

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jan-17 07:49 PM GMT

Thank you all for the comments – I'd not tried photos of the moon recently, and was quite pleased with the result.

Well, no more butterflies since the December bedroom visitation, so the camera hasn't been out much. I did grab a snap of a rainbow on Christmas Day up in Yorkshire, which seemed quite unusual, and another moon photo in January.



I was amazed at how bright the moon actually is – the shutter needed to be set at its shortest (1/2000) to get anything at all.

On Saturday (28th), the weather was conducive to a local walk. The first thing of interest was this sundog – really quite a bright one, with the sun itself concealed in cloud to the left.



A few long-tailed tits flew through the bare trees all along the walk round the lake, but more interesting was a solitary cormorant. I didn't realise how low in the water they sit.



Another local avian visitor which I have seen every winter for at least five years is the little egret. I assume it's the same one each year as it frequents exactly the same short stretch of stream. It is generally alone, but can occasionally be found in the company of a grey heron (though in this case it's duck!). Is the little egret a winter visitor? It does seem to disappear when the weather warms up. Here are a couple of shots from successive Sundays in January.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-Jan-17 09:40 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Little Egrets are now resident breeders in the UK, I think they first started in the '90s, I see them quite regularly on my local patch and there is apparently a breeding colony somewhere around here. Like most birds they probably disperse in winter when food becomes scarce and your one has obviously found a good regular source of winter food!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Jan-17 11:27 PM GMT

Alright Dave - I've not heard the term 'Sundogs' before but I'll use it now cheers 😊 When I was 14 I went on a twitch to Arne to see not just one but two Little Egrets 😊 And now they're a breeding species...if only Night and Squacco Herons would hurry up and get here they form a blank patch on my life list 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Feb-17 11:51 PM GMT

Today provided an opportunity to visit the Butterflies in the Glasshouse at Wisley. It turned out to be a very pleasant day, and it was a shame no native species put in an appearance in the gardens, where spring flowers were beginning to show under the trees.

There didn't seem to be so many butterflies flying in the glasshouse this year, or so many species, but there were one or two new ones. The sunshine

made them very active and it was very warm in there, as you might expect. Here's a selection.













I also spotted a display in one of the areas set aside for children describing the lifecycle of butterflies, which included a sequence of shots of Orange Tips by our own Vince Massimo, and another of Marsh Fritillaries taken by none other than Wurzel.



Fame at last, chaps! 😊

Dave

2017 Season Underway

by millerd, 17-Feb-17 03:43 PM GMT

17th February: After yesterday's exotic curtain raiser, the weather continued fine and sunny – probably warmer than yesterday in fact. I was lucky enough to have a day off work and decided to look around my local patch to see if an old adage was right: one fine day to wake them up and a second fine day to make them fly.

It certainly seemed to be true and my season was quickly off to a cracking start with a nice Red Admiral basking on the brambles.



I carried on to the area I have dubbed Comma Corner, and appropriately at the apex of the eponymous spot sat another Comma. It didn't stay long as it soon set off after another of the species and I lost track of them both.



So - 2017 off to a brilliant and unprecedented start for me, with six butterflies of three species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 17-Feb-17 05:00 PM GMT

That's a seriously good haul for the middle of february 🍀🍀🍀 , hopefully we don't get another icy blast again!

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Feb-17 05:20 PM GMT

Fantastic tally, Dave.

A female Brimstone is quite notable. I don't think I've ever seen one prior to mid-March!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Feb-17 06:48 PM GMT

The species you found today are exactly what might be expected for an early sighting. To see one is fortunate, two must be very lucky, three deserve a mrgreen or two 🍀🍀 . I went looking along the old railway, in very favourable weather, but nothing.

Well done Dave,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Feb-17 10:09 PM GMT

Thanks for the Glasshouse update – I didn't know that they'd used my photos for that – oh the fame (or is that notoriety? 😊) come the next Social I shall demand a red carpet and Doombarr served in Champagne flutes 😂😂

You had a cracking day, three species at this time of year is brill and both the Comma and Brimstone seem really early! 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Feb-17 09:00 AM GMT

Fame at last Wurzel 😊

Lovely to see the Butterflies so early Dave, 🍷 Hope it 's not to soon for them although the weather forecast is good for the next few days. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Feb-17 09:57 PM GMT

Thank you all for the appreciative comments – it was an exceptional day. 😊 I certainly didn't expect to see more than one species – maybe two. Despite it continuing fairly warm, and even sunny on Saturday afternoon, I haven't seen another butterfly since. Unfortunately I am back at work tomorrow, when the forecast is again quite favourable, so I think I shall have to be patient for the time being!

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Mar-17 06:30 PM GMT

Saturday 11th March: Having missed all the likely sunny days recently by being at work, it was great to see the clouds dissolve a bit today and some warm sunshine come through. A walk around my local patch produced just three Commas and a single male Brimstone, but they were most welcome. One of the Commas obliged me with a couple of close poses.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Mar-17 09:34 AM GMT

There must have been something about yesterday Dave as I too got three Commas 😊 Great shots BTW 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Mar-17 01:02 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Having missed all the likely sunny days recently by being at work, it was great to see the clouds dissolve a bit today and some warm sunshine come through.

I wish south Wales could have been equally warm and sunny. 😊

I noticed the south east was set to see 16-18 degrees so it's not surprising that you saw a few butterflies. I think I've read more reports of Commas than during any early spring spell for a while, which is surprising given how thin on the ground they were last year.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Mar-17 01:29 PM GMT

Your Comma's not too shabby either Dave!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Mar-17 07:50 PM GMT

David M wrote:

I think I've read more reports of Commas than during any early spring spell for a while, which is surprising given how thin on the ground they were last year.

I think they must have disappeared into hibernation early, David, so we didn't get to see many of them. They do seem to be quite widespread at the moment.

Thanks Buggy and Wurzel – yes, this one was a near-perfect specimen too. 😊 Annoyingly today's sunshine was observed through the office window: there's still not enough left by the time I escaped this afternoon. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-Mar-17 08:08 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Great Comma photos 😊

After a dull and cloudy weekend up here I too was looking at today's sunshine through my office window 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Mar-17 08:23 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. I've been trying to avoid looking at your beautiful moth photos – I can see that moth-fancying (?) would be a slippery slope to get onto! Some of them are stunning. 😊

Wednesday 15th March: another glorious day and this time I was able to call it a day at work soon after lunchtime, and set off round a circuit of my local patch to see what had been enticed out.

Just around the corner from my house, a mirabelle plum was in full flower, and flitting from blossom to blossom was my first Small Tortoiseshell of the year.



I was out for 90 minutes this afternoon, and saw (conservatively) eleven Commas, six Peacocks, four Small Tortoiseshells, four Brimstones and two Red Admirals. The numbers of Commas really are impressive!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 16-Mar-17 06:36 PM GMT

Great stuff there Dave, I've still only managed to sneak some butterflying in whilst at work. It'll be Orange-tip season before I get some sunny days of at this rate!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Mar-17 11:08 PM GMT

That first Peacock is an absolute corker Dave 😊👍 I love it when they adopt that basking posture brill 😊 Pretty good haul from the rest of the outing as well 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Mar-17 03:14 PM GMT

Lovely shots Dave, nothing here at all yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Mar-17 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you all once again.

The weekend and all of next week look good, so fingers crossed that your day off on Tuesday works out Buggy! 😊

I like shots like that one too, Wurzel – taken as close as possible to the level of the butterfly. However, once down on the ground these days, I'm there for a while.

I'm sure the weather will be good your way too, Goldie and you'll see lots this weekend. 😊

Friday 24th March. As promised, the sun broke through this afternoon, and there was just enough time after an early finish at work to nip round my local patch. First up was a Small Tortoiseshell, but as last time I disturbed it from its basking place on a logpile and it wouldn't settle again. More amenable were a series of Commas, probably five altogether. There were two at Comma Corner, along with a sunbathing Red Admiral which refused to take any interest in the antics of the Commas at all. It looked in remarkably good nick.



Hopefully tomorrow's promised sunshine will bring a few more.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 24-Mar-17 09:58 PM GMT

Lovely stuff Dave. Sods law has struck again for me, working this weekend so I will have to make do with a couple of lunchtime jaunts around work! Tuesday does indeed look good though 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-Mar-17 10:06 PM GMT

A good haul there Dave, I think the strength of the sun today just about won over the cold wind. There were certainly Butterflies to be found in the sheltered spots.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Mar-17 12:47 AM GMT

Fingers crossed for tomorrow indeed Dave, I'm pinning all my hopes on it 😊 I just hope the weathermen get it spot on for once, although even better than forecast would be nice 😊😊

It seems that your Holly Blue whispering technique also works on Red Admirals – I can never get shots of them at this time of year 🙄 Plus I too am starting to feel a bit of wear around the knees, I have momentary conversations with myself along the lines of 'if I go for the shot will I be able to get

back up?' 🙄 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Mar-17 12:16 AM GMT

Thanks all of you. It's good to be able to go out after work now, and after tonight the clock change will make things better still.

Fingers crossed for Tuesday, Buggy – if it's anything like today you'll have a great day.

You're right, Trevor – they were all in sheltered nooks.

Well, Wurzel, the forecast was pretty well spot on, though the breeze was a bit strong and not particularly warm. And funny that you should mention Holly Blues... 😊 😊

Saturday 25th March. The promised glorious sunshine arrived and I set out round my local patch at around 1030. The wind was really quite strong and took the edge off the heat of the sun, but things looked good. Still within sight of home, the first butterfly appeared, and not any old butterfly at that. A flash of silver and my first Holly Blue of the year wheeled past in the breeze. I didn't think I'd be able to follow it, but it was attracted to a white feather on the ground (they often settle on or near white patches – usually bird droppings). I managed to get close enough for one or two shots, with wings partly open too as it needed to warm up. Then it was up and away down wind and I lost it. This is the earliest I have seen one.



In ninety minutes or so, the total was nine Small Tortoiseshells, seven Brimstones, three Peacocks, three Commas and a Holly Blue. Things are building nicely and I am waiting for a burst of white butterflies soon, hopefully with some splashes of orange!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Mar-17 08:04 AM GMT

I was stuck in London all day yesterday, and with the weather, I wondered how many mrgreens I would be issuing when I arrived home. Well you get one for a start for that Holly Blue . 🦋

Might be a great day, today.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Mar-17 07:15 PM GMT

It was another good day today, Trevor. It was if anything slightly warmer, and the wind dropped a bit, especially later on.

Sunday 26th March. With other things to do this afternoon, I set off around my local patch again, albeit slightly later, even taking account of the change to BST. The pattern of sightings was subtly different, with Commas and Peacocks seen first, before any Brimstones and Small Tortoiseshells.



Following yesterday's sighting, I found two more Holly Blues. One kept its distance, but opened slightly.



However, the second one settled at a convenient height, but the strength of the sun kept it firmly closed up. It appeared slightly unusual, with the forewing dots of black elongated a bit into lines.





A six-species day, but still no white butterflies of any sort yet.

A walk down at Runnymede this afternoon was less productive. A couple of Small Tortoiseshells only.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Mar-17 09:44 PM GMT

The third Holly Blue is certainly interesting looking Dave, a very nice variation 😊👍 It did turn out nice for once and your Holly Blues are great as ever – do you think you'd have the same luck if I mentioned Long-tailed Blues 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Mar-17 06:51 AM GMT

Good to see Holly Blues emerging, Dave. You certainly got far closer to yours than I did mine.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Mar-17 09:32 PM GMT

LTB Wurzel? Hmm. Give it a shot in August and we'll see what happens! 😊 Another cracker of a Holly Blue coming up though... 😊

Yes, David, quite approachable and today's was even better.

Monday 27th March. I don't think I've ever been out looking for butterflies on four consecutive March days – certainly not with quite so much success. The opportunity today was late afternoon after work and though still warm, the sun was on its way down. However, I quickly saw my first Small Whites, all disturbed from roosting, and only one of which succumbed to a record photo.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Mar-17 10:23 PM GMT

Now I'm **truly** envious, Dave.

How is it that your Holly Blues are so much better behaved than mine!! 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-Mar-17 10:38 PM GMT

New species seem to be appearing daily at the moment. What a Spring so far !.
Great Holly Blues, and Speckled Wood. Saw both today.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-17 10:54 PM GMT

Cracking Holly Blues as usual Dave 🍷 but those Specklie underside shots will take some beating, gorgeous 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Mar-17 02:47 PM GMT

Fantastic Holly Blues Dave, also taken in what you've said about them liking the mud and taking minerals from it, I'll watch out for that at HLB, loads of mud puddles there at present. I've not seen any Species yet may be next week, yours look great. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Mar-17 08:25 PM GMT

Aah! nice fresh Specklie...time to start looking out in my garden 😊

Lovely open wing Holly blue as well 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Mar-17 10:07 PM GMT

Many thanks to all of you – it's been a cracking few days with something new or interesting appearing on every one of them 😊 The Holly Blues are so reliable round here I miss them when they don't appear. You get to know their little habits too. 😊

Tuesday 28th March. More sunshine, but by the time I could get out for a walk, only the last 20 minutes of it was left. A different Small Tortoiseshell was in the woodpile area today before the sun went in, and nearby a Brimstone actually stopped to refuel on a dandelion.



As on previous days, there were Commas, Peacocks and Red Admirals in various spots, and once again a Speckled Wood appeared, but along a different stretch of path. Another underside Comma view today, much more colourful than yesterday's.





However, today's newcomer, and my ninth species of the year, was an Orange Tip bumbling along towards me. Unfortunately, the Law of Sod came into force, the butterfly failed to stop, and the sun went in just as it escaped out of sight. No doubt it had gone to ground, but could I locate it... 😞 All I have is an orange splodge captured as it went past.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 28-Mar-17 10:13 PM GMT

Undeniably an Orange Tip, Dave, so we'll count it! 😊

If the weather behaves, I might try for a first ever March OT myself later this week. The cuckoo flower has been out for a few days now.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Mar-17 10:29 PM GMT

Lucky bugger Dave, although I did have a bloody good day myself, one of my epic jaunts out came up trumps 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-Mar-17 09:58 AM GMT

Weathers broke here Dave, so I'll have to bide my time waiting for the Orange Tips but you've got some lovely shots there, 5 species up on me 😊 Goldie 🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Mar-17 06:21 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 🍷 Although as usual the OTs are playing hard to get 😊😊 Mind you it still counts 😊

Have a goodun

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Mar-17 08:12 PM GMT

Good – the consensus is that the Orange Splodge counts! 😊 Thank you all for your support and kind comments.

Orange Tips around here are more dependent on garlic mustard than cuckoo flower. There is one solitary patch of the latter, which has been overgrown by brambles and is in the shade this year. It is out, but unlikely to attract nectaring butterflies and probably not egg-laying females. The garlic mustard is nowhere near flowering, and unfortunately is due for an "off" year after a good one in 2016. I don't expect many Orange Tips for a few days yet.

However, I spotted one (and a Brimstone) in the middle of Staines this afternoon.

Thursday 30th March. A day out of summer, with temperatures above 20 degrees and hazy sunshine. After leaving Staines (that often raises a smile... 😊), I had a wander round my local patch between 4 and 5 this afternoon. The sun was fading fast, but I came across a Holly Blue flying around almost as I stepped out the front door. However, the main feature of the walk was the sheer number of Commas. I lost count after 20 – even when the midsummer brood is at its height I rarely see so many. Courting, fighting, perching, chasing Peacocks, pottering about – they were everywhere.



male

Good numbers of Peacocks were around as well today, including that rare sighting – a dead butterfly. It appeared to have been caught by something that had subsequently spat it out.



No Small Tortoiseshells, curiously – their usual spot was occupied by two Commas and a Peacock. Finally, I encountered one Red Admiral and one Speckled Wood. The latter posed, but the former was too busy swooping up and down his stretch of path.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-Mar-17 09:03 PM GMT

That's an impressive haul Dave and some of those Commas look freshly emerged 🤪. They must have entered hibernation very soon after emerging last year.

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Mar-17 10:46 PM GMT

Your neck of the woods certainly looks to be 'Comma Corner', Dave. I'd love to know why they're so numerous this spring following their paucity last summer.

Was it down to the dryness of the winter perhaps?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Mar-17 10:55 PM GMT

It's really hard to work out, David. Thinking back, I reckon that perhaps a larger proportion than usual of the spring brood were not *hutchinsoni*, so went straight into hibernation – I do remember seeing more of these around in midsummer than usual (in fact normally there are none round here). As for the summer brood, the late summer better weather may have favoured them, so that when they too went into hibernation the total number slumbering in the undergrowth was larger than usual.

They still seem to be waking up and coming out. Also, as Buggy mentioned, they seem in excellent condition.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Mar-17 11:01 PM GMT

Interesting observation and totally plausible. Of course, that begs the question: why did the non-*hutchinsonii* emerge in such a greater proportion than normal? Was it in response to the run of poor springs prior to last year?

That's why butterflies are such fascinating subjects...there are always so many unanswerable questions surrounding their lifecycle and behaviour.

Re: millerd

by peterc, 31-Mar-17 09:05 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

I suspect it has something to do with the unfavourable weather in the spring and early summer. I remember not seeing my first Orange-tip until about 8 May last year and it took a while for the summer to get going. As far as the Comma is concerned, if at some point during the larval stage (I am not sure when), the day-length shortens the larvae will develop more slowly until emerging as normal dark-form adults in late summer rather than develop to emerge as *hutchinsoni* adults in late June or July.

If this year continues in a positive vein we may well see a higher proportion of *hutchinsoni* adults than usual. In my opinion this year has started almost perfectly: not too mild in January and February and mostly dry – in the south-east anyway 😊.

ATB

Peter

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Mar-17 08:18 PM GMT

An amazing tally of Commas Dave 🍷 😊 I still can't work out whether the male was trying to ply the female with Tyskie (it tastes better from a bottle) in order to have his wicked way or was he in need of some Dutch courage? 🍷 😊 You're doing well with Orange-tips there's only been one record from Wiltshire so far...

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Mar-17 10:24 PM GMT

There were more Orange Tips around today, Wurzel. Unfortunately I have a major camera malfunction so no shots at all today. 😞

Friday 31st March. I had another walk locally this afternoon after the cloud pushed away eastwards and the sun shone enthusiastically. It was pretty windy, though so numbers of butterflies were down a bit. Nevertheless, the Commas were there, certainly double figures, plus a Peacock, a Red Admiral and a Speckled Wood. However, the sun also brought out four male Orange Tips in various places, and as they had just woken up, they were keen to nectar and presented several quite good photo opportunities... but no camera.

Oh well, maybe a new one is required.

The whole Comma thing is fascinating, and it will be interesting to see how they do in the next brood. I have sometimes wondered whether Small Tortoiseshells follow the same pattern as Commas, only we don't notice the different forms as they look the same (if that makes sense...).

It certainly has been excellent weather where I am – seeing butterflies on seven days out of eight on my local patch is good for any time of year, let alone in March. No real hint of any change yet, either.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Apr-17 09:47 PM GMT

I do hope the lack of a camera is very temporary, would have loved to have seen some OT's. Still none near me but its probably a good thing since the Garlic Mustard hasn't even started sending up flower shoots yet!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Apr-17 10:37 PM GMT

The lack of camera lasted the minimum length of time, Buggy – I managed by chance to find an almost identical one at a sizeable discount first thing this morning and was soon back in the field. 😊

Saturday 1st April. By the time I had acquired the camera it was nearly lunchtime and there was a fair bit of cloud. Still, the new machine had to be tested. Close to home, there was first one and then another Holly Blue.



I put up three Speckled Woods after this, one after the other, and each retreated higher up as they tend to do when the sun is in and it feels cool.



Comma Corner had quite a few, as well as Peacocks, two more Holly Blues and three or four Orange Tips, though none of the latter came close.





At several points it was difficult to know what to follow with butterflies whizzing around in all directions. Commas will chase anything.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Apr-17 10:53 PM GMT

Glad to see you're back in the game but now I'm forced to leave a few of these on your page 🍷🍷🍷, your patch is most definitely a bit ahead of mine, time for me to venture a little further out this coming week 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Apr-17 11:30 PM GMT

Great to see Green Veined Whites are out, along with what I suppose will be increasingly regular Holly Blues. I guess the females will soon make themselves visible along with a few other new species that one can expect right now during an early spring.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-17 11:50 PM GMT

Good to see you've got a camera again – and what a cracking start with your new device 😊🍷 I thought I was catching you up but you've pulled away again with the Green-veined Whites – great set of shots 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Apr-17 09:47 PM GMT

Yes, David, GVW are very much out now, and I am eagerly awaiting the first female Holly Blue – as are all the males I saw today! 😊

I think I shall have to venture further afield now, Wurzel, to add to the total. But where? 😊

I'm just amazed at how much is flying here at the moment, Buggy. I clocked up nine species in about 30 minutes today, if that. Only the Small Whites were missing. 😊

Sunday 2nd April. Just to show that Holly Blues really are on my doorstep, I managed this wide shot of one with the house number in it as well...



Speckled Woods are becoming more numerous and they were popping up all along the path.



They were Green-veined Whites. They did not remain immobile for long, and took to the air a couple of times, being accosted by a male Brimstone at one point.







The female appeared slightly damaged; eventually the male took them off into the bushes.

Another terrific day.

Dave

Re: millerd

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

All those Holly Blues and Orange Tips at your disposal..... any room for a lodger?. 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Apr-17 10:26 PM GMT

I'm off the mark with Holly Blues now but still no Orange-tips for me. I shall be exploring further afield this week to up this years species count, hopefully I'll be in double figures by Friday. Seriously jealous of your local patch though 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Apr-17 11:50 PM GMT

I have a couple of suggestions Dave 😊 Seriously there was a Greenstreak at my Marshie site today – that's a little over a month early from when I first saw them last year 😊 I only hope things stay good weather wise for long enough for the species to get established...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 03-Apr-17 07:54 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

That certainly looks like a great local patch you have there, great reports and photos 😊

I have started looking out for my garden Specklies...none here yet but can't be far off now.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

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

Thanks, everyone. My local patch has done itself proud this year, but the weather has been brilliant and I have been out there looking far more than usual because of it. A run of ten days (except for one) at this time of year – or any time of year – is quite unusual. However, there has been excellent variety as well as good numbers, with no real blanks (though Small Whites have hardly been seen, and Large Whites not at all). 😊

Monday 3rd April. Back to work, and my only opportunity today was a late afternoon dash along the path by the railway at Bedfont Lakes Country Park. As you might expect, the honours were shared between Commas and Peacocks (four of each), but there was nothing else down there at all today. I shall be keeping an eye out for Green Hairstreaks from now on, after seeing them here last year for the first time.

The Commas today looked a bit more ragged than those at home.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Apr-17 09:23 PM GMT

Wednesday 5th April: After a rare "blank" day yesterday with no sunshine and no chance to get out there anyway, the forecast today was worse if anything with cooler cloudier weather predicted. Wrong again! 😊 The sun was out all day, with a bit of cloud but not enough to spoil things. I left work at three and did my usual circuit near home between half three and five.

Subtle changes here since Sunday... far fewer Commas (only 5 seen) and many more Speckled Woods (at least 8 and the most numerous species today). There were more Whites around (5 or 6, all GVW), and Orange Tips too (4 or 5, but no females yet). Peacocks popped up here and there (6 in all), and there were three Red Admirals patrolling sections of path and violently disputing the boundaries. As it was late in the day, there weren't many Holly Blues – only 5 altogether – but the highlight of the whole expedition was the first female of the year.

Here is a selection:

Speckled Woods





GVW and Orange Tip





Red Admiral and Comma



Holly Blues





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-Apr-17 09:54 PM GMT

That last image is to die for, Dave. Few UK insects are more attractive than a female Holly Blue.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Apr-17 10:20 PM GMT

I don't know, he says not many Holly Blues around (5 😊) then posts pictures like that 😊 Still only seen two so far this year!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Apr-17 08:54 PM GMT

I have to agree with you, David. A fresh female Holly Blue, especially from the spring brood, beats almost anything. 😊

I'm afraid that five is a low count round here, Buggy. 😊 Double figures is more usual except for that bit in the summer between broods.

Thursday 6th April. A day of continuous sunshine, once again somewhat in defiance of the forecast. I had to wait until half three again to get out there and did my customary walk. Again, there were subtle differences. For a start, there were more Holly Blues, but they were more active than yesterday and reluctant to pose, except for one that was taking minerals from the path, and another that repeatedly landed on an ornamental privet hedge.



Finally, I spotted a patch of garlic mustard just coming into flower, and sure enough, snoozing on a flower head was an other Orange Tip. I think this one was female – I couldn't see any trace of orange from any angle



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Apr-17 08:54 PM GMT

I agree with Bugboy Dave – you're just winding us up now 😊🍷 I got my first HB yesterday and I was feeling quite chuffed and then I see those images 🤔🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Apr-17 10:59 PM GMT

You're having a great run with these Holly Blues, Dave.

I saw quite a few today but none were remotely as accommodating as yours seem to be by default. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-17 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks, both of you – the run of sightings continued today, but the Blues were not very cooperative by way of photo-opportunities.

Friday 7th April. I popped into Bedfont Lakes CP after work just to check on possible Green Hairstreaks. None seen, and not that much else either – just a handful of Orange Tips, a Comma, a Peacock, a Holly Blue and a couple of Speckled Woods.

I also had an hour or so on my local patch, but later than the last few days, and things were settling down for the evening. I did see a dozen or so Holly Blues even so, but most were alternately squabbling and basking higher up. I did spot one new female but at too much of a distance to get much of a photo. I think the strength of the sun kept her from opening up further.



Everything else was much as on previous days, but Orange Tip numbers seem to be growing a bit.





I need to go out in the morning tomorrow (a ploy work denies me) to see if things are different.

I assume all the Red Admirals are locally grown still – there seem to be a fair number around.



A selection of other species...





I have now seen butterflies on 13 of the last 15 days.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-17 10:39 PM GMT

First of all Dave I want your local patch 🍷😄 Second 13 out of 15 is a cracking record for this time of year which can normally be a bit hit and miss 🍷
And finally you seem to have tweaked your Holly Blue technique as it now works on Orange-tips 😄🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Apr-17 10:31 PM GMT

It is a good patch, Wurzel. I have seen all the ten species around at the moment within a five minute walk of home. Here is a shot of the bit of my patch nearest home, where most of the Holly Blues are found.



Now up to 14 days out of 16, and counting...

Saturday 8th April. An absolute cracker of a sunny day, and I set off early (0900) round my usual circuit to see if I could catch the Orange Tips waking up and some Holly Blues basking. I succeeded with the first task quite well, finding several males and one female.



I also saw a female laying on holly buds right above my head.



I had three separate walks at different times today, and the mix was always slightly different. There Brimstones in the morning and Red Admirals late afternoon. Peacocks were patrolling in the morning and basking on the path later on. All ten species seen this year so far were around today at one point or another: Holly Blues were the commonest by far, followed by Speckled Woods. Walks in the sunshine at the moment are a real delight.



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Apr-17 11:46 PM GMT

More great stuff Dave 😄👍 It looks like I'm going to have to start getting up earlier 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Apr-17 12:00 AM GMT

More great observations, Dave, particularly the Holly Blues (again).

That ab. is a cracker. I've never seen anything like that.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Apr-17 10:02 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. Yes, it was worth going out in the relative chill of 9am on Saturday to see the butterflies waking up. However, as the days get longer it's going to get more difficult! 😊

Thank you too, David. After all these years of watching the species and having seen hundreds of individuals, this is the first variation that has perhaps qualified as an aberration. Remarkably true to type, they are. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Apr-17 10:10 PM GMT

Sunday 9th April. Today was truly a day belonging to high summer. I ventured away from my local patch for the first real expedition of the year, driving down to Denbies to see what might be out in the heat. Being Denbies, it was windy as well as very warm, and the Whites, Peacocks, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones I saw were all bowling along in the strong breeze. There were no Green Hairstreaks in either of the haunts in which they normally pop up, but at the far side of the slope, where there is a rabbit "lawn", it was relatively sheltered, and here I found a couple of Grizzled Skippers. I find it difficult to follow them when they are airborne, but was lucky enough to spot one on the ground.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 09-Apr-17 11:50 PM GMT

Great find in the Grizzled Skippers at Denbies, Dave 😄 You did well to find and photograph them given the hot and windy conditions today. You've also been doing really well with the Holly Blues recently, a nice find in that Holly Blue ab 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Apr-17 12:15 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, how long will the Grizzled Skippers be around for? We're thinking of coming South about the 12th of May. It 's a butterfly I've yet to see. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Apr-17 07:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike – I was pleased to see the Grizzlies. They are always out first in this particular spot, but spread across the hillside later in the season.

Mid-May should be spot on to see this species, Goldie. Choose the right site and the right kind of day and you should be in luck. You will need to get your eye in, though – a little flash of grey and they're gone, though with a bit of luck you can find one perching on a bit of grass (like mine was) or nectaring on a dandelion.

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Sunday 9th April (continued). After returning from Denbies I had a late afternoon wander locally once again. It was notable that the Brimstones were flying late today with the heat, and I tracked down a female on a dandelion, and then watched a male find itself a shady nook for the night.



Everything else was flying energetically, though as ever Comma Corner had its usual posers perched on bramble stems.



I spotted my first Large White of the year, but it settled too far away for any kind of record shot even. However, this was a real Holly Blue day – I lost count of them. It wasn't possible to pause anywhere on the walk without one or two or more appearing. As the afternoon wore on, their reluctance to settle diminished, but the heat today ensured none opened up until really late on – and then it was only one individual that did so. They were settling in semi-shade as well, not good for photography. I watched one come down to roost in the ivy, and while watching it, I was aware of others settling nearby. I had four or five around my head at one point. Though they don't roost communally in the way Common Blues do, with several on a grass stem, I wonder if they do so in little groups in the vegetation. It certainly seemed like it.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 10-Apr-17 08:39 PM GMT

Impressive stuff Dave, I'm lucky if I see 3 at once! 🍵

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Apr-17 09:36 PM GMT

With the change in the weather today to something much chillier, I saw just a single Holly Blue this morning! The others must have retreated well into the ivy.

Monday 10th April. It really did feel cold first thing today, but a few things were stirring in the strong sunshine (except for the Holly Blues, anyway 😊). Noticeably, the Speckled Woods were up and about, joined soon by Orange Tips and a few GVW.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Apr-17 11:00 PM GMT

Tuesday 11th April. Sunnier than yesterday and a fraction warmer – enough to energise the Holly Blues again. There were lots around this morning, and though some are now showing signs of wear there seem to be a fair number of fresh ones too.



Off to Yorkshire tomorrow for a few days, and extra clothes have been packed. It looks none too warm up there... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Apr-17 08:41 AM GMT

Hi Dave,
Glad you got your pristine Large White. Great Orange Tip sequence too.
I think we are both fortunate to have a very productive 'local patch' almost on the doorstep.

Enjoy Yorkshire,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-17 06:15 PM GMT

You did really well to get both those OT 'action ' shots and the Large White male 🤔👍 The Large Whites can be a right bu£fer at this time of year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-Apr-17 01:19 AM GMT

That's a lovely sequence of images again, Dave, particularly the rejection posture of the female Orange Tip which I have seen but never photographed. You clearly have more patience than me!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Apr-17 09:19 PM GMT

Thanks, all. The Orange Tips were just a case of being in the right place at the right time and clicking away. A certain amount of luck involved... 😊 I was pleased to see and get a record of the Large White too, after Trevor's great shots earlier. 😊

I have just spent several days up in Yorkshire, and it was a bit of a contrast. On Wednesday 12th, I managed to see a Holly Blue during a stop in Rugby en route to York, but that was all. Thursday 13th was at least dry, but only occasionally sunny and not at all warm. A walk at Allerthorpe had one brief butterfly moment, when the sun emerged whilst we were by a gate between the woods and open fields. The small piece of field margin produced a Speckled Wood, an GVW, a Small White and an Orange Tip. The last of these was clearly famished as even the disturbance engendered by me climbing the gate did not budge it from the patch of dandelions, and I managed a photo or two.



A few other Orange Tips were seen from the car later on, but that was it for the rest of the break. Despite some sunshine on Easter Saturday up at Castle Howard, nothing was flying.



Easter Sunday was particularly miserable, with rain and 8 degrees at 3 in the afternoon as we set off south.

Monday 17th April. Home again, but there was very little sun on my local patch and I only saw two butterflies all day. One was a Speckled Wood which was struggling to warm up on the ground, and the other was a strongly marked male GVW (most spring males are largely white), which had a deformed hindwing probably caused as it emerged from the chrysalis.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-17 09:46 PM GMT

That is a strongly marked GVW Dave 😊👍 I know the feeling of days out without butterflies – the weather in Wales hasn't been that conducive and in three days I've seen a single White, Speckle and 2 Small Torts 😞 Oh well it can only get better...and I'm sure your Holly Blues have missed you and your dulcet tones 😊

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Apr-17 08:48 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – the chilly weather seems to have come south with me and despite the sun today I didn't see much, though there were a few Holly blues around.

Tuesday 18th April. I had a quick sortie into Bedfont Lakes CP at lunchtime, hoping for Green Hairstreaks, but all on show were a Brimstone, a couple of Holly Blues and three Speckled Woods. Two appeared to be egg-laying females and were busting in and out of the base of the hedgerows. The third posed nicely however.



After work, I had a meander around some of my local patch. Given the low temperatures, the Holly Blues were already retreating to the trees where they roost – I watched three settle down in this way quite a way up. The various white butterflies were doing the same thing, and I managed bad shots of all three species high up in the foliage.



Orange Tips were winding down for the day, though I found a female still wandering along and generating male interest.



I watched one male flying endlessly up and down before finally selecting a bit of cow parsley to settle on. Once chosen that was it and he went straight to sleep, antennae tightly together.



Dave

Re: millerd

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

You still did really well despite the cooler weather Dave 😊🍷 That female OT has massive markings 🤩 Hope things improve round your way.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Apr-17 11:42 PM GMT

Those architectural surroundings are almost as beautiful as the butterflies, Dave!

You've done pretty well with your Orange Tips thus far...I hope things continue in a similar positive vein over the nest few weeks.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Apr-17 10:44 PM GMT

You're right, Wurzel - she does look heavily marked. 😊

The Orange Tips have been doing well, and have been very obliging too, David. Hopefully we'll keep seeing them well into May. 😊

Wednesday 19th April. A local walk again after work, and today was sunnier, slightly warmer, and less windy. However, I was a bit later setting out. Nevertheless, I saw more than yesterday, including several Holly Blues heading for bed in the ivy. One managed a disdainful look down from above my head.



