF double-broods everywhere as warm as the warmer parts of Devon as far as I know. PBF is less prone to bivoltinism, despite starting earlier in the year. SPBF double-brooded in about 25% of years in the C20th in Sussex, but PBF only six times.

Mark – Ann's Pasties and my stomach are not strangers. I never eat fewer than two at a sitting. Think Egg-eating Snake.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 10-Aug-17 11:11 PM GMT

**Better Hedgerows**

This afternoon (10 August) David Cook and I had a very productive meeting with representatives of Mid Sussex District and Burgess Hill Town Councils, to continue our review of wildlife-friendly hedgerow management in the region. Our dealings with both councils have been 'like a breath of fresh air' and it's a pleasure to work with such receptive and proactive people. The details of a new cutting regime, which will benefit Brown Hairstreak and a host of other fauna and flora, have now been finalised.

The weather improved rather late in the day, but just in time for our tour of the Burgess Hill Green Circle meadows. We were delighted to be able to show them a female hairstreak at close quarters and a freshly laid egg. After the meeting, and with the sunshine now at full strength, David and I moved to another meadow and saw a further three females and a male. This is a great area for Brown Hairstreak, and it's going to get even better. We are very grateful to MSDC and BHTC for their assistance.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 12-Aug-17 08:53 PM GMT

I think all councils could benefit from such meetings regarding hedgerows, Neil, irrespective of whether Brown Hairstreaks are present in the local area. Too much that is precious is lost needlessly in the name of tidiness. Wales is no exception to this folly.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-17 08:08 PM GMT

#### Small Pearls And Pasties (Part 1)

I've just returned from a family holiday on the Lizard Peninsula, which coincidentally (ahem) coincided with the second brood flight of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (SPBF). Although I did spend the majority of the week with Hannah and the kids, I still managed two half-days and the entire 'return day' looking at butterflies and other wildlife.

With such an interest in SPBF autecology, being involved with the resurrection of this species in SE England through my BC *Fritillaries for the Future* project, I was very keen to learn more about the populations on the Cornish coast. Unsurprisingly, there are many differences in the species' behaviour and the types of habitat occupied in these very different regions. Perhaps more importantly, there are also some similarities, and the recognition of these allows clarification of the butterfly's (or more specifically the caterpillar's) most fundamental needs.

The first image shows typical SPBF habitat in this part of the world; a sheltered landslip below the sea-cliffs, where violets grow and multiply in abundance amongst the serpentinite scree, and where a herb-rich, grassy cover develops during periods of stability. More than 30 individuals were seen flying over this particular area.







Of course the Cornish coast has plenty more to offer than butterflies at this time of year; not least its stunning landscapes. The Raven is now a common bird in Sussex, but they look more at home here. I also spent a magical hour amongst a family of Chough, and watched a Peregrine repeatedly stooping at gulls. Keeping with tradition, each walk along this part of the coast (Cadgwith, Lizard, Kynance Cove to Mullion) was fuelled with a couple of Ann's Pasties.







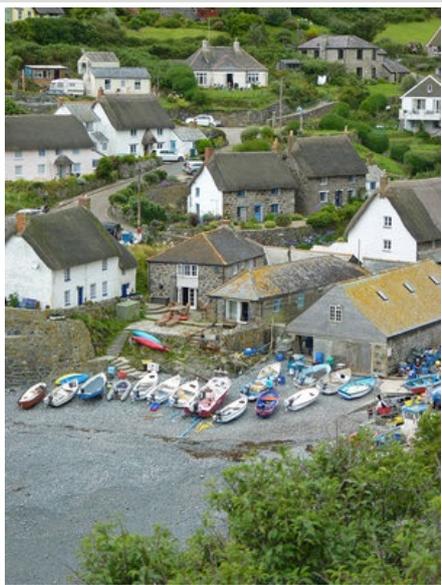
## Re: Neil Hulme

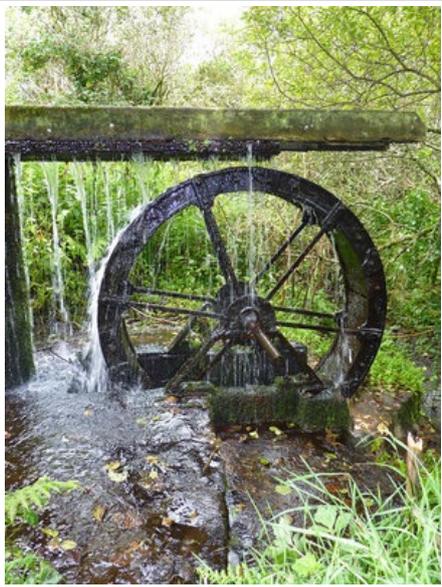
by Neil Hulme, 20-Aug-17 09:11 PM GMT

### Small Pearls And Pasties (Part 2)

During our stay on the Lizard Peninsula we based ourselves at Kennack Sands, which proved to be an excellent location for me to thrash my children in an over-competitive crabbing contest. It was also just a 40 minute walk along the coastal path (via SPBF, Wall, Grayling, Clouded Yellow etc.) from my favourite of the many beautiful fishing villages in the area; Cadgwith (first two images). There's a fantastic but poorly publicised (it's for locals!) fishing festival here, and Wednesday evening fish BBQs on the beach. Friday nights in the excellent pub are great, particularly if you enjoy some nautical crooning.

We returned several times for lunch at the Fat Apples Café at Porthallow (near St Keverne), where they serve a world class crab salad and some of the best cakes I've ever eaten. It's a bit 'out of the way', but well worth a visit. For those visiting with children, I can also recommend Roskilly's Farm. There's plenty to do at this entry-free location, including a lovely woodland walk with streams and ponds; great food and ice-cream too!





Amongst the many SPBF I photographed around the Kynance Cove area was a stunning example of ab. *gerda* (male), which I relocated just a few days later, now looking rather the worse for wear following some wild weather. However, even on the last day of our holiday (18 August) SPBF were still emerging.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by millerd, 20-Aug-17 09:16 PM GMT

That SPBF aberration is a beautiful insect, Neil. Just stunning. 😊

Dave

### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 20-Aug-17 09:34 PM GMT

Some very beautiful Small Pearls, and scenery.  
Sounds like a diet might be in order !.  
My only experience of Cornwall was in the form of some boozy holidays in Newquay,  
with my mates back in the 1970's. Would prefer your style now though.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 20-Aug-17 10:28 PM GMT

As you know, Neil, I'm very familiar with that coast- I've walked all of it, some off it many times. But I'm still mighty impressed with your sightings and images. As you will have discovered. And probably know anyway, SPBF behave differently on the western coast than isolated colonies further east. They wander freely over large areas, these contain various pockets of preferred breeding habitat. Perhaps, this has similarities with Silver Spotted Skippers in Sussex, which have far greater powers of dispersal than elsewhere.

And congratulations on sampling the delights of Roskillys Lizard ice cream and crab- we just need to get you on saffron cake and clotted cream and you will be an honorary Cornishman! 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Aug-17 07:20 AM GMT

Thanks, all. Another instalment to come.

Mark: One day we should try to co-ordinate a visit. I've no doubt that I've sat on one or two of your favourite rocks! I'll never forget walking this stretch of coast in the first week of September 2014; I've never seen so many or such beautiful Small Coppers.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Aug-17 08:26 AM GMT

#### Small Pearls And Pasties (Part 3)

Whereas the rest of the family headed back to Sussex on Friday 18 August, I headed to Lizard village to meet up with Harry Drew and his partner Laura, who are both studying at Falmouth University's Penryn campus. I got to know Harry at Knepp, where he spent the Purple Emperor flight season helping out with surveys and the Wildland safari programme. Together we walked to Mullion Cove and back, enjoying some beautiful but blustery weather.

During this walk we spotted the majority of the 19 species of butterfly I saw during my stay, including SPBF, Dark Green Fritillary, Grayling, Wall and Clouded Yellow. However, the highlight for me was the numerous Marsh Fritillary larval webs and clusters we saw.