The stars this evening though were the Orange Tips, with a couple of females and around ten males in various places. One female was nicely cooperative.





At one point, I had two males and a GVW basking in close proximity on the hawthorns, but the shot I took just has three white blobs on a bright green background. However, other males were more obliging, including one with a clear wing defect.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 20-Apr-17 09:21 PM GMT

Lovely Orange Tips shots Dave , Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Apr-17 09:42 PM GMT

Thursday 20th April. Thank you Goldie! Well, it's been said by several folk that you cannot have too many Orange Tips, and I subscribe wholeheartedly to that view, as you may have noticed. 😊

I went out locally again after work (after five in fact) to see if any were still flying in the tag end of today's sunshine. I wasn't disappointed, and within a few hundred metres of home I found a few settling down for the evening, alongside a similar number of Green-veined Whites. Their behaviour was generally very similar, with much consideration of various flowerheads before making the decision to stay put. The CVW were less ready to call it a day, and were much more easily disturbed by the breeze, or one of my less cautious footsteps. The Orange Tips on the other hand, once those antennae were firmly together to the front, were there for the duration.









I moved on, seeing if anything else was around. I looked up at an elder tree to see why an odd splash of white had caught my eye, but it was only when I had zoomed in fully with the camera that I realised this was a butterfly. Two, in fact – a mating pair of Large Whites. I did my best with full zoom to capture the event, which I don't recall having seen before.





Despite lengthening shadows I continued around the familiar track, scanning the cow parsley flowers for further roosting butterflies. It was only on the way back, with a bank of cloud making things increasingly dark, that I found a whole selection of Orange Tips dotted at intervals along the path. I found the only photos that came out were those using flash. Here are a couple of these, one male and one female I think.



I love this precise time of year, with the Orange Tips at their best, when you can go out in the early evening and be guaranteed the sight of these exquisite butterflies roosting after their hard day in the sunshine.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Apr-17 10:18 PM GMT

A truly lovely sequence of Butterflies closing down for the night, something I have yet to try. Those Large whites have adopted a very advanced position, about page 350 in the manual I should think.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Apr-17 07:27 PM GMT

Great set of shots again Dave, you're right in the assigning genders I reckon 😊 Nice to see some Green-veined Whites as well, I've only encountered a couple so far this year 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Apr-17 10:24 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor. I shall study page 350 with interest... 😊 To be honest, the position and the setting reminded me of Silver-washed Fritillaries, which are of a similar size.

Thanks, Wurzel. Yes, by the time I can confidently work this out and determine the sex, they'll be gone for another year. 😞 Still a few more weeks of Orange Tips left, I hope. 😊

Saturday 22nd April. (Part One) Despite unpromising cloudiness earlier on, I decided to go out further afield today. Right decision without a doubt. I headed for Noar Hill and arrived at about midday, and the sun was beginning to gain the upper hand. Within only a few minutes, I had seen a Peacock, a couple of Dingy Skippers and a Duke of Burgundy.



I ended up in the last pit, where I found a like-minded enthusiast concentrating on another Duke.



There were at least three here, as at one point all three of them were within a foot of each other – this of course lasted a mere second before two took off skywards. My new acquaintance also discovered a Green Hairstreak and mentioned she had been told others were around. On my way back down, I did find a little group of them sharing a large holly tree with several Holly Blues. They were all high up and very active, almost impossible to photograph. One perched for a second or two.





On reaching it, I spotted a much lighter orange butterfly fluttering over a damp patch of ground and eventually settling on it and sucking up moisture. I was very surprised to discover this was a female Duke of Burgundy.



Firstly, I don't recall seeing any female butterfly do this, and it is the first Duke (Duchess!) I have seen "puddling". But it is very dry out there at the moment... The butterfly itself was very lightly marked, even for a female - is this within normal variation? It's quite striking.

An excellent visit, but there was still time for a trip somewhere else.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 22-Apr-17 11:33 PM GMT

Looks like you hit the jackpot today Dave and the final Duchess must be an ab. I've actually found females licking dry mud paths twice, one last year and one in 2015, both at Ivinghoe Beacon. I thought it strange myself. There's pictures of both females somewhere in my PD. Looking forward to part 2 😊👍

Re: millerd

by trevor, 23-Apr-17 07:09 AM GMT

What a fabulous day you had. Vibrant is not a word to describe a Dingy Skipper, under normal circumstances, but yours is a stand out Butterfly. I imagine your camera was working overtime with so much going on. Gorgeous female Holly Blue too. 👍

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 23-Apr-17 10:44 AM GMT

Great report and photos from looks like a fabulous day Dave 😊

I am far from an expert but that Duchess does look unusual. I have seen a female taking minerals from a path once before, a few years ago at Prestbury Hill, as I remember that was a dry spring too.

It seems you took your Holly Blue whispering with you as well 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-17 07:10 PM GMT

Fantastic set of shots of the Dukes Dave 😊 🍷 Plus the usual Holly Blue 🍷 😊 And an ab Duchess 🍷 🍷 I'm going to run out of Greens if you keep this up Dave 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 23-Apr-17 07:28 PM GMT

Such a shame I missed you Dave but I'm sure we'll meet one day! You got some great shots anyway and that Duke is certainly unusual. Mike (Max) found a stunning ab a couple of years back but the next morning it had 'disappeared'! Lovely images of the Holly Blue too 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-17 09:51 PM GMT

Thank you all for your kind comments. The Duchess may be ab. *gracilens* (or something like that – one of our experts may know!) but either way it was a very attractive and different looking individual. Indeed a shame to miss you Pauline – I wondered if you might be around somewhere. 😊 Noar Hill was glorious as usual and seemed quite quiet for a Saturday with Dukes on the wing.

Saturday 22nd April (Part Two). From Noar Hill, I drove home the long way round via Denbies. I headed for the the usual sheltered path where Green Hairstreaks had been spotted by Bugboy recently, but just down from the top of the steps the flowering bugle had attracted a Grizzled Skipper and several Dingy Skippers – which then absorbed my attention for a while.



Tearing myself away, I then encountered a Green Hairstreak, which wasn't quite so wonderfully green as some are.



Aside from a very worn Small Tortoiseshell and a couple of Peacocks, nothing else was flying, but it was well worth the trip.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-17 09:56 PM GMT

Saturday 22nd April (epilogue). A quick walk locally when I finally returned home had one or two of the usual suspects: a Speckled Wood and a GVW both basking in the late sunshine.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-17 10:03 PM GMT

That is early for a Small Heath Dave 🤔🍷 - things are really motoring along now but hopefully the next couple of days of 'blip' won't be too damaging 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 23-Apr-17 10:04 PM GMT

Really nice Grizzled and Dingy Skippers there Dave 😊 I was saying to someone today how quickly the spring seems to pass by. I hope we see many more of these before it's over. I wouldn't mind if spring lasted at least an extra month.

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 23-Apr-17 10:39 PM GMT

Well done Dave. A Small Heath was seen when I was there on Tuesday but I failed to locate it myself. Good to see the dingies are out too. Hope they brought their woolies with them for this week 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Apr-17 10:54 PM GMT

You're definitely at least a week or so ahead of me in south Wales. Dingy Skippers, Green Hairstreaks and Small Heaths are yet to emerge.

At least it's something to look forward to!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-17 11:09 PM GMT

I am a bit concerned about these early arrivals and the weather prospects for the middle of the week, Wurzel - a short sharp hailstorm could finish off many of these delicately beautiful creatures. 😞 To be honest, Buggy, these fresh Dingy Skippers do look as if they have thick sweaters on. They actually remind me somehow of carpets... 😊 And I agree with you, James. Spring is the best time of year, for butterflies and for everything else. I'd swop August for another May any time. 😊

Sunday 23rd April. The sun appeared sluggishly again, but I resolved to make another trip out. This time I went up the Aston Rowant. The Chilterns are always behind the North Downs unsurprisingly, and it's always an interesting comparison with Denbies. At Aston, the sheep have been on the hill most of the winter and the grass is universally short - at Denbies it is much longer over most of the down. However, in an hour or so in calm mostly sunny conditions, I saw just one butterfly - a Green Hairstreak breakfasting on what looks like elder blossom.



With the rest of the day available, I went back to Denbies again. The coffee van in the car park and the need to get some wine from the nearby vineyard were added inducements. The mix of butterflies was the same as yesterday, though I saw five Small Heaths altogether today, and several Green Hairstreaks in their usual haunt, as well as Grizzled and Dingy Skippers.



Finally, I don't know this one, but the caterpillar next to it is probably a Six-spot Burnet.



The sunshine had now become largely absent, but it looked clearer to the north, so I set off for home with a bit of time to look around my local patch.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Apr-17 11:14 PM GMT

Alright Dave? I hope those Dingy Skippers have a proper woolly jumper with the cold snap coming 😊 Your moth is a Treble Bar, nice find 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 23-Apr-17 11:22 PM GMT

The third moth is either a Treble Bar or Lesser Treble Bar, they're very similar!

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Apr-17 11:40 PM GMT

That's **really** early for Mother Shipton, Dave. I'm more used to seeing this moth in mid-May.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Apr-17 11:08 PM GMT

Thanks for the moth ID chaps, it would have taken me a while to find that on my own I suspect. 😊

The Mother Shipton was a real surprise, David. I saw two, and both times was nearly fooled into thinking they were Grizzled Skippers. I also saw one of the common moth that often accompanies them and does Dingy Skipper impersonations – the Burnet Companion – but it wasn't having any of the photography lark.

Sunday 23rd April – back home again. After the more exotic offerings further afield it was rather pleasant to wander around my local patch and see how the more common butterflies were doing. I saw several Peacocks and Commas, the latter species still tussling madly in and around their Corner.



This spot is very sheltered from wind from almost any quarter, and the trees here are where white butterflies come to roost and where Orange Tips have their last bask of the day.



One in particular landed right in front of me.



I don't actually recall whispering to it, but maybe I did... 😊

The day drew to a close with the by now traditional roosting Orange Tip.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 25-Apr-17 09:30 AM GMT

You really have had a busy few days wracking up the species count! 🌱

Re: millerd

by Lee Hurrell, 26-Apr-17 11:24 PM GMT

Lovely photos in your recent reports, Dave.

Where do you find is the best spots for Green Hairstreaks, Dingy Skipper and Grizzled Skipper at Denbies? I've seen them in various places.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-17 10:25 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, your seeing more Butterflies than I am 😊 No Red Admiral's here yet, I've been looking back on earlier years with my BF shots and this is the first year I've never had a Butterfly in the garden in April, a couple flew over but nothing seen in the garden other than that and that was when we'd the warm spell when you'd expect them. (very bad omen for the more common Butterflies a round here.) Goldie 😞

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-17 11:58 AM GMT

I bet there was some whispering involved 😊 For me I find Holly Blues tend to make me mutter 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Apr-17 10:42 PM GMT

Yes, Buggy, I've not been doing badly, but this week has been disappointing...

Hi Lee – the first good spot for all three species is the set of steps leading down from the main path across the hillside. The other day there were both Skippers on the flowers on both sides of the steps and Green Hairstreaks on the various scrubby vegetation. The seem to particularly like a clump of nettles on the left (looking downhill) and a hawthorn bush off to the right. Otherwise, the path along the bottom of the slope all the way along is also good for Skippers, and I've found another lot of Hairstreaks over by the far edge of the open hillside where the path goes into the trees.

Better weather on the way, Goldie, and Red Admirals should start to appear soon! 😊 The cold spell has certainly slowed things right down.

I think they must know how you feel, Wurzel. 😊 They are sensitive souls... 😊

Friday 28th April. After four days which were either cloudy or downright cold (and were in any case spent at work), I finally had a walk around locally after work today. Distinctly warmer with some glimpses of the sun – enough to bring out five Orange Tips and a single Red Admiral. The female Orange Tip I saw attracted the immediate attention of a male and promptly dived down into vegetation and comprehensively hid.



Dave

Re: millerd

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

Saturday 29th April. The weather forecast suggested that it might just come out sunny later in the afternoon, especially southwest of London. I decided

to venture out after lunch and head down to Bentley Wood to see if any Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were flying. On arrival at half past two, it was still cloudy, but the sightings book indicated that one had been seen on Sunday 23rd (and by a reliable witness at that 😊). This of course was before the really cold nights, and as I walked down into the eastern clearing you could see that the tender young leaves on the oak trees had been badly burnt by frost – not altogether encouraging. A bit of sunshine around three thirty caused a couple of speckled yellow moths to appear, and then a Green-veined White, and then a Brimstone.





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Apr-17 10:30 PM GMT

You clearly made the right decision to venture out, Dave and you were amply rewarded.

Same thing happened in Swansea today – cloudy all day but began to clear up after 4pm....sadly, too late to make any visits. 😞

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Apr-17 10:33 PM GMT

I'm gutted now Dave as I was hoping to go to Bentley this afternoon! 😞 Even worse I was stuck in painting the front room when I could of been out with Pearls chewing the fat with yourself! 😞😞 Great shots though and both of those look different to the one I saw so that's at least three there now, hopefully by next weekend there will be better weather, less painting and more Pearls 😊 From the sound of the moth it could be a Fox moth, they fly maniacally around, zipping and zagging all over the shop at break-neck speed 😞😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-Apr-17 10:40 PM GMT

Lovely Pearls Dave, really need to get down and see some myself soon, especially now it looks to be warming up again 😊. Your unidentified large moth is most likely an male Oak Egger.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-Apr-17 11:20 PM GMT

Glad you got your Pearls, Dave. You've even captured the ' Ducks head ' on the underside. My local Pearls are still in low numbers, are some more going to emerge at a more sensible time ?. Or has this awful weather ruined there chances this year. Fingers crossed for a bumper year, yet.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Apr-17 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks, everyone – it was a good late afternoon. Shame you didn't make it, Wurzel: I spotted your entry in the book for Sunday and wondered if you'd see the sunshine and whizz over from Salisbury. Two different suggestions for the moth – I will go on not knowing, I think! 😊 Yes, Buggy, find yourself some Pearls while they are still fresh and glowing – such a lovely butterfly.

Sunday 30th April. A bit of a contrast, with milky blue skies and dilute sunshine though warmer and quite breezy. I had to stay local today, and to start with wondered whether I'd see anything at all. Then suddenly butterflies appeared, with a selection of Holly Blues and whites flying up from the bramble bushes, including the first Small White I've got close to this year, and a nicely marked female GWW. Soon after came the Orange Tips. All in all the Holly Blues were probably the commonest species seen – and I thought they had been dropping in numbers. There were a couple of Peacocks and Speckled Woods, but just one solitary worn out Comma.

Whites and Orange Tips:





Speckled Wood:



Comma:



Holly Blues: Most were a bit tired now and were taking a liking to the hawthorn blossom.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-May-17 03:10 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

The male Holly Blue in the last two images certainly is fresh, and stunning when they pose like that. They do seem to be having a good, long, drawn out Spring brood this year.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 01-May-17 08:23 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I was feeling pretty chuffed with some of the Holly Blue shots I have managed so far this year...and then I go and see those last two of yours 🍷 😊
Beautiful photos of a lovely fresh male 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-17 10:37 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor and Neil. To be honest, with the early start they had I am a bit surprised (though very happy of course) to still be seeing fresh Holly Blues. 😊 However, they had a strong third brood here last year (I saw a female laying on 31st October), so perhaps the early ones were progeny of the main summer brood, and the current newbies are the offspring of that third brood. Does it work like this?

Tuesday 2nd May. My only chance to see anything before once again the clouds filled the sky was a quick dash down from work to Bedfont Lakes CP at lunchtime. I didn't see very much: three Brimstones (of which two were female), two GVW, a Peacock and a Holly Blue. No sign of any Green Hairstreaks in the spot I found them last year. No photo opportunities either.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Lee Hurrell, 05-May-17 02:28 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

the first good spot for all three species is the set of steps leading down from the main path across the hillside. The other day there were both Skippers on the flowers on both sides of the steps and Green Hairstreaks on the various scrubby vegetation. The seem to particularly like a clump of nettles on the left (looking downhill) and a hawthorn bush off to the right. Otherwise, the path along the bottom of the slope all the way along is also good for Skippers, and I've found another lot of Hairstreaks over by the far edge of the open hillside where the path goes into the trees

Thanks, Dave. I occasionally come up those steps but not down them! I will vary my Denbies routes I think.

Hope to bump into you at some point soon 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-May-17 04:12 PM GMT

Lee Hurrell wrote:

millerd wrote:

the first good spot for all three species is the set of steps leading down from the main path across the hillside. The other day there were both Skippers on the flowers on both sides of the steps and Green Hairstreaks on the various scrubby vegetation. They seem to particularly like a clump of nettles on the left (looking downhill) and a hawthorn bush off to the right. Otherwise, the path along the bottom of the slope all the way along is also good for Skippers, and I've found another lot of Hairstreaks over by the far edge of the open hillside where the path goes into the trees

Thanks, Dave. I occasionally come up those steps but not down them! I will vary my Denbies routes I think.

Hope to bump into you at some point soon 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

In my experience the Hairstreaks seem to vanish by the afternoon, I've had all my best Hairstreak action before noon at Denbies.

Re: millerd

by Lee Hurrell, 05-May-17 09:28 PM GMT

Thanks Buggy 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-17 10:07 PM GMT

Thank you Neil and Trevor for your appreciation of the Holly Blues – they just seem to keep on coming! 😊

I think you're right, Buggy – before lunch is by far the best time to find Green Hairstreaks. And if you go to Denbies fairly regularly over the summer Lee, we're bound to bump into each other. Or there's always Fairmile when the Silver-studs appear... 😊

Friday 5th May. The sight of lots of blue sky today was very welcome after the grey chill of the last couple of days. I just hoped that an early escape from work wouldn't coincide with the cloud rolling back over from the east. In the end I managed to get down to Chiddingfold by four o'clock and for an hour, the sun mostly shone. It was warm as well, and as I wandered along from the Botany Bay entrance, I soon spotted a Comma, a Speckled Wood, a GVW and a couple of Brimstones. The latter two species were busy nectaring in a hurried way, and I wondered if the sun hadn't been out long down here.



After the dip down to the little bridge (which crossed merely a trickle today), I spotted a Wood White almost immediately.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-May-17 10:27 PM GMT

So nice to see those Wood Whites, Dave. There are many endangered UK species that make the headlines, but this is one under real threat. It's range is exceptionally fragmented and there are few on here who get to see them.

It's good to see they persist and even thrive in a few isolated locations.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 05-May-17 10:50 PM GMT

Lovely Wood White's Dave, I saw my first thanks to Pauline last year, their so delicate, I hope to see some again this year. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 06-May-17 08:59 AM GMT

Absolutely fabulous Wood White shots, Dave. Pauline mentioned a sighting of three the other day, but I had no idea that so many were already on the wing. A change of plan is called for !!

A mrgreen or two for you ! 🍷🍷
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-17 08:07 PM GMT

Thank you all for your kind comments. Wood Whites are a fascinating species, and the curious courtship ritual is something I never tire of seeing. As Goldie says, they are so delicate in flight, and to see one over head height is unusual and the butterfly really does look distressed to be up so high and quickly returns to ground level. The roosting behaviour yesterday was interesting too.

Saturday 6th May. There seemed to be a chance of sunshine today, so I made my way down to Denbies. There was some sun, but not a great deal, though the ground felt warm. To start with, all I saw were Small Heaths.





A most successful outing!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 06-May-17 09:25 PM GMT

Good on ya Dave! The weather hasn't been the best the last couple of days but you've gone out there and found a great range of species – and some smashing shots too, particularly the Wood Whites 😊😊 . Reckon I'll be joining Trevor at Chiddingfold some time soon. 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-May-17 10:12 PM GMT

Lovely array of species, Dave. Exactly what I'd expect in a prime spot near to you in a mild and dry year.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-May-17 10:49 PM GMT

🌱🌱🌱 They really are newbies, not a sniff of anything blue there on Tuesday, looks like my prediction of 'only days away' was spot on 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-May-17 07:16 AM GMT

I've never been to Denbies, it certainly is a cracking site, from what I've seen on here. I am in awe of your haul yesterday. Retraced your steps at Chiddingfold yesterday, had an excellent, warm, sunny morning. Did you hear the Turtle Dove ?.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-May-17 10:42 PM GMT

Lovely Wood Whites and Adonis Dave 😊 I don't know about the morning being better for Greenstreaks – there will still plenty about on the last couple of visits to my Duke site in the afternoon, in fact today they were still around at 4pm – I think though that was because the weather wasn't great in the morning 😊 Great Speckled Yellow shot – they are right pains and to get that close really takes some doing 😊🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Ps the Hill has started producing 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-May-17 10:33 PM GMT

Thank you Pauline – it's always worth going out. 😊 The less than wall-to-wall sunshine is often the best for keeping the butterflies just a bit less active and easier to see close to. It was a very satisfying couple of days and a great selection, David. 😊

Denbies is a great site, though quite extensive and requiring a bit of walking for a thorough investigation. That said, most of what I saw was in a relatively small area! Worth a visit, Trevor. Incidentally, I don't think I did hear the dove at Chiddingfold, but I wasn't listening for it. 😊

I'm sure there will be many more Adonis by the weekend, Buggy – Saturday looks a reasonable day I think. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel. Hmm – visit to a hillside down your way looks enticing. I will have to contrive something soon... 😊

Sunday 7th May. I only had a couple of hours at lunchtime before my youngest son's birthday trip to Harry Potter World near Watford (Worth a visit if you've seen the films...). I set off locally once again with the sunshine getting warmer by the minute. The first thing of note was that there appears to be a fresh flush of brand new male Speckled Woods. I saw three and each one was a lovely deep chocolate brown (like the one I saw at Denbies). I assume these are the results of the overwintered larvae, with the earlier ones coming from overwintered pupae. A complicated species.



However, as continues to be the case since they first appeared this year, Holly Blues were the most numerous butterfly again today. I counted over 20, including a female laying on dogwood.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-May-17 11:05 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

I'm sure there will be many more Adonis by the weekend , Buggy – Saturday looks a reasonable day I think. 😊
Dave

Yes the next few days look to be a bit of a mixed bag but unfortunately I shall be working the next two weekends, having swapped with a work colleague who wanted this coming weekend off 😊 On the plus side had I not swapped I would have missed out on the PBF ab on Saturday 😊

Great set of pics there and a good haul for a couple of hours out, I had similar luck on Sunday afternoon on my patch 😊

Re: millerd

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

Still weaving the old Holly Blue magic Dave 😊 and a lovely 'smoky veined white' 🍷 The Hill had 5 Marshies, 1 Duke and a Wall on Sunday...what's the weather like this weekend?...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-May-17 11:32 PM GMT

I'd say the PBF was worth the shift swap, Buggy. You don't see those at Denbies! 😊

The weather looks 50 – 50 at the weekend, Wurzel, but might be okay. I might possibly try Wednesday this week if I can get the day off as more sunshine is promised then. By the way, I don't believe in Walls on your hillside – I've been three years running and each time you've sworn they are there, but not even a fly past... 😊😊 Maybe this time round. 😊

Yes, those Holly Blues were queuing up to be photographed on Sunday, but that GVW was probably my favourite butterfly of the day, a close run thing with the Speckled Woods.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 09-May-17 08:07 PM GMT

A cracking variety of species in your recent reports Dave...great stuff 😊

millerd wrote:

...The first thing of note was that there appears to be a fresh flush of brand new male Speckled Woods. I saw three and each one was a lovely deep chocolate brown (like the one I saw at Denbies). I assume these are the results of the overwintered

larvae, with the earlier ones coming from overwintered pupae. A complicated species...
Dave

Yep...I see the same thing in my garden and have been getting the second flush over the past few days. The offspring of all these also develop at different rates which leads to the series of overlapping emergences later in the year and gives them such a long flight period.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-May-17 10:39 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. 😊 I just noticed you made the same observations in your PD about the Speckled Woods: they will be a pretty well permanent presence now until the very end of the season. Fascinating.

Tuesday 9th May. I only had a very short walk locally today, and it was right at the end of the day – quite sunny, but a bit chilly. I came across a single Holly Blue, three Speckled Woods, a male GVW and a couple of female Orange Tips. And that was it!



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-May-17 10:04 PM GMT

Wednesday 10th May. A glorious sunny day living up to the forecast. Having secured the day off, I drove down to Wiltshire and a certain hillside. First and foremost, at this point I need to apologise to Wurzel, because before I had even passed the gate leading from the layby, I had seen a Wall. A nice male, as well, and the first of four or five seen today.



Here is a list of the species seen today:

- Brimstone
- Orange Tip
- Large White
- Green-veined White
- Small White
- Wall
- Speckled Wood
- Small Heath
- Peacock
- Red Admiral
- Marsh Fritillary
- Brown Argus
- Holly Blue
- Small Blue
- Green Hairstreak
- Duke of Burgundy
- Dingy Skipper
- Grizzled Skipper

Others saw a Small Copper too, but I failed to find this one. Here are a few of those seen:





sucking up minerals from the path



one of many dozens flying



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-May-17 10:14 PM GMT

No need for the apology Dave 😊 Looks like the Hill provided plenty of quality if not quantity...hopefully it's just because of a slow build, you did visit 19 days earlier this year 🤔 Even here you manage to get the Holly Blues to play ball 🤔🤔 Interesting about the Duke, mind you 25 were seen today two hills further West 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-May-17 10:13 PM GMT

It looks like a further visit later in the month is on the cards then, Wurzel! What a shame... 😊

I couldn't ignore the Holly Blues, now could I. There were one or two along the field margin at the bottom and quite a few in the copse next to the layby.

Wednesday 10th May (continued). Once I was home again, even though it was late afternoon, it was noticeably warmer than Wiltshire. I set off around my local route, and ended up taking several photos of species I hadn't managed out west, including one I hadn't even seen on Wurzel's Hill.



I found a Brimstone in an unusual spot settled on a fence, but from a distance it did blend in – how did it know?



Late sun brings out Red Admirals – very much an evening butterfly – and several were soaring and perching, and a few Speckled Woods and Holly Blues were still active.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-May-17 10:53 PM GMT

That Holly Blue 🍷 Interesting that the Brimstone chose to hide in plain sight 🤔😅

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-May-17 12:34 PM GMT

Great Holly Blue Dave Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-May-17 12:38 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

That Holly Blue 🍷 Interesting that the Brimstone chose to hide in plain sight 🤔😅

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Yes that final holly blue 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-17 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks again to all of you. 😊 It was a smashing butterfly that Holly Blue, even by the local standard operating here! 😊 I am amazed that there are still fresh ones appearing and though numbers are dropping a bit, I still saw seven or eight around the usual hotspot quite late yesterday afternoon.

Thursday 11th May. A late scoot around my local patch in a bit of patchy sunshine: Red Admirals were the most noticeable species active, and very active at that. I saw half a dozen, tussling with each other, with Speckled Woods and even at one point chasing after a lumbering wood pigeon. They sometimes react to the aircraft taking off from Heathrow. They are very curious, and if you stand in the middle of their territory for long enough they will investigate and readily settle on you.



Friday 12th May. After work today, the sun began to break through after some welcome rain (not seen that for weeks). I went down the road to Bedfont Lakes Country Park where the sun had brought out the first Common Blues I've seen this year. In about 20 minutes I saw half a dozen, all male.



This was not all – along the fence line between the park and the railway line, I spotted a female Green Hairstreak investigating the many clumps of trefoil growing here. I didn't get a lens on it, but it is good to see the colony persists from last year. Middlesex Greenies are a rare commodity! Finally, I managed a decent shot of a Burnet Companion, to add to my collection of incidentally photographed moths.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-May-17 10:45 PM GMT

Good news about your local Green Hairstreaks and that's a very good shot of a Burnet Companion 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-May-17 10:46 PM GMT

Good to see you've got Common blues round your way Dave, that means they'll start showing up regularly round my way in about a weeks time 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-May-17 12:16 AM GMT

Eighteen species on your 10th May trip is some return, Dave.

If I can hit 20 anywhere in the UK even in mid-summer I consider that to be abnormally good!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-May-17 12:09 PM GMT

Some great shots there Dave , love the Common Blue photo's Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-17 12:11 AM GMT

Thanks, Buggy – normally this moth will never allow any close approach at all, so I was pleased with the shot. 😊

I'm hoping the Blues will appear on my local patch soon too, Wurzel. Maybe tomorrow... 😊

18 was very good, David, though in a week or so you might be lucky and find as many as 7 more: Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady, Small Copper, Common Blue, Adonis Blue and Large Skipper could all be added before any of the others disappear... Maybe even a Meadow Brown. It's an amazing site. 😊

Thank you, Goldie – the first ones of the year are always a joy. 😊

Saturday 13th May. With the forecast a bit uncertain, I decided to head off out anyway, and made my way to Totternhoe, on the downs near Dunstable, mainly to see if the Small Blues were out yet. It was noticeable that the site looked "behind" the more southern hills I've been looking at recently in Surrey and Wiltshire, and there were no Small Blues. I carried on round the site to see if any Dukes were encouraged out by the brightness (not exactly sunshine). I managed to find several, in a selection of separate chalk pits.





Aside from the Dukes, there were several Dingy Skippers in the pits and the sun brought out one or two Brimstones and Orange Tips.



Finally, on the way back to the car, I nearly stepped on a Green Hairstreak trying to blend in with the vegetation on the path.



More Dukes were to come later at Ivinghoe Beacon, a bit further west along the hills.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-May-17 07:46 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

Sorry for the belated reply, only have limited use of a business computer at the moment.
I must comment on your Wall Brown images from last Wednesday, surely the prize of the day !.
That opportunity must have been almost unique, Wall on Cow Parsley, rather than on the ground.
Great to meet you again (the last time we were looking for something purple).

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-May-17 10:05 PM GMT

Interesting Duke there Dave, it definitely looks paler both on the topside and underside and it has some of the white edges left so it isn't that worn.
Better get one of the experts to pass judgement on that, the other shots are great 🍷 But no Holly blue 🤔 Have you got laryngitis 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-17 10:23 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor - I had that Wall photo in the bag within two minutes of arriving at the Hill. A very unusual pose for the species: I had to look twice before I worked out what it was! 😊

I'm glad you agree about that Duke, Wurzel. 😊 I wonder what it looked like completely fresh? The underside is particularly pale (compare the worn one from your Wiltshire Hill above, which still had a quite dark underside), and actually quite attractive, particularly in the shots nectaring on the hawthorn. Not often you see them do this. No Holly Blues to talk to at either site I visited on Saturday, but they were hanging around for a chat on Sunday back at home, as will be revealed in due course... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-17 11:09 PM GMT

Saturday 13th May continued... After Totterhoe, I drove the relatively short distance west to Ivinghoe Beacon. After the obligatory ice cream in the car park, I set off for one of the sheltered gullies where Dukes can be found. Sure enough, there were perhaps ten individuals flying in this particular nook, along with Dingy Skippers and a brand new Brown Argus.



Others had seen Green Hairstreaks, but I wasn't so lucky. Nevertheless, the Dukes were very amenable and displayed considerable variety.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 14-May-17 11:15 PM GMT

You're definitely enjoying a 'golden' spell right now, Dave. Holly Blues, Brimstones and Commas have seemingly disappeared from my area, and Common Blues, Dingies, Brown Argus, Small Heath, et al are yet to really get going.

Hard to believe we're pretty much on the same line of latitude a mere 100-150 miles apart!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-May-17 10:09 AM GMT

I second David on his species comment, they've not shown up here yet, just the Dukes, your shots of the Dukes are great, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

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

Thank you, Goldie – they are lovely little gem of a butterfly with lots of variety between individuals, and we are both lucky to be able to see them without going too far from home. 😊

I've been lucky to be able to make the most of what sunny weather there has been and in fact the lack of brilliant sun has made things easier in some ways. I think latitude is clearly not the only factor, David, but I'm not quite sure what is. Overall, you may have had more sun recently where you are, but I think that (in respect of my local patch at least) there may be a benefit from the Heathrow "heat island" effect. Holly Blues in particular are still going strong (quite possibly the progeny of the 2016 strong third brood – this strategy can succeed, clearly).

Sunday 14th May. Good spells of warm sunshine today, so I had a lengthier walk around my local patch. I found what I had hoped to see in the form of two or three Common Blues, the first here this year. They were very flighty in the wind so photos were at a premium.



The breeze kept the Small Heaths down on the ground too, but there were reasonable numbers, well spread out.





I saw egg-laying on various plants and have started a separate thread devoted to this subject. <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?t=9308&start=0#p119955>



On the subject of eggs, I also found what I guess are GVW ova on a type of crucifer.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-May-17 10:36 PM GMT

Really nice variation in your Dukes Dave, that 'dark' one is really different 🤔🌍 Great to see you seeing multiples of Common Blue as well, last year was dreadful for them so fingers it's looking better for this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-May-17 10:57 PM GMT

Another good range, Dave, and I take your point regarding your local climate.

We may be on an almost identical line of latitude, but your inland location makes you warmer from April to November whereas our maritime climate will pay dividends through winter and very early spring.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-May-17 07:28 PM GMT

It was a good selection of Dukes, Wurzel – the variety helped in establishing that there were more than I thought. By no means all are shown here (I left out several older worn individuals). More Common Blues shortly – they seem to be better than 2016 at two of my nearby sites. 😊

You definitely have a softer climate overall, David. And much better views! 😊 I always like your coastal scenery shots.

Tuesday 16th May. Very warm today, but I was stuck indoors during the sunny part. However, under increasingly grey skies I had a brief sortie into Bedfont Lakes Country Park after work. The warmth prompted a few Common Blues to defy the overcast, but soon even they elected to adopt the head down roosting position.



Finally, can anyone identify these bugs/beetles for me?



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 16-May-17 08:16 PM GMT

Hi Dave, looks like the Common Blue may be about to have a better year than last year (can't be much worse) I've started seeing them fairly regularly too now.

Your mating beetles are a type of Soldier Beetle, *Cantharis* sp. probably *C. rustica* 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-May-17 10:30 PM GMT

Lovely selection of Blues Dave, won't be long before the Large Skippers are joining them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-17 11:22 PM GMT

Thank you chaps – more Common Blues today, even after yesterday's extended downpour, plus that elusive local hairstreak! 😊

Thursday 18th May. I escaped work for the hour between noon and one and popped into the country park again. There was still warm weak sunshine and I was soon amongst Common Blues in the same spot as the other day – more, if anything, including some very fresh ones.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-May-17 11:26 PM GMT

That's a great find Dave and great shots of the egg, hopefully they'll come to fruition next year, more Greenstreaks for you 🤔🍷 Isn't your Greenstreak a 'punctata'?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 19-May-17 06:12 AM GMT

Great shots of the egg-laying Dave (mind, you're getting plenty of practice recently 😊😄). I know from personal experience how difficult it is to record this on camera. Not only do you have to be observant enough to recognise the egg-laying is happening in the first place (not entirely easy with some species), you then have to be quick enough to get into position for the shot without spooking the butterfly – oh yeah, and after considering the butterfly there's the camera technicalities to think about! 🤔 Great field craft, great result 😊😄

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-May-17 07:20 AM GMT

Like myself, you've had a great time this week, after dodging the showers !.
The egg laying Green Hairstreak being the icing on the cake.

Keep up the good work,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-May-17 09:56 PM GMT

Great sequence, Dave, particularly the Green Hairstreaks. This is indeed a fantastic time of year to go 'hunting', with so many new species starting to fly alongside others that have been about for a week or two.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-May-17 08:58 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – yes I suppose she was a bit spottier than usual. I do hope they are definitely here to stay, though unfortunately the sanitisation squad may well come later on and mow the verge here as they did last year. We can't have untidy Country Parks, can we? 🤔

Thank you, Pauline – your comments on the camera-work are much appreciated, considering the wonderful images you have posted here on early stages. You're much better at it than I am! 😊

Thank you, too, Trevor – it was a lucky hour in which to find this. Green icing on the cake? Reminds me of a song, and that was about a Park as well... 🤔

Thanks to you as well, David. It's my favourite time of year in many respects. 😊

Friday 19th May: I had to go up the M40 this afternoon to collect one of my sons. I gave myself an extra hour and diverted a short way off the motorway to Aston Rowant, another lucky hour when the sun shone before some heavy showers appeared. I walked along the sheltered bottom of the slope, and soon disturbed one or two Brown Argus. Just as the hedge runs out, I glimpsed a flash of bright blue which was found to be relatively fresh male Adonis. The various shots I managed to take show the subtle colour changes depending on the strength and angle of the light. They are lovely insects.





The sunshine had by now energised other butterflies, and down at the lowest point of the hillside, where there were longer grass stalks old and new, there were a lot of Brown Argus, and good numbers of Common Blues as well.



It was good to see so many Brown Argus in a small area of the field. However, there is a lot of rock rose in flower currently, so it shouldn't really be a surprise! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 20-May-17 10:13 PM GMT

Brilliant Brown Argus photos Dave! I love the threesome with the unwanted male. It seems to be a good year for BA's.

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-17 10:12 PM GMT

Thank you, James! 😊 There were certainly a lot of Brown Argus flying up at Aston Rowant, and had the sun stayed out I suspect I'd have seen even more.

Saturday 20th May: Very little sunshine until too late in the day to do much with it. However, in one bright moment, the warmth was enough to wake up an Orange Tip, which immediately set about nectaring.



There can't be many more days to see them this year, now, so make the most of it!

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-17 09:55 PM GMT

Sunday 21st May: More sunshine today as the cloud built then gradually dwindled, finishing with a summery end to the day. I was out during the earlier part, when more cloud made the butterflies easier to get close to. Out of 14 species seen on my local patch this year so far, I saw 13, with the only absentee being the Small Tortoiseshell. No.14 here for 2017 was the Brown Argus, flying amongst the more numerous Common Blues.



New kid on the block today



Hiding away at the end of the day



Two of these still haunting "Comma Corner"

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-May-17 09:58 PM GMT

Great stuff with the Brown Argus Dave 😊 Rex is right this does seem to be a good year for them – I was at the Hill on Sunday with Phizloid and they

were the second most common species after the bucket loads of Marshies that were about 😊 The orange-tip also seems to be doing well as well 😊 Love the different shades you've captured on the Adonis from electric blue through to pastel, beautiful 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-May-17 10:01 PM GMT

That female Large White seems to have an unusually large, bulging forewing spot. The Green Veined is a beauty too.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-17 10:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel - yes, there were quite a few when I visited your Hill... And now you say there are lots of Marsh Frits too! I feel another trip west coming on. 😊

That spot is definitely a bit odd, David - I wish I'd got an upperside view now. That would have been interesting. 😊

Tuesday 23rd May: I had an unexpected trip up to Rugby today, but was able to make the return trip at a leisurely pace. After a cloudy morning the sun was just breaking through as I came down the A423 at Southam. Naturally enough I pulled over into the bypass layby to check the Small Blue colony. I found about a dozen Small Blues, but there could well have been many more as the steep bank means I could only really look at the border at the bottom.



However, the surprise for me was finding Dingy Skippers, as I've not seen them here before.





More Small Blues were to come not far away at Bishop's Hill.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 23-May-17 11:23 PM GMT

Lovely Small Blues, Dave. Hope to get some decent shots of them myself. Going to Wurzels hill tomorrow, and possibly several days thereafter. Keep an eye on my diary before risking a long trip.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 24-May-17 12:38 PM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on peoples diaries, your local patch is doing rather well 😊. If you're still searching for Small Coppers this year, look no further than Bookham 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-17 10:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor - I shall look out for your reportage from the Hill. 😊

Yes, Buggy, it's been good so far hereabouts, though no Coppers yet. I always forget Bookham before White Admiral time, and it's easy enough for a quick visit from here, or en route back from Denbies. Thanks for reminding me! 😊

Tuesday 23rd May: Part Two. After the Southam bypass, with traffic rattling past a couple of metres away, it was only ten or fifteen minutes further down the road to drop into one of Neil Freeman's favourite spots at Bishop's Hill. Much quieter! The sun was well and truly out now, and it was getting very warm. As Neil described recently, you only have to step into the site to be aware of little silvery-blue insects fluttering everywhere. They were mostly in and around the patches of lush grass and flower growth here, but some strayed beyond into the area of abundant kidney vetch, shared with Common Blues, though the latter's territory was more up the hillside where there is extensive bird's-foot trefoil. On a previous visit a few years back I found Dingy Skippers, but saw only one fast-moving individual today. However, I did see a single Grizzled Skipper.



The Small Blues were varied, some fresh, some quite worn, but there certainly were good numbers of them in quite a small area.







There was still time for another stop off on the way home...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-May-17 10:34 PM GMT

Cracking set of Small Blues Dave 🍷🍷 Looking forward to the final stop-off 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-May-17 10:51 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – nothing very spectacular, but I find it very hard to drive past Aston Rowant on the M40 – you can see the whole hillside beckoning to you! 😊

Tuesday May 23rd: Part Three. Yes, Aston Rowant. It was by now very warm and the butterflies were mostly highly energised (and to be honest, with the heat I certainly wasn't!). The first sighting was a female Green Hairstreak, scudding at low level over the grass – straight uphill. Next was the surprise of a Small Tortoiseshell disturbed from the path – my, did that butterfly move! I then moved into the realms of rock rose and Brown Argus – they were everywhere.



As I plodded back to the car I stopped to take one last Brown Argus photo – well, it did pose rather nicely. 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-May-17 11:13 PM GMT

Lovely set of Blues Dave, and the first Brown Argus was worth the wait, it's a cracking little BA with a slight white mark around the dark fore wing spot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-17 10:30 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. I hadn't noticed the hint of white round those forewing spots. Worth a look in the future, perhaps. 😊

Only very brief venturing forth on **Wednesday 24th** and **Thursday 25th May**, and not at all on Friday 26th. It was noticeable how the heat and strong sunshine actually kept the butterflies hiding or flying manically. The Holly Blues are still around in small numbers, but were not stopping at all. I was surprised to see three different Commas on one afternoon, and several Peacocks – the old guard hanging on in there – but no Orange Tips. I fear they have come to an end for the year. Red Admirals ruled the paths and glades along the River Colne, and Common Blues are appearing now over a wider area, and showing a particular liking for grass vetchling flowers (which look like miniature sweet peas). One was anomalously marked underneath. A small selection:







unusual joined spots on the underside



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-May-17 09:30 AM GMT

Lovely photo's of the Brown Argus Dave, I believe the Northern Brown are out at Warton Craig , it reminded me when I saw your one with the bits of White 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-17 07:25 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – I should like to see the Northern variety at some point just to see the differences. 😊

Saturday 27th May: Really windy today, though still very warm. I was confined to visiting my local patch so I set off with the target of finding some Large Skippers, which must be due any time. Sure enough, I tracked down at least two, one of each sex, both clearly very new.



There were also plenty of Small Heaths, beginning to look a bit tired, though.



The final butterfly seen was a fresh Speckled Wood, in lovely velvet chocolate colours.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-May-17 08:56 PM GMT

Hi Dave, just catching up on your outings. Looks like you made great use of your recent trip to Rugby with the stops at the Southam Bypass, Bishops Hill and then Aston Rowant on the way back 😊

I noticed your comment on the low numbers of Dingy Skippers at Bishops Hill, just a few years back I would see good numbers there but last year numbers were down and I only saw a couple this year. Some parts of the site are suffering from scrub encroachment, mostly hawthorn, which is one possible reason.

That is a beautiful blue female Common Blue you found there and interesting to compare her with the male in the same photos 😊

I also saw my first Large Skippers today, I have noticed in previous years that this species seems to appear all over the country at about the same time.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-17 10:29 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil. It's such a good route back from Rugby, with all the sites a stone's throw away. It does seem odd that there are so few Dingies at Bishop's Hill, considering how much foodplant there is on the hillside. The Small Blues continue to flourish though it seems. 😊

Sunday 28th May: As rain was forecast later, I limited my day's excursion to Denbies. Most unusually, there was not a breath of wind, but it was very warm with hazy sunshine. Small Heaths were everywhere, and there were good numbers of Adonis Blues both male and female, but otherwise all I saw were a few female Green Hairstreaks pottering around near the ground, a handful of Common Blues and Dingy Skippers, one Grizzled Skipper and a single Painted Lady flying up the hillside far faster than I could dream of following.



the male



the female



dark against the chalk



aberrant underside

Also of note were half a dozen Clouded Buff moths, a most attractive species whose wing markings are almost reminiscent of some kind of airline logo!



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-May-17 10:59 AM GMT

Love the Adonis shots Dave, you certainly had a good day out Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-May-17 12:00 PM GMT

Looks like the Adonis first brood are thriving in the dry spring so far, I wonder how they'll fair in the second brood 🤔

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-May-17 10:09 PM GMT

You're having a good run with the aberrants Dave 😊👍 I had a Common Blue with similar merged spotting a few years back and I found that it made it quite obvious - I'd leave it and have a look at something else and then a quick scan around and there it was again, really easy to find 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-May-17 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks, all. Adonis are another species it's impossible to tire of. 😊 It was interesting to get some behavioural shots as well, including male and female together.

On the way back from Denbies, I followed Buggy's suggestion and popped into Bookham. Unfortunately, the skies had darkened by the time I arrived, and all I managed to find were a single Common Blue, and a Red Admiral, plus a Painted Lady which landed on the path in front of me but was too skittish to be photographed. It bounced off ahead of me and then away northwards much in the manner of Tigger.

Tuesday 30th May: With sunshine threatening towards the end of the afternoon, I managed to get a lift to Harmondsworth Moor and walked back. This is where I usually first see Meadow Browns, but none appeared today. However, there is loads of trefoil here this year, and unsurprisingly there were good numbers Of Common Blues.



Walking home took me back through my local patch where more Common Blues were flying.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-May-17 10:20 PM GMT

I've seen and identified those beetles before Dave, they look like they've been on steroids with bulging legs, but I can't remember the name (Camp..something)? It seems like it might be a good year for Painted Ladies as the world and their wife seem to be recording them 🇺🇸.

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-May-17 10:24 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel - there seem to be two sorts of beetle and a fly of some sort there, but the one with green shiny thigh pads was the most interesting!



Wednesday 31st May: I had the afternoon free, so hoping the forecast of sunshine was accurate, I set off westwards and had another look around the Eastern Clearing at Bentley Wood. Despite warmth and intermittent sun, not much was flying. All the Fritillaries seen initially turned out to be worn PBF, and even they were difficult to approach.



At last, a couple of much brighter individuals were spotted, but would appear and then disappear infuriatingly. Finally I found one of them basking under the cloud cover and waiting for the sun to come out again: a perfect new-looking Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.



It would appear they are still emerging, but in very small numbers (though a fellow enthusiast told me they are actually better than last year).

It was now nearly four: time for somewhere else? At this time of year, the long hours of daylight meant a definite yes, so I headed even further west...
(to be continued)

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-May-17 11:12 PM GMT

Hi Dave, regarding your Thistle flowers, the beetle with Chris Hoy's thighs is *Oedemera nobilis*. Only the males have the swollen thighs so the other slimmer beetles may well be the females. The fly is a Conopid fly *Sicus ferrugineus* 😊.

Looking forward to the next part of your trip, didn't go to a hill did you?

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Jun-17 08:12 AM GMT

Yes, Buggy, I'd put money on it. After the disappointment of his previous visit the hill would act like a magnet, especially as he's seen my bait ! 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-17 09:38 PM GMT

How well you seem to know me! 😊 I toyed with the idea of Martin Down as an alternative, but that would have required negotiating Salisbury on the way back as well, so I opted for the Hill again.

Wednesday 31st May: Part Two. It took almost exactly an hour to reach the Hill from Bentley Wood, and I arrived there exactly at five, with now almost wall-to-wall sunshine. I didn't need to go far to find Marsh Fritillaries – there were several nectaring on the brambles close to the bottom path, along with more honey bees than I've seen for a very long time, and dozens of burnet moths. Many of the Fritillaries were getting worn and acquiring the "greasy" look that earned them one of their former names.





Moving on, there were more Marshies scattered along the slope, and I found one mating pair. They were very restless, with both parties trying to bask in the sun at the same time at one point.





Also seen this evening were several Large Skippers, a few Adonis, a few Brown Argus, one Green Hairstreak, and a Peacock.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-17 09:56 PM GMT

A great return from the Hill Dave, glad it finally paid up 😊 Great sequence with the Brimstones 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Jun-17 10:23 PM GMT

My money would have been safe !. At least this visit produced an action packed afternoon.

The Brimstone earns you a mrgreen. 🍷 Most Marshies were fresh last Wednesday, just goes to show what a difference a week can make.

I believe your green Moth is a Forester Moth, saw one at Tilshead last week.

Great stuff, Dave.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-17 08:04 PM GMT

Thanks for the moth ID, Trevor. They are nearly as green as a Green Hairstreak! 😊 Thank you both for your comments on the Brimstones. I was very chuffed to get the photos. There are lots more in the sequence but those two show off the upperside of both butterflies to a tee. 😊

Thursday 1st June: Another warm sunny day in prospect, so I headed for Surrey heathland and Silver-studded Blues, already reported to be out. The first site to visit was Thursley Common (just off the A3 heading south, immediately before the Hindhead tunnel). This is a big expanse of sandy heath, with gorse, heather and some young birches. Before going very far, in the environs of a fenced-off weather station, the Blues started to appear. Most were fresh, but one or two had been out a day or two. I saw a dozen or so, all males. At one point, several took a simultaneous interest in a particular

bit of heather – normally a sure sign of the presence of a female. However, I couldn't spot her.



More Blues to come...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-17 09:01 PM GMT

Thursday 1st June: Part Two. From Thursley, I went straight back up the A3 to Cobham, and a little way further to Fairmile Common on the road to Esher. The first thing I found was that the usual car park was blocked off, so I had to park a bit further up the A307 on the other side and walk back. Silver-studded Blues were out here as well, in similar numbers to Thursley, but more spread out.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Jun-17 11:21 PM GMT

Great to see your Silver Studded Blues, especially the one on Bell Heather. When I was a small boy we used to go to Hindhead for picnics and I can remember blue Butterflies on the Heather on the edge of the Punch Bowl. I've often wondered if there is still a population there.

Re: millerd

by David M, 03-Jun-17 02:19 PM GMT

Some wonderful shots in those last few posts, Dave, with my particular favourite being your first image of the pair of Brimstones. You've done exceptionally well to capture a sharp image of both sexes with wings open.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-17 07:53 PM GMT

A great set of Silver-stud shots Dave – especially the female – the black spots on her under wings are, to use a pupil's term and spell phonetically, ma-who-cif 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-17 09:04 PM GMT

I don't know about Hindhead and the Devil's Punchbowl area, Trevor – the scenery is wonderful and the vegetation appears suitable for SSB. It is also very close to Thursley and other areas of heath with the species. I will try and check it out in the next few weeks. 😊

Thanks, David – I was very pleased with the Brimstone images. The credit really goes to the brilliant features attached to even relatively ordinary cameras these days – the skill comes in deciphering the instructions! 🤪

Thank you Wurzel – those spots are a tad large (more old-fashioned terminology 😊). A nice little insect.

Friday 2nd June: Back to work unfortunately, but afterwards there was time to go out locally under very warm but cloudy skies. Despite the lack of sun, Speckled Woods and Red Admirals were still flying under the trees.



I saw three in a small area, and expected all to be male at this stage of their emergence. However, the second one seen was female, and glimpses of the upperside showed brilliant orange markings contrasting with rich milk chocolate. She was, however, not prepared to open up, though provided good underside views.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 03-Jun-17 09:23 PM GMT

Just spotted those Brimstone shots Dave – fantastic. Don't think I've ever seen a post on here where both male and female have their wings open together. RE SSB at Punchbowl – I looked years ago and couldn't find any but wouldn't surprise me if they are there. It's close to Bramshott where they are widespread – and Thursley too.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jun-17 08:03 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline. I just need to try the technique with Clouded Yellows (assuming there will be some this year!). 😊

Saturday 3rd June: A trip down to Denbies hoping to combine the visit with a sighting of "Flying Scotsman" steaming along the railway line at the bottom. However, my guess as to the timings was a couple of hours adrift (they try not to advertise the times) so that was a bit of a failure. That left the butterflies. In the bright sunshine, there were dozens (maybe even hundreds) of Small Heaths, more than I think I've see here before. Adonis Blues were still flying, and the odd Dingy Skipper, Brimstone and even a worn Green Hairstreak.





A few Large Skippers were now nectaring on the slopes, curiously in the same locations as the Silver-spots will do in about six weeks time and almost causing a bit of a double-take.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jun-17 06:32 PM GMT

Sunday 4th June: Only local wanderings today before the predicted cloud arrived in the afternoon. It is noticeable how bereft of white butterflies the paths and tracks currently are: spring feels over and it has taken the Orange Tips with it. However, the meadow areas and their hedgerows are productive, and included sightings of four new Small Tortoiseshells, very active and nery – though I spotted one sitting on a bramble flower.



The weather looks foul for at least two days now, so that'll be it for a little while I think.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-17 09:57 PM GMT

Great set of posts recently Dave – the Red Admiral on the hand is a particular favourite as I've just recently sorted through to produce a folder of 'Butterflies in the hand' on my iPod and I could do with one of those 😊🍷 Hopefully the weather will return to 'fair' in time for the weekend 😊 It would be nice to have a proper flaming June for once...

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-17 07:47 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – find the right spot and an inquisitive butterfly and you'll charm a Red Admiral down, no problem! After yesterday's weather (10 degrees, a gale and pouring rain at nine in the morning – it could easily have been December) flaming June looks an unlikely prospect unless in a swearing context... 😊 However...

Wednesday 7th June: Still very windy to start with, but sunshine. I couldn't escape work until about half four, but had a wander around my local patch just as cloud built again. Firstly, I found two Red Admirals under the trees, and one posed for a while on a tree overhanging the river.



They were joined by two or three Meadow Browns, and along the bramble hedge, a new Large Skipper was basking.



This to me really heralds the start of summer proper, and these are glorious butterflies in my book, much underrated.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 07-Jun-17 08:33 PM GMT

That's a great looking *hutchinsoni* Comma, Dave. You were lucky to get any decent shots in the wind today, or skillful perhaps 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Jun-17 08:58 AM GMT

I agree with Mike, cracking shot of the H. Comma, they are so much brighter, almost two tone 😊 Nice double eye Meadow Brown as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-Jun-17 12:08 PM GMT

Good to see Commas making a reappearance, Dave. That's a great underside shot too with the insect in a perfect pose.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jun-17 11:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike – I found some sheltered paths where it wasn't so blowy, and that Comma was in a particularly calm spot. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – it was a beautiful insect, completely fresh. 😊 You're right, there are really only two colours – the orange base and the brown overlaid on top. The same coloration as a lot of fritillaries, really.

Thank you David. 😊 The summer undersides are splendidly cryptic, designed for hiding in quite different foliage to the winter ones.

Friday 9th June: a Red Admiral evening. My usual local walk was punctuated at regular intervals by swooping, soaring, occasionally squabbling members of this species. Altogether there were at least ten of them, with overlapping patrol zones causing many tussles. Most of them appeared very fresh, out today or very recently, but there were a few older ones as well.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-Jun-17 07:35 AM GMT

Great selection, Dave, and in a week of almost continuous gales/wind/breeze.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-17 12:11 PM GMT

Nice shots Dave, no MB's here yet or LS's just bad weather. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-17 09:50 PM GMT

Lovely Red Admirals Dave, as you say some really recently emerged 😊 That Comma thought, stunning, it's soooooo ginger 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Jun-17 10:34 PM GMT

Since we visit the same sites quite often, your diary is usually at the top of my list to check on what's about if I've not been able to get out for a few days, looks like I have some serious catching up to do! Those *hutchinsoni* are truly stunning 🍷

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jun-17 11:51 PM GMT

It looks as if the weather may perk up round your way a bit by next weekend, Goldie – I certainly hope so. 😊

Definitely a fresh local crop of Admirals, Wurzel. 😊 A reliable sight here in almost any month of the year these days. And the new Commas are just magnificent.

Yes, Buggy, get out and see them whilst they're fresh – they haven't got the staying power of the hibernating brood... 😊

Saturday 10th June: Glorious weather this morning, but I was forced to stay local – which is no great chore as there is always something to see. For the first time in quite a while, I saw all the common Nymphalid species on the same day: Red Admirals, Commas old and new, an elderly Peacock, several new Small Tortoiseshells, and two Painted Ladies. The wind made photos difficult to achieve and the sunshine made the butterflies very active: the Painted Ladies were just astonishing in their high speed aerobatics. New *hutchinsoni* Commas appeared in their usual haunt at Comma Corner – two in particular spent ages contesting the right to sit on the same leaf.



It seems that the new brood revel in sunshine and hide away if it's cloudy. However, the hibernators appear to cope happily with less sunny and warm conditions, as you might expect. I didn't see the two generations together, and I do wonder how they would interact.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Jun-17 05:19 AM GMT

Your local patch seems to defy the 'June gap'. I went to two usually good sites on Saturday, and nothing at all. The old railway did perform, however. Great Comma, and Small Tort. images. How's the brownie point/annual leave situation?.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-17 09:15 PM GMT

June has brought a marked change, Trevor, but things never quite dry up, and the appearance of the new Commas, Red Admirals and Skippers has kept things going. 😊

Sunday 11th June: More sunshine today and I expected a broadly similar day to Saturday on my local patch. There were brand new Commas again (but no old ones)...



the (rather battered) winner

Some of the Common Blues were still in reasonable nick.





Meadow Browns were more frequent than yesterday but still difficult to approach.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Jun-17 09:49 PM GMT

Dave, it's tough reading to see such an array of species when I'm stuck at work!!

I love the fresh Commas in particular! 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-17 10:13 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave – there is quite a difference, even though they're pretty two tone, in the markings on those fresh Commas 😊 It's great to see Smappers on your PD as that means they'll be round my way within the week 😊 I also noticed (you know what I'm like for seeing spots) that one of the tussling Brown Argus was pretty 'lightly' marked on the hind wing underside – a possible ab?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jun-17 09:49 PM GMT

Looking out of the office window at a sunny day can be very depressing David, when you know there are things out there to see. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – yes there is quite a lot of variety in those Commas, and there are a few more every day at the moment which is good to see. And you're right about that Brown Argus – I wish I'd come across him before he started beating up his rivals and become so battered. 😊

Monday 12th June: Late afternoon after work and there were more Commas, and a healthy portion of Red Admirals.





The red bands were divided by heavy black lines on this rather worn individual...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-17 08:59 AM GMT

It's good when the Meadow Browns finally start opening up, but generally when they're past their best 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-17 10:34 PM GMT

That's true, Wurzel. It's rare to catch a fresh one doing it, especially a female. 😊

Tuesday 13th June: I was out around the same time as yesterday, and though probably warmer, it was quite cloudy. The stand out feature today though was that along a substantial bank of brambles along the banks of the River Colne, not far from the M25, there had been a notable emergence of Small Tortoiseshells. I counted about a dozen (quite likely to be some repeats in there, I suspect), and there were lots of chases going on involving multiple butterflies. Mostly they basked on the brambles and other foliage, or on the path – which is where they were most accessible for photos.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-17 11:12 PM GMT

Wednesday 14th June: A hot and sunny day. I escaped from work a bit early and decided on an expedition up the M40 to Whitecross Green Wood to see and catch a glimpse of a Black Hairstreak before the end of their distinctly early season. The paths through the wood are resplendent with flowers this year and there were Large Skippers everywhere. There were quite a few tired-looking Common Blues, Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods and Commas, plus one bright and very active Red Admiral. The skippers were all posing very nicely.



I saw a few more over the blackthorn here as well, so all in all between 8 to 10 were seen. I spoke to a fellow enthusiast from Coventry who had seen a White Admiral earlier on, but I wasn't so lucky.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-17 08:18 PM GMT

Pretty envious of your Blackstreak Dave 😊🍷 I just can't pluck up the courage to go for them for fear of disappointment 😞 Oh well, maybe next year...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-17 03:28 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel – they are quite a lot of effort to see well, even when you're right at a hotspot. You can quite easily tick off a sighting, but decent photos are hard to come by. There seems to be a ready supply of honeydew on the leaves this year, so they have no need to nectar instead. 😊

A quick visit to Bedfont Lakes CP on 15th produced Commas and Large Skippers, but little else. On **Friday 16th June**, I decided to have a look at the Essex Skipper colony which is perched on a grassy bit of roadside close to the airport perimeter. It was late afternoon, and a piece of cloud obstinately covered the sun for most of the time, but in this very small area of verge there were half a dozen roosting skippers.



The Essex Skippers are noticeably early – in the year I discovered this compact little colony (2012), they were fresh on 12th July.



Dave

Re: millerd

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

Great shots of the Essex Skippers, Dave. Unmistakeable!

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 18-Jun-17 07:50 AM GMT

Some lovely pictures of the Skippers Dave. I saw my first ones of the year yesterday and they were out in their hundreds.

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Jun-17 11:53 AM GMT

Great shots of the Essex Crooks 🍷 they've clearly all had their dabs taken 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Jun-17 03:48 PM GMT

It's my turn to show 🍷🍷 greens, lovely shots of the Skippers, I've only ever managed one shot of them and that was not a pretty one so I'd love to see more, mine always turn out to be Small Skipper's Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Jun-17 09:48 AM GMT

Ticked of my season first Essex the other day, whilst in Essex looking for WLH 😊. They are early here as well, seemingly emerging at the same time as Smalls.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jun-17 11:09 PM GMT

Thank you all for the kind comments. 😊 They are a very photogenic butterfly and their persistence in this spot amazes me every year. I wonder how they came to be here? 😊 It's interesting to compare them with the Small Skippers in the photos higher up in my diary just to see what differences there are (apart from them dipping their antennae in the inkpot!).

Saturday and Sunday were a complete blank for me. I developed something nasty tooth-related and spent some time tracking down an emergency dentist. It was also very hot and the combination kept me indoors. However, on Monday 19th June I felt better, and despite even more torrid weather, I decided on a walk at Black Park in Buckinghamshire. Within a few minutes of arriving in Strawberry Wood, I had seen three new species for the year: White Admiral, Silver-washed Fritillary and Ringlet. However, I thought for a while that I would be unsuccessful getting any photos of any of them, and in the end came away with none of the Ringlets and just one of a SWF, caught as it took off from a rare nectar stop.



I had almost despaired of the White Admirals as well, until I discovered what they like to do in hot weather. I found a shady grove of small oaks alongside a path, with a few brambles underneath. The shade was dappled and the path was in full sun, and three, possibly four, White Admirals were circling at low level around the grove. They paused every now and then to perch on a leaf, usually in the shade.





This particular one seems to convey the heat of today with very much a summer butterfly.



Also seen today were Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods, Commas, Large Skippers and a single elderly Brimstone.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 20-Jun-17 03:19 PM GMT

Great shots of the White Admiral Dave, it's in my book for this year hope fully. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-17 07:31 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – I really hope you catch up with them this year. 😊 They are such graceful insects and I could watch them for hours. I pretty well did yesterday!

Tuesday 20th June: another hot day providing many photos to sort. However, I did undertake to post these on behalf of the foot in question, so by way of a curtain-raiser...



A full account of the day will follow.

Dave

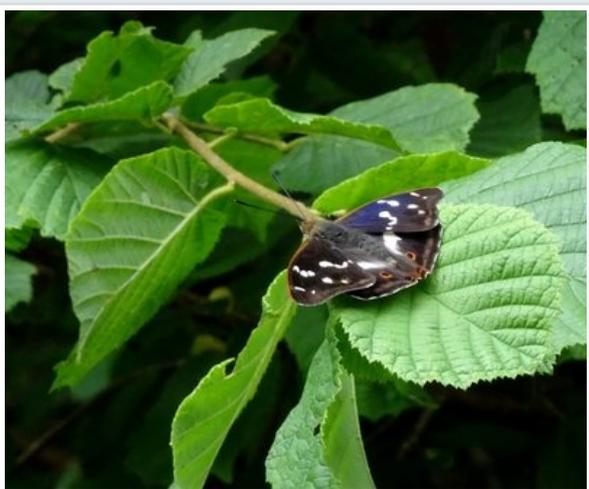
Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-17 09:30 PM GMT

Tuesday 20th June: A slightly cloudy and cooler feel first thing, and probably my only opportunity to see Purple Emperors this season. I headed down to Chiddingfold where I knew Trevor would be established in a faint aroma of tuna... Coming in from the Botany Bay entrance, I wandered along what is now a very shady path and crossed the bridge over a mere trickle of a stream. At this point, lack of proper observation cost me a photo of a fresh male Purple Hairstreak. I spotted the butterfly in time to identify it, but too late to avoid disturbing it; I had to watch it make its way lazily up into a hazel. Drat – or words to that effect... 😞

However, things rapidly improved, as climbing the hill I spotted two familiar figures in classic pose peering down at the track. Trevor and Philip Underwood had just found the first Emperor of the day. Very shortly after that, another appeared, and over the course of the morning, at least three were seen – though only two were seen on the ground. Trevor's bait worked magic, and kept the insects engrossed for lengthy spells, with them often returning after being disturbed.





We had the butterflies to ourselves - there were just the three of us, which made a pleasant change from previous years. What else was around? Silver-washed Fritillaries, Commas, Admirals both Red and White, Skippers Large and Small, Meadow Browns, Ringlets, a single Brimstone and a couple of Marbled Whites. The SWF were constantly in motion as the sun climbed but one or two of the other species obliged with photos.



As Trevor has said in his diary, it was an excellent morning and it was good to spend it in such good company – cheers to you both! 😊



Of course the day was not yet over...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jun-17 10:11 PM GMT

20th June: Part Two.

After returning home for a siesta (what a civilised idea that is in hot weather), I ventured out onto the M25 again around four. The traffic was a bit slow and the car thermometer crept up to 38 degrees at one point. However, by the time I reached Box Hill, the target for this expedition, it was down to only (only!) 30.

I was here to see the annual butterfly display on Burford Spur, where Marbled Whites and Dark Green Fritillaries take over the slopes for a few weeks. I wasn't disappointed: there were well over a dozen new DGF and hundreds of lovely fresh Marbled Whites. The former were still very active, but thinking about roosting in the trees, and the latter were starting to roost in the grass. Any movement at all sent up clouds of them, plus Skippers and Meadow Browns in good numbers. Unfortunately, it was too hot to stay for very long, but this piece of hillside is worth a visit any time over the next couple of weeks – the sooner the better while the butterflies are still fresh.





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Jun-17 10:17 PM GMT

I'm so envious of your Emperors, Dave. This is one species I have to travel at least 2 hours to see, and it always comes at a difficult time of year for me too with my French Alps commitments.

Most UK species I see in abundance on the continent, but there are a few which I can only realistically see in Britain – Purple Emperor is one of them, as well as White Letter Hairstreak, Scotch Argus & Large Heath.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 20-Jun-17 10:21 PM GMT

Don't suppose you or Trevor can send a few friendly Emperors over to Bookham could you! Saw one today who seriously threatened to settle in front of me but bugged off into the trees at the last second!

Box Hill does look good at the moment doesn't it, I was there last Friday for my first DGF and MW fix of the year 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Jun-17 11:02 PM GMT

Great to see you again, today, Dave.
Yes we all had a wonderful time, and plenty of action.
I do, particularly, like your shots of H.I.M. lazing (momentarily) in the trees.
Good to see your Dark Greens.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 21-Jun-17 12:29 AM GMT

Nice Emperor shots, Dave 🍷 and the DG Fritillary shots are not bad too! 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 21-Jun-17 11:31 AM GMT

It might not be first hand but seeing your lovely images of PE is the next best thing Dave 😊 What a pity we didn't get a chance to meet at BB 😞

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-17 06:52 PM GMT

All these shots of Him are starting to get to me now 🍷 ...what with the season being early I might miss out as Mrs Wurzel has booked me up for the next two weekends 😞

Have a goodun

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-17 10:26 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. It was a great day and luck was there as well, considering the day before and the one after were nothing like so good. 😊 One day we'll meet, Pauline – our territories do definitely overlap a bit so it's bound to happen one day. Second brood Wood Whites in August?

Wednesday 21st was a day back at work and far too hot to contemplate any activity after I finished. As reported, it reached 35.5 degrees hereabouts and was still around 30 at sunset. I doubt I would have seen much anyway, except perhaps for Red Admirals flying after dark, something I've seen here before in hot weather.