On the return leg of our walk we stopped many times, to absorb the wonderful atmosphere of the Cornish coastline. A great day, spent in great company, in a stunning landscape; that's what butterflying is all about.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Pete Eeles, 21-Aug-17 06:42 PM GMT

Great reports Neil; I particularly appreciate the habitat shots to really put things in context.

Cheers,

- Pete

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 21-Aug-17 07:21 PM GMT

Neil: you are annoying. You claim you know nothing about the technicalities of photography, Funny how you never have a tilted horizon; you understand and use the "Rule of Thirds"; the dynamic range of your pictures is always just right. Habitat/location shots are spot on.

Stop pretending Neil. You might not know your f/stop from your ISO but are a damned good photographer.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 21-Aug-17 08:00 PM GMT

That's a peach of an ab. you found there Neil 😊

## Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 21-Aug-17 11:11 PM GMT

Would happily share a visit with you Neil. I was there a couple of weeks earlier than you, but could easily arrange things accordingly, either in August or the beginning of June, when the first generation SPBF and Marshies are flying.

Great SPBF ab., Neil. In all the times I have visited Kynance, even that slumped cliff, I have never seen one like that. A bit of luck, perhaps, but well deserved for all the great work you do.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by PhilBJohnson, 23-Aug-17 08:43 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Looking at the UKB life cycle chart for the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary (SPBF), there appears to me, approx. 12 weeks needed between broods (from imago to imago) in the summer when the larva have much to feed on.

After a second brood in late summer, when looking at the instar larva stages,

"The larvae hibernate after the third moult"

so I hope more work can be done by BC Sussex in monitoring the success of the second brood through to next year as this species can spend most of it's time as a caterpillar.

Kind Regards,

Philip

## Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 25-Aug-17 08:42 PM GMT

Beautiful series of images from your trip, Neil, capped with that amazing SPBF aberration.

That part of the country not only has breathtaking scenery but also an impressive range of butterfly species.

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Aug-17 07:10 PM GMT

Thanks, Pete, bugboy and David.

Thanks, Jack. I blame the FZ38; it's taught me everything I know about photography!

Mark: I'll try to co-ordinate something in August. I would love to see Marsh Fritillary down there, but the problem is escaping my Duke, PBF and SPBF commitments in Sussex.

Philip: Fortunately there will always be sufficient time for second brood SPBF larvae to become sufficiently advanced ahead of diapause. I don't envisage the same problems that seem to face e.g. third brood Wall larvae.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Aug-17 07:17 PM GMT

### In Praise Of Steyning Downland Scheme

I've not managed to spend much time at the Steyning Downland Scheme <http://www.steyningdownland.org> this year, but I did spend most of Friday (25 August) there. I was really impressed by the way things have moved forward again, with great progress everywhere.

The *Prunus* stock is in fine shape (Brown Hairstreak numbers are modest this year, but should recover by next season); the *Primula* planting ('Dukes of Steyning' project) has worked exceptionally well in both the Coombe and Secret Garden (now looking like prime Duke of Burgundy habitat); the Coombe grassland continues to improve in quality, as do Pepperscombe Bank and the floor of the Rifle Range; and the Round Hill chalk-pit and *Prunus* on the adjacent slope both look in much better shape. I could go on and on ... Congratulations to all involved.

Has all this on-going work made much difference, as measured in terms of the butterfly fauna? Following reports of Adonis Blue towards the top of the Coombe, I focused on monitoring this species, assisted at times by David Cook and Colin Knight. The females are tricky to spot and identify, so probably 'slip through the net' quite regularly, but we saw very encouraging numbers in several areas. Adonis Blue is one of our best indicators of chalk grassland quality.

The good news is that the Adonis count reads as follows: Coombe 12 (7f, 5m); north flank of Rifle Range east end 7 (2f, 5m); north flank of Rifle Range west end 1 (f); Rifle Range bottom 1 (m); Round Hill chalk-pit 10 (3f, 7m). That number was later reduced by a particularly large Wasp Spider. A total count of 31 Adonis Blue is a clear sign that things are now improving very significantly - you would have to go a long way back in time to better this number here. However, I'm certain there's far more good news still to come as the grazing programme continues.

There were plenty of other butterflies on show including, of course, Brown Hairstreak. Amongst them were a few third brood Green-veined White and Small Copper. Some very nice Buff-tip moth caterpillars can be found along the Blackthorn just outside the fenced hairstreak reserve. Those coming to see the Brown Hairstreak should also pay a visit to the Coombe (continue up the footpath which starts at the bowling green) and Round Hill chalk-pit (via Bostal Road).





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 26-Aug-17 08:00 PM GMT

Last SPBF And First Signs Of Autumn

Today (26 August) I spent a wonderful, warm and sunny afternoon on the BC reserves with Ian and Mark Cadey. We initially thought that we had seen the last of the second brood Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary of the year, as a geriatric male on Park Corner Heath seemed to be on his last legs. However, we were in for a nice surprise, later finding a further six individuals flying over the Rowland Wood rush meadow. At least one male and one female were still in pristine condition. Eggs are still being laid and the characteristic feeding damage left on violet leaves by small SPBF larvae was widespread across both reserves.



We also saw some beautiful, dark-coloured Comma feeding on blackberries; a sure sign that autumn is now just around the corner.



by Neil Hulme, 27-Aug-17 10:07 PM GMT

### Three Queens

Late yesterday I received a phone call from Dave Harris, informing me that he'd just seen a Queen of Spain Fritillary (QoS) on his transect between Telscombe and Piddinghoe. I'm very grateful to Dave for all that followed.

Dave guided me and Ian and Mark Cadey to the site early this morning, before heading off on other business. For an hour and a half we made a thorough search of the meadow, seeing many butterflies including Adonis Blue, Silver-spotted Skipper and Small Copper. The Queen of Spain's travel companions were out in force (at least half-a-dozen Clouded Yellow and numerous whites), but our target was disappointingly elusive.

At 11.15 am I was beginning to lose hope, when a Queen of Spain suddenly appeared from the hedgerow at the western end of the meadow. I called the Cadeys over and within a few minutes we were watching two males battling for the best position in what proved to be the lekking area, around a bonfire site.

Inevitably, we spent the entire day there, enjoying these exotic visitors as they repeatedly chased any Clouded Yellow, white (Large, Small and Green-veined) or Common Blue which crossed their territory. We eventually proved, through photography, the presence of three males, with one being in good condition (only seen once during the day).

QoS tends to migrate in mixed sex groups, so I'm hopeful that one or two females (which are more elusive than the males) might be around and will have found some Field or Wild Pansy in the area. I suspect that others will have arrived with the good weather, so it's well worth looking at locations such as High & Over and Tidemills.

Access and directions: Please note that the meadow is private land, but the farmer, Colin Appleton, has kindly agreed to allow access. The main lekking area is around the bonfire site at TQ42130306. The butterflies tend to remain quite faithful to this location from about 11.15 am - 3.00 pm, thereafter spending most of the time nectaring on knapweeds along the top of the meadow, particularly between the fire-site and TQ42320304.

Head towards Halcombe Farm from the north of Peacehaven. Please do not park around the farm buildings at TQ42170302 except at weekends and Bank Holidays, as this is a turning area for large vehicles. Alternative parking can be found a little further down the track at TQ42650321. Please note that people are holidaying in the caravans on-site, so please respect their privacy. Good luck!







**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 27-Aug-17 10:55 PM GMT

Ooooooooooooooh, I was wondering what to do on my day off this week... 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 28-Aug-17 08:09 AM GMT

Q of S fascinating report that raises some questions.

1. Unlike the prominent Monarch or [continental] Swallowtail, Q of S is unlikely to attract the attention of non-lepidopterists.
2. The locality where Q of S has just been found is hardly on the "beaten track".

So how many Q of S might be present in un-visited remote localities? It could number hundreds or even thousands.

Pure speculation of course. Thoughts?

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-17 09:39 AM GMT

What a fantastic find, wish I lived nearer 😊 Goldie 🇬🇧 🇬🇧

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 28-Aug-17 05:54 PM GMT

Hi Jack,

It will be interesting to see if any more turn up.