Thursday 22nd June was another day at work, but mostly cloudy and more sensible in terms of temperature. I had an hour around five to look around my local patch under the warm overcast. On reaching the open meadow area between the motorway and the M25, I found surprising numbers of butterflies. They were mostly Meadow Browns, but every footstep disturbed one or two. In amongst them were Small Heaths, and a selection of Skippers – photos confirmed there were both Small and Essex flying, as well as a few more tired-looking Large ones.



Essex Skipper



As I ambled along the edge of the meadow where there are banks of brambles, I watched what I thought was male Meadow Brown completely ignore a basking female. Unsurprising, really – it was actually a male Ringlet.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Jun-17 01:18 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, I think my trip to Fermyn will be on the cards soon for his Highness, I went 17th July last year but that could be too late now, well done with your shots of him Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 23-Jun-17 04:18 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

One day we'll meet, Pauline – our territories do definitely overlap a bit so it's bound to happen one day. Second brood Wood Whites in August?

You're on Dave! I'll put the date in my diary 😊😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-17 09:51 PM GMT

Great to see the Essex Dave 😊 And those Commas are wonderfully marked 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-17 10:20 PM GMT

Than you, Goldie. I do hope you get to see HIM at Fermyn – I think I was really lucky on the day I could get out this year. 😊

Ok, Pauline – that's sometime in August then? 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – yes an infinite variety of beautiful Commas. 😊 Definitely up with the fritillaries in my book. 😊 It was tricky with this Essex Skipper as it was part of a separate colony to the roadside ones, and mixing with the Smalls. It was good to have one of each to post in roughly similar condition.

After correcting the dates above I think I'm right in saying that **Friday 23rd June** was my next day out. 😊 I was heading to Taunton for the weekend, so despite overcast conditions, a stop at Collard Hill was essential. Mid-afternoon under the clouds, I managed to see ten or eleven Large Blues across the site, learning from Gabrielle the volunteer ranger here this year that they have a penchant for roosting in the many gorse bushes. Several were seen in this way.





Also seen: A phantom of a Painted Lady, a Small Tortoiseshell, a Marbled White...



...and lots of Meadow Browns and Ringlets – both of which relish these conditions.

I hoped to drop by again on my return journey...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-17 10:35 PM GMT

Sunday 25th June. I did drop back into Collard again on my trip home, though rather later in the day. Still rather cloudy and not so warm either, but a few breaks in the clouds promised something. I actually saw only three Large Blues today and two were rather worn.







The angle of the light markedly changes the colour of the wings – in some angles they were steel grey, at others deep blue. A lovely insect whichever way you look at it! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 25-Jun-17 10:40 PM GMT

Shame you didn't get a bit more brightness, that bit of blue you got looks lush without the bleaching effect of the sun 🌞

Edit* I see you had better luck on the return visit with uppers 🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Jun-17 11:28 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊 Good to see that you got the upper wing shots in the bag as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 25-Jun-17 11:57 PM GMT

Amazing that Collard's Large Blues were looking worn when last weekend those at Daneway Banks were still emerging.

Always nice to get a few open wing shots of this species though, so well done for that, Dave.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Jun-17 06:18 AM GMT

You had a similar experience to me at Collard Hill, on 15th June.
Lots of cloud and nearby blue sky failing to come any closer.
Gabrielle was a treasure, a guided tour of the site, and as a first time visitor, some advice on where to look.
Glad your visit paid off, and some great shots too.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-17 09:11 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. 😊 Getting two bites at the cherry made up for the somewhat indifferent weather, and it was great to see this splendid little gem of a butterfly with a personality all its own. The hillside looked absolutely baked solid, so I hope this doesn't have an adverse effect on the egg-lay and on the ants as well. There was a lot less thyme in flower than last year.

Back to work, unpleasant weather and various other things kept me away from butterflies for four consecutive days – a record since March I think!

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jul-17 09:38 PM GMT

Friday 30th June: I sadly had a funeral to go to this afternoon up in Kettering, and had agreed to meet a friend for lunch beforehand.

Rather than waste the morning, I decided to go up first thing and visit a spot I've never been to before – Fermyn Woods. There was no one there – this seemed odd having heard tales of bulging car parks... It was mostly cloudy, but reasonably warm, and the first thing that struck me were the clouds of Ringlets that erupted from the verges of the path at every step. For all their numbers, they were nearly impossible to photograph, unless distracted by other imperatives.





. Finally, moth of the day was this one – all ID ideas gratefully received. 😊



The rest of the day was a moving occasion, joyous, uplifting and sad in equal measure. A memorable day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 01-Jul-17 10:04 PM GMT

Possibly "Shaded broad bar" *Scotopteryx chenopodiata* (happy to be corrected !) regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-17 09:53 PM GMT

Allan is right with the ID Dave...Sorry to hear about your sad day but glad that you were able to get a little natural therapy. As Fermyn was so quiet does that mean the Emperor season is over 😊 Lovely set of Silver-washed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jul-17 09:58 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

I can confirm Shaded Broad-bar for your moth.

Great report from Fermyn. I haven't made it there again this year, my plans were already made when the Purple Emperors decided to emerge early. I think they have caught a few people off guard this year hence why I have read a few reports of not many people at Fermyn. Of course the ascendance of Knepp has also perhaps played a part in tempting some people there instead.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jul-17 10:34 PM GMT

Thanks everyone for the moth ID. My moth folder is steadily growing, but I doubt it'll ever reach the proportions of yours, Neil! 😊

Fermyn wasn't quite what I expected, with no people and just the one Emperor. The complete absence of any White Admirals seemed odd, too, with so much bramble about and so many SWF appreciating it. Maybe it was just too cloudy. There was also not a single Gatekeeper...

Saturday 1st July: my first outing locally for over a week. Largely cloudy again, but warmer than yesterday, and things have moved on quite a bit. The first big change was the arrival of the Gatekeepers. There were dozens of this charismatic little butterfly, which seems to have stuck to its usual appearance date unlike many others.







Dave

Re: millerd

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

Looks like you had a similar day to mine, saw my first Gatekeepers of the year too today and a few Holly Blues who weren't stopping for man nor beast. Like you I also saw my first summer brood Peacocks but interestingly they seemed to be behaving like spring animals, holding territories. One flirted with a female Red Admiral. Don't be surprised if we get some second brood Peacocks this year!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Jul-17 10:52 PM GMT

Great to see the Gate Keepers again. I kept an eye out for them at Chiddingfold on Saturday but none seen. Lovely Summer Peacock too.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jul-17 09:46 PM GMT

Thank you both. I will be looking for those black caterpillars again before long, Buggy – I saw a Peacock today contesting a prime bit of path with a surprised Red Admiral and a couple of Commas. It was good to see so many Gatekeepers, Trevor, especially after none at Fermyn.

Sunday 2nd July was a glorious summer's day – loads of sunshine, a breeze and not too hot. A walk a bit earlier in the day round my local patch produced another couple of species on top of yesterday's tally (Ringlet and Speckled Wood), making 18 in all. Not bad for an unmanaged bit of ordinary countryside. A selection from the day:





Going out again in early evening, I tried to find Purple Hairstreaks in accessible spots. No joy here, very distant splodges were all I could manage.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-17 10:55 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, just catching up on my posts, sorry about your sad day.

I was thinking about going to Fermyn Woods on the way to my Daughters next weekend 15 Th. July but from your account I wonder if it's worth it, if the weather's good we could chance it being has you did at least see one. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 09:30 PM GMT

Worth popping into if you can, Goldie – as they say, if do you go you might see something, if you don't go you definitely won't! 😊

Monday 3rd July: I had to pop up the M40 this morning, so on the way back around lunchtime, I diverted off to Aston Rowant. It was mostly cloudy and quite cool until well into the afternoon, and very breezy. Marbled Whites were the the most frequent butterflies, with Meadow Browns close behind.



However, a brand new Marbled White takes some beating.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jul-17 09:50 PM GMT

3rd July (continued): By the time I reached home and had a wander out locally, the sun was out and the temperature had gone up quite a bit. There was nothing new to report (though the Gatekeepers were mostly hiding from the sun!).



Both of the latter were out in force late this afternoon, with the Commas generally preferring to bask and the Admirals charging around madly after anything that moved – mostly each other (or me).



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Jul-17 10:52 PM GMT

Tuesday 4th July: Following advice and directions from Buggy I set out to defeat a bit of a nemesis of mine – White Letter Hairstreaks. I have one solitary photo of a whole butterfly from some years back, and I have only glimpsed them since. So it was off round the top half of the M25 to Leigh-on-Sea, the posh bit of Southend. The initial part of the walk from there to Hadleigh Castle takes you between regenerating elm thickets fringed with brambles – mostly pink-flowering but starting to go over into fruit. It was very warm but bright rather than sunny. And there they were – at least half a dozen WL Hairstreaks of various ages nectaring on the bramble flowers. Interestingly, on looking at the first photos I took, there was a second butterfly behind the one I'd spotted which I hadn't seen at the time.







As well as the WLH, there were several Commas, including this one laying an egg.



As you might expect, there were a lot of Essex Skippers, but also a few Small ones as well, numerous Ringlets, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, and Marbled Whites and Small Tortoiseshells too.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Jul-17 07:42 PM GMT

Wednesday 5th July: After yesterday's excitement, I decided to go less far today and headed for the familiar slopes of Denbies. As I expected there were lots of Marbled Whites, and a multitude of Skippers, but it was a little while before I found the first Chalkhill Blues. They seem to be only just starting to appear, as some were flying a bit shakily.





As ever, a piece of dog poo attracted a small cluster of this butterfly, but not in the numbers I've seen before. Early days, perhaps. Also seen today: Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Small Heath, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, a single Brown Argus, and two or three Dark Green Fritillaries. This is as close as I got to one of these...



...but then a particularly large Large White landed close by.



Part Two:

I then moved on to Box Hill for tea and something to eat, ending up as usual over on Burford Spur. Here were many Marbled Whites, Skippers, Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, and small clouds of assorted butterflies would not be much of an exaggeration. I also spotted a single new male Brimstone.



However, the highlight was the good number of Dark Green Fritillaries. The males were flying low over the grass, looking for females, who were lurking in the vegetation and up on some of the scrub. The females also very occasionally popped out to nectar before swooping off to hide again, but the males never stopped.



Dave

Re: millerd

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

Glad you found those WLH and got some good shots 😊. Like I said if you get them at the start of the season next year that encounter will seem like child's play!

Also good to see the Chalkhills are appearing. Think I'll give it a few days to let the (hopefully) masses emerge, maybe next Tuesday if we have nice weather. I was on Box hill yesterday afternoon chasing those same Fritillaries 😊. Ended up with some shots of females egg laying down in the turf and some similar distant shots of the females.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 06-Jul-17 09:44 PM GMT

I would have braved the M25 for some White Letter Hairstreak shots as good as those. The Holly Blues have started around here too. Keep looking for those PH at low level, they are out there !

All the best,
Trevor

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Jul-17 10:07 PM GMT

Congrats on the Whitters Dave 😊 That does seem to be one of 'the sites' for that species. Good to see the Gatekeepers are out - have you started

counting spots – I had my first 'excessa' this morning 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-Jul-17 12:38 PM GMT

Glad you got your WLHS's Dave and a lovely selection of species as well. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jul-17 11:02 PM GMT

Thank you all for the kind comments about the WLH. It was well worth trip east. 😊

Thursday 6th July: Today's target was the Graylings of the Surrey Heaths. I went first to Dawney's Hill, where attempts are being made to remove a lot of the bigger clumps of gorse, presumably to allow the heather to flourish better and benefit the Silver-studded Blues, and provide more open areas which should hopefully make the Graylings happy. There were indeed quite a few SSB still flying, but all were very worn and faded, even the females which tend to emerge later. It was very hot and sunny, which tends to keep the females hidden in the heather, and almost all those seen were males.



male – a pale wraith, though remarkably unscarred



male



female

I made my way to an open area with little vegetation at all, where Graylings usually appear. Sure enough, all I had to do was stand still for a couple of minutes, and two butterflies bounded over the sandy ground towards me. After a minor altercation between them, one promptly landed on my trouser leg – the first of several to do so.









no - I can't take you home
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jul-17 10:16 PM GMT

Thursday 6th July - part two. On the way back from Dawney's Hill, I popped into Chobham Common. It was by now very hot again, and my stay was brief - too brief to explore and find the Graylings and SSB that Buggy saw a day later. However, for some reason, Large Skippers emerge later here than elsewhere, and there were several fresh individuals in amongst the Small Skippers. A couple in particular gave ample reason for calling this group "golden".



6th July part three. Back home again, and towards the end of the day I braved the heat once again (it reached around 32 degrees here at Heathrow late this afternoon). Noteworthy was the number of Commas around, none of which were opening up at all, but allowing a study of their variable undersides for a change.





Holly Blues were flitting around higher up and among the many Gatekeepers keeping largely to the shade, the first females appeared.





As ever, Red Admirals were to be found along all the paths, more active in the shadier bits and keeping me company in relays all along the walk.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-17 10:51 PM GMT

That is a beautifully fresh Large Skipper Dave 🤩👍 They may be late round your way but round my way they're 'late' in the other meaning of the word, a la Norwegian Blue Parrot 🤔🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Jul-17 12:51 PM GMT

Nice series of shots Dave, the Comma's seem to be every where this year 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-17 10:26 PM GMT

It's a curiously late spot for them at Chobham, Wurzel. Nearly a month after they start on my local patch they are still fresh. 😊 That one was a lovely colour too. 😊

Thanks, Goldie. 😊 The Commas are a real joy this year.

Friday 7th July: With the world seeing Purple Hairstreaks at ground level, I got up early and arrived in the woods at Bookham Commons around 8 o'clock. It was of course another brilliantly sunny day, and already in the low twenties, and as I made my way along the oak-shaded paths searching the bracken and brambles, I had a sneaking suspicion I'd be unlucky. There were plenty of distractions by way of dozens of Silver-washed Fritillaries and the occasional White Admiral, along with all the other woodland and grassy verge species you might expect. After about three hours, I had drawn a blank on the target, with the exception of a few fleeting views high over the treetops. I had taken a fair few shots of other species, though.



I decided to have a look at the Brown Hairstreak hotspot I usually visit – not with any hope of seeing any, but because there are always other things of interest here. I was certainly right on that score. In the adjacent meadow I found a lovely fresh Common Blue and an equally resplendent Small Copper.





Amazingly this was my first Copper of the year, and a great relief it was to see it. With that accomplished, I headed back to the car.

As I turned from the Small Copper, still in the meadow, I was amazed to see a very large butterfly flying across in front of me about three or four metres up. The markings were clear: this was a Purple Emperor, and by the size it had to be a female. It crossed the path and headed off into the field beyond. I probably stood there with my mouth open for a while, but eventually I carried on. Passing a large patch of thistles, I spotted a small butterfly fly from them into the hedge. It perched some way in, not within camera range, but its markings showed it to be not the Holly Blue I expected, but a Purple Hairstreak. I cursed, but only for a second or two, as sitting on another nearby thistle was another one. It was not particularly new, or well-positioned,

nor did it open its wings, but strictly speaking the day's mission was a technical success! 😊



Quite a morning, really, with 20+ species seen.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-17 10:38 PM GMT

Friday 7th July part two: After a siesta again (a habit I seem to be acquiring...), a brief walk locally revealed that second brood Common Blues were out here too.



However the heat kept most things hiding, with the exception of an occasional Gatekeeper and the irrepressible Commas.



I also found a stray male Large Skipper some way from the rest of the colony.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-17 08:49 PM GMT

Saturday 8th July: More lovely sunshine, but today there were other things to do so I had to content myself with another local circuit. There were more new Peacocks around today, all very active, and the ubiquitous Commas, Red Admirals, Speckled Woods and various Whites.



I watched a few Blues scrapping around the thistles, and one seemed particularly bright. It landed to nectar and revealed itself to be a Holly Blue, not a Common Blue, brilliant silvery blue on the underside. I've not seen one in such close association with its cousin species before.





Butterflies were constantly disturbing each other from their perches on flowers, and one such disturbance revealed a mating pair of Gatekeepers. They were almost constantly in motion (the female did the flying for two), eventually finding a spot right down in the grass where they were no longer disturbed.



On the way back, I suddenly started seeing Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars on pathside nettles – a whole variety of ages, including this odd one on its own.



The positioning is almost exactly as a Comma would have placed it, so it is possible that the Red Admiral just happened to stop where a Comma had already laid.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-17 09:29 PM GMT

Sunday 9th July: With yet another sunny day in prospect, I decided to take my youngest son to the seaside for the day. The beach at Studland is a bit of a drive, but is as good as you'll get in the UK, and it was glorious down there. The sea wasn't even cold, and my son spent about three hours in the water, and I was tempted in myself. However, there were not many butterflies, just a few Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals flying along the shoreline and a couple of Gatekeepers over the dunes. Graylings, commonly seen a few years back, were absent (or hiding from the heat, perhaps).

Part of the bargain was that we also spent an hour or so up at Durlston Country Park. Marbled Whites were everywhere, and after getting my eye in, I realised that Lulworth Skippers were just as widespread and numerous. There were Essex Skippers too, but these were noticeably larger and brighter and after a short while quite easy to distinguish. These are all Lulworths: the first four are male, the other two female.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Jul-17 09:40 PM GMT

Hmmmm, those Lulworths look very familiar 😊. Interesting you saw Essex as well, the day before I only saw Smalls flying with them but like you say, when you get your eye in, very easy to distinguish in flight.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-17 10:58 PM GMT

A cracking set of post recently Dave – difficult to keep up! 😲😲 Brill Silver-washed and then Gatekeepers and Purple Hairstreak 😊, glad you got your Small Copper too 😊 But as for the Lulworths – brill 😊 though again I missed you as Philzoid and I were there the day before 😊 We didn't see Graylings either – I'm not sure if they've started emerging in numbers yet as I've only seen a couple of records for them this far West 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

ps wot no Holly Blue from Durlston? 😬😬

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-17 09:52 PM GMT

Interesting, Buggy. All the Skippers I checked on Sunday were Lulworths (mostly) or Essex (a few). There could well have been Small ones as well. 😬

Thank you, Wurzel – missed you again! 😬 Did you see Buggy? I think he was in the area on 8th as well. And no, no Holly Blue photos... 😬

Monday 10th July: back to normal again, and a walk locally after work. The main entertainment at this time of day continues to be the amazing aerial ballet provided by numerous Commas and Red Admirals, which is being joined now by a handful of Peacocks; the the odd Speckled Wood and Holly Blue were also embroiled from time to time.



Up to nine or ten assorted butterflies were involved in one air display, moving so fast it was hard to follow them all: It really was uplifting to watch. At one point I allowed myself to be distracted from the spectacle and spotted a Holly Blue sitting out the action.





Down at ground level in the meadow area, more Common Blues were out along with a couple of Brown Argus, but the numbers of Skippers is diminishing now as the Gatekeeper numbers rise, and the Meadow Browns are becoming quite worn.



I watched another preen by running an antenna under its leg (presumably to wipe off something that had attached itself).



Not behaviour I think I've seen before.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-17 11:18 PM GMT

Well you soon caught up with the Holly Blues Dave 😊👍 Great set of Comma shots as well with the behaviour nicely caught 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-17 12:21 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. 😊 There are so many Commas to choose from, sooner or later one will do something interesting. 😊

Thursday 13th July: I was back in time from an overnight work trip to Folkestone to have another browse of my local patch. (No opportunity to look at the local hills while I was down there unfortunately)

I went straight to the meadow area to look for new examples of Common Blue and Brown Argus, and wasn't disappointed. There were a few other things of course...



...but the two target species provided some particularly lovely examples.

Male Brown Argus:



Female Brown Argus:





Male Common Blue:





Female Common Blue:





I also saw quite a brown female Common Blues, but failed to get a decent photo.

Commas and Red Admirals were duelling in numbers again as I returned, but I resisted the temptation to watch them for hours and headed for something to eat.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 15-Jul-17 05:59 AM GMT

Great shots from Durlston Dave – one of my favourite sites; You've captured that sunburst pattern perfectly 😊 A visit is long overdue.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-17 09:46 PM GMT

Some fantastic fresh Brown Argus there Dave, you caught them as they were fresh out the box 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jul-17 11:42 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline – yes, there has to be at least one trip down to Dorset every summer! 😊

Thank you too Wurzel – having Brown Argus on the doorstep is really good, and they are beautiful when brand new. 😊 That deep velvet brown is amazing, and you can sometimes get that sheen that new female Small Blues and Silver Studs display.

Friday 14th July: My evening local walk got bogged down within a few metres of the start when I found myself in a Red Admiral battleground, and became an integral part of the infrastructure. Three or four, plus a Comma or two and a Speckled Wood were indulging in their energetic evening tussles.



One Red Admiral decided to use me as a launching-off point – and soon became the target of other butterflies trying to dislodge it. No success there – I was stuck for some considerable while as Advance Base 1...





Also seen this evening were a few Holly Blues flying in the shade and nectaring on the pink bramble flowers – where I also found this rose chafer.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-Jul-17 09:31 AM GMT

This year, for a change, we have to look down for Purple Hairstreaks rather than up, easier on the neck !. Great variety from your local patch, as usual.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jul-17 08:08 PM GMT

I've never seen one down near the ground round here, Trevor – but there's always a first time! 😊 The usual view is the one depicted...

Sunday 16th July (morning). I had a quick look locally early in the day for once and got as far as a large wild buddleia just a little way from home. It hosted Commas, Red Admirals, Peacocks, Large Whites, Gatekeepers, and for the first time this year, a rather worn Painted Lady.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 18-Jul-17 08:46 PM GMT

WOW Dave, that Peacock is absolutely stunning! And those fresh Hollies are very nice too.

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-Jul-17 09:18 PM GMT

I agree, I feel like I have 3D glasses on looking at it!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-17 08:22 PM GMT

Thank you James and Buggy – there are some lovely fresh Peacocks around at the moment. I always look at them at this time of year and wonder whether I will be seeing the same individuals again in March or April. If they were rare we'd travel miles to see them.

Sunday 16th July: later that same day. I headed for Aston Rowant, which is moving into its most resplendent time of year. Unfortunately, despite remaining fairly warm, the sun became weaker and weaker, with very few really bright bursts. It was also surprisingly windy. Conditions were really far from ideal. However, there were lots of Marbled Whites being blown hither and yon like bits of torn paper, and towards the far side of the slope, numbers of Chalkhill Blues increased noticeably.





However, the most striking presence here today across the whole hillside was the Small Copper, with numerous examples to be found settled on the sheep paths and rabbit scrapes, taking advantage of the warm ground and relative shelter. There were several "blue badgers" and fresh examples of both sexes.





Other species included a good number of Large Whites and a few Brimstones, plenty of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, Small and Essex Skippers, a Small Heath or two, and both Brown Argus and Common Blue.



Two ragged female Dark Green Fritillaries dashed about in the wind, and were almost impossible to approach.



The day definitely belonged to the Coppers.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-17 10:27 PM GMT

Blooming fantastic Dave, a pairing of Coppers 🍄 I wish I had one of those shots in my collection 🍄😁 I don't know what it is this year but just as I catch up the next wave emerges and I'm behind again, Grayling, Silver-Spots, Brostreaks... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 21-Jul-17 08:17 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

I've never seen one down near the ground round here, Trevor – but there's always a first time! 😊 The usual view is the one depicted...

Nor me Dave, just the usual tree top flutterings for me here so far. I suspect the low down activities this year have mostly been a south-east phenomenon. Although we have had a decent summer so far here in the midlands with some hot weather, it has not been so consistently hot and dry as it seems to have been down there.

Great report from Durlston, I missed out on going down to Dorset last year but hopefully returning for a late season visit again this year 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jul-17 10:35 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. It was great to see the Coppers – bright splashes of red-orange against the green of the hillside. Finding the happy couple was lucky – I had spotted the pre-nuptial pursuit but lost track of them until they appeared on a bit of path already joined. 😊

I hope the season goes on late down in Dorset for you Neil. 😊 It usually seems to extend well into September with the latest flying Marbled Whites I've seen anywhere. I'm also glad I'm not the only one failing to see low-down Purple Hairstreaks!

Monday 17th July: back to work and the late afternoon local walk. It was good to see increasing numbers of Common Blues and Brown Argus, as well as the many Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers.





There were even some distinctly brown Common Blue females for a change.



However, I found another mating pair of Gatekeepers – considering the numbers of both sexes around, I'm surprised there aren't dozens of pairings on view. The female looked particularly new, with very complete fringes.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-17 10:53 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, there seems to be lots of Butterflies out at present, I've never seen has many Brown Argus before at Temple Ewell, you don't seem to have to go too far to see all the ones you mentioned. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jul-17 10:35 PM GMT

That's right, Goldie, my nearest Brown Argus are only about ten or fifteen minutes walk away (and one year when they didn't mow one patch of grass, there were some only two minutes from home!). They are doing very well this year, as you'll see below... 😊 You have the Northern version up round your way, which I still haven't seen 🍷

Tuesday 18th July: a near repetition of yesterday, with warm hazy sunshine at the end of the afternoon. I investigated a small sheltered patch almost cut off by scrub and bramble from the main meadow area, and found it buzzing with Brown Argus.









There were other species too: A Common Blue roosting among the still active Argus



A rare Small White photo



Naturally, I had to devote some time to the Holly Blues nectaring on the brambles (showing their preference for pink).



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 08:22 PM GMT

I know what you mean about a 'rare Small White' what's happened to them this year? 😞 On a nicer note – great Brown Argus shots and I see that you're back to your whispering ways 😊

Have a goodun

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jul-17 09:29 PM GMT

Very few and far between, those Whites, Wurzel, and come to think of it I haven't seen many GVW lately either... The local Brown Argus crop is excellent this year, certainly equalling the Common Blues, and yes I've been having words with those Holly Blues again! 😊

Thursday 20th July: Another almost identical late afternoon stroll, though after all the recent rain I wondered whether things might be a bit different. First off, among the duelling Commas there seemed to be one that looked a bit different. I think this looks like the first of the new "standard" type overwintering form, but it was behaving like all the others.



Here's the contrast with a fairly fresh one of the summer *hutchinsoni* form.



I then came to a shaded bit of path where the ground remained quite damp. Round my feet circled a Holly Blue, every so often stopping on the ground to take on board minerals.



It's a notable bit of behaviour, reliable in providing open-wing views unless it's too warm.

The next highlight was finding a Small Copper in amongst the Common Blues and Brown Argus – the first in my local patch this year and taking the 2017 species total here to 23.



Finally, a nice Red Admiral that made no attempt to come near me at all.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jul-17 10:47 PM GMT

Good to see the Whispering is still working dave 😊👍 Useful bit of behaviour to note for future use as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Jul-17 12:11 AM GMT

You're certainly getting your fill of Holly Blues this year, Dave. The spring brood gave you plenty of opportunities and now the summer one is following that up!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-17 07:48 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel and David. 😊 Truth be told, the second brood of Holly Blues has been less numerous than I've been used to, but then the weather has performed a bit of a downturn since they started to emerge. However, as long as it stays reasonable for the next couple of months, I would expect a third brood again in the early autumn.

Friday 21st July: More of the same on my local patch this afternoon, though I tried to concentrate more on the Common Blues today. First of note was another new Comma, setting up a territory as if it was April. He'll wear himself out and not get round to hibernating if he carries on like he was doing.





I wish I'd noticed at the time so that I could have maybe taken some clearer shots, but nevertheless they are quite clear to see. They are exactly where the first set of orange spots would be on a female. I've posted this separately to see if anyone knows anything of this possible ab. It's certainly unlike any other Common Blue male I've seen.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jul-17 09:07 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Lovely shots of the male Holly Blue and interesting observation on the behaviour.

Interesting Common Blue as well...I have never seen a male with any hint of orange on the upperside of the wings either.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-17 11:05 PM GMT

Cracking find that Common Blue ab Dave 😊👍 I had a look in the Cockayne Collection – the dark spotting could make it an ab. hylasoides or ab. nigromaculata but there didn't seem to be anything resembling the orange spotting 😊
Great Comma, and not H.Comma things have gone far too quickly this year 🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 09:50 PM GMT

Thanks, Neil and Wurzel. It's amazing what you find going through those photos of an evening! That Common Blue is really unusual and no one has come up with a precedent for it... yet.

Sunday 23rd July: with a bit of sunshine in the forecast, I set off down to Bookham to seek out possible Brown Hairstreaks. No luck (and quite soon, no sunshine), just countless Gatekeepers on the brambles (sorry, Wurzel, Hedge Browns on the hedgerows... 😊). I started looking for variation in the spotting, but it seems the population of this bit of the Home Counties is very boring and none sported anything unusual. There were a couple of paler, or partially paler individuals, however.



Unfortunately I missed the Painted Ladies that were around earlier when the sun was out.

However, I did meet up with Bugboy, and we resolved to try our luck at Denbies.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 10:22 PM GMT

23rd July part two: Despite a few spots of rain initially, it proved warm and bright enough to encourage a few butterflies into the air, the problem being that they were mostly tucked down low where they couldn't be spotted – until you were right on top of them. Nevertheless, as Bugboy and I made our way across the hillside and back, a few hardy Chalkhills opened up, especially later on when for a short spell the sun actually shone brightly.





It did mean I missed the mating Chalkhills which Bugboy was watching. Everything always happens at the same time. 😊 Finally, there was a single worn out Marbled White, spread-eagled on a bit of scrub and displaying the red parasites that bedevil the species.



A thoroughly worthwhile afternoon spent in excellent company: good to see you again, Buggy! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jul-17 11:17 PM GMT

23rd July part three: a bit of sparse sunshine at the end of the day tempted me out locally. Nothing remarkable, though more fresh Brown Argus are appearing, and there were a few Small Heath about, something missing from the Denbies visit, strangely enough.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Jul-17 12:42 PM GMT

Hi! Millard, I'm envying your Adonis 🍷 I keep going to Temple Ewell looking but so far I'm not seeing them. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Jul-17 05:05 PM GMT

Given the conditions you got some decent images of that Adonis, the next time we visit we'll have to be closely studying any of the females we come across!

I had a look through the abs. list and found a name for that "silver-studded" Chalkhill, ab. *argenteoguttata* 😊 (I'm glad it started with an 'A', it's a hell of a long list of abs to search through!)

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jul-17 09:52 PM GMT

Those Adonis can't be far away down in Kent, Goldie. However, I know Denbies can be quite an early site for them but this is the first time I've seen one in July even here. 😊

Thank you, Buggy - I knew it would have a name! I'm glad you didn't have far to wade through that list to find it. 😊

Monday July 24th: poor weather again, but a bit of sunshine at the end of the day tempted me out locally once again. Just a few minutes from home, I found a female Speckled Wood wandering in and out of the grass at the bottom of a hedge, looking for somewhere to lay.





Interestingly, they paid little heed to each other.

A quick dash into the main meadow area revealed a Small Copper – there has to be a colony based near here somewhere but I haven't tracked down where it is yet.



Why anyone is paying good money for these in a supermarket right now beggars belief. I could fill a £2 punnet in 30 seconds. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jul-17 09:06 PM GMT

Tuesday 25th July: at last, better weather, but I was stuck at work until three. I dashed off afterwards, heading for Aston Rowant to make the most of the sunshine. It was, however, quite windy, which as ever made things a bit trickier. There was a lot flying, including a couple of elderly female DGF which dashed madly about and were chased by every other butterfly they came close to when attempting to nectar. Chalkhills were the most numerous, though Meadow Browns must have been close, and perhaps closer attention to the Brown Argus would have put them in contention too. Also on the list: Small Tortoiseshell (one - very old indeed), Marbled White (very few, but also very worn now), Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Small Copper, Common Blue, Small White, Large White, Brimstone, Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and Silver-spotted Skipper. 19 species in all. Highlights included watching a female Chalkhill being accosted right in front of me by a male and mated within 30 seconds at most - no courtship whatsoever...



... others of the ilk:





It was also good to see the Silver-spots nectaring characteristically on the many scabious flowers – a very attractive pose every time.





A selection of the best of the rest:



BA do like these seed heads



a nice brightly-coloured female



and ditto the male

A final postscript, as has become common for me this year: can anyone ID this attractive moth, clearly a day-flyer, but not one I think I've noticed before?



A very good end to the day, with lots of sunshine.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-17 10:04 PM GMT

Fantastic array of summertime Blues Dave 😊 and great Silver-spots 😊 I reckon your unknown moth could be a Dusky Sallow 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Jul-17 10:37 PM GMT

Those Silver Spotted Skippers are gleaming, Dave....in fact, just about all of your specimens are very striking, and I can't wait for the weather to break round my way so I can go and see some for myself!

Re: millerd

by keving, 28-Jul-17 06:41 AM GMT

David,

Enjoying your diary for July. Impressed with the number of variations on your blues. I don't think I analyse my photos closely enough (still learning). Like the Brown Argus' too, they look lovely.

Regards Kev

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 28-Jul-17 06:59 AM GMT

I certainly agree with the others Dave. Those SSS images in particular are very nice indeed 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-17 07:15 PM GMT

Thanks for the moth I/D, Wurzel - I've not knowingly seen one before. Thanks to all for the kind comments about the SSS - a lovely subject for a photo if you can get close to them! Probably my favourite skipper. 😊 July has been jam-packed, Kev - glad you like what I've been seeing. It's amazing what you discover going through the ritual "delete" session after an outing. I think the camera's eye is better than mine these days.

Thursday 27th July: a very brief trip out locally at the end of the day to pick blackberries as much as anything. A short burst of sunshine encouraged a few things into the air - Common Blues, Brown Argus and the inevitable Comma.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jul-17 09:14 PM GMT

Saturday 29th July: With some early sunshine and a free morning (and Bugboy's recent success there) I thought I'd try Bookham again for Brown Hairstreaks. Unfortunately, by 1200 it was starting to rain, and I'd seen none. Another hopeful enthusiast I bumped into had had no more success than I had. However, there are still swarms of Gatekeepers around, with a fair variety of colour as they gradually wear.



not sure what the creature to the left is



and three Small Coppers, the first of which was a heavily marked male, and the last a fresh blue-spotted female...







...but also a somewhat worn female Silver-washed Fritillary and an elderly male Small Skipper.