I suspect that the percentage of rare migrant butterflies which reach our shores, but which go unseen, unrecognised or unreported, is probably in excess of 95%.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 28-Aug-17 05:58 PM GMT

**Royal Performance**

The three male Queen of Spain Fritillary put on a great performance for the many visitors today (see previous report for location and access details). Two males were regularly seen (sometimes sparring) around the bonfire site, while the third remained more aloof, occasionally being spotted along the track further east.

I would again like to thank the farmer, Colin Appleton, for not only allowing access, but also for directing visitors to the site, and even giving some a lift!



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Freeman, 28-Aug-17 07:20 PM GMT

Hi Neil,

Just catching up on your diary after returning on Saturday from our own family holiday down on the Lizard. We also stopped at Kennack Sands...looks like I missed you by a day.

Interesting to compare your comments with what I saw just a week later, the SPBFs were still about but most were looking worse for wear. Loads of other good stuff still about 😊 I have done a couple of reports in my diary and still have some photos to sort through.

And as for those Queen of Spain Fritillaries...great stuff 🍷 😊

I see on a couple of facebook moth groups that I am a member of that there has been a lot of migrant activity over the past couple of days so maybe there are other goodies about somewhere.

Cheers,

Neil.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by millerd, 28-Aug-17 07:21 PM GMT

What a wonderful find indeed. 😊 A little vexing that I drove within a mile or so of this spot on Saturday, completely oblivious of their presence... Incidentally, I didn't see any at either Tide Mills or High & Over (but then I wasn't looking! 😊).

Dave

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 28-Aug-17 09:35 PM GMT

Great effort with the Queens, Neil, and fair play to the local farmer for being so accommodating.

If it wasn't for the fact that I see decent numbers of this species on the continent every year I would probably make the long journey myself!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-17 10:07 PM GMT

Great news Neil, let me know if they start heading Westwards 😊, still a bit far to travel for me 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 29-Aug-17 08:14 PM GMT

Hi Neil, good to see you again today. Thought you might like this little memento of these past few days 😊



Mr Neil Hulme OBE

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterflysaurus rex, 29-Aug-17 08:27 PM GMT

I'd recognise that face anywhere!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Aug-17 08:33 PM GMT

Paul: Many thanks (BTW it's BEM 😊).

James: A face that's launched a thousand ships (and I wasn't clenching 😊).  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 29-Aug-17 08:36 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

Paul: Many thanks (BTW it's BEM 😊).

James: A face that's launched a thousand ships (and I wasn't clenching 😊).

BWs, Neil

I'll have a chat with Queenie, see what I can do about addressing my mistake, I don't like being wrong!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 29-Aug-17 10:20 PM GMT

That's **tabloid** journalism, Bugboy! 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 30-Aug-17 12:19 PM GMT

In the light (!) of recent explosions of electronic cigarettes, I sincerely hope that you are nowhere near a Queen of Spain or Long-tailed Blue or other rarity if your "thingy" explodes: we wouldn't want them damaged or destroyed 😊

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-17 08:54 AM GMT

**Queen Of Spain Update**

Here are a few images taken during visits to the Piddinghoe Queen of Spain site on Tuesday and Thursday (29 & 31 August). Two individuals (those most regularly seen to date - number three only having been seen once) were still present on Tuesday, but only one yesterday.







### Re: Neil Hulme

by millerd, 01-Sep-17 09:34 PM GMT

Just a quick thank you, Neil, to you for alerting us all to the presence of these lovely butterflies – and can you also pass on my thanks to the chap who found them and to the farmer for allowing us assorted waifs and strays to traipse across his land. As you can guess, I made the pilgrimage today (1st) and was very successful, seeing at least two QoS (I need to check the photos carefully in case there are more than two individuals). Absolutely brilliant! 😊

Thanks again,

Dave

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-17 10:25 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Glad that you (and others) have been able to enjoy them. The farmer has been so helpful that I'll make sure he is thanked in an appropriate manner. Dave Harris is a star for spotting the first one, with this sighting being the foundation for all subsequent discoveries.

Seeing this species on British soil is a real privilege. Despite having seen Queen of Spain before, it took me about 30 minutes before I got a reasonable shot, due to camera shake!

I'll be very interested to see your shots, in order to match them up with the individuals seen to date (upper-sides best for this).

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Sep-17 10:42 PM GMT

#### Wart-biters

Despite seeing a lot of good butterflies today, including Adonis Blue, Clouded Yellow, Brown Hairstreak, Silver-spotted Skipper and Queen of Spain Fritillary, I was most pleased to find my first Wart-biter Bush-cricket. I spent a couple of hours helping South Downs National Park Authority and Natural England friends with a Wart-biter project, and after a crash course in location techniques found a nice female of this very rare (restricted to just five sites in the UK) and spectacular species.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by bugboy, 02-Sep-17 07:33 AM GMT

I've not seen one of those for many a year. Used to be involved in a captive breeding program for them. Magnificent looking insects 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 02-Sep-17 10:29 PM GMT

Great images of the QoS and the cricket, Neil, and good to see the level of enthusiasm generated by the presence of this infrequent butterfly visitor to our shores.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 03-Sep-17 03:10 PM GMT

Thanks, David. I estimate that approximately 200 people have come from far and wide to enjoy the Piddinghoe Queens. BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 03-Sep-17 03:24 PM GMT

**Farewell To The Queen**

On Saturday (2 September) I made what will probably be my last visit to see the Queen of Spain Fritillaries at Piddinghoe. I've spent a great deal of time observing their behaviour and should now move on to other sites, particularly as the 2017 season is entering its final chapter. However, if the good weather returns there may be more migrants to come.

There were still two Queens present, and at 3.40pm I watched as one headed off to roost in the hedgerow, passing through the same gap as the first I saw on 27 August.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by MikeOxon, 03-Sep-17 05:04 PM GMT

[quote="Neil Hulme"]Queen Of Spain Update

Re. the Queens' entourage photo - I do hope that Her Majesties received some Lady attendants as well 😊

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Sep-17 08:08 PM GMT

Hi Mike

No females were actually seen, but I wouldn't expect them to hang around a male lekking area, once mated. The valley they are in has been farmed organically for several decades, so the set-asides and conservation headlands higher on the flanks probably host Field and Wild Pansy. If present, I suspect this where any females are to be found.

If we get an Indian summer I'll be checking the area in mid October.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-17 10:47 PM GMT

That final QoS image is a beaut Neil 😊🍀🍀 Fingers crossed for some more...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 04-Sep-17 08:25 AM GMT

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

...The valley they are in has been farmed organically for several decades, so the set-asides and conservation headlands higher on the flanks probably host Field and Wild Pansy. If present, I suspect this where any females are to be found.

That's excellent, Neil. It's hard to imagine there being no females at all so with any luck they will be attracted to this area as you say.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Sep-17 05:48 PM GMT

#### Third Brood Wall

This morning I met my brother, niece and nephew, who are visiting from Antwerp, at Mill Hill. We were hoping to see a third brood Wall and soon bumped into David Cook, on the same mission. Wall has been flying for some time at High and Over, but the third brood is only just starting at Shoreham. Having almost failed, I got a call from David, who had just found a freshly emerged male on the middle level. This was the only example we saw, despite a thorough search, but you only need one when they're this good.

Other species included Clouded Yellow (4), Adonis Blue (c.10 including a couple of surprisingly fresh males), Common Blue, Small Copper, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, and some very nice Red Admiral, Peacock and Comma in the upper level glades. While David was

photographing a Peacock he was outflanked by another.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Allan.W., 15-Sep-17 06:25 PM GMT

Hello Neil ,

Like yourself I was also at Mill Hill this morning ,hoping to find Round Headed Rampion ,a plant I,ve always wanted to see ,and was really pleased to find about fifteen , also saw several Meadow Browns ,6 Small Heath, a couple of Small Whites, and a single female Wall in the top car park . A lovely reserve ,and what an incredible view , sorry I missed you ! Didn,t have any joy with any of the Blues (or Clouded yellows ) though !  
Regards Allan.W.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Sep-17 01:58 PM GMT

Hi Allan,

Yes, a shame I missed you, and a shame I missed the female Wall in the car park!

I would check that it was Round-headed Rampion you saw; it's a little late in the year for this species and it's not a plant I've noticed there before. Devil's-bit Scabious looks similar at stages in its development. If not, it's a great excuse to come back again.

BWs, Neil



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Allan.W., 16-Sep-17 02:15 PM GMT

Hello again Neil,

Apologies for posting a couple of images on your site ,but please delete them when you,ve had a look ,also in the same spot a few Autumn Ladies Tresses and many Autumn Gentian . By the way your (and Michael Blencowe s) book is superb , a great read !!





### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 16-Sep-17 02:57 PM GMT

Hi Allan,

You're quite right – that's certainly 'Pride of Sussex'. It's late for it to be coming into flower (as one of your images shows), but Nature doesn't seem to follow the rules any more. I'm seeing quite a lot of Common Dog-violet in flower at the moment.

Many thanks for your comments about the book. I was pleased to see another good review by Peter Marren in British Wildlife magazine (August issue). The next book is already being planned.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 20-Sep-17 11:00 AM GMT

#### Extra Broods

I arrived at Mill Hill rather late on Tuesday (19 September) afternoon, just as the cloud cover was thickening and David Cook and Trevor Rapley were departing. This made the location of any third brood Wall rather challenging, but I eventually located six, saving the best, a scale-perfect female, until last.

It's great to see so many people out enjoying these late Wall as the butterfly season winds down, demonstrating how much we value this once common and widespread species. Long-gone from Surrey, it's sadly on the very point of extinction in Hampshire.

Amongst the faded and tatty remnants of the late summer butterfly fauna were a few little gems, including third brood Common Blue, Small Copper and Brown Argus, all being in fresh condition. I suspect that some of the Peacock are second brood.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by trevor, 20-Sep-17 11:27 AM GMT

Hi Neil,

Good to see you, albeit briefly yesterday. I am in awe of your female Wall Brown, especially one in perfect condition like that. Males seem to be two a penny at the moment, but the females remain elusive. I recently discovered a colony of Walls in a village church yard near Devizes, Wiltshire. They seemed to be doing very well, plenty of stone and bare earth, but no third brood apparent.

Cracking good day at Mill Hill,

Trevor.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 20-Sep-17 07:41 PM GMT

I *think* I understand the hypothesis that larva resulting from third brood Walls might not have time to develop sufficiently to be able to survive the winter (hibernate) and that having three broods in a year might not be good for the Wall's long term success. This hypothesis might help explain why Walls are doing relatively well in cooler northern districts where third broods do not occur.

So your thoughts please Neil on the likely success or otherwise resulting from 2017's third brood in Sussex.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 21-Sep-17 05:56 PM GMT

That's a pristine female Wall without a doubt, Neil. In fact, it's so fresh it reminds me of one of Richard Lewington's illustrations!

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-17 08:01 AM GMT

Thanks, Trevor and David. She was certainly 'pretty as a picture', but when these third brood females start to fade we know that the season is all-but-done 😞.

Jack: In a nutshell, the theory is that the stronger the third brood, the weaker the spring emergence. As third broods go, it's not bad, but I've seen better. Plenty more on this in 'The Butterflies of Sussex' <https://www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop/the-butterflies-of-sussex-detail>

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 25-Sep-17 08:08 AM GMT

#### Last Flashes Of Brilliance

A thorough search of the ramparts and meadows around Cissbury Ring on Sunday (24 September) produced 31 Small Copper, a few of which were still in mint condition. Common Blue, Brown Argus, Meadow Brown, Speckled Wood, Small Heath, Wall, Clouded Yellow, Small White, Comma, Peacock, Painted Lady and Red Admiral (heading south) were also seen. The National Trust's programme of mechanical scrub-cutting and grazing with ponies will hopefully revitalise some areas, particularly for the shorter turf species.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 25-Sep-17 10:43 PM GMT

Beautiful Coppers, Neil. They almost seem to reflect that autumnal light that one encounters at this time of year.

Thirteen species is good going for late September too. Shame there are no Long Tailed Blues this year to make that fourteen!! 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-17 08:49 PM GMT

Thanks, David.

We've only had two definite Long-tailed Blue (and two 'possibles') in Sussex this year, which is slightly disappointing. Just a few years ago these would have made headline news, but recent events have raised our expectations. Had the weather not fallen apart in late July I suspect we would have done better. Here's hoping for next year!

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 26-Sep-17 08:53 PM GMT

**Last Orders**

Today (26 September) was probably my last opportunity to get out looking for butterflies this year, as practical conservation work begins in earnest. For me the 2017 season ended on a high, with plenty of Wall on show at Mill Hill. I suspect the third brood is now approaching peak here, with a total of 17 seen (10m, 7f). The day started well, with a bundle of 5 males along the path leading northeast from the upper car park.

Other enthusiasts had the same idea and I spent an enjoyable afternoon with David Cook and Dave Miller, hunting down the better specimens, including some recently hatched males. At least half-a-dozen Clouded Yellow, some in good condition, were also present, along with many third brood Common Blue. As I watched the sun start to sink, I thought about the many highlights of the year. If the August weather had been better, I'm sure there would have been a few more.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Butterflysaurus rex, 26-Sep-17 10:04 PM GMT

If this turns out to be your last time (or not) I think it's safe to look back and say it's been a fantastically enjoyable and memorable year! Not least the

time we spent as a group together at Abbots Wood – absolutely terrific! And what an exceptional year it's been for Purple and Brown Hairstreaks! The long awaited Butterflies of Sussex was released, an absolutely fabulous piece of work by Michael and your good self. And who could forget the Queen of Spain's! It's only fitting your dedication is to be rewarded by the 'other' Queen.

Yep I think it's safe to say it's been a great year, one that will live long in the memory.

Best wishes to you and the family.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-17 03:34 PM GMT

I'm sure your camera will be near and ready at hand Neil 😊😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-17 05:01 PM GMT

I agree with Wurzel, Neil, your sure to see and take a few more shots. 😊 Goldie 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 27-Sep-17 07:57 PM GMT

Yes indeed it has been a great season (I'm quite sure I can still get a few more weeks out of it yet!). Thanks for the heads up about the Large Tortoiseshell and QoS and all that work you and your team has done for the Fritillary project, roll on next spring 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 30-Sep-17 10:33 PM GMT

Well done with the Wall Browns again, Neil. Nice to see them getting a bit of additional exposure at the moment.

I'm sure if anything interesting DOES crop up, it'll be you who are most likely to make us aware.

Best of luck.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 01-Oct-17 11:41 AM GMT

Thanks, James. Yes, quite a year so far, but there's plenty more exciting stuff lined up for the winter. It's too early to report on yet, but I'm working on a *Fritillaries for the Future* project which will dwarf everything else I've ever been involved with.

Wurzel, Goldie, bugboy and David: Camera at the ready, just in case, but I'm more likely to be wielding a chainsaw or brush-cutter from now on, although not necessarily at the same time!

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 01-Oct-17 05:10 PM GMT

~~quote~~Jack: In a nutshell, the theory is that the stronger the third brood, the weaker the spring emergence. As third broods go, it's not bad, but I've seen better. Plenty more on this in 'The Butterflies of Sussex' <https://www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop> ... sex-detail aas on my hols last week so I couldn't look that up. And now many of my books are packed away in boxes pending arrival of team to lay a wooden floor in the lounge/diner. This "improvement" isn't for cosmetic reasons but one of us is a messy eater and has been spilling food on the carpet (wood floor is easier to sweep up). The Data Protection Act and guidance about self-incrimination prevents me from disclosing the guilty party!

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Butterfliesaurus rex, 01-Oct-17 08:58 PM GMT

#### Neil Hulme wrote:

It's too early to report on yet, but I'm working on a *Fritillaries for the Future* project which will dwarf everything else I've ever been involved with.

That sounds very exciting indeed! I look forward to learning all about it when you're ready to reveal the grand plan.

ATB

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 06-Oct-17 07:49 AM GMT

**Coppicing For Fritillaries**

On Thursday (5 October), Paul Day and I met South Downs National Park rangers Becka and Chloe, and local volunteers Barry, Boaz, Derek and Tony, to start cutting this year's Hazel coppice coupes at Church Copse, Clapham. This will be a fortnightly fixture, every other Thursday throughout the winter (start 10.00 am), creating ideal habitat for Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Common Dormouse and other wildlife. All are welcome to join us in this important work.