The rain worsened and continued on and off till dusk, so that was it for the day. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-Jul-17 10:15 PM GMT

Sorry to read you drew a blank again... best not read my latest report.... 😞

Your bug photobombing the female Common Blue is a type of Rove Beetle, possibly *Paederus littoralis*

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Jul-17 10:22 PM GMT

What a great Small Copper, Dave. Really boldly marked on the upperside forewings with much larger than usual black spots.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-17 09:44 PM GMT

Great selection of Coppers and Hedge Browns Dave 😊👍 I feel your frustration with the Brostreaks Dave, though there is still time, at least that's what I keep telling myself 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-17 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks, both of you – at one point I wondered if I wasn't going to see any Coppers this year. Thankfully, things have changed. 😊

Sunday 30th July: Weatherwise a repeat of Saturday, but there was a bit of brightness later in the day, so I failed to resist the temptation to go out locally. Numbers seemed to have dropped, but lack of proper sunshine no doubt affected that. I saw all the usual suspects, including a worn-looking

Small Heath (though there were quite a few others, this is the only one that stayed still).



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-17 09:52 PM GMT

Monday 31st July: A significant day as it was my last day at work before retirement. 😊 However, from a butterfly perspective, on my local patch it was more of the same really, in very similar weather. There were a lot of female Common Blues around today, in various shades of brown and blue.





In the wooded parts, a few Holly Blues fluttered along, mostly high up.



Finally an inquisitive Red Admiral came ever closer, with the inevitable result.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-17 10:20 PM GMT

A great set of photos Dave 😊 And can I offer my congratulations on your retirement 🎉🎉🎉 looks like you'll be getting out butterflying even more next season 🍷
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-17 10:48 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel! Hopefully there will be a bit more time and the chance to go further afield more often. 😊

Tuesday 1st August: A morning to play with and reasonable weather to start the day. I opted to try Bookham again and see if I could pin down the elusive Brown Hairstreaks. Walking along from the car park at the 100-pound Bridge, I disturbed both male and female Silver-washed Fritillaries, though both were pale ghosts of their former selves. There was also a nectaring Peacock. Reaching the hairstreak hotspot, I found Bugboy already in place, but as yet unsuccessful. We saw good numbers of Common Blues and Small Coppers, but the numbers of Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns have reduced a bit – though still sufficient to make hairstreak-spotting less easy.





A very good way to start retirement with lovely butterfly! The deep orange of the wings contrasting with the pure white underside to the body is reminiscent of a fox. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Aug-17 11:03 PM GMT

Lovely Brown Hairstreaks, Dave, but I'm particularly envious of that Purple Hairstreak taking fluids from the blackberry. That's not a sight afforded to many!

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Aug-17 11:06 PM GMT

Several of those butterflies look awfully familiar 😊 It was a good few hours 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Aug-17 07:18 PM GMT

Spending quality time with that lovely female Brown Hairstreak on your first day 'out of the office' must be a good omen for your new found freedom. Great shots as always.

Good luck in your retirement.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 02-Aug-17 07:51 PM GMT

Congratulations on your retirement Dave 😊
Oh, to be able to get out in the week and make the most of those lovely sunny days that only seem to occur mid-week these days. Still got a few years to go myself but starting to look at ways to bring it forward a bit 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-17 09:30 PM GMT

Fantastic Brostreak shots Dave 🍷🍷🍷 A fantastic omen of things to come now you can really start living 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Aug-17 10:56 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

Congratulations on your retirement Dave 😊

Oh, to be able to get out in the week and make the most of those lovely sunny days that only seem to occur mid-week these days.

Still got a few years to go myself but starting to look at ways to bring it forward a bit

Agree entirely, Neil. Rarely a day goes by when I don't think about this (and I'm still in my forties!!)

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 02-Aug-17 11:20 PM GMT

Congratulations on your retirement !! I look forward to an increase in butterfly postings!!

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 03-Aug-17 06:19 AM GMT

I can stop feeling guilty now Dave 😊 What a smashing set of images although the Purple Hairstreak shots are a bit special 🍷🍷 Congratulation btw - you'll soon be wondering how you ever had time to go to work 😊 Make the most of the rest of the season 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Aug-17 04:07 PM GMT

Thank you all for your kind wishes about retiring. 😊 I have to say that so far it just seems like an extended weekend, and the weather has not been

particularly kind... 😊 Hopefully things will perk up soon. 😊

On 2nd August I drove up to York to stay with my sister for a few days. The idea of a lengthy detour via Arnside was scuppered by persistent cloud and drizzle, which prevailed for the whole journey (aside from a curious sunny "hole" near Sheffield). Over the next few days, it was consistently windy, but mostly dry with some sunshine. We had a couple of trips out, but most of the butterfly activity was in the garden.

Saturday 5th August: we had a walk along part of the Wolds Way near Huggate, over chalk downland. Short bursts of sun brought a few things out and there were lots of plants to nectar on, including a lot of knapweed. Notable were two different Painted Ladies along a short stretch of path, accompanied by numerous Peacocks and a few Red Admirals.



A lush extended patch of nettles alongside a main road was found to be hosting numerous Red Admiral caterpillars, including this one which was just starting to construct a new "tent".



There was also a nest of Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars nearby.



Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-Aug-17 04:19 PM GMT

Painted Lady sightings seem to be increasing, all mint homegrown stock from the looks of things. Hope the weather improves soon, I have another week off soon (yes I still have more time booked). Might well bump into you again now you have all this free time on your hands, there's still more Brown Hairstreaks to be found 😊

Re: millerd

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

Yes, Buggy - I think these are all locally bred Painted Ladies, offspring of an earlier influx that wasn't particularly obvious. Strangely, I can almost guarantee seeing them in Yorkshire at this time of year, but not at home. 😊 Hmmm - more Brown Hairstreaks... Excellent idea! 😊

Saturday 5th August continued: On the way back from the Wolds, the sun appeared for a while so we briefly stopped off at Calley Heath next to the A1079 near Wilberfoss. This is a reliable site for Small Coppers and they didn't disappoint, with a handful seen.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Aug-17 08:36 PM GMT

As mentioned earlier, most of the butterfly activity during the break in Yorkshire was in my sister's garden. All of it was common species, but it provided lots of opportunity to get close to some of them when out in open countryside it's far trickier. Commonest by far was the Peacock, with a maximum count of over 20 several times. As the sun frequently came and went, the Peacocks alternated between nectaring and basking. Sometimes they sat on the semi-wild greenery in little groups.









Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Aug-17 09:23 PM GMT

I get the distinct impression that you were yearning for Peacocks, Dave? 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-Aug-17 10:23 PM GMT

That's a lot of Peacocks! Just think in 8 months time they'll be mortal enemies, well the males anyway!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-17 09:46 PM GMT

A great collection of Peacocks Dave 😊 Interesting to see so many in one place and that one on the tile I'm convinced is a set up 😊👤 surely it's a model? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Aug-17 11:19 PM GMT

I do have a fondness for Peacocks, David, and if you pick the right week in the summer, they appear in numbers in this garden. As I think you've said before, imagine if they were rare... 😊 Yes, Buggy, its like watching male and female Brimstones nectaring at this time of year – they could be different species, the notice they take of each other. 😊 There were some good poses, Wurzel and the tile one does look somewhat contrived: I can assure you no superglue was used in the setting up of any these shots! 😊 My favourites are are the last two.

There were more delights from the garden, but for now I'll leave it with the Peacocks.

Back home, and my first real opportunity to visit my local patch was on **Thursday 10th August**. Over the last week, the most noticeable change was the reduction in Gatekeeper numbers, and how worn the Common Blues now look. There were fewer Commas, too, but astonishingly, there was yet another

new *hutchinsoni* individual.



I saw several Holly Blues, all bar one being females: one of them was very cooperative.





The Blues were generally worn, but one male wasn't too battered by the weather, and one female was brand new and beautifully marked.



Finally, another moth to identify. This beautifully marked individual landed well out in the open.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Aug-17 09:54 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, look's like we've both seen the Peacocks arrival 😊 lovely shots by the way 😊 Some Butterflies just seem to be coming out here at present so may be we'll get more shots before they disappear . Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-17 11:39 AM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – there should be a few more weeks left to see butterflies I hope. Down here at any rate there may be some third broods of one or two species. 😊

Friday August 11th: After all the poor weather, today looked really promising. I set off for Bookham once again to see if any more Brown Hairstreaks were tempted out by the sunshine. Since my last visit, Gatekeeper numbers had dropped off to much lower levels, which made the searching easier with far fewer flashes of orange to follow. Arriving at the spot where Bugboy and I had seen them before, I noticed something moving inside a bit of the blackthorn – a female Brown Hairstreak.



She emerged, revealing herself to be very fresh indeed.





Also seen: Small Coppers, Common Blues, Brown Argus, Peacocks, Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns, a male Silver-washed Fritillary, a female Brimstone and a Comma.



After a very successful morning, I moved on down to Denbies for the afternoon.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Aug-17 12:47 PM GMT

Good to see they're still around. Not been able to get out recently but I'm off for a week from Tuesday, hopefully I get a bit of sun, the forecast looks a bit iffy at the moment 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 12-Aug-17 12:49 PM GMT

Lovely BH shots there Dave and a great selection of Peacocks earlier. This morning I failed to find any BH and the shot I took of a gorgeous Peacock just doesn't match up to yours!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-17 08:06 PM GMT

Strange to see H.Commas that fresh this 'late' in the season Dave, I always thought they'd be over by now and we'd be ready for the darker looking autumnal Comma – mind you that could be a misconception brought by the unseasonable weather 😊 Great to see the Brostreaks are still going, I always get a bit nervous thinking I might miss out and then after I've caught up with them they seem to hang on and linger for a good while after 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Aug-17 08:45 PM GMT

That male Brown Hairstreak looks exceptionally drab, Dave, but the females.....well, that first one you found would compensate for practically anything!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Aug-17 09:28 PM GMT

Great shots of the BHS's Dave 🇮🇪 I've yet to see them 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-17 10:35 PM GMT

I reckon the females will be around for a while yet, Buggy, and Tuesday is looking reasonable weatherwise at the moment. 😊

Thank you for the appreciation for the Peacocks, Pauline. It was great having so many to choose from, and the constant changes between sun and cloud meant they often stopped to bask for a bit. Ideal, really! 😊

Goodness knows why I am still seeing fresh *hutchinsoni* Commas, Wurzel. Maybe the downturn in the weather has delayed a few emergences, but it really is nearly two months from the solstice now. Maybe the theory needs revisiting! 😊

Yes, David, a worn male Brown Hairstreak would win no prizes in a beauty contest. You can see it was once a subtle sandy colour underneath, but on top it has to be the least interesting butterfly around. 😊 The females win all the prizes, and that particular one came top of the pile. 😊

Thank you Goldie! Is there anywhere near you that you can go to? Didn't I read that some had been seen last year or eggs found in the Arnside area? There's still some time yet I'd say. 😊

Friday 11th August: part two – Down at Denbies.

There were a few items on the "hopeful" list for this afternoon: Clouded Yellows, Silver-spotted Skippers, a second brood Dingy and some more Adonis Blues. I drew a blank with the Dingy, and likewise the Cloudies (though someone else saw one earlier on), but did okay with the others on the wish list. As ever with Denbies, a fresh breeze was blowing, and the sun had now become hazy. There were lots of Chalkhills flying, many still pretty fresh and including as nearly as many females as males.



As for the Adonis the numbers were rather disappointing, with perhaps only seven or eight males seen, and no females. Most were fresh.



I managed to see a couple of Silver-spotted Skippers right in the middle of the slopes as usual.



Finally, on the steps where Green Hairstreaks show off in May, I disturbed a male Silver-washed Fritillary – something I haven't seen here for several years. Not more than a record photo unfortunately as it was extremely restless.



The other notable sighting was on the stroke of three o'clock when 35028 Clan Line sped through on a steam-hauled railtour: a common sight in the summer months especially.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Aug-17 11:39 PM GMT

A definite mrgreen for the Brown Hairstreak and Adonis shots 🍷 .
It looks as though Clan Line is hauling the Orient express Pullman cars,

on a Victoria to Victoria, circular lunchtime tour, via Guildford and Redhill.

Now ! they go well together, Butterflies and steam !
All in a day's work,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Aug-17 07:55 AM GMT

Interesting looking female Chalkhill – with the blue 'triangles' on the hind wings not seen one like that before 😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-Aug-17 07:52 PM GMT

That's a great female Chalkhill, Dave. I don't think I've seen one with so much blue on the upperwings before. Well done with the Adonis ab. too. That's a very striking specimen.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Aug-17 10:25 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor. I was very pleased with the Hairstreaks: probably the freshest I've ever taken photos of, and the first male in any condition. Spot on with the railtour as well – I agree that steam and butterflies mix very well and it occurs to me that a weekend on the Isle of Purbeck would provide plenty of both. 😊

It was an interesting Adonis, David. 😊 I am always reluctant, however, to count these as true aberrations as clearly the butterfly was damaged in some way as well.

I've seen one or two quite blue female Chalkhills over the years, Wurzel, but not one quite like that. I do find the females really hard to photograph though, and indeed quite difficult to spot, so there may be many that go unnoticed. 😊

Sunday 13th August: Aston Rowant. To say the slopes today were awash with butterflies would be overdoing it a bit, but the sun shone, the breeze was gentle and there was a good variety flying. There was, however, no hoped-for Clouded Yellow, nor as yet any Adonis, but the numbers of Silver-spotted Skippers made up for that. Probably the commonest species on the wing was the Meadow Brown, with many fresh examples of both sexes and several mating pairs seen. Next in line was the Brown Argus, found everywhere in all sizes from the tiniest (on a par with the smallest of Small Blues) to those rivalling a Common Blue. New ones are clearly still emerging.



Unlike Denbies, where many Chalkhills were quite fresh, here the males were mostly tired and rather worn, though the perhaps more numerous females still had a bit of life in them.



Seen in smaller numbers were Small Whites, Small Heaths and Peacocks and also a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.



However, the stars of the visit were the Silver-spotted Skippers, which I think deserve their own post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 14-Aug-17 09:40 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, Yes we've got BHS's at Gait Barrow now but circumstances have stopped me going up there at present, they had a trip there I believe to find them but weather was awful so none were seen but some one has seen a mating pair recently. I hope to go up there as soon as the weather gets better hope fully next weekend or the following week, I've no idea where to look though, I just hope there's a few people when I get there looking for them then we can join the search. 😊

A nice selection of Butterflies Dave, I saw a Painted Lady in the garden but she was in poor condition not like yours I wondered how she managed to fly. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-17 09:42 PM GMT

I hope you do get to see the Brown Hairstreaks, Goldie – they really are a lovely butterfly. 😊 Yes, there do seem to be a few Painted Ladies about. If you can find one that has hatched locally, it'll be in much better condition.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-17 10:22 PM GMT

Sunday 13th August continued: As mentioned, the stars up at Aston Rowant were the Silver-spotted Skippers. There were good numbers and it was impossible to walk along any of the paths criss-crossing the hillside without disturbing one or two every half-a-dozen paces.







Overall, a splendid display.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Aug-17 10:32 PM GMT

Superb Silver Spotted Skipper shots (try saying that after a couple of beers !).
There are some good sites for them around here, they are on my list.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Aug-17 10:43 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Dave 😊 And a SSS in the hand 🐛🐛🐛

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-Aug-17 10:20 AM GMT

Love the Skipper on your hand Dave, wow! so many Skippers , 🐛 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-Aug-17 07:27 PM GMT

Great couple of reports from Aston Rowant Dave 😊

I have not managed to get there again so far this year and probably won't now due to other plans for the next few weeks. Oh well! there is always next year.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 15-Aug-17 10:03 PM GMT

I was there Sunday Dave, shame I missed you. Perhaps you were at the northern (motorway) end, I was at the southern section, where the Chiltern gentians grow.

I too noticed the sheer numbers of Brimstones, not only by the trees at the bottom, but on the slopes themselves. I estimate I saw 50. I was also pleased to find most of the SSS in good condition still. They have been flying here for almost a month now!

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Aug-17 10:49 PM GMT

Looks like Silver Spotted Skippers are having a good year from your account, Dave. I've been to that site a few times and seen decent numbers, but never to the point where I was disturbing them with every few steps.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 15-Aug-17 11:04 PM GMT

Very much enjoyed your Silver Spots, great images.

Must visit my local site soon !. The season is racing ahead.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-17 08:27 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor (twice!) – I couldn't even say that phrase stone-cold sober, so I shall not attempt it just at the minute! 😊

Thanks too, Goldie and Wurzel – that little skipper was very tame as I think it was newly emerged and hadn't got to grips with flying yet. It was on the path and I nearly trod on it. 😊

Aston Rowant is luckily an easy trip for me, Neil – a shame you'll miss out this year. 😊

I toyed with the idea of looking at the other part of the reserve as well, Essex, but the time had evaporated. I wish I had now – shame to miss you. Yes, I saw the first SSS here on 16th July, but they must only be peaking now as there were plenty of fresh examples. 😊

Aston Rowant has to be one of the best sites anywhere for this butterfly, David, and with the sun out, they were everywhere. You need to get your eye in a bit as they move so fast, but then suddenly you are seeing them in all directions. 😊

Monday 14th August: back to my local patch today, and the commoner species. However, the Brown Argus were more easy to approach than those up at Aston Rowant, and there were still fresh examples.



Also fresh was a Comma – not a summer one this time, but the standard dark form prior to hibernation...



... and a Peacock: much trickier than the "tame" ones in my sister's garden!



...and a Holly Blue on a bramble flower completed the outing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Aug-17 11:18 PM GMT

Tuesday 15th August: a similar sort of day and another local excursion only – with a different set of things of interest. It was noticeably warmer today, and the only Commas I saw were either hiding in the brambles or sitting with wings closed. The dark winter brood don't care for summer sunshine it seems.



Luckily, this area gets little or no foot traffic (it has become a cul-de-sac as brambles have overgrown one end), but it is quite a little way away from where the butterflies are normally to be found.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Aug-17 10:18 AM GMT

Things are definitely on the turn Dave and there's another change of the guard 😊. Interesting to see the extra spot on the Small Heath, I've seen them where the 'eye' extends down but not such a clear and wide spaced one like that before. 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Aug-17 08:27 PM GMT

Yes, Wurzel, the days are noticeably shorter now and there are subtle hints of autumn in the air. The ivy is already flowering and the blackberries are going over and getting mushy... 😊 Still, it was warm and sunny on Wednesday. 😊

Wednesday 16th August: looking back at Bugboy's diary, I noticed he'd fairly recently been down to Chobham Common and seen good numbers of Grayling (as well as a very late Large Skipper). My last trip had drawn a blank for Graylings on a very hot July afternoon, so I thought I'd give it another go and explore a bit further. As soon as I reached the top of the rise and emerged onto an undulating sandy plain covered in heather and gorse, no less than four butterflies whizzed past in a bundle. I attempted to photograph this bit of action, and the rather blurry result does show a female Grayling pursued by two males, with a further male lagging behind.



There was a single Small Heath, and a flash of a Small Copper – but no skippers.

Here is a view of the general area where the Graylings were to be found.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 17-Aug-17 08:33 PM GMT

I wonder how we missed each other again, I was on the north side of the M3 yesterday!

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Aug-17 10:41 PM GMT

What is it with Graylings and blue jeans?? Nice in flight images, Dave. I enjoy watching this myself but haven't had much chance this year, sadly.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Aug-17 10:03 AM GMT

Great shots of the Grayling Dave, I last saw them at Arnside when I saw the Scotch Argus, it was great watching them. Goldie 🤔

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Aug-17 10:21 AM GMT

Great set of Graylings Dave 😊👍, nice to know they're still going strong. After my initial sighting I always seem to move them to lower on the list of priorities 😞 There doesn't seem to be enough time in the day...mind you for some people that isn't a problem anymore 🤔😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Aug-17 09:33 PM GMT

You were busy, Buggy! 😊 I think you'd gone by the time I got there.

No idea what the attraction Graylings have for denim, David. They liked the shirt too! 😊

They are good to watch, Goldie – expansive floppy flyers like nothing else, and some of the females are really large too. 😊

You do have a point, Wurzel – retirement does have the odd benefit... 😊 However, it only takes 20 minutes or so for me to reach the Graylings from home and a quick trip is reasonably feasible. Like you, I tend to forget to go after the first time. 😊

Wednesday 16th August: later that same afternoon... It's hard to resist a local walk when the sun is out in the late afternoon. Consecutive days throw up different things, so it's always worth it, even for just a short trip as today's was. There were several Commas flying, but today all those I saw were from the summer brood, with none of the new winter ones around.



One of them was striking typical territorial poses...



... and my insertion into its domain resulted in it annexing me to its little empire. Maybe it could detect the smell of the Grayling from earlier in the day.



There were a few more Speckled Woods appearing now too, plus the usual Red Admirals and Holly Blues.



However, at one point my eye was drawn to the side of the path, where the foliage is often caught by (in my view) somewhat unnecessarily severe mowing. There sat a Small Tortoiseshell. The fact that it was brand new, still awaiting its first flight, was confirmed by the bright pink spot of meconium on an adjacent leaf.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Aug-17 10:15 AM GMT

Great shot of the Small Tortoiseshell Dave 🤩👍 That really is as fresh and out of the box as you can get 🤩👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Aug-17 11:22 AM GMT

Nice to see a fresh Tortie, Dave. They've been scarce even in south Wales where they are usually fairly commonplace. How are they doing round your 'patch'?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Aug-17 06:44 PM GMT

It was a beautiful insect, David and Wurzel – as fresh as you are ever likely to see. 😊 They seem to be doing ok hereabouts, but at this time of year they seem to appear briefly then head straight into hibernation. I saw very few at this time last year, but there were encouraging numbers in the spring. They do suffer locally from nests (which are often on nettles right next to the path) being mown or strimmed flat. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Aug-17 07:21 PM GMT

Thursday 17th August: Another local trip only today – or rather a late morning one and a late afternoon one. Today, it was the turn of female Common Blues to be looking for suitable spots to lay. They are all looking rather drab now, but still distinguishable from the Brown Argus that were here a couple of days ago.



Several Commas again today, but this time there were a couple of new ones in winter plumage as well as a dark version of the summer sort (I had trouble making my mind up about this last one, but seen next to the others it is more obvious).



There was also another new Small Tortoiseshell, but this one was up and about and flying strongly between basking sessions on the path.



...but here is one that I am not quite sure about.



The overall "feel" of it says Small White, but the black markings are much more extensive than normal, and there is even a hint of a second black spot on the forewing. To be honest it resembles one or two of the photos I've seen of Southern Small Whites (I think there was some discussion of these last year when they had been found further north than usual on the continent), but it can't realistically be one of those. Just another unusual variation I suspect. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Aug-17 07:32 PM GMT

That's a very smart Small Tortoiseshell, a very vivid specimen. You had a better day than me.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Aug-17 08:49 AM GMT

That last Comma is a bit of a teaser but I would go for 'winter plumage' as it's not just two-tone like H.Commas, it's got at least four different tones in it 😊 Interesting White as well, those black tips look similar to a Green-veined Whites' markings but it's not one of those, intriguing 😊 Fingers crossed it's a Southern 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Aug-17 12:09 PM GMT

The last specimen is a male Green Veined White, Dave. It looks very similar to the ones I see in the Alps, which are similarly weakly marked.

The apical black markings extend right down to the forewing spot, which is never the case with Small White, as can be seen by comparing it to the image immediately above.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Aug-17 09:02 PM GMT

There are a few fresh Tortoiseshells around, Trevor - let's hope they still look like that next March... 😊

I'm sticking with my final diagnosis of that being a dark summer Comma, Wurzel. 😊 Having gone through lots of other photos, it turns out that they are not all two-tone (though some certainly are), and something about those hindwing edge spots doesn't seem right for the winter version. I wonder if there any "intermediate" forms? 😊

Thanks you for that confirmation, David. I thought it could only really be a GVW, but without seeing the underside, the lack of dark scales along the veins, and the overall softer look to it confused me a bit. 😊 I have found a photo from last year of a male GVW where the patterning is the same as this one, but there are black scales along the veins on the edge of the hindwings - which looks more "normal". Incidentally, are there any known instances where the two species have hybridized?

After a complete washout on Friday, I hoped for better on **Saturday 19th August**. I set off reasonably early and made my way down to Noar Hill.

By the time I had arrived, the sunshine had become a bit patchy, there was a stiff breeze blowing, and truth be told it wasn't that warm. As usual, there were loads of wild flowers, but butterflies were not around in any numbers. The commonest species was the Common Blue, but these were all looking really worn.



After sunning herself on the ground, she moved from shrub to shrub seeking better spots to bask and seemed completely oblivious to my presence.





Eventually, she took off towards the trees and disappeared. All I can assume is that recent indifferent weather had kept her up in the trees after mating, and that now the urge to lay was upon her and she needed to warm up sufficiently to do so – hence the full on basking.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 20-Aug-17 09:16 PM GMT

That red admiral is glorious, and what a beautiful set of photos of the brown hairstreak!
Janet

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Aug-17 09:53 PM GMT

Your first image of the female Brown Hairstreak, is exactly what we all strive for. Fully open, with wings flat. It's a shame she is worn, but none the less, what a shot!. Gorgeous Red Admiral too. One as fresh as that landed on my bosses forehead whilst he was eating his lunch today (camera was in the car unfortunately). 😊

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Aug-17 10:18 PM GMT

Thank you, Janet and Trevor – the Brown Hairstreak was a real piece of luck to find, nowhere near any of the spots on the site that it's been suggested to me that you should look, and certainly not close to any blackthorn. Still, I'm not complaining! 😊

Saturday 19th August continued... Driving back home via the A3 after the skies clouded over, I decided to avoid the M25 and cut across via Guildford and round the back of Woking. This took me right past Dawney's Hill near Pirbright, so I decided to drop by and look at another Grayling colony. As luck would have it, breaks appeared in the clouds and there were spells of warm sunshine. Having seen a few here at the start of July, I was surprised to see well into double figures today, seven weeks or so later.





After seeing Bugboy's brilliant shots of egg-laying activity, I resolved to track down a female and see if I could observe the same thing. I found several females, and one bright new-looking one caught my eye in particular. She was just sitting in standard pose on the ground when a burst of sunshine appeared and immediately set her in motion. Without any ado she walked quickly a little way and laid an egg on a tuft of grass. She then half hopped, half flew to another tuft, and then another before flying off a bit further.



With some bright new individuals around, I tried to get a few shots of their beautiful uppersides, but only managed to achieve a few blurry ones, mainly by dint of the camera failing to focus on the moving butterfly, and also by me failing to zoom in more on one displaying to a courting male.





I may return for another try in a day or two!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 22-Aug-17 08:01 AM GMT

Has the Grayling site at Dawney's Hill recovered from the scalping it received last year ?.
Looking at your report I should have paid a visit this season.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-Aug-17 09:50 AM GMT

Hi Dave, I'm just catching up with my posts and found your fantastic BHS shot 🐛🐛 After trailing about looking for them on Sunday I had to laugh at your luck of finding that one 😊 I feel sick! 😊
We don't seem to have a lot of different species around at present except for RA and Peacock so it feel's Like Autumn has arrived here already. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 22-Aug-17 10:59 AM GMT

Nice Brown Hairstreak from Noar, Dave 😊 Also some very interesting and varied Grayling shots from Dorneys, it's nice that they are still going strong there. I might have to pay it a visit!

Mike

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 22-Aug-17 08:18 PM GMT

Those are better upperside shots than anything I've ever managed Dave and glad you used my observations to find your own egg laying female 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-17 10:12 PM GMT

Dawney's Hill is recovering pretty well, I'd say, Trevor. The work on removing some of the extensive patches of overlarge gorse has allowed more heather to grow – which should benefit the SSB – and also encouraged the grass that the Graylings lay on. There are still good areas of bare ground sheltered by gorse on which the Graylings like to bask. Judging by the numbers I saw on Saturday it seems to have worked for them. I didn't see the SSB in full flow here this year, but I know they were around.

Thanks Goldie and Mike – that Hairstreak was an unexpectedly good find. 😊

And thanks again Mike – Graylings are well worth investing a bit of time in: fascinating creatures, as Buggy can confirm (thanks for the tips, Buggy!). 😊

Sunday 20th August: With a sunny start at least to the day in prospect, I headed off fairly early for Denbies. Before even leaving Steers Field, I had seen a Small Copper, several Chalkhills, and the first male Adonis – this boded well for the day. It's difficult to know where to start – there were good numbers of Adonis, Common and Chalkhill Blues, Brown Argus and Silver-spotted Skippers, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns – plus a Painted Lady. I took in excess of 400 photos, ruthlessly deleting a third fairly quickly, but deciding which of the rest to post is tricky (particularly as Bugboy has already included some corkers in his diary).

First come the "best of the rest":



the best looking of many many individuals seen



nectaring avidly on the knapweed

Silver-spotted Skippers were everywhere across the middle part of the hillside:



Considering how long they have been out, there were still a good few fresh Chalkhills to be seen, males shining silvery blue in the sunshine...



...and a couple of very different females



the usual chocolate brown



almost grey in colour, with white dots on all four wings
The Adonis deserve a separate post to themselves, I think!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 22-Aug-17 10:19 PM GMT

You certainly got a better range of species, I only saw one Argus and one Common Blue. Then again I was focusing my attentions on the Adonis 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-17 10:44 PM GMT

20th August at Denbies: Adonis Blues.

There were good numbers across most of the hillside, the males standing out like blue jewels. There were females too, but they were much harder to track down, and sometimes male behaviour was the best clue to their whereabouts.



shiny iridescence on probably a very new individual





And then there were the males...



As I made my way back, I came across Bugboy (again!) just arriving for the afternoon shift. He certainly had a very good spell on the hillside after I'd left. Back at the car park I bumped into Mr. Sp0ck as well, and we chewed the fat over a coffee from the excellent van that is based there on Thu/Fri/Sun. Good to see you, Martin.

All in all, a very good day, and the autumn blues were blown away by a hefty dose of the summer ones 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

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

You found more females than I did too, the clouds seem to have quietened things down a bit after you left. Forgot to mention I bumped into MrSp0ck on the hillside too!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Aug-17 10:58 PM GMT

Yes, I think Sunday morning was better than the afternoon, Buggy.

Tuesday 22nd August: Back to my local patch, and warm overcast with some brighter interludes – enough to allow a few things to fly. In fact, it turned into a good day for newly emerged Green-veined Whites and Small Heaths, and I also saw my first Clouded Yellow of the year (but it eluded the camera as they often do). For some reason, the Small Heaths were sitting higher in the vegetation than usual, and allowed several nice close shots.





There was a lot of courtship activity and numbers were very good across a wide area. Here is an attempt to capture one of these encounters in mid-air:



I found several new GVW, including one taking moisture from the path.



They popped up everywhere and the emergence seems coordinated right across all parts of the site I visited.





There were a few Small Whites as well, but they were generally far less approachable.



Amongst them was a tiny Brown Argus no bigger than a thumbnail.



Meadow Browns were quite active today...



...and there was another new Small Tortoiseshell guzzling nectar in preparation for hibernation.



An interesting wander out, and despite the advancing season it was good to see some fresh butterflies of a few species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Aug-17 09:56 PM GMT

Wednesday 23rd August: Another trip out locally, but a somewhat different selection seen. Common Blue females seen lately all seem to be of the brown variety – maybe they lose any blue scales they may have started with as they get older.



Red Admirals are down in numbers compared to a few weeks ago, but there were still a few, mostly concentrating on nectaring now.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-17 10:02 PM GMT

Cracking set of reports recently Dave 😊🍷, I'm playing catch-up having been away for a few days down in Devon. Those Adonis are great, as were the previous Chalkhills and it was good to see some definite Green-veins not pretending to be Small Whites 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-17 12:02 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, love the Adonis shots, your getting more species there than we are here, it really feels like Autumn now , the Moors are purple with Heather and Blackberries , I'm hoping to get some shots of them. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-17 08:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel and Goldie - as you'll see soon, Goldie, I have just been visiting some of your haunts in Kent.

I have been down in Fokestone/Dover for a couple of days, so have some catching up to do. Most annoying was that my trip down on Saturday was the "long way round" via the south coast from Brighton onwards and I drove past the spot where the Q of S were found near Newhaven at near enough the same time! Completely unaware, I had no idea I could have made the same detour on the way back. The Law of Sod prevailed... 😊

Firstly, a few things from a couple of local walks on **Thursday 24th and Friday 25th August**: Numbers of most things are in decline markedly now. The exception seems to be Small Heaths, which are really numerous at the moment.







Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-17 09:33 PM GMT

Saturday 26th August: I was headed to Kent for a couple of days, so I decided to make a day of the journey and stop off on the way. I went down to the coast and made my first stop at Newhaven Tide Mills, blissfully unaware of the excitement just up the road. In the hour I spent there, I saw very little except for lots of Small Heaths and Whites, plus a few ageing Common Blues. Not a Clouded Yellow (or indeed anything exciting) was to be seen. I moved on a bit further and stopped up at High & Over, where the story was the same. All rather dull so far. 😞

I needed another en route stop, and toyed with the idea of Birling Gap (twenty-four hours before a different kind of excitement), but in the end pressed

on as another idea formed: Dungeness was just a very short detour off the route I was taking. Nearly there, I realised I had no idea where I should be going to see the fabled Small Coppers – the area is huge, with lots of potential places to stop. In the end I made for the car park by the lighthouse and the RH&DR station, and hoped for the best.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Aug-17 10:03 PM GMT

Great range of Coppers Dave, and there was you wondering if you'd see on this season earlier in the year 😊 Good going with the Cloudy, still not one for me...Sorry to hear about the QoS 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-Aug-17 10:44 AM GMT

Looking forward to seeing the shots you took in Kent Dave, I bet you could kick yourself for missing the QSF, the Small Copper shots are lovely Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-17 08:00 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

... Most annoying was that my trip down on Saturday was the "long way round" via the south coast from Brighton onwards and I drove past the spot where the Q of S were found near Newhaven at near enough the same time! Completely unaware, I had no idea I could have made the same detour on the way back. The Law of Sod prevailed... 😞
Dave

Ouch!...reminds me of the time a few years ago when I had just got back from a holiday near Weymouth only to discover that a Monarch had been posing for people on Portland that very day.

Great Coppers, I have not been down to Kent for years, I must pay a visit sometime.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 29-Aug-17 08:48 PM GMT

Oh yes reminds me of the time I went away on holiday to Mull and found people were photographing a Scarce Tortoiseshell for several days somewhere I used to walk round once a week when at home!