Paul and I focused on an area which was coppiced only a few years ago, but this earlier-than-normal cut is designed to bring part of the wood into a cycle which will suit PBF. After driving to the site through lashing rain, we were blessed with warm autumnal sunshine throughout the day. A couple of Speckled Wood and a particularly fine Comma paid us regular visits. Let's hope that the A27 Arundel Bypass Options 3 and 5A <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/conservation/arundel-bypass/> don't sever the PBF network we're trying to create. Many thanks to all who came along.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 08-Oct-17 11:50 PM GMT

**Neil Hulme wrote:**

...but I'm working on a *Fritillaries for the Future* project which will dwarf everything else I've ever been involved with.

Looking forward to hearing about this initiative, Neil.

Please let we devotees know as soon as you have details.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Oct-17 10:58 AM GMT

Will do, David, once all the necessary consents and permissions are in place. If it goes ahead, it will sit alongside the re-introduction of SPBF to Sussex as the biggest 'wins' of *Fritillaries for the Future*.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 16-Oct-17 11:01 AM GMT

**Big Bucks**

I spent much of the day on Sunday (15 October) with the Graffham Down Trust volunteers, burning up brash and clearing woodland edge scallops on the GDT reserves. When the sun finally appeared, so did a few Speckled Wood, Comma and Red Admiral.

On the way home I stopped off at Petworth Park, where the Fallow Deer rut is now underway; plenty of belching and other ungentlemanly behaviour witnessed.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Goldie M, 16-Oct-17 03:07 PM GMT

Lovely shots Neil of the deer, hope you keep clear though 😊 Goldie 😊

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 18-Oct-17 02:36 PM GMT

Don't worry, Goldie – I challenged one to a duel and the others backed off. 😊  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 18-Oct-17 03:57 PM GMT

**Flailbot Wars**

Yesterday (17 October) I dropped in at Mill Hill, where the South Downs National Park Authority was waging war on the excessive Wild Privet and scrub regrowth on the lower slopes. The Flailbot (a remote controlled cutter) was being operated by a local contractor, and doing a great job of clearing the vegetation.

Where it has cut over areas of rank grass and brambles, there is quite a lot of debris to be raked off. National Park volunteers will be there next Friday (27 October), to help with clean-up duties, so any assistance you can give would be much appreciated. Please phone Philippa Morrison-Price (SDNPA) on 07917 602371 if you can make it, meeting in the upper car park at 10.30 am.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 21-Oct-17 09:21 PM GMT

So, it's that time of year again, Neil, where you put down the camera for the main part and pick up the tools instead?

I've never seen one of those robotic cutters before. Are they a new phenomenon or have they been around for a while?

Good luck with your ongoing habitat restoration.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Oct-17 09:21 AM GMT

Hi David. Yes, it's that time of year when I, like many others, get stuck into the hands-on conservation work. I see it as 'payback time', for all the pleasure butterflies have given me over the summer – although there are many other ways of showing our appreciation.

The Flailbot is quite new on the scene, and is unsurprisingly proving popular. It's not suitable for all scenarios, but undoubtedly a very useful tool in the box.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 26-Oct-17 09:27 AM GMT

#### Woods For Wildlife

I spent an idyllic day on Thursday (25 October) working with the owners (Pete and Sally) of a private wood near Small Dole, where we were ably assisted by South Downs Volunteer Rangers Alison, Mark, Jim and Ian. While re-cutting Hazel coppice and burning up brash, we were visited by 4 Brimstone, 2 Red Admiral and a Speckled Wood.

The conservation work here has been going on for many years, but has accelerated over the last few winters, thanks to the regular help offered by the SDVRS. As you can see, the undergrowth now has a varied structure, which is ideal for supporting a wide range of butterflies, moths and other wildlife.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Matsukaze, 26-Oct-17 10:00 AM GMT

Interesting device that Flailbot. I could make good use of an armoured division or two of them!

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 31-Oct-17 07:03 PM GMT

**The Brighton Conservation Volunteers**

I'm not sure how many Weetabix the Brighton Conservation Volunteers eat for breakfast, but it's more than two. They set to work on the BC Rowland Wood reserve today (31 October), armed with scythes, saws, loppers and rakes and, as always, swarmed like ants over every job. By close of play they had achieved at least double what I was expecting, despite having seen them at work before. They will be returning several more times this winter and are making a huge contribution to conservation efforts for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Hats off to every one of them.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 02-Nov-17 01:35 AM GMT

Good luck to you and your trusty and committed band of volunteers, Neil. There a few more satisfying ways to spend an autumn/winter day than improving habitat for butterflies.

How many work parties do you run during the course of the winter?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 02-Nov-17 09:00 PM GMT

Thanks, David. I agree - no better way to spend an autumn (or winter) day, and today was one of the best.

How many work parties? I didn't really know until I referred to my project listing. It was 24 in 2016, and already 33 in 2017 (obviously most being January – March). If the average attendance is 10, that effort soon stacks up. The volunteers are supplied by Butterfly Conservation, South Downs National Park Authority (their Volunteer Ranger Service and staff) and Brighton Conservation Volunteers.

Elsewhere in Sussex, a huge amount of work is achieved by bodies such as the Murray Downland Trust and Graffham Down Trust. And then there's the National Trust, Wildlife Trust, etc., etc. Where would butterflies, moths and other wildlife be without volunteers? They're the true champions of the British countryside.

BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 02-Nov-17 09:04 PM GMT

### Back To 'Pete's Wood'

I would like to say a huge "thank you" to the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service, who assisted with further habitat improvement work at 'Pete's Wood' near Small Dole today (2 November). An early mist soon gave way to wall-to-wall autumn sunshine, as we burned up brash, re-cut Hazel coppice and brushcut Bramble. If Carlsberg made beautiful woods, they would probably look like this one (other cheap lagers are available).





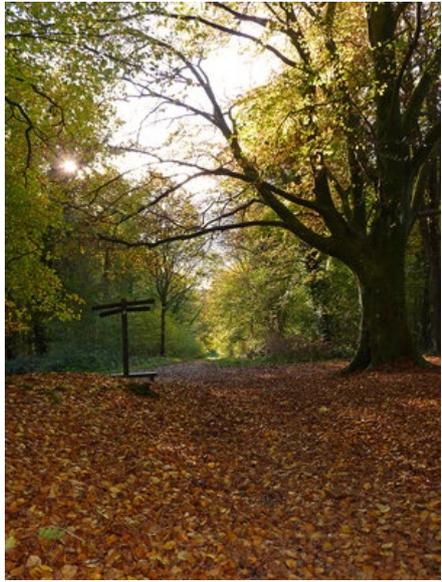
## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 06-Nov-17 10:20 AM GMT

### Eartham Autumn

On Sunday (5 November) I took a walk through Eartham Wood, primarily to enjoy the autumn colours. This Beech forest seldom disappoints at any time of year and it's becoming increasingly good for woodland butterflies from late June to September. The section of Roman road (Stane Street) is worth following out onto the open downland towards Bignor, for great views back past Halnaker Mill to Chichester Harbour. I encountered three Red Admirals and a Speckled Wood on my travels.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by trevor, 06-Nov-17 10:43 AM GMT

You mention Halnaker mill, I have a part time job very near the mill.

Last year a grounded Purple Emperor was seen on the farm premises ( not far from Earham ).

Also in late March 2016/17 the Small Tortoiseshell emergence from hibernation, could probably have given Ferring Rife a run for it's money !.

Already looking forward to next season,  
All the best,

Trevor.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 06-Nov-17 11:17 PM GMT

Thanks for the information, Neil, and thanks also for the autumnal images from your out of season forays into the wild butterfly lands of Sussex.

I'm sure 2018 will see an even greater response to the work that you and your volunteers are doing.

Best of luck with it.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 08-Nov-17 08:50 PM GMT

Thanks, David. The next post shows some pretty major stuff going on, but it's not the 'biggy' 😊.  
BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 08-Nov-17 08:56 PM GMT

**Thunderbirds Are Go**

Today (8 November) I met BC Reserves Officer Jayne Chapman, Sussex Branch Chair Nigel Symington and our wonderful contractor, Ian Hampshire, to look at progress with major restructuring work on the BC Rowland Wood reserve. Rowland Wood is currently closed to visitors for obvious health & safety reasons, but I'll be providing regular updates on progress.

Work is focused on the more remote parts of Rowland Wood, where good butterfly habitat (particularly for Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries) is currently in short supply; not for much longer! The rides and box-junctions in the more familiar parts of the reserve are also being improved through widening. The reserve will be closed for about three weeks, but the volunteer work party on Sunday 12 November will still go ahead, as Ian and his team take a well-earned rest.

Despite the use of these impressive 'Tonka Toys', the fine tuning of the habitat management work will still rely upon the critical input of our trusty volunteers, particularly over more sensitive areas. Please observe all exclusion zones, warning signs and barriers.



Thunderbirds 2 and 4



Thunderbird 3



Thunderbird 4



Thunderbird 2

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 10-Nov-17 07:18 AM GMT

Some very serious looking machinery there, Neil. I'm sure a great job will be done.

When will you reveal details of the 'biggy'?

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Nov-17 07:29 PM GMT

Hi David

If all goes well, I'll be making an announcement during the Pearl-bordered Fritillary flight season.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Nov-17 07:59 PM GMT

#### Outstanding Volunteers

Although I couldn't make it to the BC national AGM this year, I was delighted that BC Sussex volunteers Theresa Turner and Gary Norman (UKB's Gary.N) picked up Outstanding Volunteer Awards, along with other worthy recipients. They have played a vital role in my *Fritillaries for the Future* project, by repeatedly overcoming difficulties in the captive-breeding of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, for re-introduction to the BC Park Corner Heath & Rowland Wood reserves, and FC Abbot's Wood. I very much doubt that anyone, other than those very close to the project, will fully appreciate just how many hours and how much dedication this has involved. Their contribution has been immense. I'm sure that all UKB and BC members, and anyone else who loves butterflies, will join me in saying a huge "thank you" to them.

Image of Gary and Theresa with Dr Jim Asher, by Nigel Symington.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 12-Nov-17 08:18 PM GMT

#### Timber!

Many thanks to everyone who came along to the BC reserves in Sussex today (12 November), to help continue the major restructuring work. Two of us brushcut a large area of Bracken on Park Corner Heath, while the rest of the team beavered away cutting new SPBF habitat in Rowland Wood. Volunteers today came from as far afield as Australia (a new BC Sussex record). Having missed the BC national AGM on Saturday, this was an opportunity to pass my own thanks and congratulations to Theresa and Gary, who picked up richly deserved Outstanding Volunteer Awards.

We also took the opportunity to have a look at the excellent progress made with heavy forestry work by our contractor, Ian Hampshire. There's a lot of wood coming out, and a lot of light going in!



### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 13-Nov-17 11:40 PM GMT

More great exposure for your conservation work, Neil, as well as for some of the volunteers!

I don't think I can wait for your big announcement though. If I make a donation can I know it in advance? 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Nov-17 02:18 PM GMT

Hi David

I'd love to spill the beans, but until all consents and permissions are obtained, it remains a plan. Fingers crossed!

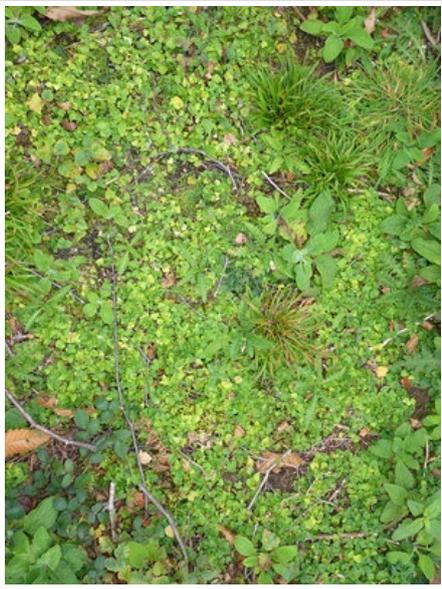
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 15-Nov-17 02:23 PM GMT

Cowdray Estate

Huge thanks to South Downs National Park Authority staff and the Volunteer Ranger Service for their help improving and expanding Pearl-bordered Fritillary habitat on the Cowdray Estate yesterday (14 November). Bracken was brushcut, chestnut was coppiced, lying brash was lifted and burned, and conifers were pruned to allow more sunlight into woodland edges. One area, kindly cut by the ever-helpful estate last winter, is so rich in violets that they have formed the most extensive carpets I've ever seen – it's now up to the butterflies to do their stuff and show their appreciation.





### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 17-Nov-17 09:10 PM GMT

{quote}Neil Hulme wrote:

Hi David

I'd love to spill the beans, but until all consents and permissions are obtained, it remains a plan. Fingers crossed!

I understand, Neil.

My donation will be forthcoming nonetheless.....as soon as we know what it's for! 😊

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Nov-17 10:53 AM GMT

#### Coppicing Continues

Thanks, as always, to the trusty South Downs National Park Authority staff and Volunteer Ranger Service, and BC volunteer Paul Day, for their efforts at recent work parties. On Thursday (16 November) a group of nine continued coppicing Hazel at Church Copse (Clapham), to create a new home for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. A different group were out the following day, cutting Sweet Chestnut at Rewell Wood.





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 21-Nov-17 09:38 PM GMT

### ... And Even More Coppicing

Today (21 November), and yesterday, I joined Chris Letchford of the National Coppice Federation <http://www.ncfed.org.uk> Sussex and Surrey Group <http://www.coppicgroup.wordpress.com> and our industrious helper, James, in cutting the second Hazel coppice coupe in a new cycle on the Angmering Park Estate.

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary habitat produced by last year's cut is exceptionally good, so we are optimistic that this species will naturally colonise the site from Rewell Wood, hopefully within the next few years. Cutting coppice is a hugely satisfying hobby and a great way to keep fit. For those, like me, who are prone to SAD, it is the best possible medicine.

Every other Thursday (next 30 November) there is the opportunity to join a coppice cutting party at Church Copse, Clapham (details will appear on the BC Sussex website).





## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 23-Nov-17 09:00 AM GMT

### Reshaping Rowland

Many thanks to Trevor Rapley and Doug Neve for helping out at Rowland Wood yesterday (22 November). In addition to dragging and burning-up brash, their presence meant that I could set to work with the chainsaw. We worked on a particularly damp and environmentally sensitive ride (where SPBF bred in 2011), from which we would prefer to exclude heavy machinery. We managed to fell almost all of the target trees, allowing much more light in and creating ideal habitat for the new SPBF population.

Our contractor, Ian Hampshire, is making great progress elsewhere in the wood; harvesting conifer blocks, widening some existing rides and creating some very impressive new ones. The aftermath of heavy forestry work always looks brutal, but Ian's work is exceptionally neat and tidy, and once each area has been tidied up, it will recover very rapidly.





**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 24-Nov-17 11:02 PM GMT

That looks like choice habitat in the making, Neil, and good that UKB members are helping out!

Fingers crossed that the target species will respond.

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 25-Nov-17 01:29 AM GMT

Even though I can't appreciate the results myself, it's lovely to read about how conservation (for butterflies) should be carried out.

Thanks Neil. You deserved that last "gong" for all you efforts and maybe will get a few more in the future.

*Q. Do you have to wear it round your neck when on these work parties?* 😊

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 26-Nov-17 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks, David. I'll provide another update at the end of this week, as the contractor will have finished and another volunteer work party will have taken place.

Thanks, Jack. No, but I'll wear it in the bath, and if ever stopped for speeding.

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 26-Nov-17 07:49 PM GMT

**Sleepyhead**

On Saturday (25 November) I paid a brief visit to Rewell Wood, to look at recent habitat work for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, and to see the Hawfinches which are overwintering here in exceptionally high numbers. Despite the earlier frost, I, like many others, continue to encounter significant numbers of Red Admiral, with a total of five seen, including a courting couple.