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Aug-17 10:12 PM GMT

Keep trying with those Clouded Yellows, Dave.

Eventually you'll find one settled!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-17 09:02 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – it seems we all have stories of the ones that got away when we didn't even know they were there! 😊 The Coppers were worth seeing at what must be their hottest of UK hotspots. If they are as widespread over the whole peninsula as they were in this one small area, goodness knows how many there must be altogether...

Sunday 27th August: Another hot and sunny day, with not a breath of wind, even down on the cliff edge overlooking the Channel. In the morning I went up onto the downs between Temple Ewell and Lydden and it was interesting to compare what was around with what I regularly see up on the North Downs in Surrey (it is essentially the same chalk ridge). On the way up to the hill from the car, I saw several Holly Blues, a few Speckled Woods and a nice new Comma. Once onto the hill proper, there were very few Chalkhill Blues still flying, though there may well have been more females than I realised.



There were also a scattering of Common Blues, and a few Brown Argus.



Silver-spotted Skippers were darting around in all directions, though many were looking a bit worn.



Meadow Browns were everywhere, though outnumbered by the ubiquitous Small Heath – a definite contender for the commonest butterfly here today. Finally, there were numerous white butterflies, mostly Small and Large, and last of all a single Clouded Yellow. Given the constant strong sunshine, there was no way it was going to stop for more than a second – and so it proved. I spoke to a couple of other enthusiasts today, including a chap from Essex who was very pleased to see the Clouded Yellow, and a lady who seemed to have a good deal of local knowledge and was very helpful.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-17 09:20 PM GMT

Sunday 27th August: part two – the afternoon. After a break for lunch I spent the afternoon walking the clifftop path from St. Margaret's to Kingsdown and back, taking in the area called Kingsdown Leas (famous in 2013 for its crop of Long-tailed Blues). The first part of the walk was strangely butterfly-free, and it was a while before I came across the first one – a Small Copper initially down on the path, but which then flew up to perch.



Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 31-Aug-17 09:32 PM GMT

[quote]There was a particularly fresh-looking Chalkhill female... Wow Chalkhill's are all but finished around here Dave. There are a few very geriatric ones still flying but I've not seen any as fresh as that!

Re: millerd

by David M, 31-Aug-17 10:19 PM GMT

Large Whites are suddenly doing very well near me too, Dave. Maybe there has been an influx of migrants?

Sadly, Chalkhills and Adonis are not part of the Welsh butterfly 'fabric', but it's nice to see fresh examples of these beautiful butterflies from elsewhere!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-17 10:45 PM GMT

That is a classically posed 'in cop' shot Dave 😊👍 The larger(female?) has really nice spots, spikey looking 😊 Lush Adonis as well 👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Aug-17 11:01 PM GMT

Your camera was kept busy in Kent, Dave.
Great shots of Adonis, and especially the Small Coppers.
The areas you visited were surprisingly busy, given that we are now at the end of August.

All the best,
Trevor.

PS. How's retirement? 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-17 10:05 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, you've got some great shots of the Adonis 😊👍 It looks like I'm coming to Kent at the wrong time of year 😞 I've been down there in July and early August before but never at the end of August, I must try different tactics, perhaps a Late August visit. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Sep-17 09:56 PM GMT

Thanks again, everyone. It's great to see fresh-looking butterflies late in the year, and particularly when they are Adonis Blues. 😊 I think the Chalkhill female was a bit of an oddity, though I do often see females well into September at Denbies (when most of the males of all species have disappeared). I think it's hard to time it right for a visit, Goldie, as every year is different. About a fortnight ago would have been really good this year as all the Blues would have been out together as well as the Silver-spots...

Monday 28th August: Another scorcher of a day, and time for my return home. My first stop was another place Goldie has mentioned – the area of reclaimed land created 20 years ago out of chalk marl spoil from the Channel Tunnel diggings, which lies at the foot of the cliffs between Dover and Folkestone. This has been christened Samphire Hoe: Samphire being one of the common plants found along this coast, and Hoe being a word for a bit of land sticking out into the sea. It is accessed by a steep and narrow (one-way traffic) tunnel from the A20, which I believe dates back to earlier abortive attempts to burrow across to France. Typical chalk downland plants are everywhere, some deliberately introduced (wild flower seeds from Folkestone Warren) and some colonising naturally. Unsurprisingly, over the years the butterflies have moved in. However, today being at the tag end of the season, the variety was not great: Common Blues, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns predominated, with a sprinkling of Large and Small Whites. The highlights though were several Clouded Yellows – at least three separate butterflies, but quite possibly more.



This one has just flown backwards off the flower...



(My thanks to the visitor centre for all the obscure facts about this spot, which simply didn't exist when I lived in Dover many years ago!).

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Sep-17 10:04 PM GMT

Looks like you had a good time down Kent way 😊. I'm glad you didn't miss out on the Queens though and look forward to seeing what you saw down in Piddinghoe 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Sep-17 10:10 PM GMT

28th August (part two): Still in blissful ignorance of the QoS in Sussex, my detour on the way home was to Denbies, a place I find it hard to pass by. However, it was only a brief call, but long enough to see that the Adonis were still going strong and there were a good few Silver-spotted Skippers and the odd Brown Argus still flying.



one pair...



...another pair close to the path





28th August (part three): All was not quite over, as I reached home early enough to have a quick wander around my local patch. At this late time of day, I didn't see much, but there were still a few GVV pottering about, nectaring and looking for spots to roost. I hardly saw any of this species in Kent, but here at home the story is different.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-17 12:36 AM GMT

With hardly a moment to draw breath, I was off on my travels again on 29th August, this time to Cardiff so I could take my youngest son to the Dr. Who Experience before it closes in a few weeks time. It was a long-standing promise, and rare migrant butterflies in Sussex were never going to compete. The good thing was that the dreadful weather on Wednesday 30th in the southeast had cleared Cardiff by 11 o'clock, and it was a lovely afternoon there: Cardiff Bay is very pleasant indeed, but appears to only have white butterflies.

Thursday 31st August started well, but I had the car to MOT (successfully!) first thing and there was even a heavy shower by the time I was ready to go out anywhere. However, the sun came out again mid-afternoon, so I set off round my local patch. Out in the big meadow area between the M25 and the River Colne, I came across a couple of chaps energetically sweeping the grass and flowers with large nets. It turned out that they were surveying the area for insects, gathering and identifying whatever flying creatures there were to be found. I mentioned that the whole area was threatened by Heathrow expansion, and they reckoned that what they were doing was related to the assessment of the potential environmental impact of this (in my view) unnecessary project. I mentioned that I regularly see 24 species of butterfly here, which they found interesting, and to prove the point, a Clouded Yellow breezed past.



One of the chaps was very pleased with that as he hadn't seen one for many years. In fact, there were at least two Clouded Yellows, as they encountered each other a number of times, and I finally caught up with one for long enough to get some photos.





Also around were Common Blues, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns, plus a variety of White butterflies of all three species.



There was a single Peacock (they have largely disappeared into hibernation around here now).



Back nearer home, the hedgerows had a good selection of Speckled Woods, and a wild buddleia had attracted a several Red Admirals.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-17 09:43 PM GMT

Great shots of the Cloudy Dave, it's great when butterflies just turn up on cue 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-17 10:03 PM GMT

Yes, Wurzel, and I was pleased to actually get close to the little perisher, having watched it charge up and down almost daily for the last week or so! 😊 I was also pleased it had been joined by another – interesting that they should turn up here, as they do almost every year, when I haven't seen any at such butterfly hotspots as Denbies and Aston Rowant this year. I'm not complaining! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-17 10:23 PM GMT

Friday 1st September: As Trevor has intimated, the benefits of retirement are now becoming manifest, and with the sun shining again, I set off south to Halcombe Farm in Sussex hopefully to see the Queen of Spain Fritillaries. Using the old fashioned method of an OS map and dead reckoning, I found the spot reasonably easily and arrived to find a small handful of folk in attendance on a remarkably accommodating insect. I took a fair few photos before wandering further afield to see what else was around. Returning later, I found myself alone with a single butterfly. Suddenly, it shot into the air and started a frantic tussle with another very similar-looking individual: another QoS. They spiralled high into the air before plunging to earth in matching curves in Red Arrows fashion. A little later, this happened again, but was preceded by a high speed chase at ground level.







Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-17 10:44 PM GMT

1st September, Halcombe Farm – the best of the rest.

As mentioned, there were other things to see at what is a great little spot even without QoS Fritillaries to liven things up. Adonis Blues, Clouded Yellows and Small Coppers were all around.







Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Sep-17 10:56 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, I'm glad you didn't miss out on the Queens, a bit 🍷 for you getting to see two and some aerial battling!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-17 11:15 PM GMT

I'm glad you got your QoS Dave, I think? 😊 🍷 🍷 And more Cloudies too, I've still not found this year 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 02-Sep-17 11:50 PM GMT

Pleased you made it to see the Sussex Royals. Well done with the Clouded Yellows as well – they won't stay still for me this year. 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 03-Sep-17 07:16 AM GMT

I am pleased you managed to see the Queens Dave and now have some lovely images to treasure 😊 . I hope we get to see a few more migrants before the season is finally over.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Sep-17 07:45 AM GMT

You were lucky to have two QoS perform for you.
I am pretty sure that the one in your penultimate image is the one I photographed.
Several mrgreens must be awarded for a stationary Clouded Yellow !. 🍷 🍷 🍷

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 03-Sep-17 06:07 PM GMT

Hi Dave, great to see you made it here for this rare event. Like you I was lucky enough to see a pair of QoS's sparring, it was a fabulous sight wasn't it! Great action shot's too!!

Best wishes

James

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Sep-17 07:52 PM GMT

Thank you all for your enthusiasm! 😊 It was a great morning with the Queens, and blurry though the photos are, I am pleased I had a go at catching them interacting. Somehow that evokes the day better than some of the more posed shots. The Cloudies were a real bonus, and as luck would have it, there was enough cloud about to stop them in their tracks when it covered the sun. I'm not sure, but the CY photos may well show three different butterflies.

1st September: the way home. I avoided part of the M25 by diverting across from the A23 to the A24, which inevitably meant a late afternoon call in at Denbies and a coffee and a cake from the van. Suitably fortified I headed onto the familiar slopes. The late afternoon sun provided some lovely views of the hillside and beyond.



Things are definitely winding down now and there were far fewer male Adonis and even fewer Chalkhills flying – most were worn like this one.



However, most noticeable (maybe because of the time of day) were the good number of nectaring Silver-spotted Skippers, very easy to find today.





...when there in the frame appeared another one. They harmoniously continued nectaring together for a while – and dare I say it, improved the shot no end.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 03-Sep-17 08:46 PM GMT

Amazing how a bit of sun can change the day completely, I didn't get a sniff of a Skipper there today! And two on one flower in harmony, almost as rare as a bilateral gynandromorph 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-17 10:51 PM GMT

Great set of shots Dave as per usual 😊 I might need to make a visit to Denbies one day 🍷 That female blue is a tricky one, blue scaling on the wings near the body yet white markings round the orange on the hind wings..tricky 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 04-Sep-17 08:14 AM GMT

Who said the season was dying!?! (I think it was me, actually 😊)

Clouded Yellows, Silver Spotted Skippers, Adonis Blues....Queens of Spain

Keep your eyes peeled down there, Dave, you never know what you might find next.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 04-Sep-17 10:32 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, I love the Skipper shots with the fields in the Back ground, it makes your shots more realistic, such a change from seeing individuals only. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-17 10:25 PM GMT

As you say, Buggy, a slight change in the weather and you'd think it was a different place altogether! 😊

Denbies is always worth a visit, Wurzel, but with some of the sites you have near you, I'm not sure I'd venture very far at all! 😊 I think now that the female blue might just be a Chalkhill, because of the hindwing white spots which I don't think I've seen on an Adonis – but still not sure! 😊

The season is still alive, David – just about. It'll only take a few days of bad weather to thoroughly dampen it down. However, fingers crossed for some extra broods and a bit of selective targeting of sites may produce a few results even now! 😊

Thank you, Goldie (and Buggy) – I was very pleased with the last skipper shot in particular, created more by luck than anything when the second one appeared just as I got the background right! 😊 You're quite right – it evokes the full memory of the day and the place in the way the more clinical shots with plain backgrounds never can. They could be taken anywhere (someone's front room even...). 😊

Saturday 2nd September: Another lovely day to make the most of, so I headed up to Aston Rowant to see how things had progressed since my last

visit on 13th August. Initially, the most noticeable thing was the large number of bright new female Meadow Browns nectaring in the early sunshine, spreading their wings wide in a way I don't normally see.





Joining the Meadow Browns were a selection of whites, including these two, a fresh female GVW and a male Small White.



As I walked across the slopes, the numbers of blue butterflies increased, including the little silver flashes of Brown Argus.



There were still a few very worn Chalkhills...



...and some Common Blues...



...but most eye-catching were still the Adonis Blues, whose dazzling colour seems to intensify the more worn they become.





A lovely new Small Copper put in an appearance...



I had searched in vain for a nice female Adonis, when at last I thought I'd found one. The butterfly settled and showed itself to be something a bit unusual – ab. *krodeli*? A glimpse of the upperside showed deep chocolate and a turquoise dusting of scales – definitely Adonis.



Last, but by no means least, were the Silver-spotted Skippers, still flying energetically about. I didn't manage many shots (after Denbies the day before it didn't seem to matter).





It was only when I was going through the photos at home later on that I realised what was odd about it: It was half female, half male. A bilateral gynandromorph no less, the stuff of dreams (though somehow less spectacular than to see this condition manifesting in a blue butterfly or the magnificent SWF found a few years ago at Southwater). Coming a day after seeing the beautiful QoS, two "once in a lifetime" events in two days? And a really nice Adonis aberration as well... Whatever next? 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-17 10:31 PM GMT

You're having a hell of a run Dave 😊🍷 Retirement, it seems, really suits you 😊 I reckon it's all the good karma you've built up whilst slaving away at work 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Sep-17 10:38 PM GMT

Gonna have to try and 'bump' into you more often in the field if your luck carries on like this!

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-Sep-17 08:27 AM GMT

What a stunning female Green Veined White....and the Adonis ab is a cracker too.

I've also noticed that female Meadow Browns tend to 'open up' later in the season. Maybe it's due to the sun being that bit weaker?

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 05-Sep-17 04:30 PM GMT

Great shots Dave, your certainly having lots of luck 😊 I don't think we get a second flush of Meadow Brown's here in the North, I've not located any yet. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 05-Sep-17 07:55 PM GMT

you're certainly going through a bit of a purple patch, Dave 😊🍷😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-17 08:44 PM GMT

Thank you all for your appreciative comments – yes, an amazing couple of days and if you'd told me two weeks ago what I'd be seeing, I don't think I'd have believed you! 😊 Since childhood, and finding out such things existed, I've always dreamed of seeing a bilateral gynandromorph, but I'm afraid the

fantasies always involved Orange Tips. 😊 Never mind, I don't expect I'll ever see another of any type. 😊

I had time after coming home from Aston Rowant on **Saturday 2nd** to scoot round my local patch again. There were still quite a few Small Heaths around, and I spotted a mating pair (some thing that I don't often come across, despite the local abundance of the species).



I did also see a few Holly Blues, but none came anywhere close today.

Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 06-Sep-17 10:27 PM GMT

Excellent images again Dave, what a great few days you've had! The QoS, and that Silver-spotted Skipper? I think a few 🍷🍷🍷 are in order!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-17 11:23 PM GMT

Now you can be out and about morning til nightfall everyday during the season the OT gyandromorph is certainly 'do-able' 😊 That second Small Heath is a great shot 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-17 08:14 PM GMT

Thanks, Essex - I won't get two days like that again I don't think. 😊

Retirement is good, Wurzel, but not quite the blank sheet of paper some folk imagine it to be... 😊 Still, I hope to chase a few Orange Tips next year, just in case. 😊 Yes, catching them like that is one of the few occasions you can get close to Small Heaths without them bounding off. Even then, the female was a bit twitchy.

Monday/Tuesday 4th/5th September: Weather and other commitments rather limited activity, and a couple of short local walks were all I managed. On the Tuesday, the large meadow area received its annual mowing (a month earlier this year than 2016, though the same as in 2015) which will no doubt have an impact of what was left here. I doubt I'll see the Clouded Yellows again (one was still around on Monday). Here's a rather autumnal selection.



Another brand new Comma with a drop of meconium underneath it

There were a few Holly Blues around high up in the ivy round two local ash trees, sharing the spot with several Red Admirals – they like it up here in less warm weather at this time of year as they get the sun for longer, and nectar is all around for little effort. For the male Hollies there is always the chance of bumping into a female too.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-17 10:40 PM GMT

Wednesday 6th September: the forecast was reasonable, so I thought I'd try one more visit to Bookham Commons. There was a bit of sunshine from time to time, enough to bring out the butterflies. Since my last visit all the Gatekeepers have now disappeared, and the only possible source of confusion for a hunter of Brown Hairstreaks might possibly have been the numerous Speckled Woods. These were mostly lovely new individuals.



...but the most eye-catching feature of the day were the Small Coppers. They were mostly quite new, and must have numbered close to double-figures, and one in particular was a stunningly beautiful insect. Perfect in every detail except for the tiniest of nicks out of its wings, it repeatedly demanded the attention of the camera, and even took to my finger at one point. Pruning the Copper photos down to a sensible number has been difficult... Oh, and by the way, there were two different female Brown Hairstreaks basking in the sunny intervals before setting off on another round or two of egg-laying. Not often they play second fiddle to anything.



I'll post the Coppers separately.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-17 10:55 PM GMT

6th September: Bookham Small Coppers.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 08-Sep-17 08:43 AM GMT

I think there will be some envy from a certain Small Copper enthusiast when he sees your examples. As you said yesterday, they are all stunningly fresh, and well marked. Blue spots among them too.

Looking forward to your Wall images,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by badgerbob, 08-Sep-17 09:28 AM GMT

Good to meet you yesterday Dave. Looks as though it was worth the longish drive for you with several really fresh Wall Brown. Looking forward to seeing the results.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Sep-17 12:27 PM GMT

They were a splendid little selection of Coppers, Trevor – not quite in the numbers available down on that well-known Kentish shingle promontory, mind, but the blue-spot individual was a real cracker. 😊

Good to meet you too, Bob – definitely worth the drive as it always is to your part of the word. Wall photos coming up shortly. 😊

6th September: A bit later on. After the Bookham trip I fitted in another brief local walk. Of interest today was a very faded female Brown Argus a long way from their usual haunts.



I'm convinced that late in the season, the females of various butterflies wander quite a way looking to lay in new spots in order to spread their species. I've seen a couple of Small Heath in this area recently, also quite a distance from their main colony, and there was the female Small Copper I saw here just a few days ago.

I came across several Speckled Woods, including this one which had just emerged from inside the shrubbery at ground level – presumably another female on an egg-laying mission.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Sep-17 12:57 PM GMT

Good to see Bookham is still putting out the goods, and that is a lovely Copper. Looks like they're trying to finish the year on a flourish again. Not sure when I'm going to get out again now the weather has deteriorated 😞

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-17 07:06 PM GMT

That's a lovely Small Copper Dave, we don't see many round here worse luck, love the shot of the Copper on your finger 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-17 07:15 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Just catching up again after another few days away.

Cracking find with the Silver-spotted Skipper bilateral gynandromorph. I see the third Meadow Brown down on your report from September 2nd has orange patches on her hindwings, I have been seeing more and more like this over the past couple of years.

That's a lovely Small Copper as well with a great set of blue spots 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Sep-17 09:33 PM GMT

Definitely worth another go down at Bookham, Buggy. Hopefully the sun will shine a bit over the weekend. 😊

Thanks, Goldie – as well as being a real looker, that Copper seemed to have no fear, hence the number of close-up shots and its willingness to sit on my hand. 😊

Thank you, Neil – it just shows its worth checking every photo, even the mediocre ones! 😊 Hmm – I wonder if Meadow Browns *are* getting brighter? I may have a look back at previous years and see if there's a trend.

Thursday 7th September: Another sunny start to the day, so I set off for Sussex, following Trevor's posting of probably third brood Walls. I ended up at High & Over, and though the weather had deteriorated, it was still reasonably warm and the sun was still there though rather hazy. Almost immediately I encountered Badger Bob near the viewpoint and within minutes, the first Walls. After seeing two males and a female, Trevor also appeared and we had repeated sightings of these three and perhaps one other. Also seen were a large number of whites – mostly Small Whites, but with one or two Large and GVW as well.



A Red Admiral spent a long period flat on a bench (there were one or two others on the ivy flowers as well), and there was also a persistent Peacock.



I glimpsed a Small Copper, but it whizzed past at speed in a red-orange blur; there were several Speckled Woods along the paths leading down from the car park.

However, the day belonged to the Walls: I will try and post some shots that aren't the same as Trevor's... 😊











Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Sep-17 09:46 PM GMT

~~quote~~ Definitely worth another go down at Bookham, Buggy. Hopefully the sun will shine a bit over the weekend. 😊 Forecast is a real mixture of weather, sadly I'm at work so I'll just have to settle for doing my transects if the sun shines for long enough!

Love those Walls, I'll have to try and visit High and Over some time, I keep hearing about it and it's not a million miles away from Newhaven 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-17 10:50 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Coppers from a post or two back Dave and then a fantastic set of Walls, you filled your quota there 🍷🍷 Mind you it does seem slightly odd seeing fresh butterflies when the weather over my way is almost end of Autumn/start of winter 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Sep-17 12:16 AM GMT

Love the Wall Browns, Dave. It's such a bonus to have a site where they are resident.

Well done with the Small Coppers too, especially those *caeroleopunctata* specimens.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-Sep-17 07:41 AM GMT

You certainly made the most of that female Wall, and quite rightly so, as they are far more elusive than the males, and it is always a treat to see one. It would be interesting to know the ratio of female to male in a Wall colony. I have noticed a few 'same shot, different angle' images, but that was inevitable.

A great day, great shots, thanks for the company.
Trevor.

PS. How about a visit to the old railway, next Spring?.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Sep-17 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy - worth the journey to High & Over, certainly. 😊 However, it's a bit of a step from Seaford station, though you could get the bus along to Exceat and walk up from there.

Thank you, Wurzel - there are still a few fresh ones around, but you have to choose your species and select a spot to find them. However, it's feeling distinctly autumnal now. 😊

Thank you as well, David - this is a really reliable location for Walls, and as I have to travel 70 miles whichever way I go to find them these days, it's the

no. 1 choice. 😊 The Bookham blue-spot Copper was a real cracker, wasn't it? Hopefully there'll still be a few more of these to see this year. 😊

An excellent day all round, Trevor, including the lengthy chinwagging with you and Bob! A visit to your patch in the spring sounds a very good idea too. 😊

Friday was not a day for going out, and I felt like a rest after a week of really good sightings in a variety of locations. 21 different species seen over seven days (which didn't even include any Small Tortoiseshells or Painted Ladies) – not at all bad.

Saturday 9th September started well, but you could see that the cloud would bubble up by lunchtime and the forecast was (accurately) predicting worse later on. I settled for a stroll around my local patch, and a typical early autumn offering dominated by Red Admirals and Speckled Woods. There were whites of all types too...



...and a single new Peacock.



Its late appearance makes me wonder if there has been a second brood around here – it's happened before.

So here are a selection of the many Speckled Woods, perching momentarily between chasing each other along the paths...





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Sep-17 10:51 AM GMT

Hi! Dave , looks like the same butterflies we're getting up here at present 😊 lovely shots of the Admiral , I think I'll have to venture to Hall-Lee-Brook (my local patch) for the Speckies I really like that shot of one on the Berries 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Sep-17 08:35 PM GMT

Sunday September 10th: the sunshine today was even more short-lived than on Saturday. There was just time before the clouds arrived to see what might be flying in the immediate vicinity to home. There was a Comma...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-17 10:51 PM GMT

Cracking set of images Dave 😊 from the 'Autumnal Collection' 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Sep-17 12:22 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

...plus a couple of Large Whites on the buddleia – one of each sex, but they took no notice of each other whatsoever

That is normally the case at this time of year, Dave. I think they're too busy feeding up before the flowers disappear to concern themselves with other distractions.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-17 09:51 AM GMT

Hi! Dave , love the shots of the open winged Whites, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-17 06:52 PM GMT

I think you must be right, David – I saw the same lack of interest again today.

Thank you, Goldie – they must be some of the trickiest butterflies to persuade to open up. They go just so far – and no further... 😊

Monday 11th September: more sunshine here and there, and reasonable temperatures (up to 20 degrees or thereabouts). I stayed local today, and was rewarded with the sight of at least 30 Red Admirals in various locations throughout the walk. They were largely newly emerged individuals, and most were enjoying the wealth of ivy flowers there are now to be found everywhere.



the "C" mark has a gap in it



fresh and unafraid of the world





There was a single Peacock, possibly the one seen a couple of days ago, which preferred the dandelions to the ivy and basked lower down.



GVW (m)

Though there is very little real variation between different individual Red Admirals (with the main exception of some having the extra white spot: var. *bialbata*), I did notice one with a noticeable additional patch of red scales towards the tip of the forewings.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Sep-17 08:23 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, I see your into Red Admiral's has well 😊 I've just seen one today with a huge blotch of white on it's wing and there seems to be a lot of the *bialbata* ab's about this year too. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-17 09:03 PM GMT

Tuesday 12th September: The forecast was for another sunny morning at least, so I decided another trip down to Bookham couldn't hurt. The first

butterfly was a brand new Comma.



In the end, I was unable to resist the variety and brilliance of the Small Coppers.





At one point several were in the same area, and a male accosted a female in no uncertain terms. However, despite him getting very close to success, she decided to escape his attentions.



Finally, there are a couple of things to be identified, one caterpillar...



...and one moth.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 13-Sep-17 09:26 PM GMT

Hi Dave, nice to bump into once again, sorry you missed out on a Hairstreak but those Coppers are a good compensation. You did much better with the Commas than me though, only saw that one!

That caterpillar isn't what I thought it was, its a Knot Grass *Acronicta rumicis* and the moth well....

looking through my guides I'm leaning strongly towards something called Dewicks Plusia *Macdunnoughia confusa*, a rare migrant with about 50 records on the British list. Might be worth sending the picture to the local BC branch to get the expert eyes on it 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-17 09:42 PM GMT

I've just Googled that moth and I think you're right, Buggy. I'm glad I stopped to get a shot or two of it. UK Moths says:

"This moth is a vagrant to Britain, having occurred only a few dozen times, mostly attracted to light on the south and east coasts. August is the optimum month for this species, but records have occurred between July and October."

Goodness - I'll contact the BC Surrey branch and see what they say. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Sep-17 07:44 AM GMT

A well found Moth. Did it excite you as much as a rare Butterfly migrant ?, probably not.

But it does sound like a major find, so well done !.

Like you I've found plenty of fresh Commas and Red Admirals feeding up before hibernation, a great sight at this time of year. Lovely Pics.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Vince Massimo, 14-Sep-17 09:21 AM GMT

millerd wrote:

"This moth is a vagrant to Britain, having occurred only a few dozen times, mostly attracted to light on the south and east coasts. August is the optimum month for this species, but records have occurred between July and October."

Nice find, Dave,

One was also reported by Colin Knight on the Sussex coast on 9th September, so there could have been a small influx.

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

Vince

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-17 08:53 PM GMT

Trying to catch up with your PD Dave which is proving difficult what with me working and you not 🤖 Cracking set of white images, Question Mark (odd Comma) and to cap it all a rare vagrant moth 🦋 By the way when you mentioned 'they must be some of the trickiest butterflies to persuade to open up.' are you now branching out into White Whispering as well? 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-Sep-17 09:02 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

... By the way when you mentioned 'they must be some of the trickiest butterflies to persuade to open up.' are you now branching out into White Whispering as well? 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Well he does have a fair bit of spare time on his hands now 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Sep-17 11:01 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor, and no, there wasn't the same frisson of excitement around this as there would have been if it was a Camberwell Beauty for example. 😊 However, once again this was an ID after the event, and maybe if I'd known what it was at the time I wouldn't have been so casual taking a few snaps of it down in the grass. 😊

Thanks, Vince – interesting to know that at least one other has been seen recently. I've let the moth recorder for Surrey know, and am waiting for a reply back (which may have some other news of them of course).

You're right about the retirement lark, Wurzel (and Buggy!). Any sign of the sun and I'm off out! 😊 The nearest part of my local patch is only two minutes walk away and most of what I'm seeing at the moment is on this part – it has a large wild buddleia, loads of ivy in full flower (and in full sun for much of the day), and lots of bramble too. It's also sheltered for the most part. And talking of whispering... Guess what appears in the post below? 😊

Wednesday 13th September: After the overnight blow with attendant lashing rain, the day dawned brilliant blue, and amazingly remained sunny for good portions of the day. I confined my attentions to my local area, with a couple of forays before and after midday. Commas were to be found all over the place today...





There were once again dozens of Red Admirals, many of which also appeared brand new.



...to a solitary Small Copper...



...and to a single Small Tortoiseshell. This last individual had rather a granular look to it, which may well be recognisable next spring if it survives the winter.



Finally, to cap a very productive day, I spotted two separate Holly Blues. One of these was down low, and not flying far. It turned out to be brand new male, probably a third brood individual (given today's date and the earliness of the second brood this year).





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-17 11:39 PM GMT

Great Holly Blues Dave, looks like you've still got the knack 🤔🍷 Nice to see the Small Torts out before they head off for bed til February 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-Sep-17 08:00 PM GMT

Nice find with the Dewicks Plusia Dave 🍷 😊 ...that one would have been the find of the year for some I know up here.

I am still getting the odd second brood Holly Blue lingering around my garden in the odd bit of sun between all the heavy showers, looking well tired now though.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 15-Sep-17 08:33 PM GMT

Those two Holly Blues were quite a find, Dave, and I should imagine quite a surprise. I'll have to keep an eye on the old railway.

Trevor.

PS.High and Over might be worth another visit.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Sep-17 09:36 PM GMT

Thanks, all.

Third brood Holly Blues are an annual event round here, sometimes in surprising numbers. Hopefully the weather will settle a bit and there will be a few more. 😊 The moth was extraordinary luck, Neil. I thought it was a Silver-Y as it flew to ground, but behaved entirely differently and just sat there as I took its picture. I had no idea what it was until Buggy did the initial research. 😊

I will try and fit in another little trip down your way next week, Trevor...

Thursday 14th September: Another surprisingly sunny day with showers avoided on my local patch at least. More interest today – the first surprise was another migrant moth! However, this was a Hummingbird Hawk, the first I have ever seen round here.





The photos were somewhat disappointing though, partly as the sun kept going in and out.

There were more Commas...





...more Red Admirals...





...and more Speckled Woods.



The only Holly Blues today stayed up high in the ivy up in an ash tree, sparring with (and thoroughly outnumbered by) Red Admirals. However, to compensate I came across a lovely fresh male Common Blue, probably also a third brood individual as I haven't seen a fresh one for some while now.



Another very good day!

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Sep-17 10:25 PM GMT

Great selection, Dave – a gorgeous and rare Hummingbird Hawk moth, a fresh looking Common Blue and I just love those Red Admiral/Comma combos...a real taste of autumn!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-17 10:12 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, Great find for you, (the moth) 🦋 I'm still chasing that Holly Blue in the Garden, it suddenly appears then pops over next door's garden. 😊
Lovely shots of the the Butterflies too . Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

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

Thank you, David. It was great to see the Hummingbird Hawkmoth – I haven't seen one anywhere this year, and to come upon one two minutes from home was a very pleasant surprise. I'm glad you liked the two Comma+Red Admiral shots – a bit of whimsy on my part alternating the focus... 😊

Thank you too, Goldie – Holly Blues can be very frustrating like that and can cover quite a distance before stopping. 😊 If you can catch up with them when they do they are worth the effort.

Friday 15th September: More local butterflies. Despite more lovely Commas and Red Admirals, including more newly-emerged examples of the former, I concentrated on the Whites. During the rest of the year they get neglected through being thoroughly uncooperative, but currently their habits have changed and much time is spent nectaring on the dandelions – they have little or no interest in the ivy or the blackberries. This makes them easier to approach. Large Whites...



...and a lovely and very new female Small White.



OK, in the end I couldn't resist the Commas. The second one seems to be floating above the ivy...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-17 07:54 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Dave, it's difficult keeping up with your rate of posting 🤔😄🌿 Those Commas are lush as are the Whites and the Blues, in fact they're all mighty good but the best of the lot for me was the third Hummingbird Hawkmoth – brilliantly captured especially when you consider that the wings when viewed like that a actually just a blur 😊😄🌿🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

you're probably doing another posting as I type 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Sep-17 08:47 PM GMT

The first Large White image is a cracker, and well done by almost 'freezing' the wings of the Hummingbird Hawk Moth.

As for the Peacocks I have seen them at this time of year before, but there are a lot around at the moment. One of our more gorgeous Butterflies.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-17 09:42 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel and Trevor. 😊 I could probably have done even better with that Hummer if I'd thought about it at the time, but I just wanted a reasonable record of it as it was such an uncommon sight round here. Interestingly, one was reported nearby (within a mile or two) the previous day, and I suspect it was the same one. With a bit of sunshine every day it's always worth going out, and amazingly even at this end of the season there are still a few gems to be found.

However, the sun over the weekend was somewhat at a premium, though somehow this little area to the west of Heathrow avoided being rained on during daylight hours at least. **16th & 17th September:** With less sun, far fewer Red Admirals seemed to be around, but by casting the eye upward to the ivy around the higher parts of the trees, many more could be spotted. These two were lower down.



...but of course there were still Commas to be found – a lightly marked example.



However, the real highlight of the weekend was seen during a sunny hour on Sunday afternoon: A new third brood female Common Blue.



The underside looked a bit unusual and closer scrutiny of the photos showed one of the hindwing black spots had a distinct orange centre.



The season continues, and the weather forecast is steadily improving now... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Sep-17 09:47 PM GMT

What a beautiful specimen that female Common Blue is, Dave. You got lucky seeing her.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-17 09:53 PM GMT

Beautiful fresh Common Blue Dave 😊🍀, try as I might I couldn't find any at the Devenish yesterday though there were still a few Adonis at Larkhill a couple of days ago 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Sep-17 11:04 PM GMT

Thank you both – that female Common Blue was a lovely butterfly, and must have been out that day. The fringes are 100% intact as shows up particularly well in the close-up. You can also see the two separate fringes well, with the chequer marks only extending into the one nearest the wing itself. Not that there are any Adonis to confuse it with in these here parts!