I then met up with the owners of a part of nearby Binsted Wood, which would disappear under tarmac if the A27 Arundel bypass Option 3 were ever to

be built. I was there, along with another couple of licence-holders, to conduct a Hazel Dormouse survey. It would appear that many dormice are still active, as numerous freshly-made nests were unoccupied, although one was being 'squatted' by a Pygmy Shrew. In the end we got lucky, but despite being weighed and closely examined, to determine sex, he continued to snore through the entire process.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by essexbuzzard, 26-Nov-17 07:55 PM GMT



. That's all.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 26-Nov-17 11:53 PM GMT

That Dormouse photo ought to be enough to kill off any prospects for Option 3.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Nov-17 08:04 AM GMT

#### More Rowland Rumbblings

Yesterday (28 November), the fabulous Brighton Conservation Volunteers returned to help with restructuring work in Rowland Wood, with BC volunteers Trevor Rapley and Dave Cook swelling our numbers. This was the second of four BCV visits planned for winter 17/18 and their contribution is proving vital in laying the foundations for what I'm certain will be a very bright future for the BC reserves in Sussex.

This highly effective army completed the clearance of the wet ride most favoured by Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, prior to its regional extinction; this is one of the rides where we don't want the heavy machinery to work.

Elsewhere on the reserve, Ian Hampshire is near to completing his four-week marathon, aided by the 'heavy artillery'. Thunderbirds 2 and 4 have now left the site, having completed their work, and a cut & collect machine has recently been in to clear some rides of dense Bramble and open up the structure of the densely vegetated part of the 'rush meadow', to increase floral diversity.

Also joining the fray is 'Mr Mulcher' (pictured), which is grinding stumps and lying debris, to facilitate future maintenance.

Many thanks to the BCV, our volunteers, Ian Hampshire, and BC Reserves Officer Jayne Chapman.



The Brighton Conservation Volunteers



'Mr Mulcher'



Yours truly on piano

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by David M, 30-Nov-17 07:02 PM GMT

Great effort by all once more, Neil. That 'Mr Mulcher' looks pretty handy to me....should quicken things up enormously.

Love the dormouse by the way...surely one of Britain's most adorable creatures?

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 30-Nov-17 07:55 PM GMT

Thanks, David.

*"Love the dormouse by the way...surely one of Britain's most adorable creatures?"*

Yes, along with Michaela Strachan. 😊

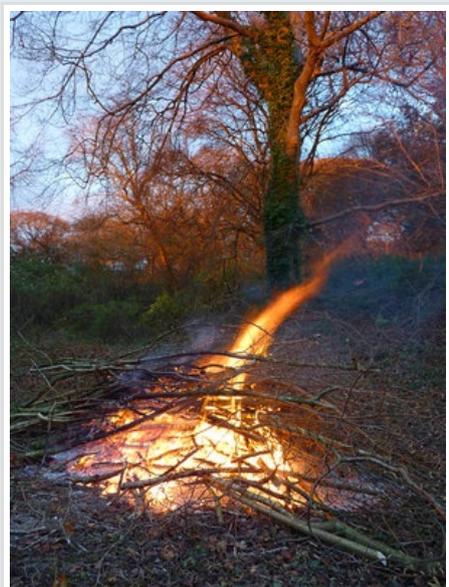
BWs, Neil

## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Nov-17 07:59 PM GMT

### Church Copse

Many thanks to BC Sussex stalwart Paul Day (who I believe was working at Heyshott Escarpment yesterday) for his help cutting Hazel coppice at Church Copse, Clapham today (30 November). We were working alongside the regular cutters, led by national park ranger Bekah. I'll be back here on Thursday 21 December, to avoid Christmas shopping, so please get in touch if you would like to join us. I stayed on for a while, to tend the fire and watch a beautiful sunset.



## Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 03-Dec-17 02:09 PM GMT

### *Fritillaries for the Future* – Project Update: Restructuring Rowland Wood

A key aspect of the *Fritillaries for the Future* project has been guiding the management of the BC reserves in Sussex, with the aim of creating and maintaining suitable habitat for the re-introduced population of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and, looking ahead (given the necessary consents), the Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Last winter we focused all of our efforts on Park Corner Heath, clearing a huge amount of scrub and reinstating a much more aggressive Bracken management regime.

This year we have turned our attention to Rowland Wood, which, given its size, has required the services of a contractor (Ian Hampshire), to take care of the heavier forestry operations. We are very grateful to BC Reserves Officer Jayne Chapman for setting up this contract at short notice. Ian's work, which has fundamentally restructured Rowland Wood, has been conducted to the highest possible specifications, in an environmentally sensitive manner. We are delighted with the results.

The much wider and extensive ride system is now in a condition which will facilitate an ongoing programme of management by machinery, ensuring that top quality habitat for fritillaries and other species can be maintained more easily. This work also allows us to meet our obligations to the Countryside Stewardship grant system, which will provide financial support in the future. However, the considerable upfront costs of this restructuring work have been met by the BC Sussex Branch; I can't imagine a better use of Branch funds.

This does not mean that we will become less reliant upon the work of volunteers; far from it. Some areas are too wet and ecologically sensitive to drive heavy machinery over, so it is vital that we manage these by hand. Volunteers will also provide the means of fine-tuning the habitat management work; it is often the attention given to small areas which creates the perfect breeding conditions for the more fussy species.

### Examples

The first image shows widening work along a wet ride which we know is highly suitable for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, but which had become choked with Bramble, willow and saplings. We are very fortunate to have hosted several visits by the Brighton Conservation Volunteers, who have done a fantastic job of clearing this area with scythes, loppers, rakes and saws, while I've put my *Fritillaries for the Future* training with the chainsaw to good use. Just around the corner, in the ride known as 'Dead Man's Gulch', BC Sussex volunteers have been performing similar work, and are creating an open, boggy area just below the lake; again, very suitable for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.



The second image shows a new ride of 30 metres width, running SW-NE in the north-western part of the reserve. Although the surface is currently dry (due to the carpet of mulchings), it is hoped that this will soon become damp, with standing water, rushes and, of course, violets. Ian has expertly crafted some cross-ditches (image three), which should provide perfect egg-laying sites for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. The fourth image shows the view from the northern end of this ride, towards a conifer clearfell, the western part of which has been de-stumped and will be maintained as a wide ride in the future. I'm hopeful that this area might be used by Nightjar in years to come.





The fifth and sixth images show how Ian's machines have carefully avoided the original ride surfaces, so as to reduce, as far as possible, any damage to the existing fauna and flora. The adjacent strips have been mulched, to remove old tree stumps and lying debris, so that tractor-drawn mowers can maintain these areas on a rotational basis.



The seventh image shows existing and newly created bunds in the higher, drier, central-east part of Rowland Wood. This area is more suitable for species such as Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Grizzled Skipper, which will hopefully breed on the south-facing slopes of these features. We know, from old records, that the Pearl-bordered Fritillary favoured this part of Rowland Wood in the late 1990s. Image number eight shows how, wherever possible, Ian has sealed the new ride surfaces with clay. This will provide a tougher surface and hopefully retain patches of bare ground and sparse vegetation, suitable for warmth-loving species.



The penultimate image shows the greatly widened ride which best connects Park Corner Heath with Rowland Wood, before running along the western edge of the lake. With just the single line of Beech trees along the parish boundary path to navigate through, this should ensure that there is some mixing of the butterfly populations between the two reserves.



Ian's cut & collect machine has cleared some rides of their excessively dense Bramble growth and, more importantly, has close-cut the densely vegetated part of the 'rush meadow'. This will open up its structure and hopefully increase floral diversity, to create the much more favourable conditions seen in the northern part of the meadow, where the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary is already breeding.



We will shortly announce the re-opening of the Rowland Wood reserve, but until Ian Hampshire has finished his work, please continue to observe all exclusion zones and warning signs and barriers.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by essexbuzzard, 03-Dec-17 11:12 PM GMT

Wow, that sure is impressive stuff Neil. The cost for all that work must have been considerable. But, so long as the branch can afford it, I can think of nowhere the money would be better spent. I hope it continues to be successful, as, after all the hard work down there, it is richly deserved, I'm sure we would all agree.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Andrew555, 04-Dec-17 08:23 AM GMT

Agreed, fantastic work Neil and all involved.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

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

Many thanks for the detailed and comprehensive report, Neil.

Your words and images translate the work on the ground exceedingly well and I can only wish I were there to lend a hand so that this project can achieve its stated aim – to encourage the permanent colonisation of this tract of land by the delectable Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary.

How I wish such initiatives were commonplace throughout the UK. If they were, then I'm sure nature would benefit....and not just the butterflies.

It's high time for government to consider a nationwide 'corridor' for wildlife. It can't be too difficult to achieve. After all, we're probably only talking about a minuscule number of acres in the grand scheme of things.

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 17-Dec-17 12:43 PM GMT

Thanks, all. There'll be another update soon, as volunteer work parties are planned for 22, 27 and 28 December. It will take a year to settle into its new skin, but by 2019 we should have something exceptionally good here. BWs, Neil

### **Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 17-Dec-17 01:12 PM GMT

#### **Egg Hunt**

On Saturday (16 December) I spent the day counting Brown Hairstreak eggs on the Knepp Wildland, as part of the annual butterfly monitoring programme. Many will be aware that this species enjoyed a spectacular population explosion there in the summer, with an unprecedented number of adult Brown Hairstreaks being recorded. Unsurprisingly, this was reflected in the egg count, with the eggs-per-hour find rate rising from the 2012–2016 average of 1.8 (which is a low figure for West Sussex) to 30.6; an increase of 1600%. I also found two pairs of Blue-bordered Carpet moth eggs on the Blackthorn.



Brown Hairstreak



Blue-bordered Carpet

### Re: Neil Hulme

by MikeOxon, 17-Dec-17 05:05 PM GMT

Neil Hulme wrote:

***Fritillaries for the Future - Project Update: Restructuring Rowland Wood***

At first glance, it looked like clearance for a new road 😊 Don't let the Council see it; it might give them ideas 😞

Mike

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Dec-17 09:23 PM GMT

Hi Mike. It's a dual carriageway for fritillaries. 😊  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 18-Dec-17 09:28 PM GMT

Wall Of Death

Today (18 December) was spent in the company of South Downs National Park Authority Rangers Bekah, Chloe, Tom, Matt and Simon, as we worked clearing scrub from the perilously steep walls of the Steyning Bostal chalkpit, which is part of the Steyning Downland Scheme area. With recent heavy scrub control performed by the legendary Flailbot, and grazing with hardy breeds of sheep, this site could become very good in the future. Brown Hairstreak eggs were remarkably easy to find.



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 19-Dec-17 02:49 PM GMT

If I have correctly identified the pit from OS and Google Earth, it would seem that the northern section of the pit is littered with [presumably] abandoned buildings and/or vehicles. How do you deal with these? Or don't you?

And once the pit is opened up, how do you prevent it becoming a playground for all and sundry including eg off-road motor bikes?

Seems to be an excellent project and I hope you can minimise subsequent misuse.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 19-Dec-17 02:57 PM GMT

Hi Jack

The very deep and more recently quarried pit you are looking at is at TQ168105. We're working in an older pit to the immediate south, at TQ168103. The only problems here are sporadic fly-tipping and (before we cut much of the scrub down) 'dogging detritus'; it's a much nicer place now. 😊

BWs, Neil

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Jack Harrison, 19-Dec-17 03:56 PM GMT

I'd missed that other pit. There seems to be an even smaller one just to the southwest.

At least this proves that I *do* look at your writings/work.

See you early May I hope.

Jack

**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 23-Dec-17 10:18 AM GMT

**Happy Christmas!**

Season's greetings to you all.

Everything seems to be pointing towards a very good butterfly season next year ... fingers crossed.

Best Wishes, Neil



**Re: Neil Hulme**

by Neil Hulme, 23-Dec-17 11:32 AM GMT

**Coppicing At Christmas**

On Friday (22 December) we started cutting a block of birch coppice on Rowland Wood, which, once finished, will complete all the work we need to do on the Sussex reserves before year-end. We'll be back here again on 27 and 28 December, so an ideal opportunity to come along and work off some of that festive flab! At various points in the day I was joined by Jonathan, Trevor, Doug, Theresa, Gary and Steve; thanks to you all.



### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 23-Dec-17 11:40 AM GMT

~~quote~~joined by Jonathan, Trevor, Doug, Theresa, Gary and Steve Surely not THAT Theresa? I can't imagine Theresa M doing anything so useful.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 24-Dec-17 10:02 PM GMT

You really are putting the hard hours in this year, Neil. I hope all your labours bear fruit come the flight season next year (and beyond).

Best wishes for Christmas and good luck in 2018.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Dec-17 12:50 PM GMT

No, Jack. This Theresa won a BC Outstanding Volunteer Award this year, for her assistance in returning SPBF to Sussex 😊. The other Theresa has yet to be nominated.

Thanks, David. I'm confident that the fritillaries will show their appreciation of all that's been done by the many people who've given so generously of their time. Happy New Year to you.

BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 29-Dec-17 12:55 PM GMT

#### End-year BC Bash

The work party held at the BC Rowland Wood reserve on 28 December was blessed with very different weather conditions to those suffered the previous day, with wall-to-wall sunshine. It was great to see such a strong turn-out, including a few new faces. A huge amount of work was performed in two areas, including the new birch coppice coupe.

The next work party here will be held on Sunday 14 January, although I'll be working elsewhere with the South Downs Volunteer Rangers. Thanks to everyone who came along: Theresa Turner, Anita Cundall, Francis and Tim Squire, Graeme Rolf, Keith Alexander, Gary Norman, Trevor Rapley, Helen, Tom and Chris Corrigan.



Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Dec-17 03:12 PM GMT

### Wildlife Art

Although not related to butterflies, anyone with an interest in the natural world may find this of interest.

My older brother, Mark, who lives in Antwerp, is a wildlife and landscape artist. He has illustrated a number of bird books and been responsible for producing a wide range of interpretation materials for various establishments, including museums. If you ever visit one of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centres you'll see his work on all the identification boards.

He has recently started showing some of his work on Instagram. I am, of course, biased, but I think it's well worth a look.  
[https://www.instagram.com/mark\\_hulme\\_artist/](https://www.instagram.com/mark_hulme_artist/)

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Wurzel, 30-Dec-17 03:22 PM GMT

Some cracking images there Neil – especially the geese coming in to land 😊 Happy New Year!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Neil Hulme, 30-Dec-17 04:37 PM GMT

Happy New Year, Wurzel. My brother looks in on my diary, so I'm sure he'll appreciate your comment.  
BWs, Neil

### Re: Neil Hulme

by bugboy, 30-Dec-17 06:03 PM GMT

I agree with Wurzel, an interesting range of styles as well, I like the black and white images. I must have glanced at his images hundreds of times as a regular(ish) visitor to the London WWT. I'll pay closer attention next time I go 😊

Also great work with all that habitat work you and your team have been doing, I've enjoyed watching things develop through your posts 😊. If I could have made it down to help myself I would have. It's good we are experiencing a decent winter to also help the Fritillaries (not to mention all our other native wildlife) along, fingers crossed for a bumper crop in 2018 🙏

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 30-Dec-17 06:29 PM GMT

I came across Mark's work by accident when visiting WWT Arundel earlier this year.

My reaction : "Those information boards and illustrations are good but could do with replacement by less faded versions." Then I saw who they were by. (Hardly Mark's fault that the boards were "tired")

I have met Mark (when I was with your Neil) in a meadow near Billingshurst.

Jack

### Re: Neil Hulme

by David M, 31-Dec-17 09:52 PM GMT

Your fraternal family links remind me of the Lewingtons, Neil. Your brother is very talented artistically, and I'm sure deep (or not so deep) down you have that trait in you as well.

If you weren't a butterfly species champion I'm sure you could be a photographer/artist.

Some folk just 'have it'.

All the best for 2018.

### Re: Neil Hulme

by Jack Harrison, 31-Dec-17 10:29 PM GMT

[quote]David M : If you [Neil] weren't a butterfly species champion I'm sure you could be a photographer/artist. Neil always claims – unconvincingly – that he has nil understanding of the technical aspects of photography. Transfer that lack of expertise (?) to art and presumably he wouldn't know which end of the paint brush to use but would somehow "muddle through".

Jack