Monday 18th September: More local ramblings in the brief period when there was a bit of sunshine. In fact everything interesting was to be seen on the small open area just a few minutes from home – starting with another female Common Blue. Today's specimen was by contrast brown and rather worn, but I have seen very few in this spot this year (mainly because the grass is mown in May when all the flowers are out, and again in July).



Close by on one of the many dandelions out at present was a Comma. They don't usually come down to these flowers, but this one seemed very keen.



I saw perhaps half a dozen Commas altogether, including this quite dark individual...



There were a few Small and Large Whites (the GW do seem to have disappeared again very quickly), and plenty of Speckled Woods.



This was reinforced a few minutes later by another sighting, but of a different individual. I managed to approach a bit closer to this one.



Dave

Re: millerd

by badgerbob, 19-Sep-17 10:18 AM GMT

The problems with going away for a week!! I have only just spotted you posted your Wall photos from when I bumped into you. Great to see them as well as the other species from the day. Good to see you that day.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Sep-17 04:16 PM GMT

We'll have to run a beauty competition, Dave. I was drooling over your 'blue' female Common Blue, only to find a real cracker myself today. Shall we let Wurzel adjudicate! 😊
We both seem to be leading hectic lives at the moment.

Great stuff, as always.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Sep-17 11:04 PM GMT

Thanks, Bob – it's a great little spot you have down there and I'm very envious of you having it close to hand. Good to meet you too and put another face to a name. 😊

The trouble is, Trevor, that the sun has been out for a short while at least every day recently – the last day I failed to photograph a butterfly was 3rd September. This does make for a busy schedule! Your female Common Blue was at least as colourful as mine too – another splendid individual. 😊

Tuesday 19th September: I had to stay reasonably local again today, but headed to Bedfont Lakes Country Park for a change. Now that I no longer work nearby, I'd almost forgotten about it. 😊

There was not a lot to see, really – three or four Speckled Woods, a scattering of whites, one Red Admiral and no Commas were all the majority of the

Park could manage. There are some blackthorn hedges that look eminently suited to Brown Hairstreaks, but unfortunately they haven't spread here yet. Worth a winter trip to look for eggs, just in case. However, one little corner of grass and flowers which had been untouched by the mower all summer was home to a small selection of other species: four new male Common Blues...



...and a single Small Heath in good condition.



A third brood of Common Blues is relatively normal here as far as I can tell, so I suspected I might see a few. I was surprised they were confined to just one small area though.

There was time late in the afternoon to look around for a minute or two near home as well – with predictable results...





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-17 10:07 AM GMT

Great set of shots Dave 😊 But it makes working out what's going on a bit tricky. There is a definite end of the season feel yet there are really fresh Common Blues and Small Heath 😊 Not that I'm complaining mind, an extension o butterflying is always welcome. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 20-Sep-17 02:20 PM GMT

I'm surprised you saw anything yesterday, it was so cold! Perhaps I need to move to the other side of London where I might actually get to see the sun again this year! 🇬🇧

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Sep-17 07:55 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. You have to be really choosy about where to go and the usual "good" sites often have next to nothing around now. On the other hand my local patch is full of Red Admirals at the moment! 😊

I was lucky with the sunshine yesterday, Essex. If it had been cloudy I'd have seen nothing at all. I have to say it was a bit warmer yesterday too – the Heathrow "heat island" effect is a reality and can easily up the local temperature by a degree or two. 😊 There are a number of disadvantages as well... 😞

Wednesday 20th September: A promise of some sunshine mid-morning, and a bit more warmth in the air tempted me back up to Aston Rowant. However, within twenty minutes, the cloud was back and stayed resolutely. The sun didn't reappear until after five when I was back home, which is a bit late to wake anything up. Aston Rowant managed to produce a single new Small Tortoiseshell...



There are still good numbers of flowers out here and a bit of more prolonged sunshine might have conjured up a few more butterflies, but today that was it for the visit.

As ever there were Red Kites over the hillside, a long way up, but I saw a much smaller hawk hovering lower down. I'm not much into birds, but no doubt someone can identify this one in an instant!



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-17 10:47 PM GMT

Lovely markings on the female Meadow Brown Dave, more sort of splodges than the usual 'wash' of orange 😊 After my last failed ID attempt on Philzoid's post I'm steering clear of any further ID's 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 21-Sep-17 12:34 AM GMT

It's a kestrel, Dave. They often use the slope, at the motorway end, for hovering. On cool days in August, I often wonder if they take their share of Silver-spotted Skippers!

Re: millerd

by Art Frames, 21-Sep-17 05:44 PM GMT

Some lovely pictures Dave. Especially like that Common Blue and that bright Small Copper. I agree get out as often as you can. I am usually surprised at how much I do see. 😊

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 24-Sep-17 09:16 PM GMT

Any luck with the Wall Browns today Dave? It was a bit windy today but I saw a few not far from home.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Sep-17 09:49 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. 😊 Fresh Meadow Browns are worth a study for their variety – are they getting more orange, and are two-pupilled eye-spots becoming more common? The trouble is we tend to ignore them except when not much else is left...

Thanks, Essex – hopefully I'll be able to pick out a kestrel in the future! 😊

Thank you, Peter – yes, I always go out if I can. If you stay in, you won't see anything, but if you go out, you might... 😊

Hi James – yes, I was down at High & Over by 1030 today, followed by a look at Mill Hill on the way back home. The change in the direction of the wind moved the Walls to the other side of the hedge at High & Over, and the very warm sunshine made them extremely active (more like they are earlier in the year). There were a few at Mill Hill as well, which was more sheltered, but they didn't stop at all. Reports to come in due course...

Thursday 21st was pretty well a blank – despite it being a bit warmer, constant cloud meant a couple of glimpses of Red Admirals was all that was on offer locally.

Friday 22nd September: a better day with plenty of sunshine, but I couldn't venture far. My local patch sported its usual Autumn collection of Red Admirals and Commas, and I also saw Holly Blues (high up, unfortunately), Various Whites, and Speckled Woods. A Painted Lady joined some of the Red Admirals high on some of the ivy, but too distant for even a pink smudge type of shot for the record.



Saturday 23rd September: Warmer again, but mostly cloudy in the morning which was my opportunity for the day. Having not seen any for several days, I came across two separate female Green-veined Whites as well as the usual suspects.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-17 10:44 PM GMT

"The trouble is we tend to ignore them except when not much else is left..." Peter (Art Frames) pointed out something similar on my PD the other day, but when you've got limited time you have to try and make the most of it. Lovely first shot of the Red Admiral, I love it when they adopt that pose. Also it's got the white spot in the band as well as blue spots in the black marginal spots on the hind wing, so a Silver-studded Red Admiral 🤔🇬🇧 The Comma is none too shabby either, thought the GVW is, there's always one letting the side down 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 24-Sep-17 11:46 PM GMT

Don't despair, Dave. What you've seen is good for the time of year and we all must acknowledge that the season is coming to an end.

You still managed some lovely Comma shots, and one hopes there will be many more opportunities before the nights and the cold weather finally close in towards the end of next month.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 25-Sep-17 10:43 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, looks like we're on the same track with the Butterflies 🤔 let's hope we see lots more before they disappear. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Sep-17 11:38 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel - yes, the GVW were a bit ragged compared to the pristine Commas and Red Admirals! 😊

Thanks for the encouragement, David! Fingers crossed for continuing reasonable weather - the season doesn't usually end completely until November round here, and this year it started in mid-February. A three- or four-month gap is just about bearable... 😊

I'm hoping, too, Goldie. You seem to be doing well up there with the end-of-season species. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Sep-17 08:38 PM GMT

Sunday 24th September: The promised beautiful day became reality and I set off down to High & Over once again for another look at the third brood Walls. Arriving at around 1030, I found them really active in the sunshine, and the change in wind direction had moved them to the other side of their favoured hedge at the top of the slope. Getting decent shots today was much more like trying at other times of the year - much less successful than I was a fortnight or so ago. Much of the time they'd settle with wings half open to reduce the chance of overheating, and nectaring was done in only very short stints on flowers.



Other species seen – a couple of very worn Common Blues, two energetic Peacocks, several Red Admirals – but none of the whites seen last time round.

A successful morning, but there was time left in the day for a stop off on the way home as well...

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Sep-17 09:34 PM GMT

Another successful session with the Wall browns for you Dave. Some great shots too. I'm wondering if the hiding female you saw had been mated, and was waiting for her eggs to ripen. If that was the case she would surely want to avoid the attention of all the patrolling males. Last year I witnessed a female reject several males in succession, clearly having no use for them.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Butterflysaurus rex, 26-Sep-17 06:08 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, glad you made it over here for the Wall Browns, they are not easy especially when the weather is warm!

ATB

James

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Sep-17 09:54 PM GMT

Thank you Trevor and James – always a pleasure to drive down to Sussex for the day and Sunday was glorious. 😊 I detoured via Mill Hill on the way home from High & Over, and that didn't disappoint either.

Sunday 24th September (part two): Mill Hill. As I walked down the steps from the car park at the seaward end, I had an immediate flavour of what was around, seeing a Wall, a Clouded Yellow and a female Common Blue in quick succession. It was really quite hot on the slopes, which were fairly well-sheltered from the breeze, and the butterflies were very active. Photographs were not easy to come by, and I didn't come away with all that much, but I saw a good selection for the end of September: Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper, Red Admiral, Comma, Peacock, Large and Small Whites, Clouded Yellow, Small Heath, Meadow Brown and Wall. One or two shots; the Walls proved elusive, the Cloudies nearly so:





A couple of views. One of them has a Clouded Yellow in it! 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 26-Sep-17 11:35 PM GMT

That roosting Clouded Yellow certainly looks pristine, Dave 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Sep-17 03:36 PM GMT

Fantastic Cloudy Dave, I still haven't seen one this year 🍷🍷 so a trip down to Bournemouth might be in order 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Sep-17 04:37 PM GMT

Great shots Dave, we're certainly not getting a great selection of Butterflies here but at least we're seeing some.Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 27-Sep-17 08:15 PM GMT

Nice Cloudie, that's one species I still hope to have a decent encounter with before we say farewell to this season 🍷

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-Sep-17 09:07 PM GMT

Great Clouded Yellow images from Mill Hill.

I was there today, and could only watch helplessly as they either passed close by without stopping, or landed a bit too far away. 😞

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Sep-17 04:00 PM GMT

Thank you all – it was a particularly splendid Clouded Yellow. 😊

Monday 25th was wall-to-wall cloud, but **Tuesday 26th September** looked as if it might be better – though it started very murky again. After some humming and ha-ing, after such a good afternoon on Sunday I decided to head down to Mill Hill again. Amazingly, just after passing Steyning, the skies cleared and sunshine greeted my arrival on site. Before getting more than a few metres from the car park, I came across a nectaring Clouded Yellow, another lovely new individual.



Astonishingly, no more than a few metres further on, there was another.



A splendid start to proceedings, and before the day was out I had seen more butterflies and in more variety than for a while. There were Common Blues (a very good third brood), with some beautiful blue females among them.





There were several nice Small Coppers (including one with slightly elongated "teardrop" spots)...





...and a few rather worn Small Heaths.



Good numbers of quite fresh-looking Meadow Browns spent most of their time nectaring (nearly all females).



A patch of hemp agrimony had attracted a fresh Peacock and a somewhat tatty Red Admiral...



There weren't many white butterflies around, but I did find a new female Small White...



As if that wasn't enough, on today's visit I managed to track down a variety of Walls, both male and female.



I also bumped into Neil Hulme and Dave Cook also enjoying the late season bounty here, and counting the Walls – good to see you both. Here is another view of the hillside. In the right foreground is a particularly lush Deadly Nightshade and on the top of the crest you can just make out the two chaps just mentioned. I didn't spot them till later...



An excellent day, and probably one unlikely to be matched until next year.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Sep-17 04:35 PM GMT

Up until today I would have been gnashing my teeth at those lovely Clouded Yellow images. But I was able to put that right this morning. One thing's for certain, Wall Browns could be considered placid compared to warmed up Clouded Yellow on a sunny day.

I'm pleased that sunny Sussex is rewarding you in retirement!. Great stuff.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 28-Sep-17 07:09 PM GMT

Well I still am gnashing my teeth at those Clouded Yellow images. I have seen a few around, and even managed a few pictures, but nothing remotely matching these! 🍷

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Sep-17 07:21 PM GMT

It could be high summer with that range of species on the wing. Make the most of it though, have you seen what's arriving on Sunday!

Re: millerd

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

I'm with Trevor on this one Dave 🍷🍷🍷 Some great Yellows and an astonishing looking Blue – but could it be all over after the weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Sep-17 08:21 PM GMT

Those first two Cloudies were an amazing bonus, Trevor – the rest of them were manic as usual in the heat. The Walls were none too easy either. 😊

I think I caught them just as the sun came out, Essex, so they were just fueling up for the day – but luck as ever plays the biggest part! 😊

It felt like high summer, Buggy – and it did feel a bit like squeezing out the last drops of the season. Returning to my local patch, not much is left – there may be further trips to the south coast if Trevor can keep things going down there! 😊

Thank you Wurzel – it was a very blue female and must have been staggering when completely new, though it was still pretty stunning. 😊 I hope you do find yourself a Cloudie. Three were reported yesterday from the ever-reliable Southbourne undercliff, so that's the place to go. 😊

Unfortunately I was only able to get out briefly locally on **Wednesday and Thursday 27th and 28th September**. This was a pity as there was sun and warmth on both days, but I suspect there was not much more than what I saw – one or two whites, a few Speckled Woods and perhaps a dozen Red Admirals. One species I didn't see at Mill Hill, though... 😊 I think many Red Admirals have been migrating south – if they had all stayed put, they would be overflowing the ivy round here by now...



The weather does look a bit iffy from Sunday onwards as the remnants of two hurricanes combine and head our way. Whether they managed to catch any migrating Monarchs in the process remains to be seen. Let's hope so! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Sep-17 03:29 PM GMT

Loving these images, Dave. You've seen quite a variety, with some beautiful Wall Browns and Clouded Yellows. My favourite though has to be that almost 'tacky' fresh female Small White. What a beauty she is.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-17 07:41 PM GMT

Cracking looking Red Admiral Dave 😊 Cheers for the tip-off – hopefully they'll make until next weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-17 08:50 PM GMT

Thank you for those appreciative comments, David. It is difficult to beat a fresh Clouded Yellow when the season is running down. 😊 I'm also pleased you singled out that Small White. It looked very new (the wings even seemed a bit limp, still), and wasn't really white at all, more a pale lemon. It also had extensive black scaling on the upperside, with incipient extra spots, including one on the hindwings. A nice individual from a rather overlooked species.

Cheers, Wurzel – I hope you make it to the seaside! 😊 😊

Friday 29th was another "blank" day with virtually no sunshine to entice either me or the butterflies out. However, **Saturday 30th September** started better. A large hole in the cloud cover appeared, so I headed swiftly down to Bookham Commons to see how the Small Coppers were faring. Bugboy had seen a few on Tuesday so I was hopeful.

Once at the usual hotspot, the Coppers were not shy in appearing, and I saw perhaps as many as ten or a dozen. They varied from pale, ragged and worn to very new indeed, with fresh examples of both sexes. Aside from the Coppers, there were a couple of male Common Blues. One of these looked quite fresh...



Whether this is extreme enough to count as ab. *flavescens*, I don't know, as there is a lot of variation.

There were also a few Speckled Woods, including this nicely marked female waiting for the sun to come out so she could resume egg-laying.



However, it was really a Coppery morning.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-Sep-17 10:37 PM GMT

Good to see the Coppers doing well there today, I hope they're all tucked up somewhere safe ready for tomorrow! If I hadn't been somewhere further afield today I'm sure we would have bumped into each other again 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Sep-17 11:03 PM GMT

You've lifted my spirits with those images, Dave, on a day when I got a soaking merely for travelling between my car and the shops!!

Things are clearly still alive in those areas where it doesn't rain incessantly! 😞😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Oct-17 09:02 PM GMT

A very good showing from the Bookham Coppers, Buggy – definitely worth another visit and hopefully they'll have been well down out of the wind. 😊

I'm glad to hear that, David! They were an uplifting sight – full of character and colour. 😊 I think quite a few of the wet spells have passed through here overnight after soaking points west during the previous daytime. This can put quite a different perspective on exactly the same weather. 😊

Monday 2nd October: breezy after the overnight wind and wet, but a fair bit of quite warm sunshine in the morning before the cloud increased again. After quite a poor showing on the Red Admiral front a few days ago, I half-expected them to be nearly absent on my short local walk today. How wrong can you be? There were dozens (I managed to reach 30 before retracing my steps and risking double-counting) and most of them looked quite fresh. Another flush of new hatchlings from the abundant nettles around here: it will be interesting to see if they head southwards as their predecessors seem to have done. I also spotted half-a-dozen Commas, a similar number of Speckled Woods and a couple of Small Whites.







Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Oct-17 09:57 PM GMT

Your patch really is quite remarkable at this time of year, I've practically given up looking for butterflies on my patch, it's barren! 🙄🙄🙄

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-17 11:02 PM GMT

A splendid array for this time of the season Dave, it's great to see butterflies persisting and just shrugging off inclement weather 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Oct-17 11:33 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Your patch really is quite remarkable at this time of year, I've practically given up looking for butterflies on my patch, it's barren!

Indeed. My patch too is quite bereft. I'm actually starting to wonder whether I'll see another butterfly before the year is out!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 03-Oct-17 09:02 AM GMT

Hi! Dave , those Red Admiral's are very harder , I've been amazed at the numbers I've seen this month 😊
I love the Comma on the Berries, really autumnal 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-17 12:07 AM GMT

Thank you all - it's the Red Admirals that keep things going, like they seem to be with you, Goldie! 😊 However, they aren't the only thing around still, amazingly. Several species are (to use your word, Wurzel) persisting, much to my pleasant surprise today. Some areas are indeed barren and bereft, but not all...

Tuesday 3rd October dawned sunny and a bit nippy compared to recent mornings. However, the temperature rose quite quickly to around the 16 mark by lunchtime. The initial object for the day was to do a more scientific count of the Red Admirals around my normal local walk. I managed this, but was constantly distracted by other things, so may have missed one or two. The total overall came to 35, so yesterday's estimate wasn't far off. Of these about a third were around one big ivy patch and two thirds within five minutes of home. Almost all of them looked very new, and some were definitely freshly emerged. It's certainly the largest number I've seen this year on one day, though I've had higher numbers in the past.

However, they were not the only attractions. Altogether, I saw ten species today, and managed to photograph seven out of ten, which was a bit annoying because of those that eluded me. As I was in counting mode today, the league table looked like this:

Red Admiral 35



Comma 6



Speckled Wood 6



Peacock 1



Small Copper 1



Common Blue 1



Small Heath 1



...and those that evaded the camera:

- Small Tortoiseshell 1
- Holly Blue 1
- Small White 1

The Small Copper was in the same area as other recent sightings, though another different individual. The Common Blue was where I'd seen eggs being laid a while back, and was very fresh. The Small Heath was a ghost of a butterfly in their usual area, but barely able to fly. The Peacock was seen near the same spot as the Small Copper, and appears to have the extra hindwing spots seen on the one at Mill Hill. It's probably a second brood individual. I disturbed the Holly Blue from an ivy patch where I was counting Red Admirals, the Small Tortoiseshell was basking on the path and I failed to see it

before it set off rapidly downwind and the Small White was pottering in the sunshine and failed to stop.

One particular Red Admiral caught my eye. It was very new and the red band on the forewing was divided in two as well as it sporting prominent *bialbata* white spots.



A striking individual.

An excellent day for the time of year.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 04-Oct-17 09:01 AM GMT

What amazes me Dave, is that in the height of Summer, June, there's hardly a butterfly to be seen, then in October, with Christmas items appearing in the shops, you can find a haul like that !.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-17 09:31 AM GMT

A cracking array Dave, especially nice is that Red Admiral 🤔🇬🇧 - isn't there a named ab where the red line is cut through with black like yours?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 04-Oct-17 10:08 AM GMT

Wow! Dave, that's a great haul, love the Admiral 😊 they've certainly had a great year, it's strange isn't it how in different parts of the country we're still seeing lots of Butterflies 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-17 10:38 PM GMT

It surprised me somewhat too, Trevor – some were quite unexpected and the sheer numbers of Red Admirals was amazing. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – I think there is a named ab., but I don't know what it is... It was a striking *bialbata* anyway, even without the other factor. A lovely specimen. 😊

Thank you too, Goldie – yes, Red Admirals have been good round here too, and it's great they are still going strong up your way. I must ask my sister how they are doing over in York... 😊

Wednesday 4th October. Barely a glimpse of proper sunshine today, and not exactly warm – but this didn't daunt the Red Admirals much. Over the same route as yesterday I still counted 18 – and a few of those were seen in some of yesterdays blank spots.



...a Speckled Wood...



...and to make up for me not getting a shot yesterday, a male Small White.



To emphasise that it was autumn, there was also a nice specimen of a type of fungus, the name of which escapes me...



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Oct-17 10:43 PM GMT

Impressive array of species Dave. The Broken red band RA is *ab. fructa*

Re: millerd

by Greenie, 05-Oct-17 07:04 AM GMT

Your autumnal fungi is *Coprinus comatus* / Shaggy Ink Cap or Lawyer's Wig .

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Oct-17 10:28 PM GMT

Thank you for the ID on the fungus, Greenie – I remember the inkcap name now. 😊 We used to get them in the garden when I was a kid.

Cheers, Buggy – a double ab, then – I thought there had to be a name for the broken red band.

Thursday 5th October: My local patch again. The overnight cloud kept the temperature up a bit, so that when it cleared around 10, the sunshine turned the day into a fairly warm one. The butterflies responded beautifully. On top of the ten species seen so far this week, I saw another three (Large White, Painted Lady and Brimstone) and perhaps a fourth (a questionable GVW). I also managed a shot or two of one of those I missed the other day.

First to be seen today were a Red Admiral and a Comma, basking on windowsills of nearby houses. White PVC does a great job of reflecting the sun onto basking butterflies. A bit further on, and there were more Red Admirals basking in the more natural environs of the bramble bushes. A couple of Speckled Woods disturbed them, and suddenly there was a multi-species bundle of butterflies. What else was in there? A passing Large White male and a new male Holly Blue minding its own business in the sun. The latter butterfly posed very nicely with regard to its lovely silvery underside, but no amount of whispering could persuade it to open beyond a certain point. Nevertheless, I took quite a few shots from all angles of this near-perfect third brood butterfly.

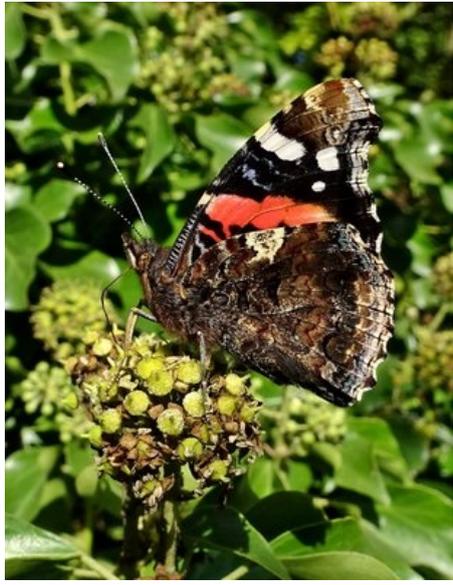


So, today's count:

Red Admiral 24
Comma 9
Speckled Wood 8
Small/GV White 5
Large White 3
Brimstone 1
Holly Blue 1
Painted Lady 1

Species seen here this month: 13 (perhaps 14)

Every day brings a surprise! 😊 (As well as the old favourites...)



Dave

Re: millerd

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

Another great smattering of butterflies Dave, that's still mighty impressive whispering skills 🤔🤔🤔 Cheers to Bugboy for the ab name 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-17 10:28 PM GMT

And another slightly different smattering today, Wurzel... 😊

Friday 6th October: Another sunny morning and most of the afternoon, but with a distinct chill to it first thing. My local patch didn't disappoint, with nine species seen today.

First of note was a male Holly Blue in the same spot as yesterday, but a different individual. It was also sucking up moisture from the leaf.



Nearby was a male Small White, bouncing from yellow flower to yellow flower, and also battling with the breeze.



I also came across two Speckled Woods battling like there was no tomorrow for some considerable while.



Some context...



The overall tally today:

Red Admiral 22
Speckled Wood 9
Comma 8
Common Blue 3
Small White 3
Peacock 2
Large White 1
Small Copper 1
Holly Blue 1

Hopefully there will be some more sunshine next week, and the chance of another trip south for some more Clouded Yellows.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Oct-17 10:53 AM GMT

That last shot must be a World first !, airliner and Speckled Woods in the same image.
I'm in Wiltshire most of next week, so I will miss any more Cloudie action for now.
If you manage to get to Shoreham, hope you have a great day.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-Oct-17 08:30 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, another great for you, 😊 I'm loving your HollyBlue shots, keep them coming 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 07-Oct-17 09:09 PM GMT

Some brilliant Holly Blues there Dave ,not had much luck with them myself this year . Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-17 06:12 PM GMT

That last shot is a cracker Dave, it looks like they're about to go and have a word with Jet for invading their airspace 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Oct-17 09:08 PM GMT

That aircraft shot was a bit fortuitous, Trevor and Wurzel – I was snapping away at the Specklies as they battled and circled around me and the A340 got in there somehow. To be honest I'm surprised it doesn't happen more often! 😊 Red Admirals, when in fighting mood and chasing everything, often react to the planes passing over. Goodness knows what they hope to achieve... 😊 😊

Thanks, Goldie – as you know, I have a soft spot for Holly Blues, and if I see them I shall do my best to bring them to you! 😊

Thank you Allan 😊 – even round here, where they are pretty common, there haven't been so many around this year. A natural fluctuation I hope.

Saturday 7th October: Grey all day, though definitely warmer. A short local walk could only muster six half asleep Red Admirals and one Speckled Wood.



What hasn't helped is that the area full of flowering dandelions and clover was mown flat (again!) soon after I took some of Friday's shots. That poor Small Copper will have to find somewhere else now for late season nectar...

Sunday 8th October: A better day; however, I had other commitments for most of it, watching my son playing u-13 rugby. In a bright spell in the afternoon, I had another brief walk around and managed to see a dozen Red Admirals, four Speckled Woods and a couple of Commas.



However, some of the older Red Admirals, and also the Speckled Woods, have started basking on the ground, either on bare patches or on specially selected fallen leaves to which they persistently return. This is in preference to the usual spots higher up on vegetation.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Oct-17 09:59 PM GMT

Red Admirals seem to be doing really well this year Dave and you're seeing some especially nice ones, the first shows the extension of blue up the inner margin of the wing 😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-Oct-17 11:29 PM GMT

You've done really well lately Dave, especially with those Holly Blues, which you seem to have 'magnetised' throughout 2017. Particularly impressive is your image with the aircraft invading the butterfly jousting space. No chance of that round me....in Swansea, we're not in the line of low flight paths, so this kind of event is out of the question!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Oct-17 10:04 PM GMT

The Red Admirals are doing very well round here, Wurzel. Going back over my records for the year, they have been the most frequently seen and most abundant by far. 😊 Seeing them in numbers over the last eight consecutive days has certainly helped! 😊 It does mean there are lots of opportunities to see all the little variations between individuals.

Holly Blues come in third on the list on my local patch, David, which should come as no surprise! As you know, they are a favourite of mine as well. This may account for the apparent magnetism... 😊😊 The aircraft are even more abundant, unfortunately, but you get used to them. It does make for slightly unusual shots if the timing is just right. 😊

Monday 9th October: Another warm but mostly cloudy day. A short spell of sunshine energised the butterflies and unusually the first one I saw on a

local walk was a Comma, high up on some ivy.



The rest of the walk was predictable, with Speckled Woods (4)...





When the sun went in, I diverted to the local coffee shop. Outside was a planter which I think had herbs in it earlier in the year but now was rather overgrown. On some variety of crucifer (it may even have been a horseradish plant) I spotted no less than three Small White caterpillars of various sizes. I would guess they will reach the chrysalis stage before any real cold weather arrives.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-17 10:36 PM GMT

That is a really interesting looking Red Admiral Dave 😊 I wonder what caused that – if she's female could she be gravid and fit to burst?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Oct-17 05:51 PM GMT

That could be it, Wurzel. 😊 The butterfly was very new – its fringes were perfect, and it was posed unusually with the wings held apart from one another. It's definitely fatter than the one in the photo above.

Tuesday 10th October: A very grey day with minimal brightness. However, in the tiniest of brighter moments, the extra warmth was enough to stir one or two of the indefatigable Red Admirals into flight. Even a spot or two of drizzle made no difference – I saw five altogether today. A couple of sparring Speckled Woods (undistracted by aeroplanes today) appeared as well, plus a wandering Small White.



Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 10-Oct-17 06:39 PM GMT

Yes, it's a kestrel. I think Thursday is looking reasonable weatherwise, Dave...

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Oct-17 11:00 PM GMT

Things MUST be winding down if you're seeing just Red Admirals and Speckled Woods, Dave. In just a few short weeks, Red Admirals will doubtless be out there on their own.

This is undoubtedly the toughest period of the calendar. Roll on next March!

Re: millerd

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

Hi! Dave, still seeing a few Butterflies here in the Garden, I thought your Hawk was a Sparrow Hawk 😊 they look a lot a like to me 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Oct-17 11:25 PM GMT

Thanks, Essex. The kestrel was larger than it looks in the photo – it was taken from some way off. You were right about Thursday too... 😊

Things wound up again with today's sunshine, David, after almost a blank day yesterday. There still seems to be a bit of life in the season. 😊

You're seeing a great selection in your garden, Goldie – I have to go a little further, but not much. 😊

Wednesday 11th was nearly blank – but not quite. Under cloud, but in a brighter moment, I spotted two Red Admirals flying around the trees.

Thursday 12th October was a different day entirely. The sun was out most of the day, but it was 11 o'clock before it started to warm up. However, the Red Admirals were out there ready for it, basking all over the brambles and then heading off to the ivy. Most were very new, but I did notice a few more ragged ones today. Overall, I conservatively counted 21 individuals.



Speckled Woods appeared too, looking very tired – six seen in all.



... but as ever the Holly Blue made my day.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Oct-17 05:46 AM GMT

That Holly Blue is brand new, surely unusual for this time of year ?. I've noticed that the blue intensifies if the wings are held part open, one wing reflecting off the other. Really great open wing shots too.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-Oct-17 07:46 PM GMT

That is a beautifully fresh looking Holly Blue Dave 🍃😊 not seen one for some time round here.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Oct-17 11:09 PM GMT

Fantastic set of images Dave but the highlight has to be the Holly Blue, your specialism 😊🍃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 14-Oct-17 01:30 PM GMT

That male Holly Blue has made **my** day too, Dave. As others have mentioned, it is an undoubtedly freshly emerged one; it is quite pristine.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Oct-17 09:52 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. It was a lovely insect that Holly Blue, and though a few third brood individuals appear every year round here, that didn't make it any less special. 😊

Friday 13th October: another grey and breezy day today unfortunately as it was entirely warm enough to tempt the butterflies out. I saw another Holly Blue today, but in a different location and well out of reach, and I also came across a female Common Blue being bowled along by the wind. I followed a female Small White for a while, but never got any closer than a very distant shot.



I have altered the contrast slightly to bring out the black-on-black spots, and the blue centres are quite clear. The endless subtle variety of this splendid species comes into its own with so many to study. I have seen hundreds this month... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-Oct-17 10:29 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Thank you everyone. It was a lovely insect that Holly Blue, and though a few third brood individuals appear every year round here, that didn't make it any less special. 😊

Friday 13th October: another grey and breezy day today unfortunately as it was entirely warm enough to tempt the butterflies out. I saw another Holly Blue today, but in a different location and well out of reach, and I also came across a female Common Blue being bowled along by the wind. I followed a female Small White for a while, but never got any closer than a very distant shot. SW1 131017.JPG Curiously, no Commas or Speckled Woods appeared today, but the irrepressible Red Admirals did – around a dozen by my count, many of them just sitting on the grass or the ground and whizzing around energetically when disturbed. RA2 131017.JPG RA4 131017.JPG They are not easy to spot with their wings closed. I managed a few shots including one with some unusual spotting. I have noticed that the black areas often have a reddish sheen to them, and along the border of the black area on the hindwing there are a series of more intense black spots – like black spots on a black background (if that makes sense). One individual today had blue centres in these spots. Blue centres to the spots within the hindwing red bands are not that unusual, but this is the first one I've seen with blue dots in the black area. RA1 131017.JPG RA spots 131017.JPG I have altered the contrast slightly to bring out the black-on-black spots, and the blue centres are quite clear. The endless subtle variety of this splendid species comes into its own with so many to study. I have seen hundreds this month... 😊

Dave

I had one with that blue spotting inside the red hindwing band a couple of years ago at Bookham, I think we named it ab *buggeri* 😊

Edit: my one can be seen near the top of this page, you got better pictures though 📷 <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=8077&start=460>

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Oct-17 11:31 PM GMT

Yes, that's the same ab, Buggy. I'm happy to stick with the name chosen... 😊😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Oct-17 06:16 PM GMT

A 'blue badger' Red Admiral – not to be sneezed at 📷 and I definitely think the name is a keeper 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Oct-17 08:12 PM GMT

It was an interesting variation, Wurzel – one hopes there are no Small Copper genes in there. That would turn the whole of taxonomy upsidedown I suspect... 😊

Saturday 14th October: Some weak and intermittent (but warm) sunshine this morning, enough mobilise a few more of the local Red Admiral Army (should that be Navy? 😊), but no particular surprises today: 14 Red Admirals (at least one with the red bands divided – ab. *fructa*), 3 Speckled Woods (including one newer one), and a single Comma.



ab. fructa



this is yesterday's blue badger again I think



a pretty new individual - most are worn now

Going back through my RA photos, I would say that the white spot *ab. bialbata* crops up to some extent in one in three individuals. Are there any official stats on this does anyone know?

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Oct-17 08:49 PM GMT

You must have seen well over 100 Red Admirals on your patch this year Dave, they've had an absolutely stonking year!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Oct-17 10:35 PM GMT

Possibly 100 just this month, Buggy. If you add the numbers I've seen each day (2nd-15th October inclusive), it comes to 235. Allowing for repeat sightings, 100 might be feasible... If I go back to 11th September, bearing in mind several blank days, the total is 418. The vast majority of those seen were fresh as well.

I imagine a few will be around tomorrow, too... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Oct-17 10:40 PM GMT

The local Nettle beds must have been heaving with caterpillars!

Re: millerd

bugboy wrote:

The local Nettle beds must have been heaving with caterpillars!

Strangely, Buggy, not that you'd have noticed. There are some quite large beds of nettles around here that obviously suit them – hence the numbers – but they are not easy to find. 😊

Sunday 15th October: I had a busy day scheduled, and my local look was very brief on what turned out to be a warm and sunny day for the most part. Nevertheless I quickly totted up 14 Red Admirals and a single Comma – no sign of any Specklies today.



A prominent bialbata specimen

Monday 16th October: As the remains of Hurricane Ophelia battered the western half of the British Isles, it was unusually warm and there was some very hazy sunshine for my local patch (the "red sun" phenomena reported on the news today).





All change with the weather tomorrow...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Oct-17 03:05 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, great shots of the Butterflies, my Husband was telling me about the Red Sun, he'd to go into town this morning , he said the cloud lifted and the Sun was red before clouding over again, we've got the high winds now but the Sun is shining and it's lovely and warm outside 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Oct-17 09:17 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – it got even redder later on (This was taken at 1421).



Around three o'clock, the whole sky turned orange and it got quite dark for a while. Apocalyptic! But by sunset the haze had largely gone. A bizarre day of weather. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Oct-17 12:51 PM GMT

Tuesday 17th October: a sunny morning until about 1130, but much cooler than the last few days. The butterflies were just getting going when the sun started to fade into gradual grey gloom, but I counted about a dozen Red Admirals, a Comma, and the reappearance of a Speckled Wood before this happened.



Today marks exactly eight months since my first sightings of the year, back on 17th February (when Red Admirals and Commas were also seen). Not a bad length of season, and though the weather will be deteriorating over the next few days, it may of course not be the end! This is also the 16th consecutive day when I've seen butterflies locally – every day in October except 1st – including 14 different species. Now that does seem good! 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-17 11:00 PM GMT

That is an impressive tally indeed Dave, you must live in a pretty good microclimate bubble 🤔🌱 Hopefully there may still be a few days of butterflying left this season, fingers crossed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-Oct-17 08:37 AM GMT

The weather you describe trashed my plans for yesterday.
Great images of those Red Admirals, a fine sight at this time of year.
As far as Butterflies are concerned, we are now living on borrowed time.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Oct-17 09:13 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, the garden Butterflies disappeared for the last two days because of the bad wether , it's sunny today so I'll keep a look out but it's much cooler. Great your still seeing them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 20-Oct-17 09:52 AM GMT

Sounds like a great October Dave. Interesting to learn about the various abberations, I'm going to have to check through my old pics now. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Oct-17 02:07 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – it's probably partly the Heathrow "heat island" effect and habitat that suits the less-specialised butterflies. And the season is still going – just. 😊😊

Thanks, Trevor – it's been a two-day washout here too without a glimpse of the sun. 😞

Thank you, Goldie – if the sun shines you'll probably see something! 😊

Cheers, Andrew. Yes, October has been pretty good, really. When there are so many Red Admirals, you do start to look at individuals a bit more closely to see what variation exists. It's amazing what you find! 😊

Two grey and dismal days meant no sightings on Wednesday and Thursday. However, at lunchtime on **Friday 20th October**, the sun appeared sheepishly and in case this proved to be just a ten-minute wonder, I dashed out onto the nearest part of my local patch. Everything was rather soggy, and the recent rain and wind seemed to have spoiled the ivy flowers. However, high up and out of camera range was a Comma. Red Admirals then appeared, but I only managed to count four over half an hour or so.



Resigned to it being somewhat out of reach, I was pleased when a gust of wind caught it and set it down nearly at ground level. After composing itself for a minute or two, it sensed the sunshine and gradually opened up again.





Still a few surprises in 2017 it seems... 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 20-Oct-17 02:24 PM GMT

That's great, well done Dave, dedication pays off.
You not only got a sighting but great pics as well.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-17 01:01 PM GMT

I still haven't got any shots of a male Holly Blue that come anywhere near as good as those Dave 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-Oct-17 01:41 PM GMT

What's going on at your local patch ?. Two male Holly Blues at this time of year is remarkable. None around here at all, but I did see a Red Admiral being blown around by ' Brian ' this morning.

I think you're a good contender for the last Butterfly photo of 2017, at this rate !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-Oct-17 03:07 PM GMT

Where are you conjuring these Holly Blues from, Dave?? 😊 You're a magnet for them.

That is yet another fresh individual so with any luck you may still find a female or two before the cold weather kicks in.

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 22-Oct-17 04:34 PM GMT

Some great Holly Blue shots there Dave ,haven,t seen any myself now for a couple of months,looks really fresh as well nice find ! Things for me (butterfly-wise)seem all but finished,it's definitely turned a lot cooler,and very windy ,here in my part of Kent !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Oct-17 11:34 PM GMT

Thanks to all of you for the appreciative comments on the Holly Blue. 😊 Oddly enough, at this time of year when any sunshine is relatively weak, they are more inclined to open up a bit more to soak up what sun there is. I think I've found five individuals since late September, all in roughly the same place. All have been completely new, hatched that day in all likelihood – but no females.

I've just spent the last few days up in Yorkshire, staying with my sister in Wilberfoss a few miles east of York itself. Her house is liberally spotted with Large and Small White chrysalids at present, about half of which have been parasitised. I think I'll post some shots of those separately. Storm Brian passed through at the start of my stay, but on **Monday 23rd October** things calmed and there was an hour or so of weak sunshine and it grew quite warm. The southwest corner of my sister's house is covered in ivy, so I popped out and craned my neck upwards. Sure enough, I managed to count five Red Admirals and one Comma.



for the record only...

One of the Red Admirals came down a bit lower briefly.



deciding to bask for a bit

It was warm again today (24th) but I was driving back so couldn't see what was about, but tomorrow may be similar.... Who knows what may be about on my local patch!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-17 09:08 AM GMT

This post pretty much sums up butterflying at the end of October – find some ivy and wait for the sun 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Oct-17 06:08 PM GMT

This is very true, Wurzel! 😊 And you were right, David, when you predicted a few days back that a female Holly Blue might turn up. 😊

Wednesday 25th October: I didn't have to wait too long for the sun today, as it was out and warming my local patch before 10 o'clock. Warm was the word, too – it turned into a lovely day, with hardly a breath of wind and lots of sunshine. I made for the usual ivy patch, which sadly has nearly finished flowering – but not quite. On the way I disturbed a couple of basking Red Admirals, and there were more on the ivy. Altogether, there were around eight or nine around – possibly one or two more.



I watched a Small White fly lazily over quite high up, showing no interest in either type of flower on offer, and a Speckled Wood patrolled the edge of the brambles and nettles.



However, once again the day was made by the Holly Blues. Altogether I saw three individuals – one newish male that stayed mostly high up and was flying between trees much as they do in the summer, another somewhat worn male that stayed lower down and basked from time to time...





The second male eventually discovered her, but his attentions were spurned as she twice flung herself on the ground and hid in the grass. He then took his frustrations out on a couple of Red Admirals, chasing them all over the place.

What a splendid day, considering the date... 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 25-Oct-17 06:29 PM GMT

   is all I have. I did see a single Speckled Wood today, but it was the other side of a window where I was working today 😞

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Oct-17 07:23 PM GMT

What can one say Dave, other than amazing !. That must be one of the best late October hauls ever.  .
Up at High and Over, under cloud, I could see vast swathes of sunshine to the north and west, but none for me.

Stunning female Holly Blue.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 25-Oct-17 08:56 PM GMT

However do you manage to find those Holly Blues? For late October, quite remarkable  .

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Oct-17 11:03 PM GMT

Stunning Dave       They say 'good things come to those who wait'...well you must have been, very, very patient for that one! 

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 25-Oct-17 11:49 PM GMT

Lovely to see you Holly Blue photos Dave, I have hardly seen any all year.

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Oct-17 12:00 AM GMT

Wow! Yes, I predicted it, Dave, but that doesn't detract from the joy of actually seeing it.

What a lovely specimen she is and how lucky you were to encounter her. A female Holly Blue at any time is welcome, but in late October a fresh individual like that is simply off the scale. I hope there's still enough warmth in the season for you to get chance to encounter a few more. Your patch is certainly blessed at this time of year. Let's hope there is more to come!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Oct-17 08:35 PM GMT

Once again, thank you all for the appreciation of the Holly Blue.  To be honest, once found it was a very obliging insect and though it changed position a few times it didn't fly far and the lower power of the October sun caused it to open up a fair bit to keep warm. The newer of the two males I saw was much more active. As David says, that female was a really uplifting sight as we move into the darkest third of the year now..

Today (Thursday 26th), though still quite warm, was almost entirely grey, gloomy and distinctly damp. In a smidgen of brightness I did see a single Red Admiral quite high up, but nothing else at all. Sunshine, but noticeably cooler conditions promised tomorrow, though.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 27-Oct-17 11:24 AM GMT

Another one!? Beautiful, I like the Comma in sunshine as well.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Oct-17 07:04 PM GMT

Thank you, Andrew – beautiful is just the right word for that Holly Blue. 

Friday 27th October: As forecast, a lovely sunny day, though a bit chilly at the start. As I had to pop into Egham this morning, I decided to carry on afterwards down the motorway and have one more look at Bookham Commons. Buggy had predicted that the Coppers might still be around at the end of the month, so it was definitely worth a look. He was quite right – in the usual spot along one particular hedgerow I found at least three individuals, one of which was still in reasonable condition. They made for very autumnal photos!







Aside from the Small Coppers, I watched around half a dozen Red Admirals flying energetically south towards the sun. They seem to be aware of the sharp downswing in temperatures forecast after the weekend, and are heading for warmer climes. Very sensible. 😊

Whether the Coppers will make it into November here, I don't know, but it'll be a close thing!

Despite endless traffic on the way back, I still had time before the sun slipped down too low to have a quick look at the nearest part of my local patch. Noticeable was the lack of Red Admirals now – I only saw two, one of which was patrolling the usual territory and posed nicely.



I imagine the others have, like the Bookham ones, headed south.

However, I did find three Commas – they of course are still nectaring and will do so until it gets quite a bit colder.



Looking up at the strangely empty ivy, I then spotted the little silver triangle of a Holly Blue.



A wasp disturbed it and it came down a lot closer, revealing itself to be a female (quite possibly the one I saw on Wednesday). It was very cooperative, and whether the same one or not it was a lovely sight in the autumn sunshine.





Another really good day. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 27-Oct-17 07:44 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, Holly Blues at this time of year, quite bizarre. The last Copper I saw at Bookham last year was 2nd November (also saw a Peacock on the same day), so there's only a few more days for them to cling on and judging by the condition one or two might just make it if they are able to find

shelter from the chilly wind and cold nights that are approaching. I might pop down this weekend if we get enough sun to tempt me out, that hedge should be enough to keep the worst of the predicted northerly wind at bay at least!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-17 11:23 PM GMT

More fantastic Holly Blue shots Dave 🤔👍 Will them hanging on this late have repercussions next year?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Oct-17 11:47 PM GMT

What a day you've had, Dave....again! Those Holly Blues keep rolling along.

Beautiful!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 28-Oct-17 11:56 AM GMT

A good day indeed, great stuff Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Oct-17 05:19 PM GMT

Great to be seeing Butterflies so late Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Oct-17 06:35 PM GMT

The Coppers were probably still around today, Buggy – it wasn't too bad a day at all. Though I've seen Holly Blues on my local patch into November before, they aren't usually quite as fresh as this one was. 😊

Thank you Wurzel! Fingers crossed it doesn't impact them next year: to be honest it hasn't done in the past and the numbers around now are not really very high. That female was the same one as seen two days earlier (I looked closely at the photos) which in this context is a good thing! 😊

An excellent day, David and Andrew – there really can't be many more of these this year now! 😊

It is good to still be seeing them, Goldie. 😊 Hopefully, as long as the sun shines and it doesn't get too cold or really wet, Red Admirals will still put in an appearance.

Saturday 28th October: the sun was hazy today, and there was more breeze, but it still became quite warm. I took in more of my local patch today, making the most of the brief period around midday when the sun still has some strength. All I saw today though were Commas and Red Admirals, but surprisingly in higher numbers than I expected – I counted four of the former species and nine of the latter.







The clocks change tonight, a real sign of impending winter, and the weather is expected to reinforce this with a very chilly night tomorrow night and a cold day on Monday. Of course the clock change makes no difference at all to the butterflies: I shall just have to remember to advance my excursions by an hour to keep in step with "real" time. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Oct-17 06:53 PM GMT

Lovely fresh Red Admirals and Commas, Dave. And as for that female Holly Blue, well..... !.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 28-Oct-17 06:54 PM GMT

Agreed, I will certainly be using BST if there is any sunshine on my days off the next week or two. Seems like there is every chance of something other than Red Admirals at the start of November, in the far south at least. I for one will certainly be keeping an eye on sightings.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Oct-17 10:26 PM GMT

It seems you had some more good weather Dave, it was a lot chillier over this way and they reckon we might even get some frost next week 🙄 Fingers crossed that we don't cos that could be that for the butterflies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Oct-17 12:18 AM GMT

You did well to see butterflies on Saturday, Dave. It was cloudy all day by me and the forecast generally was pretty ordinary.

There may yet be time for you to find a few surprises before the first frosts put paid to butterfly activity.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-Oct-17 10:24 AM GMT

You cheer me up no end Dave 😊 yesterday was a horrible day here, rain all day and cold with it, keep it up 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Oct-17 04:50 PM GMT

Thank you all once again. 😊

The continuing sunshine, despite lowering temperatures, seems to be keeping the butterflies going. I suppose there are many spring days when it's actually cooler than it is now during which Commas and Red Admirals (and a few more besides) are happy to fly.

Sunday 29th October: more sunshine today, and a bit of a breeze early on which eased around lunchtime. In the sun it felt warm, but the air had a slight underlying nip to it. The Commas were out nectaring again, with three individuals seen today.





One or two of the Red Admirals were on the ivy as well, but most were basking on nettles or defending territories. It seems that though some elect to migrate south (I'm sure many from round here have done this) others decide to stay put, establish territories, chase females and stick it out through the winter. I wonder what factors influence this decision? I managed to count ten individuals in various spots, quite well spaced out along my walk.





Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-Oct-17 06:18 PM GMT

Do my eye's deceive me or is that first RA another ab 'buggeri' 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 29-Oct-17 11:18 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

....you mentioned surprises, David... Today's unexpected sighting was that of a male Small White, doing its best to make its way between dandelions.

I'll accept that as a 'surprise', Dave, though not on the scale of fresh male & female Holly Blues at this time of year.

Next month will challenge the established theory on surprises though. Once we get beyond Bonfire Night I will readily recognise any butterfly other than the adult hibernators as somewhat unusual, particularly in view of the forecast frosts were about to experience.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 30-Oct-17 01:58 PM GMT

Nice to still see Dave, no butterflies on my lunch break stroll today at work in Redhill, Comma and Speckled Wood last week.

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Oct-17 06:24 PM GMT

You're right, Buggy – that Red Admiral has some faint blue spots and qualifies for your specially named aberration! 😊 I don't think it's the same one as before, but it's a bit worn and difficult to tell.

The Small White was a bit unexpected, David – I don't think I've seen one this late before. Not the impact and charisma of a Holly Blue, though! 😊

Thanks, Andrew – keep looking, they are probably hiding somewhere. 😊

Monday 30th October: There was some wet ice on the car windscreen first thing this morning as forecast, with the air temperature around 4 degrees at around 8 o'clock. However, there was lots of sunshine and no wind, and things warmed up a bit by late morning. Once again the Red Admirals were well spread out and in fact the total today was slightly higher than yesterday with a dozen seen. There are no longer any brand new examples, and some are getting really worn – not surprising considering some of the aerial battles I've witnessed recently.



I also came across yet another Holly Blue, but I failed to spot it down on the ground, promptly disturbed it, and sent it flying high into a willow where it resolutely stayed. Hopefully it won't go far. I have had some amazing luck with them recently, so I can't really complain. 😊

I noticed yesterday, and again today, that one or two of the Red Admirals were flying low over the nettlebeds. Though they never stopped longer than a second or two, this looked suspiciously like egg-laying behaviour and I investigated further.



Only a minute or two searching part of the nettle patch produced results – two tiny green eggs laid on leaves not far apart.





I imagine there could be quite a few more, though what future they have is debatable. I will keep an eye on them and look for others. Red Admirals are known to have managed to go through the winter as caterpillars in sheltered spots, so who knows?

Even at this time of year, there is always something of interest to inject some life into the season! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 30-Oct-17 08:09 PM GMT

Interesting observation and behaviour, Dave. I wonder how this works, as presumably those nettles will be killed by the first air frost? Perhaps the caterpillars will wander off, and find a mild sheltered site, where the nettles will survive and the larvae can slowly develop through winter. 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 30-Oct-17 08:12 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Your wet ice on the car windscreen at 08.00 this morning was a lot harder on mine here at 06.00 when I went off to work with the temperature on the car display showing 1 degree.

Good to see you still have plenty of action going on down there with great reports and photos to brighten up a cold dark evening 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-Oct-17 08:39 PM GMT

I had an afternoon wander around Epping Forest today, didn't see a single butterfly even though it felt almost springlike in the sun.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Oct-17 11:08 PM GMT

Thanks, Essex. I can't see those eggs having much of a future to be honest. Though that location is sheltered and south-facing, you are absolutely right that a sharp ground frost (let alone an air frost) will polish off those tender young nettles. Any caterpillars would have to walk a fair way to find better shelter. However, there is the saying "never underestimate a butterfly" so you never know! I shall keep an eye on things. 😊

Thanks, Neil. 😊 I think there will be more chilly nights next week too, even if there is sunshine as well.

That seems surprising, Buggy - was there no ivy still flowering? You'd have expected a Red Admiral or a Comma...

Tuesday 31st October: Unlike the last three Hallowe'ens, which have been warm (even very warm) and sunny, today was blessed with very hazy sunshine at best, though it was up to 14 degrees this afternoon. Finding butterflies was a struggle, but I managed to spot half a dozen Red Admirals, three of which were high up on some ivy in a sheltered nook I hadn't really noticed before.



ya-a-a-wn....



ZZZZZZ

So concludes a remarkably full October. I saw butterflies on 25 out of 31 days, and might well have done on two other days if I hadn't been stuck in the car. Altogether I have seen 14 different species on my local patch this month, with (making no allowance whatsoever for repeats!) a total of 480 individual butterfly sightings: of these a remarkable 317 were Red Admirals. To be fair, retirement has allowed me to head out almost every day, but the weather has been kind too – there has been very little rain here, any strong winds have been generally overnight or have missed us, and it's been reasonably warm and quite sunny.

Now let's see what November brings... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-Oct-17 11:37 PM GMT

That's one hell of a total even accounting for repeat sightings! Also that latest Comma is a fine looking chap, the forewing scallop looks particularly deep.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 01-Nov-17 12:04 AM GMT

I was just browsing through Red Admiral Ab descriptions for no particular reason and found that Ab. '*buggeri*' is a synonym for an already described ab *merryfieldoides*... oh well.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Nov-17 12:41 AM GMT

I feel your name for the ab. slips more sweetly off the tongue, Buggy – *merryfieldoides* is a bit of a mouthful... 😊 Of course, if one name is used more commonly it may become the accepted version. 😊

(PS: I've had to update the numbers in the post above – they weren't high enough! My spreadsheet (yes, sad isn't it) had failed to add in the results for 2nd October.)

Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 01-Nov-17 09:10 AM GMT

I will keep looking Dave, there is actually a nature reserve nearby, lunch time walks can be very pleasant 😊
An amazing tally, still thinking about those Holly Blues 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Nov-17 11:07 AM GMT

Mighty impressive totals for a month that some write off 😊 😊

"Of course, if one name is used more commonly it may become the accepted version. 😊" If only it worked that way Taxonomy wouldn't be such a headache/mess 😊

Fingers crossed for some November butterflies 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Nov-17 10:58 PM GMT

Thanks, chaps. October has been very productive, and now... here's looking at November! 😊

Wednesday November 1st: A lovely day, sunnier and warmer than yesterday (16 degrees at least), and in the middle of the day between about 1100 and 1400, the butterflies appeared. There were a couple of Commas, but both were sitting wings closed for some reason (as one did yesterday).



Red Admirals appeared of course, with perhaps seven seen altogether – though these three shots may well be of the same individual!



As I made one last tour of the area, I spotted a silvery flash on one of the remaining dandelions – a Holly Blue. There was only one brief opening of the wings, revealing another new female butterfly.



She hopped from flower to flower (there is little else on offer now but dandelions), and then suddenly set off to bask high up in the trees.



She was still a lovely sight for a November outing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Nov-17 11:33 PM GMT

It would seem that there are a few sites producing Holly Blues at the moment. One has been seen at High and Over (not by me), and the one today at Shoreham. I wouldn't have thought Shoreham was typical habitat for them. Great to see your examples, forgot to award your female image a mrgreen 🍷.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Nov-17 12:37 AM GMT

Those Holly Blues really are hanging on this year Dave 😊 she looks wonderfully fresh as well 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Nov-17 01:27 AM GMT

I'm running out of adjectives to describe all these late season Holly Blues you're seeing, Dave. Even more amazing is the sight of one nectaring on a dandelion! I've certainly never seen that before.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 02-Nov-17 12:35 PM GMT

Fantastic Dave, and great shots too 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Nov-17 04:55 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor - I was equally 🍷 of your Painted Lady... 😊

Thanks, Wurzel - somehow I think that there won't be many more this year, as there are some chilly nights ahead shortly. 🙄

Thank you, David. Dandelions are pretty well all they have left to feed on now - you're right though, it's a first for me with a Holly Blue. 😊

Thanks to you too, Andrew - it's great to have the season extending into November. 😊

After yesterday, when the cloud arrived the moment the fog lifted (unlike down on the south coast by all accounts 😊), the clearance appeared at midday-ish, allowing perhaps an hour or two of warm sunshine before low cloud and more fog, plus the low height of the sun, put paid to any activity. As it was, two Red Admirals were active in the nearest part of my local patch, a couple of minutes from home. One was quite worn...



... but it was soon displaced by another much newer individual which was flying around energetically between basking sessions at a nice height on the trees.





This one cannot have been more than a day or two old.

How long will they keep going? It's going to rain properly tomorrow for the first time in quite a while, followed by some frosty nights. We shall see...



Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 03-Nov-17 07:56 PM GMT

You female holly blue definitely gets a 🍷 from me!

After the rain, cold sunshine is predicted for next week. I saw a Red Admiral feeding in sun at just 5 degrees this week, so I expect sightings to continue

for another week or two, provided it is not too windy.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-17 11:56 PM GMT

I was speaking to my cat's Vet (Ronniethepoo) and he saw a Red Admiral at around 8am on Friday when it was only about 5-6 degrees so possibly the Red Admirals will carry on for a bit yet...so long as it's not to their detriment then that would be great 😊 Great set of shots especially the third one, that's a belter 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Nov-17 09:23 PM GMT

Thank you both of you. I am still hopeful of a few more sightings, despite the predicted frosts. 😊

Sunshine today, **Sunday 5th November**, after yesterday's rain. However, my only opportunity to have a look locally was at around two o'clock - and it was still only 11 degrees at best with a bit of cloud by then too. However, one Red Admiral was in the same spot as the two on Friday - but I'm fairly certain it's neither of those.



Its abdomen looks quite shrunken and thin, so I suspect this one has little left in the way of reserves and will not sadly last a lot longer. 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Nov-17 09:52 PM GMT

Still a few sunny (if rather chilly) days predicted this week Dave, I'm sure those Red Admirals of yours will be making the most of what's left of the year 😊

Re: millerd

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

Just one Red Admiral today for me too, Dave. I think we are now at the very end of the season.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Nov-17 11:37 PM GMT

Seems like the Heathrow 'bubble' worked again Dave as you're still onto butterflies and I spent another day without a sighting 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 06-Nov-17 08:49 AM GMT

Still some great looking RA's there Dave.

One for me on Sunday, landed outside my window and basked for a minute or two, looked in good nick.

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Nov-17 07:15 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – nearly the end of the season, but still they keep on coming.

Monday 6th November: a sharp frost this morning – the car needed a good deal of scraping first thing, and declared it to be just 1 degree above zero. Easily low enough for temperatures on the ground to be below zero but as far as I could tell going out at lunchtime, none of the young nettle plants seemed to have been frosted. In fact, the first butterfly I saw was a Red Admiral fluttering over them appearing to be egg-laying just as I'd seen last week.



No one can declare the season over yet... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 06-Nov-17 07:24 PM GMT

Indeed not Dave! Great spot you have there 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 06-Nov-17 08:10 PM GMT

Red Admiral yes, they are normally still around in early November. But I'm surprised you saw a Comma. 🍷

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Nov-17 07:16 PM GMT

That Comma is a real late showing Dave 😊 As for the egg laying Red Admiral I wonder how viable the egg will be, will it get through the winter? Looking good for a few butterflies on your way to the Social Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-Nov-17 08:14 PM GMT

Well done again, Dave, though I'm almost disappointed that there's no Holly Blue in the shake up! 😊

The Comma is particularly noteworthy. They're usually tucked away by late October so to see one a week into November is most welcome.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Nov-17 09:57 PM GMT

Thanks, all – I was pleased to see the Comma, but not entirely surprised as several have been flying here during the tail end of October and the start of this month. I have a sneaking suspicion that the Holly Blues are over for the year though... 😊

I've just been up to Holmfirth for a few days – despite a lovely day yesterday with lots of sunshine and temperatures just into double figures, there were no butterflies. A great view from where I was staying, though, over to Holme Moss.



More nice views though.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 10-Nov-17 07:17 AM GMT

Nice images of what is a beautiful part of the country, Dave. I suppose if **you** didn't manage to see a butterfly then the season **must** be on its last legs! 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 10-Nov-17 12:48 PM GMT

Lovely scenes Dave. Triffid.. 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

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

Thanks, both. I was slightly disappointed that even the Red Admirals had gone, as it looked like the perfect kind of day for them.

Friday 10th November: After rain early on, there were some sunny breaks around lunchtime back home here in the soft south (as described by my Yorkshire friend...). Ten minutes on my local patch was enough to see a single Red Admiral.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-Nov-17 10:53 PM GMT

It's a case of ever diminishing returns now Dave, but even then not bad as we are now a third of the way through November. I think we have both had a good run for our money !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Nov-17 05:41 PM GMT

That Chard does look spectacular, if a little scary Dave 😲😬 The Red Admirals are still clinging on though not for much longer now...unless we get the odd nice day of course 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Nov-17 02:32 PM GMT

Thanks, both. Amazingly, the season is still not over...

Thursday 16th November: a warm start and increasingly sunny up to lunchtime, though cloudier later. I walked down to my local cafe and on the way back spotted two Red Admirals flying around quite high up. I continued onto my usual walk around the lake and back to the sheltered part nearer home. Here I found two more Red Admirals, one of which posed nicely and didn't even appear to be that worn.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 16-Nov-17 03:59 PM GMT

🤪 Ok Dave, exactly what sorcery are you performing there ?
'Holly Blue.. I summon thee!!'
Amazing 🍷

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 16-Nov-17 04:21 PM GMT

Andrew555 wrote:

🤪 Ok Dave, exactly what sorcery are you performing there ?
'Holly Blue.. I summon thee!!'
Amazing 🍷

Dave's witchcraft over Holly Blues is legendary in these parts but even so this is quite out there even by his standards! 🤪

Your next mission should you choose to accept it is to photograph one on some frost encrusted Holly berries on Christmas Day Dave 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-17 11:38 AM GMT

WOW! Dave, I thought I'd missed Winter and it was Spring 😊 great Holly Blue shots 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Nov-17 12:02 PM GMT

Thanks, Andrew - I have no idea why the Holly Blues keep popping up. No incantations, potions or wands involved! 😊

Yes, Buggy - it amazed even me, and I'm used to seeing them. Not in the second half of November though... 🤪 😊

Thank you, Goldie - you would certainly think that it was a different time of year. 😊

Friday 17th November: my 2017 season started exactly nine months ago, on 17th February: it still hasn't finished...

There was quite a heavy frost this morning and the car needed a fair amount of scraping. The sun soon got to work and there was no wind, so despite low air temperatures (in single figures certainly), I had a look around the nearer part of my local patch before heading away for the weekend. I didn't see the Holly Blue again, but quickly counted four Red Admirals - here are a couple of them (the last one is the one I photographed yesterday).



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Nov-17 12:59 PM GMT

I think you're getting a bit too good at this Holly Blue whispering Dave – a pristine specimen in mid November 🤔🤔🤔 You're not just getting them to open their wings but now you're getting them to leave their Chrysalis 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Nov-17 01:43 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

With such a pristine, very late female Holly Blue, I am sure you will be showered with mrgreens 🍀🍀.

But I think we have a contest on our hands, for the most unusual end of season species.

Is it your Holly Blue or my Meadow Brown ?

That last image is stunning.

It's been a great season with lots of surprises !
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 17-Nov-17 08:17 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Your next mission should you choose to accept it is to photograph one on some frost encrusted Holly berries on Christmas Day Dave 😊

Now there's a challenge 😊

It does make you wonder though, what else is out there. I have seen a number of recent reports of various moth species coming to traps well outside of their normal flight times. I had a Shoulder-striped Wainscot in my trap a couple of weeks ago, this being a species that normally flies from late May to Late July.

It has certainly been a strange season.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Nov-17 09:08 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

Your next mission should you choose to accept it is to photograph one on some frost encrusted Holly berries on Christmas Day Dave 😊

I've made some joking remarks about Dave's ability to conjure up late season Holly Blues from the ether lately, but given this latest sighting I can't be 100% sure that he won't pull off the very image you suggest, Bugboy. 🤔🙄

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Nov-17 10:14 PM GMT

I am mystified, Wurzel, as to why a Holly Blue chrysalis that has suffered several very chilly nights has not gone into blissful winter sleep, and instead hatches out on a mid-November day. I hope there are one or two left for next spring! 😊

To be honest, Trevor, both seem baffling to me: how could a spring Meadow Brown caterpillar not emerge as a butterfly until November? And as for the Holly Blue, see my comment above. I wonder what the experts make of all this? 🤔🙄

That's quite a challenge, Neil and David (and thank you once again Bugboy 😊🙄). However, unless the whole spring brood go completely awry and emerge one by one every week until the end of the year, I don't think I'll succeed! 😊

I was down in Somerset over the weekend for a school reunion, and saw no butterflies during the trip. However, I was shown a piece of mobile phone video footage of a stretch of ivy-festooned wall in Wellington which was entertaining over 50 Red Admirals (taken in October). Goodness knows how many there must have been in the UK this year.

I returned home around lunchtime on **Sunday 19th November**. The sun was out (which it hadn't been for most of the drive), the temperature was 9 degrees at best, and over on the nearest part of my local patch a Red Admiral was flying.



Good to be home!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 20-Nov-17 09:59 AM GMT

Hi! Dave it's a treat to keep seeing Butterflies in your posts 😊 It's certainly making the year stretch out 😊 I hope you see some more. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 20-Nov-17 11:05 AM GMT

Nice RA Dave. 😊 What's the record for your latest sighting of the year ?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Nov-17 02:45 PM GMT

Thanks, both! It's good to still be seeing things. Eight days out of twenty this month so far, and ten months out of twelve in the year. 😊

I think that nationally Red Admirals have been seen on every day of the year – but I would check that to be certain. It doesn't seem unlikely to be honest.

My latest ever around here to date, Andrew, was 30th November 2014 when on an unusually sunny and warm day I saw six Red Admirals and three

Commas. I had also seen a Red Admiral and a Peacock the previous day down in Hampshire just before the winter social got underway. A little way to go yet to break that record, but you never know. 😊

My last Holly Blue of 2014 was 9th November, so that particular record **has** now tumbled...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Nov-17 10:21 PM GMT

And still the Red Admirals come! 😊 I reckon you'll be able to muster one up this weekend on the way to the Social Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 20-Nov-17 10:59 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

And still the Red Admirals come! 😊 I reckon you'll be able to muster one up this weekend on the way to the Social Dave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

You might be right there, the forecast (for what it's worth) is for a lovely sunny day. Keep your camera handy just in case 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 21-Nov-17 06:39 PM GMT

Interesting to see the Red Admiral was pottering around nettles. I wonder whether it was looking to lay?

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 22-Nov-17 01:36 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Thanks, both! It's good to still be seeing things. Eight days out of twenty this month so far, and ten months out of twelve in the year. 😊

I think that nationally Red Admirals have been seen on every day of the year – but I would check that to be certain. It doesn't seem unlikely to be honest.

My latest ever around here to date, Andrew, was 30th November 2014 when on an unusually sunny and warm day I saw six Red Admirals and three Commas. I had also seen a Red Admiral and a Peacock the previous day down in Hampshire just before the winter social got underway. A little way to go yet to break that record, but you never know. 😊

My last Holly Blue of 2014 was 9th November, so that particular record **has** now tumbled...

Dave

Thanks Dave, interesting. I will be in Weymouth at Christmas, I will have a scout around there and Portland, you never know! 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Nov-17 11:54 PM GMT

Thanks to you all for the comments. 😊 Unfortunately that was the last sighting of anything around here. The sunny days recently have been too windy, or just plain cold. I've checked the various nettle beds, but have not been able to re-find the Red Admiral eggs I spotted earlier in the month, nor any signs of larval activity. On the other hand, the nettles have not yet succumbed to any of the frosts either. I shall continue to keep an eye out.

All I have to report is this curious moth, found inside a few days back.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Nov-17 09:19 AM GMT

I'm not surprised the the Heathrow micro bubble has succumbed to the chill – it's bloomy nippy all over 😊 Your moth is a Plume moth, probably a Brown Plume, but I think 'stick' moths would have been a better group name for them 😊
Good catching up at the Social – if you fancy trying Daneways for Large Blue next year PM me and we might be able to sort a group trip – it'll have to be a weekend though as I'm sill a wage slave 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel