

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-18 12:38 PM GMT

Better late than never 😊



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 01-May-18 01:35 PM GMT

At last! I wondered where you'd got to, 😊 Lovely shots as well Pauline, I must pay a visit now to Gait Barrow. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-May-18 02:55 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie. I decided you were right so have taken your advice 😊 . I'd give GB a few days as they are very late down here but whilst you're there do keep your eyes open for another white PBF!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-May-18 05:50 PM GMT

Welcome back Pauline, it's not the start of the season proper until you've come out of 'hibernation' 😊😊 What a way to start 😊 talk about off like a shot 😊🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 01-May-18 05:53 PM GMT

It must be Spring, Pauline's back !. Coping with the weather I hope. Might see yoy at BB later on.

Best wishes ,

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 01-May-18 09:28 PM GMT

That's a nice way to kick off your season, Pauline. A lovely Duke. 😊 I shall have to pop down that way shortly! 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-May-18 07:14 AM GMT

Great to see you back, Pauline. 😊 I was getting a little worried because you were later than in times gone by, but then so is spring so maybe it's not too much of a surprise.

You made quite an entrance too with your Duke, which is the first image, I believe, of a 2018 specimen on here. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-May-18 09:54 AM GMT

Thank you for the warm welcome on my return. D'you know Wurzel, I have only seen 7 species so far this season, the Duke being one of them. One of the others was this Brimstone which was laying an awful lot of eggs. I took a quick shot of the eggs immediately on 20 April and then went back on 24 April to find them all intact (notice the colour change):





It has been tough this Winter Trevor. I am still caring for a hedgehog I found in the snow (in my garden) with ring worm, mange and lung worm. Hopefully when the weather improves things will get easier and it would be great to see you at BB.

Cheers Dave and thanks for the compliment. For goodness sake, if you are coming down this way please do let me know as it is high time we met up after missing each other for several seasons now despite visiting the same spots.

Thank you too David. You just wouldn't believe how busy I've been. I managed to get those 6 chairs upholstered before Christmas and for a first attempt I'm quite pleased. What d'you think?



I then went on to paint the hallway and kitchen and somehow along the way acquired 6 budgies. Some might recognise another butterfly enthusiast who popped in for a cuppa when the weather was too bad to get out:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-May-18 11:10 AM GMT

As the stat to the season has been so dire 7 species is reasonably respectable 😊 That is a cracking shot of the egg-laying Brimstone 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 02-May-18 12:32 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I have only seen 7 species so far this season, the Duke being one of them.

Good to see you posting again, Pauline. With the weather we've had so far, 7 species seems a remarkable total to me and I've certainly not seen any Dukes. Once again, I'm looking out onto a rain-soaked and blustery garden, and feeling sorry for all the birds that are trying to raise families in these trying conditions. It seems that better weather is forecast for the weekend, so let's hope for some overall improvement.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-May-18 06:00 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Thank you too David. You just wouldn't believe how busy I've been. I managed to get those 6 chairs upholstered before Christmas and for a first attempt I'm quite pleased. What d'you think?

I think I would, Pauline, but more taxing is the question of how you've found time to upholster a room full of chairs!! 😊

Love the laying Brimstone, whilst the budgies are all adorable, I'm sure. Given the temperament of the one depicted, one presumes they were all former pets?

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-18 06:42 PM GMT

Welcome back Pauline...and a great way to kick off again with those Duke images 😊

Great sequence of the Brimstone and eggs too 😊

All the best,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-May-18 07:35 PM GMT

I don't blame you for having a few extra weeks in hibernation this year Pauline, if I could I would have too! Good to know your Dukes are out, give it a few weeks and my 'local' ones in the Chiltons will be on the wing too 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-18 07:17 AM GMT

Thank you again for your comments. It certainly has been wet here Mike. I have been worried about a male Goldcrest who spent the best part of a week trying to get into my bedroom window and making a dreadful mess on it. His mate was calling from a nearby tree but I imagine he was seeing his reflection as a threat. I was quite worried about his survival at one point as he spent so much time there. I did manage a short video of him but for now just a poor photo:



Yesterday there were another 2 Dukes at Noar Hill but I won't keep posting shots of 'same old, same old'. Suffice to say I couldn't get my car along the road and the water came over the top of my (ankle) wellies!! I hope it has dried up a little today.



For some years now Buggy I have been monitoring the immature stages of the Duke at Noar and last Autumn it was apparent that the level of predation was higher than normal. I shall be interested to see what effect that has had (combined with the inclement weather) on this years population and how it compares to other sites.

Thank you for your kind words Neil. It's good to be back but where this season will take me remains to be seen 😊 .

I appreciate the compliment David. Like everything else that lives here the budgies have their stories – but I'll save that for another time 😊

Cheers Wurzel, much appreciated but I'm going to have to do something about that total 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-May-18 12:59 PM GMT

6 seen today:



Witnessed the actual coupling which happened in less than a minute and lasted 36 minutes. A few early shots of the 'courtship':





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-May-18 02:09 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Pauline 😄🍷 It seems like the Dukes over this way are a way off- we haven't even had a Grizzlie in Wiltshire yet 🤔😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 03-May-18 02:38 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, very nice Duke shots. 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-May-18 06:24 PM GMT

Whoa! Someone got lucky (with the weather as well as the Dukes)!

Looks like *lucina* is wasting no time after the recent deluges and cold. I suspect this weekend could see quite a frenzy of activity?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-May-18 06:11 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. It's going to be an interesting season that's for sure, one way or the other.....

Good to hear from you Andrew and thank you for your very kind words.

The season will be condensed in my opinion David but it remains to be seen exactly how many have made it through to participate in the frenzy. Once it is possible to make comparisons with previous seasons, conclusions will be drawn by those more knowledgeable than me no doubt - as you know I have concerns regarding the level of predation that extends to Purple Hairstreaks also, despite them having a good year in 2017.

Sorry to have to do this to you Goldie but at least half a dozen seen today at Rake Bottom. Both male and female but no pretty poses. I doubt I shall ever take one as good as Katrina's (check it out). Notice the cute 'eyelashes' on this one:



I also spotted several Green Hairstreaks which looked freshly emerged. These were my target today but sat perched up really, REALLY high so with my camera at full zoom and some pretty harsh cropping I was only able to achieve this:



IMO this part of the site seems to have deteriorated. Today it seemed to lack colour, flowers and the number of butterflies I am used to seeing. There is a tangle of brambles hindering close access to some Green Hairstreak areas and I could go on but I would be interested in what others think.

In the last 24 hours I am pleased to say that the total of species seen so far has doubled. In part this is due to the sighting of a Speckled Wood in the garden this morning. 'So what' I hear you say. Well, not only is this my first sighting of the season but, despite having SWF, WA, PH in the garden regularly (oh, and that Brown Argus that turned up a couple of years ago), this is only the 2nd time I have had a Speckled Wood in the garden 😊😊 I was so excited I thought it deserved a special mention. So there you have it Neil. Whenever I see a Speckled Wood it reminds me of your cracking shots and the numbers which you get in your garden regularly. Perhaps you would be kind enough to confirm the gender?:



Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 04-May-18 06:24 PM GMT

Aha, so despite your worries you were after all able to get back out of Rakes Bottom! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 04-May-18 07:47 PM GMT

Aha!..a garden Specklie, a nice fresh male 😊

Although I would trade a few of mine for your SWF, WA and PHs 😊

Nice Grizzled Skippers too, and the Dukes from the other day 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 04-May-18 09:39 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Cheers Dave and thanks for the compliment. For goodness sake, if you are coming down this way please do let me know as it is high time we met up after missing each other for several seasons now despite visiting the same spots.

I promise to in future, Pauline, but I went down today on a last minute decision when the weather looked so good... 😊 Well worth it with a Neil Hulme being spotted amongst other species.

😊

Those Grizzled Skipper images are brilliant. They do indeed have wonderful eyebrows, though oddly enough I'm told that is what *callophrys* (as in Green Hairstreak) translates as. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 05-May-18 08:10 AM GMT

That first Grizzlie is an interesting critter, Pauline. The 'clothes peg' on the hindwing is very enlarged, almost like an Oberthur's.

Beautiful specimen and great to see you had another productive day. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 09:23 AM GMT

Grizzlies have now been reported from Wiltshire Pauline 😊 I really like the third Grizzlie, almost a deep purple in colour, gurt lush 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-May-18 08:27 PM GMT

Thank you for your concern Ernie. The exercises I have been doing for that hamstring injury are working a treat 😊

Cheers for that Neil – and the kind words. Would you consider me a lazy so-and-so if I asked you how to tell the difference? 😊 Actually, I should just look it up. In fact, I should already know 😊

No worries Dave – it's bound to happen some day. I hope you had a great time (even without me being there 😊😊) and thank you for the info re *callophrys* – I'm always learning something from this site.

I realised the colour/pattern was a bit different David but I had never heard of Oberthur's. I have now tho'. I looked it up and see exactly what you mean. I'm pleased you liked it.

Thank goodness for that Wurzel!! 😊 How far behind a 'normal' season do you think they are? I am trying to work out if I can get to your hill this season .

Today has been hot and incredibly busy so it wasn't until 5.00pm that I arrived at Noar Hill. The intention was to see how many Dukes are emerging and hopefully see GH but time was against me. I was surprised to see 8 cars when I arrived and someone told me he had seen 12 Dukes but had been there a few hours. By the time I was half way across the site I had seen 6



but then my attention was diverted by 2 female GH egg-laying as if their lives depended on it – ovipositing on anything and everything it seemed in a fast and furious manner. It was quite challenging to keep up with just one of them but this is the little lady in question and a shot of her future off-spring. I have hardly seen any GH this year and yet here they are egg-laying:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 05-May-18 08:42 PM GMT

Great shots of the Dukes Pauline and the Grizzlies, I must set off and try to find some in Flintshire, it's only an hour a way while the weather stays good 🍃🍃 a couple of greens for you. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 10:46 PM GMT

Absolutely cracking Dukes Pauline 🍃🍃 I'll keep you posted about the Hill, it's difficult to say whether the Marshies will be late emerging as they could catch up with a run of good weather 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-May-18 07:13 PM GMT

I envy you your Dukes on your doorstep, Pauline. This species is a 3 hour round trip for me and I may miss out on them (in the UK at least) this year due to the late season. Yes, it's surprising to see egg-laying Green Hairstreaks so early in their flight period, but these insects have no time to waste, and given the generally poor conditions thus far in 2018 it's no shock to see them making haste the way they clearly are!

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 06-May-18 07:40 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,
great to see you posting again. Some brilliant Dukes, Green Hairstreaks and Grizzled Skippers. Must get to Noar next week.

Mike

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 06-May-18 08:44 PM GMT

Interesting about the frantic egg-laying activity from the Green Hairstreaks, Pauline. The one I saw last week at Bedfont Lakes was similarly single-minded, and I came across a few in various spots today and all were females looking for places to lay.

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-May-18 03:18 PM GMT

Cheers Goldie, I'll keep my fingers crossed for you. Good luck!

I'd appreciate that Wurzel as you never know, I might just find a window of opportunity 😊

I do try not to take them for granted David and I really appreciate being so close to the Brown Hairstreaks. I am sure you are absolutely right and clearly Dave has noticed the same thing but in contrast I have seen no evidence of Dukes egg-laying yet despite being there at the right sort of time.

Hi Mike, thank you for your comment. I suggest you bring plenty of liquid and sun cream – it's hot up there, even early evening and I'm getting burnt to a crisp 😊 Look forward to seeing you both again but it definitely won't be next week 😊

Thanks for that input Dave. It's always interesting to know how the butterflies are behaving elsewhere as I have noticed behavior can vary with location and habitat quite significantly.

As I'm effectively 'grounded' due to domestic issues and the arrival of roofers tomorrow I thought I would take the opportunity to document some of my activities over the winter. By the time I'd completed that upholstery and Christmas had been and gone I was champing at the bit to get out again to hopefully see a few bird species that were new to me. Report of a flock of Hawfinch at Chawton was just too close to home to miss out on and despite it being so close I had never actually been there. I found it to be a charming, quaint little village lying within the South Downs, the home of Jane Austen for the last 8 years of her life.



Not sure what the significance of this was on the main street



6ft tall garden ornaments



One of a number of different cats on various roofs

It wasn't difficult to locate the flock. They had a very distinctive look when in flight but they remained near the top of trees that were about 80–100 ft tall. It was difficult to see them with the naked eye and my binoculars were not quite up to the job either. Undaunted, using a tripod and with camera on full zoom and a very close crop, this is the best I got. Recognisable but more than a little disappointing.

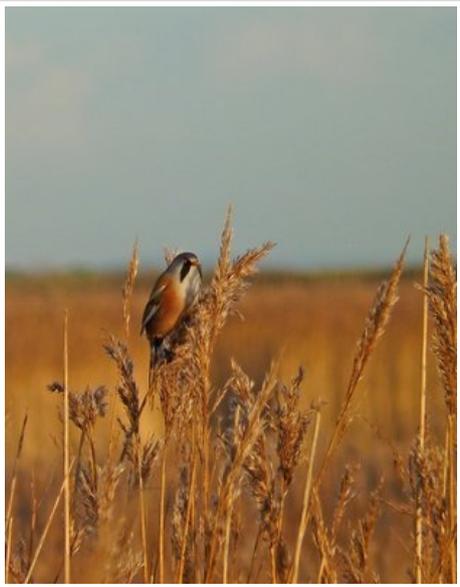


A few days later on 13 January I set off to see the Bearded Tits at Farlington Marshes. To quote from the HIWWT:

"Farlington Marsh is one of the Trust's oldest reserves and one that visitors return to year after year. This site is a coastal grazing marsh and lagoon which has several pools, both freshwater and brackish, and a broad stream which provide feeding and roosting sites for waders and wildfowl. It is internationally important for the bird population that it supports, such as bearded tit, sedge and reed warblers. Many flowering plants have also been recorded here, including unusual species such as sea barley and corky-fruited water dropwort."

It wasn't long before I was treated to a wonderful display from these birds which was highly amusing and entertaining and I spent far longer watching than taking photos. Timing was key – as the birds land on the reeds their weight caused the reed to bend and they were catapulted out of sight! I realised I was doing little towards my aim of improving my bird photography but I had enjoyed the spectacle so much I didn't care.





Still buzzing from this latest encounter I set off on 16 Jan to see 2 Barn Owls at Titchfield reported to be in a 'split tree'. Well, I had no idea what a 'split' tree was or even where it was to be found - but I was sure I'd find it. On arrival I asked at the visitor centre but they didn't know either. They pointed me to a track and said owls had been seen flying about 20 mins walk along the track. Recent heavy rain had left this track quite treacherous. Honestly, I have never known mud to be so slippery - it was like sheet ice. There was no room for manoeuvre with a stream/river at one side and a fence at the other so I tentatively continued at a slower pace than normal. It was a really cold day and not a soul to be seen - no-one to ask. 90 minutes later I was on the point of turning around when a dog walker approached. For once I was thankful to see him. He told me exactly where the birds were 5 minutes further on. Turns out their location was only about 50 yards from another car park!!!! 😊 The dog walker had failed to tell me that it wasn't possible to get anywhere near these owls as they were at the far end of a field which had a fence around it. So, another shot on full zoom and close cropped. I was actually surprised to see Wood Pigeons surrounding the predators. After 5 minutes of photography I started my return trek. I was running a bit late now and tried to make haste but that only resulted with me lying flat on my back in the mud - twice!!!! Luckily my thick coat together with the mud cushioned the blow but the resultant bruises were a great deal more remarkable than this photo 😊. An outing that will always be remembered for all the wrong reasons!!



Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 07-May-18 04:30 PM GMT

Love the Bearded Tit shots. Farlington Marsh is always a good location for birds and the saltwater plant life is interesting and sometimes unusual (in summer).

I am green with envy over the Hawfinches at Chawton. I did not know they had arrived there this winter. You probably know I could walk to that location from my house if I felt fit enough!

Re: Pauline

by David M, 08-May-18 12:05 PM GMT

Interesting to see some of what you got up to during the winter, Pauline. Bearded Tits and Hawfinches are well worth getting out for, although you went above and beyond in pursuit of those owls, lovely though they are!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-May-18 08:21 PM GMT

Thank you for your comment Ern. You need to keep your eye on NatureTrek reports.

You might be surprised at some of what I get up to David 😊😄 I tend to agree with you re Owls tho especially given my level of photography. If it had been a great shot then I might have been able to justify the pain 😊😄

A hectic day as expected with more to come. However, even around 6.00pm last night there was some activity at Noar with 8 Dukes being counted, 3 of them females. A territorial Comma allowed me a few shots as did one of a couple of egg-laying Holly blues.



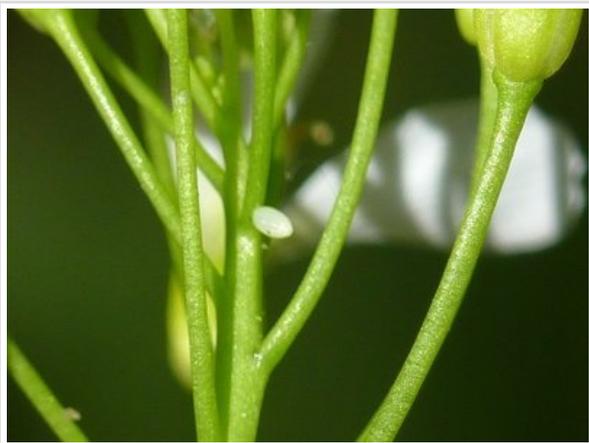


In my diary summary from last year I touched upon the subject of monitoring butterflies in the wild. I am always in awe of the folk who do this as it is far more challenging than just rearing butterflies (in my very limited opinion). First, you have to find your subject. Next, you have to take the time and trouble to visit regularly. Then there is the frustration and disappointment if it 'disappears' - perhaps predated or wandered off. I imagine seeing it

through from start to finish happens fairly infrequently. Nevertheless, I am going to give it a go with whatever I come across that ignites my interest. It has to be said that rearing at home first is educational and prepares you for what to look for and where, and also enables comparisons to be made between the two. I shall try to ensure that all subjects are at the same location simply to facilitate the process and so I shall start with last night's Holly Blue. This is the little lady and one of her eggs:



Over the weekend I had GW and OT also egg-laying but in the garden – very handy! I didn't manage to get a shot of the adult OT who laid this egg as I didn't want to disturb her (hope the hens don't eat them 😊):



...and just to put it into context:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-May-18 12:08 PM GMT

I love the way you pay particular attention to some of the more rarely seen butterfly behaviour, Pauline. The images of the ova are always interesting....and how do you manage to get all those species to present their profiles so willingly on such a hot day? 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-May-18 03:18 PM GMT

I guess I've always been interested in animal behaviour David and the butterflies are just an extension of that. As for the profiles, well, I guess it was the heat cos it has been scorching in some of those sheltered pits even at 6.00pm!

In the past I have reared Brown Hairstreaks at home and managed to get shots of the larva emerging from the egg. However, with thoughts of monitoring BH in the wild this season, 23 April found me on Noar Hill looking for wild eggs. I didn't think I was too late. After all, everything was late this season wasn't it? However, the first 6 eggs I found had all hatched. More worryingly, I could find no sign of any larva.



I was about to call it a day when at about 2.15pm I struck lucky. I found 2 eggs on the same Blackthorn that were both in the process of hatching. I was just sooo excited. I took a few shots and decided to hang around as from previous experience I know this species can take a few hours to emerge from the egg.



14.33pm



16.41pm

The weather wasn't all that favourable either - cool and cloudy a lot of the time with brief periods of sun. I took regular shots at intervals but as time went by little progress was being made. I hung around until about 5.45 when I had to leave but the emergence was no further forward. I wasn't sure what would happen as by now it was totally overcast and really quite chilly but next morning I was back by 9.00am to find both eggs had hatched and there was no sign of the larva. Now these are very small 'stand-alone' bushes so any larva should have been easy to locate despite their amazing camouflage. I have shown these eggs to several folk since who have also failed to spot any sign of them.



Undeterred I decided to look for some more and on 27 April I found 3 eggs that had just hatched in another part of the site and this time I was delighted to see 2 tiny larva.



At the time of taking this shot I only noticed 1 larva but as you can see there are obviously 2 😊



Close-up view

I checked them again on 1 May:



... and again on 2 May:



It was clear that this pair were thriving and so I checked them again on 4 May which was the last time I saw them. I am not too hopeful but perhaps they're still there somewhere. I shall keep checking!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 09-May-18 03:47 PM GMT

That's really great Pauline, I hope you find them okay, they're on my wish list has you know for this year but I've to try for the Grizzled Skipper before I search for them 😊 You certainly have patience Pauline, I don't think I could hang a round all that time. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Art Frames, 09-May-18 04:25 PM GMT

Pauline

Yesterday as I was photographing Dukes in Bedfordshire I hoped to see some pairing – but there was no sign. Your shots are just wonderful. I'm envious of your expertise in finding the action. Unfortunately I doubt that I'll get back there in the near future...but you have inspired the thought. 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-May-18 05:59 PM GMT

Patience pays off! Well done with your search, Pauline. These are tiny creatures so you've put some effort into finding and photographing them.

Let's hope they go on to have a fine year.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 10-May-18 11:07 AM GMT

Great Grizzled close ups Pauline, and a beautiful side view of your garden Speckled Wood. 😊
Love the Dukes as well. And well done on your egg and larva efforts. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-May-18 03:02 PM GMT

I'll be so pleased for you when you find your Grizzlie Goldie. I am certain you will. Thank you for your generous comment 😊

That's a massive compliment Peter 😊 but on this occasion I just got lucky as the butterflies flew towards me as I was chatting and immediately paired up. Something to aim for in the future eh? 😊

Cheers David 😊 Yes, it does take some time and effort but is certainly more satisfying than if someone else points them out. Perhaps it's a sense of achievement I could become addicted to 😊😊 Watch this space 😊

I was pleased too with that Speckled Wood Andrew – somehow I rarely get good shots of them. I appreciate your comment but you have been taking some very nice artistic and creative shots yourself eg Grizzlies 😊

Just in case anyone is interested there were 2 male Pearls at Stanstead this morning. In the time I was there I only saw one of them stop just the once and very briefly. I was only able to grab a distant shot:



Of more interest to me (honestly) were the Green Tiger Beetles. There were loads (dozens) of them. I was captivated by their striking colours and the diversity ranging from emerald to olive green and on the underside from pale blue to turquoise. They were all along the paths and a few had even been squashed (not by me I hasten to add). The shots I took of them cost me dearly as I left my specs on the ground. I returned to look for them but no sign. 😞



I am relieved that things are slowly returning to normal here. The Wood Pigeon I have been rearing has now been relocated to a place with another 2 of the same age and they will all be released together in a few days.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-May-18 09:03 PM GMT

PBFs really ARE late this year, Pauline. Normally, they're starting to look a bit battle weary by now. Give it a week and the females should afford you better opportunities to get close.

By the way, good luck with the wood pigeon. Hopefully it will pull through and be able to be released soon.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-May-18 06:27 PM GMT

Thank you David. I'm confident that the Wood Pigeon will be fine as she's now feeding herself and flying well 😊

I thought I'd pay a late afternoon visit to Noar Hill to try to find those BH larva – or any BH larva. All I found tonight was this:



The leaves were covered in them – all waiting to pounce on me 😬 but I'd come prepared. With my plastic disposable gloves I was ready for anything 😊 :



Among the several late flying Dukes that I saw I came across this one – similar to the one Bob saw in 2014 and listed on this site as an unclassified aberration:



I turned my attention to Duke eggs. If previous years are anything to go by I was going to have to find a fair few as they are mostly predated. Time was against me tonight so I stopped when I had found 3 batches:



On my way back I decided to check 'my' Brimstone eggs which had recently hatched. I could see at least half a dozen little lime green cats sat on the top of the leaves – couldn't have been any more obvious if they'd tried so it will be interesting to keep an eye on these to see how quickly they are eaten.



I also came across another Green Hairstreak egg, well hidden, great camouflage:



... and lots of OT eggs everywhere:



A quick check on the Holly Blue egg and then it was a quick dash back to the car. Not a bad result for 90 mins 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 11-May-18 09:22 PM GMT

Fascinating close-ups Pauline. While we're still admiring this year's butterflies, there are next year's already in waiting. Amazing. 😊 I also note the photo of the pernicious parasite – one annoyingly came home with me on my recent visit to Noar Hill, and waited 36 hours before creeping off my clothes and tucking in... 😞

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-May-18 07:59 PM GMT

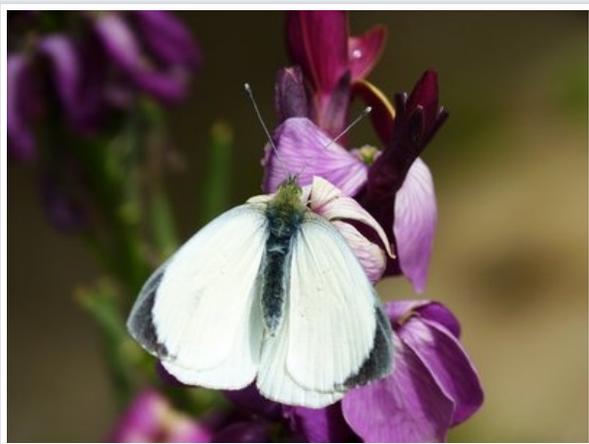
Cheers Dave – I am finding these immature stages very interesting. Trouble is, what I am seeing raises a variety of questions that I just can't answer. Now I know there are a lot of really smart individuals on this site so I have been trying to pluck up the courage to ask, as the answers may well be

obvious, leaving me embarrassed. The first question I have concerns the 2 BH eggs that were in the process of hatching late in the day. I wished I could have stayed to determine exactly when these eggs hatched but when I left it was cold and cloudy (as it had been for most of the afternoon). Whether they hatched during the evening or overnight I am still intrigued as to where they got the energy. They are such tiny little creatures and given that butterflies are inactive in cold periods how does that work? Whilst it may well be a good survival strategy (fewer birds around at night and other predatory insects inactive) I am still puzzling over this. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-May-18 05:26 PM GMT

Well, that question must have either been really daft or very difficult 😊





I'm feeling quite confused and bewildered – which seems to be almost normal for me these days. 😊😊 I'm trying to remember when I last reared Whites. Some might remember better than me as all my rearing activities are documented in my diary – I believe it was when I bought the plants from the garden centre to 'save' the eggs!!! There were an awful lot of them (like about 100) and I remember releasing about 10 butterflies daily into the garden. Naturally, not all the butterflies emerged from the pupa. When this happens I usually just clean out the rearing cage but this time I didn't (sheer laziness!!!). I just left it in a corner of the garden and the only thing that has been in it all Winter is the Puss Moth larva that I am hoping might emerge some time soon. It was for that reason I checked it today and found another 4 Whites had emerged 🤪🤪. I am now about to plough through my diary to find out exactly how long ago that was but I certainly won't be in a hurry to dispose of any pupa that don't hatch in the future.

Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 13-May-18 05:49 PM GMT

I liked your close-up of the wing scales on one of your Whites. I wonder if the patterns are like fingerprints and could form unique identifiers for each butterfly?

I mentioned once before that the 'whiteness' of the upper wings, which causes problems for photographers, is remarkable and has been investigated as

a mechanism for improving the efficiency of solar cells. Intuitively, one might think that the wings should be dark, to absorb heat, but, without a circulation system, it would be difficult to convey that heat to the flight muscles, where it is needed. By making the wings super-reflective, the butterfly can position its wings to reflect the heat onto its body, where it is needed.

Which brings us to the question in your earlier post. The primary source of energy for the hatchling lies in the foodstuffs contained in the egg. It would appear that a higher temperature might speed up the chemical reactions needed to exploit this energy source but everything is relative. After all, many fish thrive well in very cold waters. This isn't an expert option but a reminder that nature can operate successfully in an extraordinarily wide range of conditions, while many processes have an optimum temperature at which to operate.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-May-18 10:39 PM GMT

Cracking close up of the Large White Pauline 😊 It's crazy to see that two coloured scales can have such an effect 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 13-May-18 11:45 PM GMT

Someone else on here reared some Large White where a small proportion decided to pass through the winter rather than emerge with the rest. I can't remember who it was but I think it was reported sometime last spring. It would seem a simple case of not putting all your eggs in one basket kind of scenario, keep a few back in case the main late summer brood fails for whatever reason. Off course I say a 'simple case' but if people like you don't rear them in captivity then we'd be very unlikely to know these details. Just goes to show that even with the most common species there are still things to learn.

Re: Pauline

by CallumMac, 14-May-18 09:10 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

It would seem a simple case of not putting all your eggs in one basket kind of scenario, keep a few back in case the main late summer brood fails for whatever reason.

Of course that doesn't quite work when you think about this behaviour in terms of natural selection acting at the level of the individual (i.e. the caterpillar) – each caterpillar has to 'decide' (except it's probably not a conscious decision) what to do, and the mother can't say 'a quarter of my eggs will pass the winter this year'. I imagine that each caterpillar can decide whether to emerge with the rest – a very safe strategy, but one that means it will be exposed to loads of competition for resources from the others in its cohort – or to pass the winter – a very risky strategy, but one that pays off (if successful) with much-reduced competition. When a caterpillar tries the overwintering strategy and it pays off, its offspring might be predisposed to also try that strategy. By this means the overwintering strategy will pay off just often enough for some individuals in the population to continue to try it.

The observant amongst you will notice that what I've described is exactly the same as the trade-off that maintains long-distance dispersive types in butterfly populations, when dispersing away from your natal patch of host-plant is extremely risky and carries no guarantee of ever finding another patch – but if you are the first individual of your species to find a new patch of host-plant you are laughing!

Pauline wrote:

Whether they hatched during the evening or overnight I am still intrigued as to where they got the energy. They are such tiny little creatures and given that butterflies are inactive in cold periods how does that work?

I always thought that butterfly adults were inactive in cold periods, because they need a lot of warmth to get their flight muscles going. If you're ever emptied a moth-trap the following morning, you'll have noticed the moths sit and vibrate their wings hard for a few seconds (or even up to a minute) before flying off, which I believe is for the same purpose – generating metabolic heat to transfer to the flight muscles. That might mean that the thermal threshold needed by the immature stages to become active might be far lower. One of the metrics that we often use to estimate, effectively, 'available development time' for Lepidopteran larvae is 'growing degree days' which counts degrees celsius per day above a lower threshold – which we usually set as low as 5 degC. Setting it higher (even at 10 degC) means that some of the earliest spring moths appear to have emerged after zero development time (which is obviously incorrect!).

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 14-May-18 10:12 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

The first question I have concerns the 2 BH eggs that were in the process of hatching late in the day. I wished I could have stayed to determine exactly when these eggs hatched but when I left it was cold and cloudy (as it had been for most of the afternoon). Whether they hatched during the evening or overnight I am still intrigued as to where they got the energy. They are such tiny little creatures and given that butterflies are inactive in cold periods how does that work? Whilst it may well be a good survival strategy (fewer birds around at night and other predatory insects inactive) I am still puzzling over this. 😊

Hi Pauline, a few general thoughts on the subject from me also.

Firstly, I have observed several species of larvae (and seen reports of many more) that are active at temperatures well below the threshold where adults are able to fly. When monitoring overwintering Red Admiral eggs and larvae in 2017/2018 I found that larvae emerged from eggs in November,

December, January and February. I also noted that the smaller the larva, the better it seems to be able to cope with cool weather (just don't ask me why).

Brown Hairstreak egg shells are noted for being particularly tough and it is well documented that the larva can take a whole day to chew a hole large enough in the shell to be able to emerge. However, like everything else, they will have their limits and it is possible that they will stop such activity when the temperature gets too low. In March this year I observed a Red Admiral larva take approximately 8 days to emerge from its egg from the time that it started to eat through the eggshell. For most of this period the top of the egg was open, but the temperature was too low for any activity.

You may not yet have caught up with the Red Admiral observations topic after your winter break but you can find it here: <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=9581#p126253> . It contains a lot of interesting data.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-18 07:02 PM GMT

Cheers Mike 😊 Now there's another good question – fingerprints eh?! Reckon it would take a dedicated photographer and a hell of a computer program to check that one out 😊 Mind you, for all I know it may already have been done!!!!.....and your proposal makes perfect sense to me.

Isn't it just Wurzel! 2 more emerged today btw 😊

I seem to recall that too Paul but can't remember who either. That seems like a reasonable survival strategy to me but I wonder if many other species do it.

Hi Callum – good to hear from you and thank you for taking the time to provide such a detailed explanation. I *think* that Bugboy was implying the same as you ie, it is not the butterfly's choice but the caterpillar, (although the phrase he used might have been misleading) but in any event it could well be in the interests of the species for the reasons you have outlined .Forgive me if I should already know this Callum – you may have explained earlier – but given the scientific nature of your response I am intrigued to know what your involvement is in this subject matter? The great thing about this site is that there is so much expertise and experience there is always someone who can answer your queries no matter how bizarre they may seem 😊

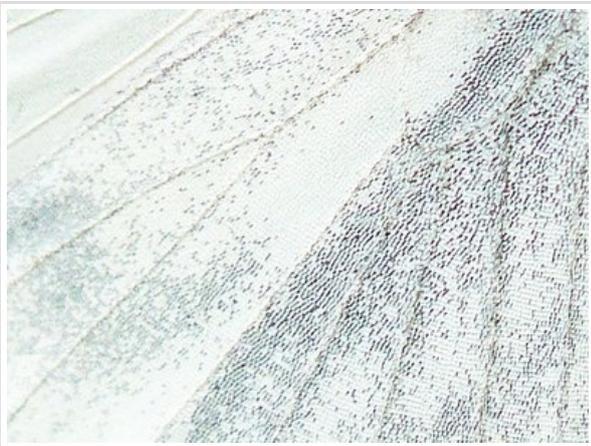
Thank you too Vince. I know from experience of rearing BH that the eggs can easily take 3–4 hours to hatch but I didn't know whether they would continue once it got colder. When I returned the next morning I didn't know whether they would still be hatching and was a little surprised that it was all over and no larva to be seen. What you've stated is really interesting and I'll definitely make time soon to look at that topic.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-May-18 07:15 PM GMT

My visit this morning to Botany Bay was all I would have wished. Perfect weather, great company and lots of butterflies. The Wood Whites were already active when we arrived but provided enough photo opportunities as they battled with a strong breeze. About a dozen seen in the usual spot:





another fingerprint 😊

Perhaps the best sighting, one which I certainly haven't seen before, was Millerd!!!! Great to meet you at last Dave. Dave and I had been chatting for some time about everything butterfly related when of course the subject came round to Holly Blues. We hadn't seen one at all during the day and I suggested to Dave that perhaps he should have brought a handful with him. I had no sooner got the words out of my mouth than a Holly Blue flew past and landed at Dave's feet??? 😊😊 Honestly, what's the chance of that happening?????



It was time to leave but on the way back we stopped to take a shot of this lovely moth that flew towards us:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 14-May-18 07:19 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, if you've got any Small Whites we could do with some in the North, I've seen only one this year and none in the Garden so far which is unusual. Goldie 😊 Just seen your Wood White Shots lovely Pauline 🍷🍷

Re: Pauline

by CallumMac, 14-May-18 07:20 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I think that Bugboy was implying the same as you ie, it is not the butterfly's choice but the caterpillar.

Yes - sorry, in hindsight it does sound like I was contradicting him, but I didn't mean to be! I agree that we were largely saying the same thing, but I just wanted to clarify that the 'decision', such as it is, is taken by individual caterpillars rather than as a collective.

No reason for you to know this as I'm still very new on here, but yes, I'm a postdoctoral researcher at York University, in the research group of Jane Hill and Chris Thomas. I'm currently studying how butterfly and moth phenologies have been changing over the last 40 or so years of climate change. However I count myself very lucky to have landed in this field as I've been a butterfly and moth recorder and photographer for much longer than I've been a scientist!

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 14-May-18 08:02 PM GMT

Nice Beetles Pauline, I like watching the Tigers too. 😊

Love your Large Whites and Wood Whites, and brilliant crisp images that bring them to life. 😊

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 14-May-18 10:46 PM GMT

If many more pictures of Dave appear on here we might have to set up a species specific page for him too 😊

CallumMac wrote:

Pauline wrote:

I think that Bugboy was implying the same as you ie, it is not the butterfly's choice but the caterpillar.

Yes – sorry, in hindsight it does sound like I was contradicting him, but I didn't mean to be! I agree that we were largely saying the same thing, but I just wanted to clarify that the 'decision', such as it is, is taken by individual caterpillars rather than as a collective.

No offense taken 😊, you just filled in some of the science details behind my very basic conclusion.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-May-18 06:44 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie – if I see any Small White's I'll definitely point them in your direction. My latest 2 captive Large Whites to emerge were much smaller than any I've seen so I wonder whether it was to do with their prolonged development period? 😊

Wow! That must be a dream job Callum. Thank you again for responding to my question 😊

Thank you for the compliment Andrew. It's fair to say that Buggy's diary had a significant influence on my interest in beetles – I only like the pretty ones mind 😊😊

bugboy wrote:

If many more pictures of Dave appear on here we might have to set up a species specific page for him too 😊

bugboy wrote:

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It's not often that I manage to get out twice in one day but early evening I decided to check on immatures on Noar Hill. The first butterfly I spotted was a Dingy Skipper. I took this shot simple because it was the first one I've seen this season and I certainly can't compete with Mark's lovely images.



and with Wurzel in mind, this was the best I could do without lying on the ground, which, given the number of ticks I've had so far already this year, is no longer an option:



I was disappointed not to be able to find the Green Hairstreak egg as I had guessed it may just have hatched. I then discovered 2 of the batches of Duke eggs I had previously found were also gone 😞 . Despite finding a fresh batch of Duke eggs I felt things weren't going too well.

However, things were beginning to look up when I saw 2 female Holly Blues egg-laying. Perhaps a bit of Dave's magic had rubbed off on me 😊 Pity I don't have his skills in photographing these lovely little butterflies but this was the best I could do on a near vertical slope!



I stood for some time watching a pair of Brimstones as I felt sure their activities would result in a coupling – but again no luck. At this point I decided to cut my losses and go home but before leaving I decided to have quick look for those BH larva. Bingo!!!! I immediately found one of them and not many leaves away from where I lost him 😊 I am hopeful the other is still there too but I wanted to keep disturbance to a minimum. So here we have a wild BH which I believe is now days old.



After this great success I renewed my efforts to look for eggs and found several more which I believe are Holly Blue given that she was laying in this area. However, I didn't actually see her lay these ones so I suppose they could be Green Hairstreak?



Just before I left the site another small butterfly literally flew into me – another first for the season, a Small Heath:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 15-May-18 09:16 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, your certainly making up for lost time at the beginning of the Season 😊

I seem to be missing butterflies at present 😊

I went to GB yesterday and inspite of lovely Sunshine nothing appeared, one of those days I think 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-18 08:13 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Dave and I had been chatting for some time about everything butterfly related when of course the subject came round to Holly Blues. We hadn't seen one at all during the day and I suggested to Dave that perhaps he should have brought a handful with him. I had no sooner got the words out of my mouth than a Holly Blue flew past and landed at Dave's feet??? 😊😊 Honestly, what's the chance of that happening?????

It must have been in his pocket, either that or witchcraft...there is no other answer 😊😊

I have just seen the moth on Dave's diary too...it is a female Muslin Moth.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 15-May-18 10:52 PM GMT

Lovely hairy Small Heath Pauline, like a little Teddy Bear 😊 I liked your stained glass shot, sterling effort but my favourite shots is of The Holly Blue Whisperer in full on whisper mode 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-May-18 07:32 PM GMT

I love your 'fingerprints', Pauline. It's so interesting to see the fine detail of a butterfly's wings in such a way. Of course, seeing Wood Whites at all in the UK is a joy in itself so I'm sure you had a satisfying time.

I think your moth may be *diaphora mendica* - muslin moth. I've seen a few of these on the Gower and they're rather striking, aren't they?

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 16-May-18 09:45 PM GMT

In answer to the egg question... Hmm, not sure, but they look more Holly Blueish to me. The trouble is eggs of both change colour a bit as time passes, so that guess is exactly that. I've been trying to find dogwood with both types of egg on the same bud cluster, but haven't succeeded despite seeing both species apparently laying in the same areas on dogwood at Denbies and over at Mill Hill.

That is a nice Small Heath close-up too - they really are furry little creatures. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-18 06:36 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie. It's another season where outings are in short bursts I'm afraid. I'm putting together an aviary today and tomorrow but hope to get out briefly.

Thank you for the moth ID Neil - similar to Ermine tho', don't you think? I'm ashamed to say I haven't had the moth trap out at all this year which is something I must soon put right. Stand by for a barrage of ID queries 😞😞

I feel like I'm one of your pupils Wurzel 😊 Do I get marks out of 10 😊

Thank you David. I did wonder whether it was possible to determine the gender. The way it flew towards us and then crawled purposely around plant stems looked like female egg-laying behavior - but then, I've never seen a moth egg-laying so it was probably just trying to get away from the light.

That would be my guess too Dave. Would love to see a shot of both eggs on the same plant just by way of comparison.

Just to prove I have been trying (but without any success) a few cat shots below. I got excited at times finding what I thought to be typical feeding behaviour - turns out a very ordinary green cat leaves a similar trail:





and lots of these brightly coloured (pretty 😊) bugs:



A couple of nice moths too. I believe one is a Green Carpet moth and can't remember the other 😊



Re: Pauline

by CallumMac, 17-May-18 08:25 AM GMT

Super moths, Pauline! You're correct with the Green Carpet and the other is Red Twin-spot Carpet *Xanthorhoe spadicaria*.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 01:48 PM GMT

I'd give it a 9 Pauline as I can't have the pupils getting a better mark than the teacher 😊😊 Great set of moths shots 😊 Bit of a heads up – the Marshies are out at a neighbouring Hill to the main site so there should be good numbers over the weekend 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-May-18 05:40 PM GMT

Those moths both display great camouflage, Pauline. The Green Carpet is particularly attractive.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-May-18 06:13 PM GMT

Cheers Callum – I've not paid enough attention to moths this year so far due to lack of time. Your ID has saved me a bit of that as eventually I would have looked it up. Thank you.

I appreciate your comment Wurzel on all 3 counts 😊 I'll have to start seeing what I can organise but there has been some snags with this aviary putting me back a bit.

If I hadn't seen that Green Carpet fly and land again I doubt I would ever have found him David. It was a bit tricky getting a decent image in fading light in the middle of foliage but I tried. I tried again today when I popped out for an hour. I tried to get some decent shots of these Brimstones in flight:



😞 and failed miserably. I had rather more success with this amazing Cuckoo on Thursley Common:





Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 17-May-18 08:07 PM GMT

Oh, my God, Pauline. Stunning Cuckoo photos. You should enter them for a nature magazine competition!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 10:49 PM GMT

Great Cuckoo photos Pauline – is that the one that they bait? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 17-May-18 11:01 PM GMT

Have just seen your Cuckoo photos, Pauline, brilliant 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-18 08:50 AM GMT

Thank you Mike, Wurzel and Ern for your kind words. Let me introduce you to Colin 😊 Named by locals this Cuckoo returns to the same area each year and the food he regularly receives allows unprecedented close views – providing one is prepared to wait sometimes many, many hours. Another shot of Colin and a nearby Stonechat and then it's back to butterflies 😊



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-May-18 02:27 PM GMT

This morning the choice was either Noar Hill, The Straits – or Bookham 😊😊 (kidding Buggy!). I opted for Noar Hill where in a couple of hours I found loads of early stages but today belonged to the BH. Many will know that year after year I am drawn back to the Hairstreaks so I thought I would focus on

finding the larva. Much of what I learned from rearing at home was brought into play including the type and amount of feeding damage, inclination to wander at various stages etc. I was quite excited when I found Number 1 (I'm afraid I haven't given them names Guy 😊). Like many cats they are really well camouflaged and what I hadn't seen at home was the silken thread used to help them find their way around the bush and in this case from one Blackthorn to another. A few shots of Number 1 showing the context and close-up:





After this it just got better and better. I just kept finding more!! 🤪 Why can't it be like this for PE???? Here is Number 2:



.. and Number 3:



...and Number 4:



..and Number 5:



..and Number 6, but it was this cat I spotted first on the top of the leaf – hope it isn't predatory!



I could have gone on but have I qualified yet as your able assistant Buggy??? 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-May-18 06:10 PM GMT

Lovely images of the Hairstreak cats, Pauline, though we've become accustomed to your attention to detail with these over the years. What I wasn't prepared for were those fabulous cuckoo shots, especially the last one of your first sequence where the bird has just launched itself from its perch.

Wonderful!

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-18 06:35 PM GMT

Colin the Cuckoo...I love it 😊 Great photos of him too. I heard my first of the year last week but as usual not a sign of the bird itself.

Some great images of the various larvae recently as well 🍷 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 18-May-18 06:38 PM GMT

Great shots of the brown hairstreak larvae, Pauline – and I just love Colin the cuckoo! 😊

Guy

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 18-May-18 06:50 PM GMT

Come to Bookham Pauline, you can relocate all my Brown Hairstreak larvae!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-May-18 07:02 AM GMT

I would be very happy to give it my best shot Buggy but you would need to be there to make sure I found my way out! Honestly, at least twice I have found myself totally lost in such unfamiliar places which will come as no surprise to those who know me and my total lack of any sense of direction 😊

Thanks Guy. I shall certainly try to keep an eye on these. Just for (my) record I was surprised at how much these larva varied in size given they have been subjected to the same conditions. I appreciate the eggs may have been laid at different times but I know for a fact that 6 eggs hatched within 24 hours of each other and these larva were mostly on those bushes. The question is – are these larva from those eggs or are the larva much more mobile in early instars than I had assumed and also witnessed when rearing. (Perhaps a greater risk from predators in the wild necessitates greater mobility?) One of the reasons I say this is that the eggs I found/saw being hatched were all on small (12–24") discrete bushes which I have checked carefully many times since without any larval sightings (bar one). I also know how well they can remain hidden hence the repeated checking, but if they are the same then that implies that they develop at different rates. Just a few rambling thoughts so hope it makes sense.

Cheers Neil. It was a great experience seeing that bird. Word has it that he (apparently it is male) has been coming for 5 years now and given their lifespan it is thought unlikely that he will return again. However, a second Cuckoo is 'learning' about the food source so you never know! Colin is identified by a white spot just above his left pupil which is just about visible in the shot below:



It's very kind of you to say so David. I am really trying to improve my bird photography but I think that shot was more luck than skill.

A few more of the immature stages taken recently:

I believe the first shot are Holly Blue eggs and the second shot is another Green Hairstreak, based mainly on the fact that I saw the appropriate butterflies egg-laying in different areas. I have yet to find both types of egg on the same plant:



If you should happen to read this Andrew, when it is freshly laid a GH egg is a blue/green colour and then fades to the colour below. I have seen them laid on the flower head and on the back of leaves:



Green Hairstreak larva:



Orange Tip larva:



I didn't bother taking any shots of the Duke eggs as none of the ones I found had hatched.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-18 07:14 AM GMT

It was very calm and still yesterday evening and although the heat of the day had faded it didn't feel particularly cold. A perfect night to put out my moth trap for the first time this season, or so I thought. How wrong I was 😊. This morning I found the grand total of 3 moths!!! Hardly worth the cost of the electricity! 😊 The Flame Shoulder was in such a poor condition I didn't even bother to take a photo, the Pebble Prominent (?) I have seen before. The third was a MALE Muslin moth. Apologies Neil as I did not pick up on the fact that you stated the previous moth was FEMALE which makes me even more convinced she was egg-laying – but would they do this by day? If I was one of your pupils Wurzel by now I would be expecting you to tell me I should be paying more attention and you'd be right! 😊 An interesting find whilst I was taking the shots was this larva on the bark of an old Peach tree – any ideas please????





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 20-May-18 07:46 AM GMT

You're a very lucky Lady, to see a Cuckoo at such close quarters.
Together with some of, possibly, the finest images ever taken of this bird species.

Superb stuff, 😊
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-May-18 08:44 AM GMT

Trevor!!!! Lucky!!!!????? What about patience? What about perseverance? What about skill? What about Yeah, you're right – I did just get lucky 😊😊 Seriously Trevor, thanks for your kind words – I feel privileged to have seen it 😊

I made a quick dash to see my local Pearls yesterday – a brief visit at the end of the day in (still) very hot temperatures but I was only able to locate a definite 3 (sorry Neil, I'll be back again before long – this was confined to the original release area so may have been more elsewhere or more likely roosting out of sight!):



Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 20-May-18 04:55 PM GMT

Thanks for that Pauline, good to learn. 😊 I didn't see anything like that when I checked.
Colin the Cuckoo.. what a star. 😊 And great shots of him. 😊
Good effort with the Brimstones I'd say. My attempts at that sort of shot have been a big fail so far. 😊
Enjoying your continued larvae exploits. 😊

Cheers

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 21-May-18 09:47 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, love the Cuckoo shots, 🍷 I'm ashamed to say " I wouldn't know what it was if I saw one" 😊 So very well done 😊 Your Bird shots are fantastic , I would enter that one of the Cuckoo if I was you in a comp, lets admit it they're such an elusive bird there can't be too many good shots of them, and your's is a cracker 😊
Hope your Aviary is finished now and Birds enjoying it. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-May-18 06:14 PM GMT

Thank you for your kind words Andrew. I'm always learning stuff from folk on this site which is what keeps the hobby so fresh and interesting 😊

Hope you're feeling a bit better today Goldie. I'm pleased you liked the Cuckoo shots. Frustratingly, I have to wait for more aviary bits so it will be this weekend - hopefully.

I have searched long and hard for about 4 years now looking for a PE larva. This year I stepped up the search - The Straits, Abbots Wood, Bramshott, Chiddingfold Forest and today for my last attempt this season I thought I would go to Bookham Common. I took photos of many, many different cats and today I even resorted to taking shots of leaves with feeding damage which I had intended to post tonight in an effort to find out where I was going wrong.

In his diary Buggy had invited me to find some BH cats and I quickly found 4, marking 2 locations so I could direct him to them. I was surprised at how well developed they were:



I was going back through the gate, returning to the car park, as Buggy was entering. It was a real delight to meet you at last Buggy 😊. Buggy kindly gave me a tour of part of this lovely area that he is so familiar with and that included his amazing find of a PE cat. Of course I wanted to know all the details: how he'd come across it, how he felt about it etc etc. I was just so excited and felt really very privileged to be shown such a special find. Naturally I had to take shots from every conceivable angle so I'm not going to apologise for the number of similar shots – for me this could well be a once in a lifetime event although it has spurred me on to renew my efforts to find another:





and in context:





I even suggested to Buggy that he should consider camping out to protect it and monitor it now that it is in its final instar 😊😁😁 .

Before I had time to recover Buggy took me on to show me my first ever wild Purple Hairstreak larva. Having reared them in the past it was my intention to visit Browndown quite soon in an attempt to see just this:





I should mention that Buggy also showed me a BH larva from one of the eggs he rescued. I wish I had taken a photo as it was quite tiny compared to the ones I had found earlier. Suffice to say that this has been quite some day which will certainly go down as one of my highlights of the season so thank you again Buggy.

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 21-May-18 06:30 PM GMT

Great to see you got your PE larva pictures. I did similar bumping into Greenie today, and was able to show him the Brown Hairstreak larvae, we found 5 in all, 3 at Farleigh Dean Crescent, that were also well advanced, and 2 smaller ones at another part of the site. It seems that Bookham and our site is ahead of others re BH, and they may be flying at the end of June at this rate. We checked the 7 BH eggs we found in Kent, but no larvae were seen although they had hatched ok.

Another WLH larva at Chapel Bank has turned brown and spun its girdle, so again will be flying in early-mid June.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 21-May-18 10:36 PM GMT

Nice pictures Pauline, your camera coped better in the poor light than mine from the looks of things. Nice to finally meet 😊 although you're lucky I decided to go today, you might still be wandering around now otherwise 😞

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 21-May-18 10:46 PM GMT

Brilliant photos, Pauline. 😊 The camouflage displayed by all three of those larvae is amazing – the PE and BH look just like the leaves they sit on (and eat!) and the PH is extraordinarily like an oak leaf bud, with those overlapping scales. 🍃🍃

Dave

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 22-May-18 08:30 AM GMT

Sooo jealous of that Purple emperor caterpillar! 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-18 03:10 PM GMT

Kind of you to comment Mark but I reckon all the credit has to go to Buggy – guess I owe him big time now 😊

Cheers Dave – Camouflage fascinates me and from my rearing activities I can appreciate how good they are at it and it certainly helps when looking for the wild critters 😊

If we meet again Paul please don't leave me until you've seen me safely into my car 😊😊 Thank you again.

Thanks Martin, it was incredibly exciting – sounds like it's all happening in your neck of the woods too 😊 Please do keep us informed of the Glanville activity there and say hello to Greenie from me 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-May-18 04:19 PM GMT

I thought hard about your hill Wurzel (and thank you for keeping me informed) but decided that for this year it is just a step too far tho I would really love to pay it a visit. Instead, a few shots from the Eastern Clearing which I think is looking so much better this year:



You've probably got much better than this Wurzel but never let it be said that I don't think about you 😊😘



Still rubbish at the action shots 😞😞 :



Re: Pauline

by Padfield, 22-May-18 04:43 PM GMT

Great pictures of my namesake, Pauline! And of all the other butterflies and larvae, of course.

I'm quite sure you will find many more purple emperor cats yourself now. Start looking for the eggs in late July – this is (logically) the most numerous stage and they are quite conspicuous. I actually think there are few greater thrills than seeing a newly hatched caterpillar perched proudly in the tip of a willow leaf.

Guy

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-May-18 06:47 AM GMT

Cheers Guy. I really appreciate the advice and shall certainly give it a go. I have only ever seen 2 female PE and had been previously told that they lay in inaccessible places. Nevertheless, Buggy has given my motivation a massive boost and I shall continue to look for all stages.

Yesterday it was a sheer pleasure to stand alone in a relatively small area surrounded only by butterflies. I had the venue entirely to myself apart from perhaps 40-50 PBF (maybe many more) which, like me, were enjoying the sunshine. Along the ditch area perhaps a dozen or more females were looking for egg-laying sites and not wanting to disturb them I just enjoyed the view:





... and early stages from previous visits:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-May-18 07:57 AM GMT

Great shots once again Pauline, Lovely Marshie's and Pearls, 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 23-May-18 05:56 PM GMT

Breathtaking stuff, Pauline. I wasn't sure how you could make your PD appreciably better than it already was but you've gone and done it with those Padfieldesque PE cat images. That's not to say the other early stages are less deserving....it's just that the PE is **the** Emperor in all its stages. 😊

Nice Marsh Frits too....

...he says almost as a token postscript

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-May-18 10:34 PM GMT

Great to hear that the Pearls are doing well in the Eastern Clearing Pauline – 30-40 is great and it seems that the chopping has paid off 😊 Very nice set of Marshies, I reckon you know which one is my favourite 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-18 05:51 AM GMT

Great news that the Chequered Skipper is being re-introduced to England – 50 from Belgium being released into Northamptonshire (Rockingham Forest) later today 😊😊😊 . A species I'd definitely like to see.

Loving your comment and your sense of humour David – you do make me smile 😊😊 Your kind words are very much appreciated.

Cheers Wurzel – I was a little surprised not to see the Duke as I can usually spot at least one on each visit.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-18 01:00 PM GMT

Where do I start???? This is Belle when she was much younger:



She grew into a fine hen but some years on she is quite poorly and she is the reason why my recent outings have to be L&B (Local and brief 😊). She has fluid accumulating in the body cavity which could be due to heart disease, egg peritonitis or a host of other things. I am giving her antibiotics via a gavage tube but this is really a long shot and she only has until Saturday to show some improvement. Given the necessary vet visits I didn't get out (to Noar Hill) until yesterday afternoon, the intention being to check up on the little ones. First up were the Brimstones with many visible in different stages:



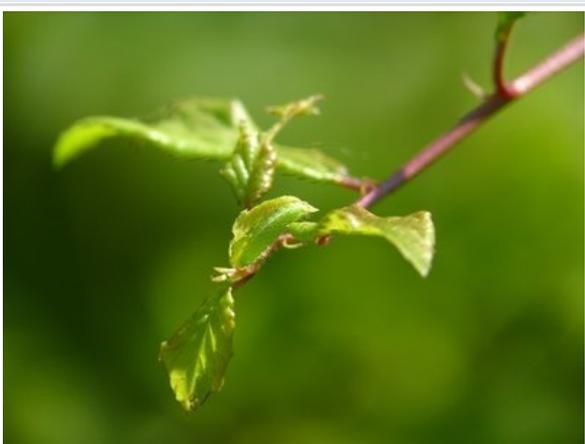


Next it was on to the BH larva. I am astonished at how many of these I am finding this year and how easy it is – given that I have only ever found one in the past. It has been difficult to track individuals. I have been paying particular attention to about 6 bushes (well, twigs really) across the site. What I have found is this:

a) one bush standing alone but about 12" from the next one had 2 larva on it but not now. Either they have been predated or the larva have moved, indicating perhaps that they are more mobile in the early stages in the wild than in captivity.

b) another bush holding 2 well developed larva now only has 1 small larva on it; either the large larva have been predated, have moved or have gone on to pupate (too early surely?). Either way they couldn't have shrunk so the small larva which has replaced them seems to indicate without a doubt that these insects are more mobile in the wild than in captivity perhaps because of the threat of predators.

I know butterflies can be caught and marked for monitoring exercises. How I would love to be able to mark these larva to get a better understanding of what is happening. A few shots:





Whilst looking for the BH I came across this egg on the back of a blackthorn leaf and wondered if anyone can put a name to it?



Whilst carrying out this monitoring – and it has to be said it is definitely a great deal easier doing it from home – I noticed a GH egg-laying and then resting up:



Ironically I was looking for previously laid eggs and it wasn't until I got home that I realised I had in fact seen one of the larva, just to the right of the hatched egg:



For anyone interested this is the typical feeding damage I would expect to see from a GH larva at these early stages:



Just to end this post (tho not the visit) I was aware that there were several Small Blues fluttering round next to me. I grabbed a few shots as it is great to see them back at Noar Hill in better numbers than I've seen for many years:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-May-18 01:48 PM GMT

OK! Back again, having managed to grab some lunch which is a novelty in itself these days 😊 I need to catch up on the Dukes. In particular I have been watching a couple of eggs and I guess the photos tell their own story When I visited yesterday afternoon it was obvious there were changes in these eggs. This shot was taken at 14.48:



I kept an eye on them:



15.10pm



15.56pm

but then I had to leave for another vet appointment. I remembered some years ago that Pete had 'camped out' on Noar Hill to watch Dukes hatching but I couldn't remember how long it took. Having returned from a long vet session I decided to return to Noar Hill. I was a little apprehensive going at dusk – some might remember I had an encounter a few years ago that was a little unnerving and I won't bore you with my train of thought that convinced me to keep going. The photo I got at about 8.30 was a waste of time as it was way too dark but I'll include it anyway:



At least it showed the eggs hadn't hatched. 8.30am this morning I was back there – did I say it is much easier to rear them??? 😊😊 It was overcast, misty and raining but with the recent BH in mind which had hatched overnight I wasn't sure what I would find. They hadn't yet hatched!!!:



I hung around for an hour or so but still no change and the weather was worsening.



Perhaps I'll get back there later.

I did see an unusual fly which I don't recall seeing before – ideas Buggy??



and checked the Orange Tips – some were huge and others were just little tiddlers 😊



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-May-18 02:23 PM GMT

Just a stab in the dark but *Xyphosia miliaria* for the unusual fly? Though I'm not happy about the eye colour 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-May-18 06:35 AM GMT

Best of luck with Belle the chicken, Pauline. I presume she's a 'bluebell' breed (although ours don't have brown necks)?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-18 12:22 PM GMT

Spot on David- at least that's what she was sold as but don't know what's going on with the brown feathers. She's a sweet, tame, friendly hen tho' and I'll be very sad (as will her Cockerel) if she doesn't make it. A photo of her from this morning:



Thanks for that potential ID Wurzel. I've checked it out and altho' it looks similar I don't think it is quite the same - perhaps closely related???

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-May-18 12:32 PM GMT

A sick pigeon is keeping me here today with another vet visit scheduled for later 😞 Given the circumstances thought I'd post a few of the (hundreds of) critters I found when searching for PE larva:



I seem to remember this is a Lackey moth larva but can't for the life of me remember the name of this moth 😞 :



I assume this is some sort of Shield bug but not one I've come across:



A few more larva (which may be sawfly for all I know):



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 25-May-18 01:56 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I found a tiny green caterpillar on Jim's shirt when we got back from a visit to Hall-Lee=Brook , I wasn't sure what it was but I placed it onto some Nettles, (I keep a few right at the back of the Garden) I did that last year about this time with one I found in the Garden and with all the plants I've got out there I think they should find some thing to live on. 😊
Hope your hen is okay Pauline, you've lost a few animals lately. How's the Budgies doing 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 25-May-18 07:32 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Your little moth looks like Nemaphora degeerella, I had a couple of these in my garden last year.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-May-18 10:43 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Spot on David- at least that's what she was sold as but don't know what's going on with the brown feathers. She's a sweet, tame, friendly hen tho' and I'll be very sad (as will her Cockerel) if she doesn't make it.

Aah! She looks just like ours in that image, Pauline. Must have been a trick of the light in the first photo.

Yes, our bluebells are tame but can bully some of the less muscular chickens (and they're extremely greedy too).

Fingers crossed she'll be ok.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-May-18 06:30 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie. I am sure you will have noticed all the little green cats dangling from trees recently which is probably how Jim acquired his one. If it doesn't find its way back home I am sure a hungry bird with little'uns will make good use of it 😊

Thank you for the ID Neil. Loved your recent post - hope you have more photos to show us including a repeat of the eggs?

Thank you David - fingers crossed but not looking good.

It's getting to be something of a habit but yesterday I wasn't able to get out until late afternoon. Others have pointed out that looking for immature stages can be time consuming and frequently unsuccessful. It certainly is! At times such as these one just has to take any opportunities that present themselves. At 7.00pm there was little visible except a couple of dozen very fresh Common Blues going to roost. As beautiful as they are to watch I rarely take photos as I can never do them justice but as I had found very little else







Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 27-May-18 02:42 PM GMT

Lovely Marshies and PBF's Pauline, that PBF encounter sounds amazing. 😊 I Like your Blue's as well, I need to try some early evening spotting. Great selection of larva shots, love Buggy's PE cat. 😊

From your previous post the first caterpillar is of the Lackey moth and your bug is a Brassica shieldbug.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-May-18 07:06 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew. Evening butterflying when the temperatures soar is not a bad idea. I bumped into John Williams today (nice to meet you again John) and he was telling me that's exactly how he got some good shots of SPBF recently. Thank you for the ID's too - much appreciated. I was so thrilled when Buggy offered to introduce me to Padfield - honestly Andrew, you have no idea how excited I was 😊 I decided today I would do a bit more Sallow searching myself. It is perhaps just as well that I didn't find my target as I now realise the camera was on the wrong settings!!! 😊😊 Nevertheless it was hard to ignore the Wood Whites - most of those I saw were either females looking to egg-lay or males with some wear and tear:



(I'm not stalking you Buggy, honest!! 😊😁)

Of my many finds amongst the Sallow was this larva which I THINK will become a Harlequin Ladybird and this huge caterpillar – it was a real whopper. I

don't know what it is yet but whatever it is will be big!



There has been a great deal of work carried out at Chiddingfold which will no doubt be a huge improvement – it really opens up the area creating wide rides and glades which will certainly benefit many species.

Re: Pauline

by MrSpOck, 27-May-18 08:29 PM GMT

one of the possible ids for the caterpillar is the Notodontid "Pale Prominent" which is large and a Sallow feeder, but is a bit early.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-May-18 11:07 PM GMT

When you said 'Bugboy introduced me to Padfield' for a moment I thought "I didn't know he was back in the country 😊😄 A great set of Blues and Whites recently Pauline especially the really blue female Blue 🤩👍 The Small Pearls are out at Bentley...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by John W, 27-May-18 11:30 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Evening butterflying when the temperatures soar is not a bad idea. I bumped into John Williams today (nice to meet you again John) and he was telling me that's exactly how he got some good shots of SPBF recently. Thank you for the ID's too – much appreciated. I was so thrilled when Buggy offered to introduce me to Padfield – honestly Andrew, you have no idea how excited I was 😊 I decided today I would do a bit more Sallow searching myself. It is perhaps just as well that I didn't find my target as I now realise the camera was on the wrong settings!!! 😞😞 Nevertheless it was hard to ignore the Wood Whites – most of those I saw were either females looking to egg-lay or males with some wear and tear

Hi Pauline, it was very nice to meet you again too. Here's the best of the Wood White shots I got today.



It was a bit frustrating in the heat though – I have taken some lovely shots of Wood Whites in previous years but only when it was cloudy and cool!

Cheers
John W

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 28-May-18 07:28 AM GMT

' Camera on the wrong setting '. That's nothing !.
A couple of years back I arrived at BB, in the thick of the Emperor season, only to discover there was no memory card in my camera. It was still in my computer 54 miles away !. 😞😞.
There was some good news that day, no Emperors were seen !.

Really enjoy reading of your wanderings. 😊
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 28-May-18 08:27 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Pauline, looks like we were both struck with camera Hick! ups! this last week 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-18 01:05 PM GMT

Thank you Martin – I think I'd go with that unless anyone screams otherwise 😊 Following your ID I checked it out and read that the larva from the first brood is May – June so perhaps not that early?

She was one very attractive lady Wurzel which is what tempted me to switch the camera on 😊 Thanks for the heads up re SPBF – I actually prefer these to the Pearls so might just have to return 😊

That's a pretty fine shot John and well worth hanging around for – better than any I got in that heat. Thanks for sharing.

I think I can equal that Trevor – last season I went to Thorney Island and it wasn't until I got out of the car that I realised my camera wasn't in it!!! 😞😞
My companion – who had never been to Thorney – insisted we return for it, so some 2.5 hours later we were back where we started. I am not sure that we even saw a single butterfly and she has vowed never to return to that venue again! – at least not with me 😞😞 I'm glad you're enjoying my diary 😊

Cheers Goldie – and it's not over yet

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-May-18 03:28 PM GMT

A brief outing to Noar Hill this morning was even shorter than anticipated when I realised I had forgotten my spare battery and the one in the camera was almost out of charge! 😞 I think it must be the heat! 😞 I decided I would need to 'ration' the number of shots I took but that became a little difficult given everything I wanted to check up on and all the unexpected activity. The first sight that met me was a pair of mating Common Blues so naturally they deserved a couple of shots just for the efforts they were putting in on behalf of the future generation! 😊



Next up was those Duke eggs. I knew I had missed all chance of seeing them hatch due to other priorities but hoped I might find a couple of first instars - no such luck. Eggs had gone and no sign of any larva 😞 . Undeterred I set about finding some more:



Whilst searching I came across this caterpillar. I am embarrassed to ask for any more ID's but if anyone knows what else eats cowslip.....?????????



Next up was a quick check of the Green Hairstreaks where I found 3 tiny ones but bearing in mind the battery, which was now flashing red at me, I had to restrain myself 😊 .



On to the Holly Blues – no sign of any larva from the 3 eggs I discovered in this area. I shall keep checking – who knows?

I struggled to find any Brown Hairstreak larva but after some effort managed to discover 3 all of which were really quite small tho' I appreciate it's difficult to tell from this shot. No sign of the heavyweights I was seeing a week ago. Perhaps they are more susceptible to predation as they get bigger and more visible, moving around to satisfy their voracious appetites, or more likely imo they have gone off to pupate and we shall see these butterflies a little earlier than usual? Time will tell.



It was time to get back to feed the pigeon and check the hen, both of which are still alive as I type. On my way out my attention was caught by this female Green Hairstreak, a little worse for wear but working hard to deposit her eggs. I watched her lay 3 before she flew to a leaf for a well earned rest.



2 of her eggs can just be seen nestled in this Bird's Foot Trefoil:



I can confirm that on this, and other local sites, Ticks are again having a really good season. 😞 My count to date is 19, 3 of those from today 😞😞

Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-May-18 09:21 PM GMT

I love that Common Blue pair, Pauline. 😊

Fascinating shots of the early stages once again although it looks like you are paying a price for all this by way of unwanted stowaways of the biting kind!! 😞

I hope the sick birds will be okay, though judging by what you wrote I suspect this may be a long shot.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-May-18 05:13 PM GMT

I actually liked that one too David – thank you 😊 I must admit the ticks and other biting things are a problem as by the end of the season I am usually on antibiotics 😞. If anyone has any ideas that I haven't already tried.....?

It is exactly a year to the day since I saw the SSB's so with thunder rumbling overhead and having been soaked (twice!!!) I was pleased to find a few males:





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 29-May-18 07:26 PM GMT

Lovely SSB's Pauline. Is it that time of year already ? !.

Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 29-May-18 08:11 PM GMT

Smashing shots of the lovely fresh Silver-studded Blues, Pauline 😊 I've finally caught up with your diary, lots of early stages in there, love the shots of Padfield (courtesy of bugboy) 😊

Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 29-May-18 08:13 PM GMT

Aha! So its time for me to go to Broxhead SSB lek then is it? Thanks for the tip, Pauline. Great shots too - as always.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 29-May-18 08:20 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I was just flicking through before I messaged you for a heads up for Bramshott. I guess your last post has answered my question already 😊 . Excellent content in your diary as always especially those SSBs 😊

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 29-May-18 08:58 PM GMT

Love the Common Blue shots Pauline ,the females in particular are stunning ,some really terrific shots Nice one !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-May-18 10:54 PM GMT

A lovely set of Silver-studs Pauline 😊🇧🇪 I drove past my usual Silver-stud site today, I should have called in 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-18 05:35 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel - it is a very early site tho, sometimes the first in the country, so don't be too hard on yourself 😊

Good to hear from you Allen - your kind comment is much appreciated 😊

Thanks Paul - please do keep me up to date with the WLH scene at your end 😊

Cheers Ernie - I would leave it a while before you go to Broxhead which is a much later site and doesn't usually deliver until after sightings have been reported from Iping.

Thank you Mike - the comment in your own diary has left me intrigued 😊 I shall be watching closely 😊

Cheers Trevor - isn't the season just galloping on now. Only another 12 weeks and I'll be gone again 😊😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 30-May-18 07:16 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I've just been enjoying your lovely shots. Love the pair of mating CB's and the SSB's are fantastic 🇧🇪 they bring back memories of a couple of years ago. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 30-May-18 07:51 PM GMT

We had a good day didn't we Goldie? 😊 Today wasn't so good as the vet confirmed this morning that Belle (hen) and pigeon will not make it. I have

taken the decision to have them both pts before the weekend which I always find quite upsetting. I would not want to leave it until they were suffering. To take my mind off this I went back to Bramshott late this afternoon to see if any female SSB's were out. They weren't. But there were some lovely female Common Blues:





Not to be outdone the males were also rather resplendent, reminiscent more of Adonis with the bright vibrant blue they were displaying:





My attention was caught by a male trying to mate with one of the females. It seemed to me that she was raising her abdomen at him by way of rejection. I have only seen this behaviour in Whites so I initially thought I was mistaken but she clearly did it several times:





A rather splendid Grizzlie was begging to have his photo taken so I had to oblige:





Dingy Skippers were quite active but I eventually found one settling down to roost – not on the seed heads I am used to seeing them roost on:





Last but not least, among the very many day flying moths, were a few Mother Shipton moths. The grotto, not far from Harrogate is worth a visit:



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:07 PM GMT

Excellent Skipper photos, Pauline, and I agree with you that the Common Blues at the moment seem especially vibrant and are giving the Adonis some real competition! 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 30-May-18 08:27 PM GMT

I also agree with you and Dave about the Blues 😊 Mind you that Mother Shipton gives them a run for their money – cracking that is 😊🍀 I hope they offered adequate solace 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-May-18 10:02 PM GMT

Those Grizzlies are amazingly fresh, Pauline. It's one butterfly that **does** seem to have a long flight period.

Sorry to hear about the birds. You did everything you could, I'm sure.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jun-18 04:46 PM GMT

Thank you David. I know she was only a hen but she was my hen, y'know? We'd sort of got used to each other but the cockerel is missing her even more than I am. I have spent most of the day (unsuccessfully) trying to source a new friend for him 😊

Cheers Wurzel – not really. Went out a bit earlier just to take my mind off stuff (y'know how it is) but it didn't work too well. Thought I might as well post a few snapshots tho'.

Thank you Dave. Not just vibrant but the females are sooo variable in colour (i know you and others have already remarked on this but I'm sure it didn't always used to be this way).

Anyway, Bramshott is a nice place – a really nice place. It doesn't have all the attractions of Noar Hill – no Brown Hairstreaks or Dukes but it has the SSB's and the odd PE has been reported from there I'm told. There is always plenty happening there and it has the added advantage that it is even closer to me than Noar Hill (5 mins instead of 10 😊). I thought there might be some female SSB out by now but if there was I couldn't find them. The numbers of males have increased as I saw about 10–12 in a relatively small area, most newly emerged I imagine:



It was the variation in the female Common Blues that caught my attention however. Everything from this:



... to this:



... to this – a 'proper' blue female who I subsequently watched laying eggs in quite a desperate fashion:





I thought I watched her lay 4 eggs but if they are all stacked up like this it could have been a whole lot more:



Tried to crop a bit tighter but not sure it works?:



I also saw my first Meadow Brown of the season but couldn't get anywhere close:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jun-18 06:23 AM GMT

The Puss Moth caterpillar has to be one of the most interesting larvae for a whole host of reasons. The camouflage and defence mechanisms of this insect are amazing, not least its ability to squirt formic acid at a perceived predator. Apparently it is this same formic acid which the butterfly uses to escape from the incredibly hard and well-camouflaged pupa. 3 years ago I reared one of these incredible creatures but despite having the pupa in a mesh cage over winter it was somehow predated, tho' exactly by what I cannot imagine.

Some might remember that last year I tried again and was successful at rearing the larva from the egg thru' to the pupa – a couple of shots of its development:





I have been checking the pupa daily since the beginning of May. I had already decided that if necessary I would keep the pupa for another year, given the recent Large White situation. However, last night I was delighted to see the moth had emerged and what a beauty it was:





I wish I had seen it emerge from the pupa which is rock hard. It seems to have left a little fur behind as it squeezed through the exit it had created:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-18 11:04 PM GMT

It emerged into a fantastic looking moth Pauline 😊 The pupal case is really well camouflaged as well, to all intents and purposes it looks like just another bit of bark 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Jun-18 12:16 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Thank you David. I know she was only a hen but she was my hen, y'know?

Yes, I absolutely know it, Pauline, having 30-odd hens of my own. Always sad when one of them passes away.

Wonderful to see those Silver Studded Blues. Things really are emerging at a rate of knots right now!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-18 04:16 PM GMT

Didn't it just Wurzel! 😊 I was well pleased 😊 . I probably didn't post one of the better shots showing the antennae so another one below:



I really appreciate that comment David. I am pleased to be able to say that at last I have been successful in finding my little cockerel (Pickle) a friend. A totally different breed – a Swedish Flower which apparently almost died out in the 1970's but has been 'saved'. I called her Petal (yeah, I know!! 😊😄). The great thing is she has cheered him up and given him a new purpose even tho he is 15 years old:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jun-18 04:32 PM GMT

I spent 2 hours at Bentley this morning and although it was a little busy due to 2 different organised walks (nice to see you again Ashley) it was thoroughly enjoyable. My aim today was to get some underside shots of Small PBF and see the Argent and Sable moth. Met one, didn't meet the other:





We arrived at 9.30 and it was already quite hot with butterflies seeking shade and reluctant to open their wings so this is the only open wing shot I managed to get:



Given that I was only there a couple of weeks ago I was surprised at how few PBF were around and those that were seemed to be showing significant signs of wear:



There was no sign of the Marsh Fritillaries I saw on my last visit but I did see a single worn Duke whilst looking for them. I also recorded my first Large Skipper of the year. Other folk had seen a Small Skipper which I didn't encounter:



I had never realised there were so many day flying moths and if I had stopped to look at all of them I would still be there next week. Unfortunately I didn't see the Argent and Sable but I stopped to take a shot at this one:



I also came across a Brimstone larva and possibly that of the Pale Prominent (again 😊):





and this lovely Darter:



Well, the jury is still out on this one. A group of observers were having a debate as to whether it was Pearl or a worn Small Pearl. I think I know the answer but am I right???? 😊



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jun-18 06:15 PM GMT

Well you've got a 50:50 chance Pauline 😊😊 I reckon it starts with a 'P'... 😊
I'm surprised the Marshies weren't about there were at least three there yesterday morning, one of which was fresh out of the box? Mind you those Small Pearls made up for it 😊 I reckon your moth is a Brown Silver Lines (if that's the right way round) 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by CallumMac, 04-Jun-18 08:17 AM GMT

Super underside shots of the SPBFs, Pauline – if that was one of your day's objectives then I reckon you can chalk it up as a big success!

I agree with Wurzel that your moth is a Brown Silver-line, and I think your dragonfly is a female Broad-bodied Chaser. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 09:43 AM GMT

Love your SSB's Pauline, and the various blue's in general. 🌈 😊
What a great looking moth the Puss is. 😊
I'm sorry to hear about your birds.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Jun-18 12:26 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I am pleased to be able to say that at last I have been successful in finding my little cockerel (Pickle) a friend. A totally different breed – a Swedish Flower which apparently almost died out in the 1970's but has been 'saved'. I called her Petal (yeah, I know!! 😊 😊). The great thing is she has cheered him up and given him a new purpose even tho he is 15 years old

Never heard of that breed, Pauline. She looks to have a bit of light sussex **and** bluebell in her.

The cockerel has reached an amazing age! Best we've ever done are two different hens who were eight when they passed away.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jun-18 06:59 PM GMT

Well, d'you know Wurzel, that's exactly what I told them! (Honest! I have a witness 😊) But with 4 against 1 they convinced me I was wrong 😊 Thanks for the ID. I'm surprised that 3 dozen pairs of eyes (and feet) were not able to locate a single Marshie but I guess it was just too hot for them (I'm assuming you're referring to EC and not other place where 8 were seen?)

Cheers Callum for both the compliment and the ID's. Much appreciated 😊

Thank you Andrew for your very kind post. Neighbours have called me 'eccentric' as they know I can get excited about a moth or a larva! They probably think I need to get a life but I think they need to spend more time in the countryside 😊 😊

I had 2 Khaki Campbells that went on til nearly 22 years David 😊 but Belle was only about 5 years 😊. I don't know whether it interests you at all but here is an extract I found about the Swedish Flower:

"Swedish flower hens emerged as a landrace several hundred years ago, the product of a now forgotten mix of primitive breeds that were brought to Sweden by settlers and conquerors. As a landrace, this breed was not intentionally created by a breeder carefully selecting birds as part of a structured breeding program. Rather, this breed was created through natural selection and random pairings as the breed adapted to the climate and conditions of the Sydsk??nska Plain in southern Sweden. Even more impressive is the personality and hardiness of this breed. They are poised and confident around people, but the roosters are never aggressive toward their caretakers. They are independent enough to make excellent free-range birds, but they seek and seem to enjoy human interaction. Swedish flower hens are relatively calm but never to the point of being inert or inattentive. They seem to possess all the positive aspects of chicken personalities and none of the negatives. Our experience is that they are also unusually hardy, rarely falling ill or acting dumpy. Swedish flower hens display a level of vigor and mastery of their environment that other breeds –and quite a few people– would do well to emulate." LOTS more if you do a Google.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jun-18 07:07 PM GMT

Just a quickie tonight as I've finally been putting together that budgie aviary all day and I'm pretty shattered! The Orange Tips have started to pupate so here is a few shots:

Preparing to pupate:



Pupated a couple of hours ago:



Pupated the day before:



I tried to take hourly shots to monitor the changes but with everything else going on I wasn't able to do it with these ones. Perhaps I'll manage it with one of the others. I had always assumed that the silk girdle supporting the larva and pupa was strung around the body but looking closely it seems that this actually emanates from each side of the body – is that correct or do I need a stronger hand lens? 🤔🤔

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Jun-18 08:18 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I had 2 Khaki Campbells that went on til nearly 22 years

That really is incredible, Pauline. Best we've managed is a Mandarin Duck that hit 12!!

[quote]Swedish flower hens emerged as a landrace several hundred years ago, the product of a now forgotten mix of primitive breeds that were brought to Sweden by settlers and conquerors. As a landrace, this breed was not intentionally created by a breeder carefully selecting birds as part of a structured breeding program. Rather, this breed was created through natural selection and random pairings as the breed adapted to the climate and

conditions of the Sydska Plain in southern Sweden. Even more impressive is the personality and hardiness of this breed. They are poised and confident around people, but the roosters are never aggressive toward their caretakers. They are independent enough to make excellent free-range birds, but they seek and seem to enjoy human interaction. Swedish flower hens are relatively calm but never to the point of being inert or inattentive. They seem to possess all the positive aspects of chicken personalities and none of the negatives. Our experience is that they are also unusually hardy, rarely falling ill or acting dumpy. Swedish flower hens display a level of vigor and mastery of their environment that other breeds –and quite a few people– would do well to emulate. " Lots more if you do a Google.

This breed sound absolutely divine to keep! I will have a scout round to see if any are available in south Wales. I'd love to have half a dozen of these in the yard!

Well done getting the aviary sorted and thanks for sharing those delightful Orange Tip pupation images.

Re: Pauline

by Vince Massimo, 04-Jun-18 08:50 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Love the Hen storey 😊

The Orange-tip larva is suspended by a silk girdle that runs around the body. In your case it is partially hidden because it is tucked in the segment joint. When the pupa is formed, it effectively expands and sometimes envelops the part of the girdle that it is in contact with. This will not affect the development of the adult.

Vince

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 04-Jun-18 10:43 PM GMT

Interesting to read about your Bentley Wood visit on Sunday, Pauline. I visited there the previous afternoon (report still to come!) and saw two different Marsh Fritillaries as well as several SPBF and a few worn Pearls. No Duke, but a very worn Grizzlie instead, plus the impossible to photograph Argent & Sable moths. Amazing how a few hours can make such a difference. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-18 01:49 PM GMT

I've just seen your lovely images Dave 🍷 I guess it must have just been a case of wrong place, wrong time. I can only conclude they were tucked away because of the temperature otherwise I am sure someone would have seen them.

Thanks for that Vince. I think a visit to Specsavers must be long overdue 😊😊

Cheers David – thought you might like to see the result:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-18 03:07 PM GMT

I was pleased to see females beginning to emerge at Bramshott this morning although only 5 seen:





Males were also emerging around me as I stood and watched, several disposing of meconium and drying their floppy wings:





I noticed that very fresh males were approaching other males and appeared to 'nudge' them. I don't think they were mistaking them for females – male bonding perhaps? 😊😏



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jun-18 08:33 PM GMT

I made a (very) brief visit (35 mins) to OWH a short while ago, hoping to catch the Adonis Blues settling down for the night. No such luck. It was still very warm, bright and sunny and about 8–10 males were dashing about the lower slopes with few signs of them slowing down. I decided just to watch the spectacle feeling too old to scamper up and down that hill (I'll save that for the Clouded Yellows 😊😏), trying to grab a few shots when they paused close enough:





Several females, including the ones below, were egg-laying and when I got down to look I could see 4 eggs in quite a small area:





As I was leaving I was startled by this very attractive moth. I'd like to say it's a Cream-spot Tiger but I've been caught out by these Tiger moths before 😊



Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Jun-18 10:20 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Cheers David – thought you might like to see the result:

Yes, a creditable piece of work, Pauline. Can we have another soon when the birds are esconced in it?

I envy your Adonis and Silver Studded Blues. I have to travel an hour and a half to see these.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-18 11:28 PM GMT

Cracking Silver-studs, those females are just lush when the light catches them in that way 😊🌿 I'll have to try and wangle a visit to my site next week as Bramshot is an early site 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 07-Jun-18 12:41 PM GMT

Some wonderful Blues there Pauline. You tiger is a Wood Tiger Moth 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jun-18 05:10 PM GMT

I never forget how lucky I am David living so close to some smashing sites even if I also have to travel for certain species 😊

Cheers Wurzel – I can't seem to get enough of them at the moment and have even more shots to post! 😊

Thank you Paul – I just knew I wouldn't have that ID right even though I tried. I had the trap out last night but I have delayed posting the results as I just know it's going to leave me feeling quite embarrassed. I can't seem to get to grips with moths. I mean, you have 2 that look almost identical and they're different species, and then 6 that look totally different and they're the same species 😊 Thank goodness there are folk who keep putting me right 😊 I was thinking about you today as I searched for larva – wondering whether Padfield turned up and how your 'rescued' BH are getting on. Anyway, here is my contribution from Noar Hill this morning:

I headed for the Brimstones first. As I expected there were no sign of any of the larva so I had a cursory look for pupa but no luck there. I didn't have much time so had to move on but I have not given up yet!

Next up was the Green Hairstreak. Several larva of various size were easy to locate but they were definitely not the ones I photographed earlier (different area):



Then it was on to the Brown Hairstreaks. These larva were more difficult to locate and I only found 2, both of which were enormous, including the one below which seemed perilously close to a spider and his cache. I am assuming some of the others have gone off to pupate and if this should be the case I reckon they may well emerge early this season. We shall see:



...and in context:



...and the spider's larder with some strange content:



Sadly, the 2 Duke larva I had found earlier were missing, probably predated. I say this because in my experience the very early stages rarely leave their leaf (and definitely not their plant). I have read that larva can hide right at the base of the plant and I am sure this is correct but they still have to eat. Each time I visit I expect to see a greater amount of feeding damage. When this doesn't happen and it coincides with a small larva going AWOL I have to assume they have been predated. I only had time to find one other larva:



Whilst I was searching for a Duke I came across this caterpillar which I am unable to identify:



I noticed a few Orange Tip larva of various sizes so stopped to take some shots but the breeze persisted in blowing their plants around and the photos are rubbish. Just like this one of a male Scorpion Fly. If this had been sharp it may have been the best shot I have of this creature:



I didn't photograph many butterflies but saw a Single Red Admiral, worn Duke, several Small Blue, a fair few Common Blue and this Small Heath which for once was posing nicely:



Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 07-Jun-18 07:56 PM GMT

Lovely Female Silver-studded Blues, Pauline, and great shots really showing the sheen on their wings 😊

Mike

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 07-Jun-18 08:30 PM GMT

Love the Adonis Shots Pauline, I'm hoping to see them in Kent this year all being well 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 07-Jun-18 11:07 PM GMT

You really are switched on to these early stages, Pauline. It just goes to show what is going on out of plain sight literally in front of our eyes.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-18 09:52 AM GMT

Cheers Mike – gorgeous when they're fresh aren't they? I can't seem to stay away from them this season 😊

Thank you Goldie. Good luck and fingers crossed for Kent.

I'm finding these immature stages really interesting David – so much to find that I've never seen before!

On that note I'm delighted to say that Vince has informed me that my unidentified larva in the last post is a Meadow Brown which I've also never seen

before 😊 . Just goes to show when you go out looking you can never tell what you might find!

Well, I guess it's time to 'bite the bullet' and post those moths (are you ready Neil? 😊😊). I should know them. I've seen them all before – nothing new this time. I shall start with those I didn't photograph 😊 Lots of little ones and many that flew as soon as I removed the lid. I was pleased about that because it had been raining and a few poor little mites were floating on the lid which I do find sad. There was the Heart and Dart and Large Yellow Underwing, a Clouded Border and Small Magpie, what I believe to be an Orange Footman (tho' probably something entirely different) and a lovely large moth which flew before I got a shot. Looking at websites I think it may have been a Pale Oak Beauty. The first moth I attended to was this lovely Pale Tussock. I really like these moths. It hadn't gone into the trap but was sat on the table quite soaked. I put it in the garage where it put its wings up and sort of shook the raindrops from itself before settling down 😊



Next was the Peppered moth (female). I know this to be correct thanks to Neil's diary:



There were a few Coxcomb Prominent in the trap in various states of wear and tear:



I don't know what this one is but quite a pretty colour:



Also a Flame Shoulder:



and last but not least a Willow Beauty:



I wait to be corrected 😊😄

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 08-Jun-18 10:14 AM GMT

Brilliant blue's Pauline. 🍷 Love the SSB's. I see Bramshott is on the way to Noar Hill, from my direction, any tips for potential visitors ? Some nice moths there as well. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-18 02:10 PM GMT

Thank you Andrew. I don't think I'm great at taking photos of the Blues but I find the SSB both inspirational and photogenic. As for tips – well, I could point you to a couple of locations but they are now all over the Common. Rectory Lane is always a good starting point and early evening and morning are both good for both the light and getting the butterflies before they are too lively – although I always find them more approachable than the Common Blues (and there are plenty of them there too).

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jun-18 04:36 PM GMT

In an attempt to 'catch-up' and save precious space I have combined the results of a few visits to Bramshott into this one image – don't want folk getting bored 😊



Re: Pauline

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

They're such a fantastic species who could get bored of Silver-studs Pauline 🤔😄 Lovely set of shots as is usual 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 08-Jun-18 08:23 PM GMT

Hi Pauline, trying to catch up a bit myself...I nearly missed that beautiful Puss Moth 🐛😄

Some lovely SSB photos too 😊

The Coxcomb Prominent photos are of The Festoon <http://ukmoths.org.uk/species/apoda-limacodes>, a much more localised and scarce species.

The 'pretty colour' one is a Barred Red.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 08-Jun-18 08:39 PM GMT

A few mrgreens for those lovely fresh female SSB's 🐛🐛
I have never found them that fresh at Iping common.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 08-Jun-18 09:07 PM GMT

Thanks a lot Pauline, I have very few sightings or shots of SSB's. I think I will give Bramshott a go. 😊
Lovely combo pic! 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jun-18 01:41 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...don't want folk getting bored

Chance would be a fine thing! Ours in south Wales aren't out yet! I must put a visit to Castlemartin in my diary for either next weekend or the one after.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Jun-18 02:58 PM GMT

You're very kind David. I'm sure you won't have to wait much longer 😊

Cheers Andrew – I have sent you a pm.

Thank you for that Trevor. Mind you, I have always found the SSB at Iping to have particularly nice, well-marked studs.

Aah Neil, what can I say!! 😊 Reckon I'm a lost cause 😞 I was pretty sure of that one – I mean, it's just so distinctive isn't it? I definitely won't get that one wrong again. Thank you for your help, much appreciated 😊

Cheers Wurzel – the one below is just for you 😊 :



Yes, I am pleased to be able to say that the Glanvilles are hanging on at Wreclesham. Not quite the same spectacle as on the IOW but good to see them just 10 mins away. A few shots:







A big thanks to Hazel for giving me the heads-up 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 09-Jun-18 05:50 PM GMT

It's interesting to see that, from what I can make out, all your Glanvilles are female and in good condition. That was exactly the situation on the IOW.

Last week was too late for decent Glanvilles, all the males were worn, and by the state of some of them, had more than done their duty.

This points to the fact that, as with other species, the males emerge first and the females later, hence their better condition.

Good to hear that the Wrecclesham colony are still hanging on. They appear to have been there for some years now.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-18 08:57 PM GMT

Cheers for my shot Pauline 😊😄🍀 Hopefully they'll hang on in there and maybe even increase in numbers? Philzoid and I tried there last year with no luck and parts of the site were looking pretty dire 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 09-Jun-18 09:30 PM GMT

It seems that both Surrey sites are holding on, but probably are both well inbred populations now, so the numbers are much lower than a few years ago, the Hutchinsons Bank ones are similar a few good conditioned females, and a few knackered males. I had 2 well worn females on the transect this week.



this one was seen on Friday, after the transect, and is in better condition

It doesn't help that the Wrecclesham site is mostly closed off, so it can't be monitored more closely again. I think 2012 was the peak at Wrecclesham. Only one or two were seen at both sites in 2013 the year of the cold spring, on transects Sand Point had the most with 6 if I remember, but was too low

to hang on there.

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 09-Jun-18 09:35 PM GMT

Perhaps someone has made a new release at Wrecclesham? Hope that's not controversial, that's certainly not the intention. Just a thought?

Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 09-Jun-18 09:40 PM GMT

The site was being over grazed by goats at one point, with no access now its hard to know what is going on in the former breeding areas, a new release would not be a good idea on the site under threat.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..I am pleased to be able to say that the Glanvilles are hanging on at Wrecclesham. Not quite the same spectacle as on the IOW but good to see them just 10 mins away.

Amazing how they've kept going, Pauline, after how that area has suffered over the past few years.

Seems like only yesterday when I drove over there to see them from Swansea but it's been SIX whole years!

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-18 09:15 AM GMT

That's a lovely combination Pauline, 🍷😄 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-18 05:38 AM GMT

Hi Trevor, yes, they had been there for years until the landfill became a reality which is a pity because it was a cracking site. Rumour has it that just prior to the development many were collected up and moved. Who knows!?

Evening Wurzel - It is difficult, nay impossible, to get into what was the core part of this site with heavy vehicles working some weekends too. The butterflies were spotted right on the periphery of the site (only 2 females and 1 male) so it is difficult to know how many are actually still there. I am hoping they may disperse a little as there is plenty of Plantain nearby but a couple of years ago Andy and myself searched for larval webs here without success.

Yes, it is difficult to assess the true size of the population here Martin and whether it is big enough to sustain a viable colony. There is a huge amount of plantain both inside and outside of the site and it would be great if they were still thriving somewhere here. Smashing shot btw 😊

I suppose that's a possibility Mark but my thoughts are probably not. I have been reliably informed that there has been a small satellite colony (is that even a word?) in this particular area for many years, existing alongside (and possibly mixing with?) the main colony. When I first saw them in this area I thought perhaps they had dispersed from the main site as they are always seen initially quite late into the season but my feelings are that despite not finding any larval webs, they are probably breeding in this area.

It's criminal what they've done to this area David. A ready-made wildlife reserve has been trashed whilst they continue to try to create similar areas elsewhere!!!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-18 05:48 AM GMT

Cheers Goldie. It is lovely to see them even if it's not in their natural environment and yesterday evening, as it was still warm and sunny, I could not resist another trip to see them, even if they are stating to look a bit the worse for wear and tear:



Large Skippers were very much in evidence, chasing everything that approached them, including the Glanvilles! If I'd had more time I would have hung around to see the outcome of this pair:



The last time I was there I spotted an old Green Hairstreak which, to be honest, didn't have much green left:



together with a Painted Lady. I didn't get any shots of it but last night I decided to quickly check the thistles for eggs. I didn't find any but spotted this lovely Golden-bloomed grey longhorn beetle:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-18 08:35 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, it seems there are people not happy unless they cause destruction, I was at Southport in the Dunes yesterday and some one had tried too set fire to the grasses there, luckily not too much damage was done.

Good news is that the Large Heath are back at Heysham, nr Morcambe after their site was set fire to last year, there's some real moron's about 😡 (On a happier note love your first shot) 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-18 09:15 AM GMT

They may be a bit battle worn but still great to see Pauline 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 11-Jun-18 11:47 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...It's criminal what they've done to this area David. A ready-made wildlife reserve has been trashed whilst they continue to try to create similar areas elsewhere!!!

Yes, I remember it being quite a decent place, albeit in close proximity to the concrete jungle nearby. It surprises me that in spite of everything, the species still persists, which I suppose is indicative of the general suitability of the environment there.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jun-18 02:19 PM GMT

I think that's my favourite image too Goldie 😊 It's great that you can see Large Heath – probably something I will never see.

Cheers Wurzel – it's great having them so close and it will be interesting to see what happens in the future but I have a hankering to go back to see them in their natural environment. You can't beat the sea views, all that red valerian, the white rocks etc etc . Perhaps next year

Hi David – my favourite shot of all time from Wrecclesham is this one. It was 2013 and I watched this pair for about 15 mins. I was quite close and she knew I was there but I didn't dare move, not wanting to pose a threat of any kind. It is a special memory that I shall always remember:



Re: Pauline

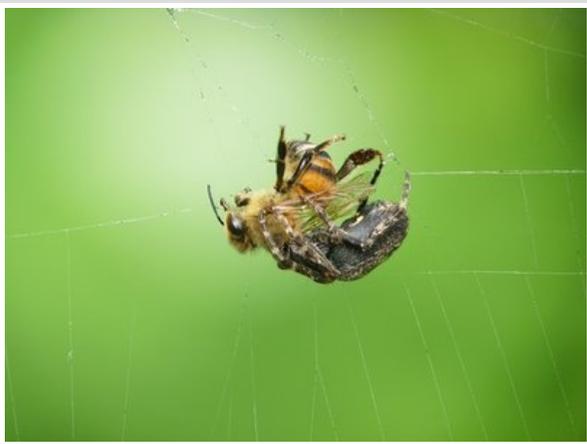
by Pauline, 11-Jun-18 02:31 PM GMT

Today I went looking for WLH at a site near Havant but didn't see any. That could have been because there was quite a strong breeze or possibly because I got distracted by this Painted Lady:



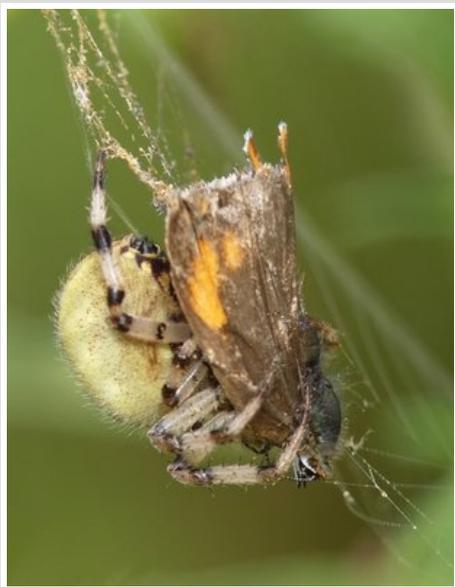


For 2 hours all she did was feed and sun-bathe. I am assuming it is a 'she' from the behaviour and shape of abdomen but I searched all the thistles and couldn't find any sign of eggs. Whilst I was doing this my attention was caught by a spider capturing a wasp. How adept it was:





It reminded me of an incident way back in 2014 when I watched a spider capture a female Brown Hairstreak, just as quickly and just as efficient:



Just before I left I spotted my first Marbled White of the season – just a record shot:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 11-Jun-18 06:49 PM GMT

Wow Pauline , one of my favourite Butterflies " the Marbled White" It seems very early, lovely shot, I hope I don't miss them when I go to Kent 😊 I may have NB and LH's near by Pauline but put that with all the others that are in the South and we don't seem to match that, I didn't even see the Duke this year and there's a good chance there dying out at Gait Barrow which is such a shame, I hope they do some thing about it. How's your Budgies getting on and did you get the Aviary finished 🤔😁 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jun-18 01:57 PM GMT

Hi Goldie, I shall send full email shortly but I usually find Marbled Whites flying when I'm looking for WLH and they are definitely out tho' I've so far failed to see one!

I usually try to visit at least one new site each season and as a colony of Black Hairstreaks has recently been reported as being found on a Sussex site it was just too good an opportunity to miss. It was a fair drive and I had gone just over half way when the sun and bright skies disappeared and it looked like it was going to rain. I had come too far to turn round but nevertheless my expectations of seeing anything had now dropped to zero. After all, I had never been to the site and didn't even know where I was going. I don't understand these grid references 😞😞 . I just typed a post code into my sat nav and thought I would take care of the rest when I arrived. There weren't many cars in the car park when I arrived - I had expected dozens! Thankfully, I didn't have far to walk before I spotted a small group - some familiar faces and a few new ones. Despite the conditions they had already spotted a male but high up in a tree. It wasn't long tho' before a call came thru to say that a male had been found, down on the bracken. He wasn't in great condition but at this point I wouldn't have cared if he'd had half his wings missing! (well, I would, but you know what I mean). They were a friendly group and as most had been there the day before they kindly allowed me the first shot. I was so excited my hands were shaking so a kind gent from Southampton (sorry, I didn't get your name) let me use his monopod. Here is the male:



Soon after, a pristine female was spotted. She was so very obliging and we all got plenty of shots:





Just over an hour later and it was time to make the long trek back but what a great morning. I am looking forward to reading other reports and hope all went home as satisfied as me 😊

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 12-Jun-18 02:22 PM GMT

What did I say Pauline,!!!! More in the South for choice than the North 😊 Thats a lovely photo well worth the long drive. Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Jun-18 10:33 PM GMT

Fabulous close-ups of the Black Hairstreaks, Pauline. Interesting how they bask on the bracken. I'm not aware that they do that in their core area further north (or even whether the type of soil is conducive to bracken there).

Now that the site has been discovered, let's hope it can be preserved so this rare butterfly can thrive.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-18 11:04 PM GMT

Cracking shots of the Black Hairstreak Pauline 😊📍📍 I know what you mean about Satnav, it's about time they released a version that used both postcodes and Grid References!

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 12-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

Really lovely shots of the Black Hairstreaks, Pauline 😊 It's also interesting that you found some Glanville Frits at Wrecclesham, what a pity there's no access the whole site now. At least they're hanging on.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-18 06:29 AM GMT

Cheers Mike - it's definitely worth a trip to Ditchling if you can fit it in anytime soon. Even if they were introduced still lovely to see 😊

Thanks Wurzel. Recently, Alan T showed me an incredibly useful gadget that he bought using GPS and maps I believe. Carried in the pocket it can be used almost to identify where a particular tree is. Trouble is, I'm not much good with technology either 😊😊

Thank you David. It is being assumed that the butterfly has been there decades and if that should be the case one can only hope it continues. I have noticed several species of butterfly (in particular SSB, PBF, and Duke) behaving quite differently on different sites so that was not too much of a surprise. I think they are able to be quite adaptable.

I was pleased to get those shots Goldie. Not as good as some other folks shots but they'll do for me, for now! You might remember 4-5 years ago I reared this species (which may have sparked my interest in immature stages). Because they were reared and not in a natural environment I took the liberty of being a bit more artistic and creative with the shots:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-18 06:58 AM GMT

Given my recent success with the Puss Moth and my fascination with the whole process, I decided to rear this species again this year:



Eggs just hatched. I hadn't realised there was such a variation in colour but there clearly is as these 'twins' show:



At this stage they remind me more of little seahorses than cats:



Growing fast this one is settling down in preparation for a skin change:



Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 13-Jun-18 07:09 AM GMT

Hi Pauline. I just loved your pics of the Puss Moth recently and these cats are kooky little devils aren't they? I can understand your fascination with them. Now you mention it - they do look a bit like seahorses.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-18 08:58 AM GMT

You know better than some how long I can spend looking for and at such creatures Ernie so it will not surprise you to learn that I spent an hour watching that one eat the skin it had just shed. Here are a few shots:





Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-18 09:54 AM GMT

WoW! Pauline , it's got a huge head, 😄 those shots are really good , so clear 😄 your right it does look like a Sea Horse 😄
Goldie 😄

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 13-Jun-18 10:40 AM GMT

So much good stuff here Pauline. Great shots of the spider in action, and I'm with Goldie, I love me a Marbled White. 😄
Glad you got some good shots of the Black Hairstreak, those older one's are pretty epic. 🍷
Good to see the Puss Moth cats, great close up's. 😄

Cheers

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jun-18 03:52 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie. I keep trying but look at Art Frames!!!!!!

Thank you for your very kind words Andrew. It was great to meet up with you the other day and I am looking forward to seeing your shots including the mating pair 😄

It wasn't a great morning having had a tooth reconstructed (I hate dentists) which left me feeling sore and impoverished 😄 . The only way to take my mind off it was another butterfly fix so I briefly visited both Havant and Cosham. No luck yet at the former but as Paul has already reported 4 or 5 males were dog-fighting in the higher branches at Cosham. The site is very different from when I last visited with much of the grass over my head 😄 2 males came down to re-fuel for more scrapping I expect but even the privet which they chose was too high 😄 I managed a couple of shots on full zoom (tightly cropped):



I also spotted another Longhorn beetle which I believe to be the aptly named Black and Yellow Longhorn beetle:



and for Goldie and Andrew, another Marbled White 😊 :



Re: Pauline

by Andy Wilson, 13-Jun-18 04:36 PM GMT

Great Black Hairstreak shots. I was at Ditchling today and my hands were shaking a lot. Maybe I should invest in a monopod!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-18 07:02 PM GMT

Great to see the Whitters Pauline 🤗🍷 Only two species to go and then you'll have a full house 🤗🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Art Frames, 13-Jun-18 08:03 PM GMT

Pauline, I love those two Black hairstreaks you reared and took the shot of. Beautiful. 😊

But those puss moths are a subject I'd love to shoot. 🍷🍷 very artistic

Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Jun-18 11:18 AM GMT

Must be great to be able to see both Black and White Letter Hairstreaks in successive days, Pauline! I wondered when Marbled Whites would emerge. I expect we'll see quite a few this year. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 14-Jun-18 04:18 PM GMT

Hi Andy, good to hear from you and thank you. It's good to know I wasn't the only one unable to keep a steady hand but in the circumstances I think it was understandable 🤗. I haven't had a chance to look at other postings yet but I hope you got some nice shots. Either way, it was great to see them

wasn't it? 😊

You know I just love the Hairstreaks Wurzel and I have every intention of getting that 'full house' 😊

You're very kind Peter. I'm pleased you like the Puss larva shots as you're going to be seeing an awful lot more of them in the future 😊

I must check back David as I believe I also saw a (very worn) Green Hairstreak the day before that too 😊 It has been such dreadful weather here today it perhaps gives me an opportunity to post another quick shot of that aviary with a few of the budgies in it. So far, only 6 of the 9 have ventured outside:



A few other 'odds and sods' from recent outings include this vibrant Comma:



and a colourful Lackey moth larva:



A Ladybird without any spots 😊 although I was told that this was an indication that it was very young:



....and some really pretty flowers 😊😊



Re: Pauline

by David M, 14-Jun-18 10:07 PM GMT

That's great, Pauline! Thanks for the image of the birds. Looks like you've got two committed pairs in the middle of that perch. I'm surprised the other three haven't ventured out. Usually, budgies follow one another around so when one takes flight the others are off purely out of curiosity!

I'm sure they'll enjoy a wonderful life in that little set-up you've constructed for them.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-18 10:45 PM GMT

Your Comma looks good for a Hutchinsonii Pauline 😊 Summer really is here now then 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jun-18 04:20 PM GMT

My thoughts exactly, Wurzel! 😊 Just need to get the work finished on the hen shed and then I can get out and enjoy it 😊

Hi David, the budgies came from all over the country and are still bonding. The last 3 came as a trio and for the last 2 years+ had been kept in the tiniest of cages with no exercise, the result being that one of them can no longer fly. I am hoping it is just muscle tone as that may improve but none are very confident or keen to explore. I guess it will take time.

Still on the topic of birds the garden is teeming with them – so many babies. It should be a pleasure but is a constant worry with all the cats around here now. Anyway, it has given me the opportunity to practice my bird photography (albeit thru glass). I have reared all these species and more but, like the butterflies, it is great seeing them out there:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 15-Jun-18 09:49 PM GMT

With all the wonderful recent sightings many have posted this will surely seem somewhat mundane. However, having 'saved' a few Orange Tip eggs from the garden I have been wondering how this:



turns into this:



For various reasons I missed the crucial moment – a trip to Sainsburys, happening overnight etc. I was aware that there were about 10 larva on a neighbour's frontage and I considered taking a few to give me more chances to observe. However, I decided to leave them and observe them in the wild. Some might recall an incident from last year – the same neighbour had this area strimmed whilst it held larva and pupa. I rushed to the house of the person who had done the work just in time to see them thrown on a bonfire 🙄. My neighbour appeared to be horrified and stated she would never do that again but last weekend, as I ate lunch in the garden, I heard the strimmer. I raced across the lane and sure enough all the plants and larva had gone 😞😞. The guy had just piled all the rubbish into a large builders bag so I rifled thru it and was able to locate 6 larva – the rest must have come off their plants and been buried in the soil. Anyway, that gave me some more chances to watch at close hand and whilst I was typing last night a movement caught my eye. It was one of the cats which was gyrating about wildly like an escape artist in a zipped up sleeping bag. There were bulges and twisting which gradually subsided into something that looked like the exercises the physio gave me for my hamstring – a gradual stretching and flexing before returning to repeat the exercise, going a little bit further each time. I took many, many shots which were very similar so I will just show a few here:





The area which was a mass of wild flowers has been replaced by purple coloured stone chippings with shiny blue pots (containing nothing) on top!
Lovely! 😊

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-18 10:55 PM GMT

Don't get me started on that one, Pauline! Have you any idea that thousands, if not millions, of Orange Tips, in various stages, are destroyed each year by councils strimming verges in the name of tidiness? Road verges yes, I get that, for visibility reasons. But cycle paths, footpaths? If they can afford to waste money like that...

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 07:49 PM GMT

Great set of shots and good to see there was at least some form of happy ending to the usual spring horror story. I echo what Essex said, they can afford to have blokes going out and strimming everything in sight but there's no money for anything else 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 16-Jun-18 10:56 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

Don't get me started on that one, Pauline!

Yes, this is one of my pet hates too.

We have roundabouts at major intersections here in south Wales where you have to stop and engage first gear due to the length of the vergeside vegetation yet in other areas vast swathes have been lacerated even though there is no positive impact on driver safety. 😞

All councils are looking to save money....here's one way they can do precisely that AND improve the environment at the same time!!

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 17-Jun-18 08:17 AM GMT

Exactly! Not to mention the roundabout and verge full of orchids near me that has just been shredded to the ground! 😞

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-18 10:17 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, well done on rescuing the Orange-tip larvae.

I have emailed our local council here regarding unnecessary verge cutting a number of times but not even had the courtesy of a reply.

All the best,

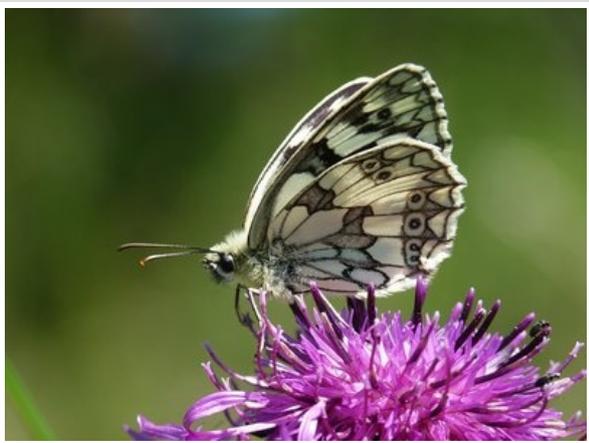
Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jun-18 04:58 PM GMT

Hi Guys, appreciate the support and pleased I'm not the only one who feels strongly about this 😊

Today I spent an hour during the hottest part of the day amongst dozens and dozens of Marbled Whites, one of 11 species seen, yet surprisingly I did not see a single mating pair.



The real reason I was there was to try to get a few shots of DGF but with the high temperatures combined with a strong breeze and very long grass I couldn't get close. Now I know where to find a couple of them I shall try to heed your advice David and will definitely be returning to try to do better:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 18-Jun-18 09:49 PM GMT

You've not done too badly there, Pauline. 😊

The worst thing about DGFs is that they seem to have telescopic vision, meaning that if there are lots of them around those feeding tend to get 'bombed' whenever an airborne individual flies within proximity to to the one awaiting being photographed. 😞

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 18-Jun-18 10:23 PM GMT

Yes, I don't think you've done bad there, Pauline. In today's very warm sunny but breezy conditions, I'm surprised you got any to land at all.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 18-Jun-18 10:57 PM GMT

I'd be over the moon with shots like that of DGF Pauline. I still don't have any decent underside shots. I was chasing them today in similar warm, breezy conditions, they're frantic nutters when fresh, I'm sure I can see them huffing and puffing when they do actually land!

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 19-Jun-18 09:57 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

and for Goldie and Andrew, another Marbled White 😊

Cheers Pauline. 😊

I like your aviary, very smart looking. Great DGF and Marbled Whites. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jun-18 02:01 PM GMT

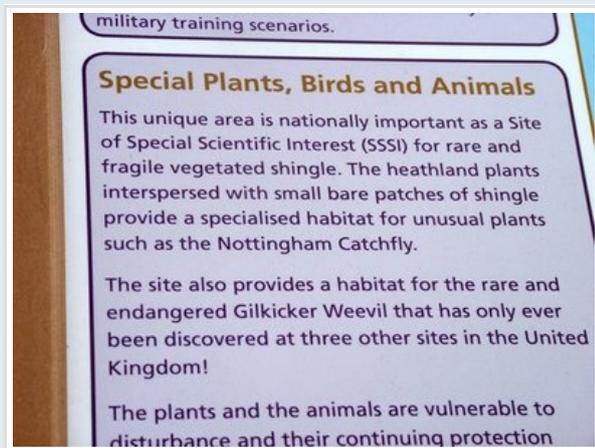
Thank you Andrew. I am pleased with it but more importantly the birds seem to like it 😊

I have to admit Buggy that they are probably the best shots I have to date but y'know I'm never satisfied 😊😞. Thank you for your appreciation.

Cheers Mark. The reason I couldn't do any better was precisely because he (there was only one, the other having disappeared soon after I arrived) only touched down for about 3 secs at a time and that was low down out of the wind. I'll keep trying tho'..... 😞

Thank you David but y'know when you have an image in mind that you want to achieve? Well, I haven't got there yet – I want him with his forewings more exposed; a bit like one of yours. Another problem he faced was the Meadow Browns which I believe Dave has already commented on – at times he had at least 4 pursuing him!

Well Wurzel – only one more to go now. Today I was at Browndown and if anyone is planning a visit this week do check the opening times as what it says on the website is not the same as on the gate!!!! In case anyone is interested in this location I grabbed a quick shot of the entrance board:



A friend was hoping to join me today but due to some unfortunate circumstances it was not possible tho' I doubt these landscape shots will be any consolation:



The weather again was grey and windy so when I did catch up with the Hairstreaks they just mostly wanted to hunker down for shelter or sip up some secretion from the leaves. I thought perhaps the donor was ants but I'm now wondering if it was this larva/grub which the butterfly was very attracted to. If anyone knows what it is I'd be interested to know? Some type of leaf miner?





A couple tried to open their wings but they were soon blown shut again:





The only other butterflies seen were Large White, Small Heath, Large Skipper and this fabulous fresh Small Tortoiseshell:



Re: Pauline

by Art Frames, 19-Jun-18 02:30 PM GMT

Pauline, lovely to see Purple Hairstreaks in your diary and so fresh– and lovely natural shots too with great light.

I tried at my best site yesterday, but without any joy. I did record the first White Admiral and Silver–washed in the county, but was out of purple luck.

Having just returned from an East European trip it is hard to build excitement during the June pause. So thank you for a glimpse of excitement 😊

Peter

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-18 08:41 PM GMT

Great stuff Pauline 😊 One to go! 😊👍👍 Just wondering if there is any other way of knowing the opening times for Browndown other than the website – it's a fair old way for me to travel just to get there and it be closed when the website reckons it's open?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 19-Jun-18 10:28 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Lovely Purple Hairstreaks 😊. The shot of the butterfly probing that strange green larva is really fascinating. It almost looks as if the butterfly is gently massaging the larva with its feet to stimulate some sort of nutritious secretion. Was this an isolated instance or did you witness this more than once?

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 19-Jun-18 10:46 PM GMT

My best guess is that larvae is some sort of Hoverfly maggot. Many species prey on Aphids and it's not too much stretch of the imagination that it produces a similar type of honeydew, perhaps to protect it from ants who would otherwise attack it if they happen to be farming the group of Aphids the larvae is eating. That's all educated guesswork but it would explain why the Hairstreak is licking it!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-18 02:09 PM GMT

You are very kind Peter and I appreciate the compliment. Having seen some of your recent gorgeous images of stunning butterflies I can totally understand how you are finding it difficult to summon up some excitement! That Black-veined White is gorgeous and one I have been lucky enough to see in the UK even if it was labelled a release.

Cheers Wurzel. I really don't know – it is quite a long trip for me too. On the website it is listed as open 3 days this week but the gate said closed until next week. There was a phone number on the gate but I didn't make a note of it.

Thank you Paul. It had me fascinated as well. The secretion was all over the place along with loads of feeding damage but I only saw the one larva. In fact, I only saw 3 butterflies in total, all around this bush but my attention was drawn to this one. I have never seen this before but will be more watchful in future. To be fair, I didn't stay long or stray very far as I was keeping a watchful eye on the incoming tide (I'll leave you to work that one out 😊😄).

That sounds like a plausible scenario Paul – again, a site I'm hoping to revisit this season so I'll be keeping my eyes open.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jun-18 02:24 PM GMT

I was a little disappointed today to find that the DGF photographed a couple of days ago seems to have completely vanished. It was warm, a little overcast and not much breeze so I was feeling quite optimistic. Many butterflies were on the wing but no DGF 😞 I had also wanted to see mating Marbled Whites. Well, I did!!! 3 pairs to be precise..... but each time I bent down to take a shot they separated, the female expelled a couple of drops of meconium whilst flapping her wings, before taking off in a somewhat unco-ordinated maiden flight. I think the male MW's need to develop some manners and a bit of patience! 😊😄 This is one of those females:



As before there were lots of Marbled White about but this time they were quite a bit more active in the cooler temperatures:



This one appears to be carrying pollen sacks on the proboscis:



For me the day was very much about the Skippers with fresh Small Skippers zooming around. No sign yet of the Essex colony which I know is here but a few Large noted:



Half a dozen Ringlets were flapping about – my first of the year – but most seemed a bit worn already. The rings on this one are not quite symmetrical:



I shall keep trying for those DGF!!!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-18 10:42 PM GMT

Cheers for the info Pauline 😊 Lovely set of Marbled Whites you did better than me with those today 😊🌿 – I did manage to find my first DGF today but it didn't hang about for a photo 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jun-18 11:51 PM GMT

Those are quite extraordinary images of the Purple Hairstreak 'milking' some kind of grub, Pauline. If anyone has any pointers as to what the larva is then I'd be very interested to read about it.

I've certainly never seen any butterfly do this before.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jun-18 03:37 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. I've had some info sent to me that suggests the place to address any issues regarding this site is Natural England but I don't know how often this situation happens. To be fair, the website does say 'subject to change' and I've never had this happen to me before.

Quite incredible David how the natural world works! Since Buggy suggested Hoverfly larva I've had a look online. There are some fairly similar images but I can't find anything which looks exactly the same. I shall keep looking.

It was perhaps foolish today to go and look at butterflies when the wind was so strong that it was bending the branches over. Actually, that's not true – it is great to see them in any weather but it was daft to think I could get any half decent shots. I tried tho' but missed many more than I should have and those I got were a bit iffy. There were about 10 males at the Havant site and I thought this was about all I would see:



I went on to get a few more shots as they tired of dog-fighting and came down to nectar but most of the males are showing signs of wear and tear now – no sign of any females yet:



I was pleased to see my first Essex Skipper there but just as I was about to press the shutter he zoomed out into the road never to return 😞 Nevertheless, whilst looking I did see a mating pair of Large White and yet another Lackey Moth larva:





Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 21-Jun-18 11:12 PM GMT

Nice stuff recently, Pauline, the Purple Hairstreaks really stand out 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Jun-18 11:27 PM GMT

Great to get any kind of audience with White Letter Hairstreak, Pauline....even better if conditions aren't conducive.

It always pays to get out regardless.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-18 10:04 AM GMT

Cheers Mike – as you know this sort of unusual behaviour fascinates me and it will be something I shall be watching out for more carefully in the future.

It is rare for the weather to keep me in David 😊 There's always stuff going on regardless and even if photos are not possible I enjoy watching the antics of the various creatures.

However, I've been neglecting immature stages so here are a few pics. I decided to rear a couple of Sallow Kittens alongside the Puss Moth to enable comparisons to be made. In some ways they seem very similar but I suspect they are actually very different, even though superficially similar in appearance, the Sallow Kitten being much smaller obviously and slighter in body. First, the Sallow kitten and just like the Puss Moth it has shed its skin and eaten it altho' I didn't witness that this time as it was overnight:





... and now a few shots of the Puss Moth which are growing very fast indeed:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-18 11:41 AM GMT

I didn't mention that one of the other casualties from the strimming across the lane was a final instar Comma larva. I didn't bother to take any shots as I have reared these a couple of times before. It wasn't long before it pupated and last night I came back to find this:



I wasn't too bothered about missing the emergence because I have seen it several times before and have some fairly reasonable shots. However, I couldn't resist a couple before it went on its way this morning:





I had forgotten that they don't give much opportunity for open wing shots when they are fresh like this. A couple of flicks of the wing and they're off. By the time I'd put down my cup of coffee he was in the Acer!



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 22-Jun-18 05:17 PM GMT

I know, my 3rd post in one day!!! 😊 Well, there has been a lot happening and I have a lot of catching up to do 😊 The last few evenings, after Ashley reported PE's out on my patch, I have been keeping a close eye on several areas. Last night I saw a single PE flying over the canopy but for various reasons I couldn't get out today until after 2.00pm. I'm not sure if it was the same individual but it was pristine and very skittish. For some 45 mins it entertained me with the most fabulous display but settled for very brief periods where he seemed to be searching frantically for some moisture, at times even diving into and onto various foliage. How I wished Trevor was with me as I was ill equipped to provide the necessary. (Reckon I'll be seeing you sooner rather than later Trevor 😊). Last year I missed this whole period as I was rearing those tiny hedgehogs so I guess this is a good start:





Re: Pauline

by trevor, 22-Jun-18 06:10 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I did indeed have the necessary Emperor sustenance with me today, and one individual enjoyed it very much, and indulged for a good 30 mins. 😊. The very bright Sun played havoc with photography though.

May see you next week.
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-18 06:39 PM GMT

3 posts in one day! 😊...I am struggling to do a couple a week at the moment 😊

I have missed out on Purple Emperor for the past couple of years, I am hoping to catch up this year.

All the best,
Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 22-Jun-18 08:56 PM GMT

Don't feel guilty about 'overdoing' it in a single day, Pauline. Whilst some diaries merely record the usual to-ings and fro-ings of the butterfly season (my own included), yours always holds significant interest given the range of species/behaviour/miscellaneous events that you capture.

The undersides of your Comma are quite striking, almost as if the wing tips have been dipped in oil.

Similarly, it's nice to see an early Purple Emperor. I'm sure you'll do greater justice to this butterfly over the next couple of weeks.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 23-Jun-18 06:49 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, well done with the Emperor 🤗👍 I'm still stuck with the usual 😊 can't even find a WLH 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-18 11:28 AM GMT

Go easy on that tuna Trevor – don't want them all fully sated before I get a chance to get over there 😊 Could have done with it again this morning as they are all desperate for moisture

Ah, but you have the stamina to keep it up during the winter months Neil 😊 I've just got to squash everything into a few weeks!

That's exactly what I've been trying to achieve David so I am pleased to know that I have been somewhat successful. I shall keep trying with the PE, and the DGF, and the WLH and the you get the gist 😊

Thank you Goldie – a lot of it is just down to luck and being in the right place at the right time. Just keep looking 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 23-Jun-18 11:34 AM GMT

I had been getting a bit concerned about the SWF round here – or rather the lack of them – so I was very pleased to see 3 brand new fresh specimens yesterday. I just love the undersides when they have just emerged:



A few PE seen this morning but I really need to get a can of tuna! 😊 They were skimming the gravel and landing in grass, on bracken and in trees but only momentarily so record shots only:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-18 10:34 PM GMT

Three posts in a day 😊 Plus it had to be on my 'day off' 😊😊 Great set of His Nibbs shots Pauline, hopefully they'll be in action at Bentley Wood next weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 23-Jun-18 10:54 PM GMT

I was wondering a bit about the SWFs, Pauline – they're usually out before the Emperors, but I think they were second this year! Nice undersides, too. 😊
It makes a change to see Purple Emperors doing something other than sit on unmentionable things on the ground, too! 😊 I may well be following the scent of tuna again on Monday too...

Dave

Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jun-18 02:19 PM GMT

Good to see the SWFs, Pauline. I agree, they're wonderful when fresh.

I'm also looking forward to reading reports on the Emperors' habits this year, given that their flight period coincides with abnormally warm and dry conditions.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-18 06:20 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Ah, but you have the stamina to keep it up during the winter months Neil 😊 I've just got to squash everything into a few weeks!

That's not so much stamina Pauline as a way of coping with the dark winter months 😊

Great shots of the SWFs 😊

I think that the weather this year has thrown us a bit and the warmer than usual May, along with some species now emerging a bit early has made it feel as if the season is further along than it actually is. Not so long ago I would not have expected to see SWFs much before July, and that is still another week away.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jun-18 06:42 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I'll look forward to seeing your shots around the end of August 😊😊

Thanks Dave – yes, this is the first year I have ever seen PE before SWF but still not as many as I remember from a few years back.

Cheers Neil – I definitely prefer the undersides. The butterflies are not the only ones suffering in this heat – far too hot for me and if I keep using the hosepipe the water bill will be thru the roof!

I've seen PE's 3 times this season so far David and each time they have been behaving in ways I haven't seen before – for example, diving into undergrowth and foliage and trying to 'burrow' into crevices in mud baked hard. They're not the only ones though. This afternoon I have been watching WLH behave differently, landing on all sorts of leaves and plants and even the fence post. They were very, very active despite the extreme heat and for 90 minutes they kept me entertained with 3 or 4 visible at any one time and plenty of comings and goings. A few shots from the hundreds taken 😊😊





A big thanks to Alan for informing me the females were out 😊

Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 25-Jun-18 09:06 PM GMT

Great stuff with the WLH's, Pauline. I wish I could get just one shot as good as many of those you posted.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 25-Jun-18 11:55 PM GMT

You may well be envious of my Dark Green Fritillaries, Pauline, but those shots of White Letter Hairstreaks fill me with the same level of envy!

They don't seem to descend to nectar in Wales like they do in England; I don't understand why (same applies to Brown Hairstreaks).

I'd pay some premium to be able to get as close to them as you have!

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 26-Jun-18 11:36 AM GMT

Really like your Purple Hairstreak shots Pauline, great close ups. And your WLH's, one I've yet to see. 😊 Well done with that Comma. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 26-Jun-18 03:14 PM GMT

Thanks Ernie. For my very first shot at a WLH (many years ago!) I drove to Brighton and stood under a tree for 5 hours waiting for it to come down. When it did it landed at my feet in long grass. With camera poised I waited for it to come out which it did only a few seconds later – and flew straight back up into the tree!!! Patience!

The only thing that surprised me David given the number of males and 3 fresh females was that I didn't see a mating pair!!! I have noticed that various species of butterflies behave differently at different sites, presumably responding to a different environment.

You're very kind Andrew. If you're ever over this way at the right time of year I would be happy to help you look.

The lure of a PE ab caused me to abandon the painters and everything else this morning for a chance to see it. It didn't actually make an appearance but that really didn't detract from the lovely time with lots of butterflies and good company. It was great to see you all again and I was sorry to have to leave so soon. As you predicted Dave, I saw several on the way back to the car park but they were mostly doing that 'skimming the ground' thing. Anyway, these shots will look surprisingly familiar but in the current atypical conditions I was quite pleased with them even without the 4 purple wings:





Probably a total of 6 seen.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 26-Jun-18 09:23 PM GMT

Well done, Pauline. I knew you'd get HIM eventually....and there's quite some time to obtain more! 😊

Happy days!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-18 11:12 PM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline of both the Whitters and Emperors 😊👍 I think August is a bit early.. 😊😞 Though to be fair some of us still have to work for a living 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-18 09:53 AM GMT

Cracking shots Pauline of the Emperor, your WLH shots will take some beating 😊 I love to see them on Flowers 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-Jun-18 09:56 AM GMT

It was lovely to see you again, Pauline – I shall refrain from publishing the action photos... 😊 Great shots of familiar butterflies – you did better than I with the purple angle! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-18 03:37 PM GMT

Thank you Dave on all accounts 😊 It was lovely to see you again too. I shall be returning (very soon) for one final shot at the PE's.

Cheers Goldie – the WLH's were everywhere. This weather is just crazy!

Cheers Wurzel – I can sympathise and empathise. After decades working as business analyst for central Gov I am now enjoying my freedom 😊

Thank you too David but I'm not too sure about that. In this heat it will be interesting to see just how long the season actually is.

I have some reasonable shots of Purple Hairstreaks with open wings from previous seasons but I have not managed to achieve any this year so that was my target today. We arrived on site at around 9.15am only to receive information from another observer to the effect that I was 4 hours too late!! 😞😞 He had taken his at 5.00am. Temperatures were already high, there was a strong breeze and the butterflies alternated between frantic activity and hiding away under leaves. Any attempts at opening wings were thwarted by the strong wind. Many of the butterflies were already showing considerable signs of wear and I did not observe any of them interacting with larva. In these conditions photography was difficult if not impossible. I guess those open wing shots will have to wait for another time







BTW, it was good to see several Grayling were flying around but not stopping.



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jun-18 05:49 PM GMT

Just a quick update on the Puss Moth larva. He has shed his skin now for the second time making him 3rd instar I guess. Yeah, I know you've seen this before but you haven't seen this one 😊 Look at the size of the skin he has to eat!!! 😊 Seriously, I've seen them eating the skin plenty of times now but I've never seen them shed it which is what I am trying to do right now!





Notice the flagellae protruding from the 'tails' which is what they do when a threat is perceived. The threat wasn't me – just a strong gust of wind.



Re: Pauline

by David M, 28-Jun-18 09:54 PM GMT

You may not have obtained the open-winged images you were seeking, Pauline, but you've done one hell of a job getting so close for those PH underside shots. Fantastic effort!

PS - that Puss Moth larva is becoming quite scary!

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 29-Jun-18 12:07 PM GMT

I'm still seeking better PH shots as well Pauline, you still have some lovely side views. 😊
Your Puss moth is pretty incredible looking. 😍😍

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-18 02:05 PM GMT

Thank you David and Andrew. To me, the Puss Moth is equivalent to the PE in the moth world. Fantastic looking creature which can spit formic acid, how could I not post a few more shots:



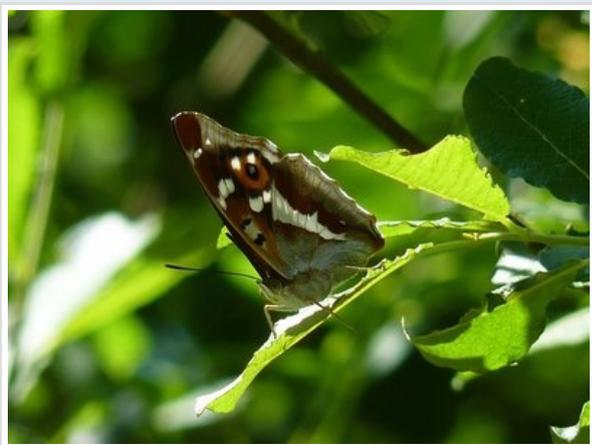
...and by way of size comparison the Puss Moth larva with the Sallow Kitten larva (both about the same age):



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-18 02:11 PM GMT

I didn't see either of the PE abs today! I didn't even manage an open-winged shot of the PE today. I don't think anyone did although there were enough of them about. I probably saw about 10 of which 4 came to the ground, a few for quite some time, but with wings clamped tightly shut! Still, worth a few shots despite their choice of cuisine:





Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jun-18 03:17 PM GMT

I thought that just for a change I would post a few random images taken as I looked for other species in the last week or so:



White Admiral



Comma



Worse for wear Speckled Wood



DGF - getting nowhere near to that perfect shot 😊



Beautiful demoiselle male (I think)



A creche of Shield Bugs?

A couple of Skippers, Large and Small:



after an early evening watching PE I stopped off at Broxhead and was surprised to see the SSB still active just after 7.00pm:





Common Blue Damselfly?

Green-veined White in the garden:



Guess I'd better stop now 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-18 07:02 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

I love the images of the Puss Moth Larva, brings back memories of when I used to find them as a nipper 😊

Great shots of the Purple Hairstreaks and Emperors too and particularly that White Admiral underside 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-18 08:52 PM GMT

Cracking sets of random shots Pauline and blinding Emperor ones too 😊👍👍 I reckon that is a Beautiful and not Banded 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 30-Jun-18 10:47 PM GMT

I just love that image of the Green Veined White with the ethereal green background, Pauline. Beautiful composition.

You seem to be doing rather well with the colour purple right now too. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-18 12:42 PM GMT

Thank you for your lovely comments Neil 😊 . Hope you're having a good weekend. Stand by for some moths next 😊

Cheers Wurzel – still haven't managed that quadruple purple yet! Bumped into Philzoid today 😊 (you probably already know that by now 😊)

I liked that one too David. I'm not doing too bad this year with the PE it's true – probably seen more than I ever have in one season but all very unco-operative 😊. I was looking today too and was totally alone (initially) when I found one settled on the ground. Now in all my years looking at PE's I have only ever seen an Empress twice so I am not sure about the ID of this one but whichever way I turned, and whether the butterfly was in sun or shade, I could catch no glimpse of purple – just a velvety brown. Unfortunately she had a large chunk out of her wing but I wonder if either yourself, or some other expert, could confirm the gender please?



I saw a couple of others at The Straits (which was very crowded) but they were doing that skittish thing, running along the gravel and pausing for 3 secs so I won't post any more shots. Great to see you again Nick.

Re: Pauline

by Mark Tutton, 01-Jul-18 06:09 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

looks good for a male to me – bold underside markings, wings not 'rounded' and the white border spots on hind wings a bit dull – stand to be corrected tho. There are good numbers of females out at Alice Holt – saw six yesterday.

Kind regards

Mark

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-18 06:39 PM GMT

Hi Mark - very happy to take your word for it - you've been watching Emperors too long to get it wrong 😊 . You forget that I have personally seen you identify a female at quite some distance tho' how you do it I'm not sure 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 01-Jul-18 07:17 PM GMT

Last night for the third time this season I put out the moth trap, hoping for better than last time. The first thing I saw when I opened it was a Hornet which made my heart sink. Some might remember last year the death and destruction caused by one of these in the trap, one of the victims being that gorgeous Burnished Brass. As I began to explore the contents I was pleasantly surprised. I had 3 Elephant Hawk-moth 😊 . Now that is my kind of moth 😊



I discovered an old favourite of mine - well, 3 to be precise - the Buff-tip:



Now this might surprise some but I don't believe I have ever saw a Mayfly so I had to look this up – lovely looking creature and it wasn't until I looked at the shots that I noticed it seemed to be laying eggs? – or is that just another ridiculous observation 😊 :



I don't think I've ever seen the Dot moth in the trap before so that was a nice surprise:



Buff Ermine:



and a Green Silver-lines (my favourite colour 😊):



There were many, many more which included I believe Common Footman, Small Maggie, Brimstone, Rosy Footman, Riband Wave and this really pretty little micro moth which I can't identify unless it is *Ancylis achatana*:



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-18 10:19 PM GMT

Great set of micros and other moths Pauline 😊 Philzoid did mention that he'd bumped into you 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Jul-18 08:11 AM GMT

Beautiful moths, Pauline, particularly the Elephant Hawk Moth, which is always a welcome sight,

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-18 08:19 AM GMT

Great shots of the PHS Pauline and the Emperor's, 🍷😊 I hope to meet up with both this Coming week-end Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 02-Jul-18 06:17 PM GMT

Pauline those purple Hair shots (the two feeding ones) are superb ! well captured ,the Purple Hairs that I,ve been watching are still obsessed with the forming Acorns ,and early morning I,ve now seen them descending down onto the Bramble patches ,but even then the interest ,seems to be in the forming Blackberries ,anyway once again great shots !!
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 02-Jul-18 06:58 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

Your last image of the micro is a *Rhyacionia pinicolana*.

Last night until 11.30pm I had 38 species at the moth lamp. Mostly what you are getting but I am still awaiting a Dot moth.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Jul-18 09:16 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – it was good to see Philzoid again. Perhaps it won't be too long before the two of us meet up as I have the feeling BH might be early this year 😊

Those Hawk moths are so impressive aren't they David. You wouldn't believe how many shots I took of them – just in case I never see another 😊😊

Thank you Goldie. I hope your visit to Kent goes according to plan but it's really, REALLY hot down here. I am spending most of my day trying to cool off

the animals with wet sheets, hosepipes, frozen water in bottles etc etc. They are really feeling it 😞

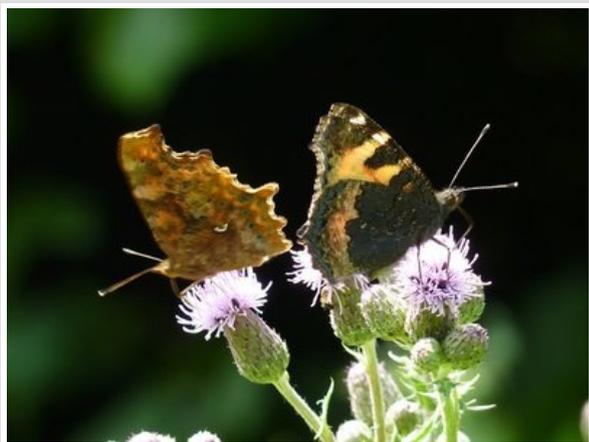
D'you know Allen, I was about to say the same thing about YOUR PH! 😄 Some great behavioural shots there and your description regarding the acorns reminded me of the Small Coppers last year which I photographed on the acorns. Funnily enough, it was when I was taking shots of the PH the other day that I saw my very first Small Copper of the season. No photo as he was fighting with a Skipper and Small Heath!!!

Hi Maurice – why haven't I seen you yet this season????? Great to hear from you tho and thank you for that ID – much appreciated 😊 Hope all is well.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Jul-18 02:15 PM GMT

Thank goodness the temperature has dropped a few degrees – not enough imo – as it enabled me to get out to a local site today for an hour. An hour in which I saw 15 species. I did not photograph them all and I'm not even going to list them – so you'll have to trust me on that one 😊. There were masses of Gatekeepers. In fact the whole place was teeming with butterflies and it was difficult to find a flower head with just one insect!



There were lots of Skippers egg-laying so I took a few shots but didn't go on to explore the eggs for 2 reasons – firstly, been there, done that and you've all seen my shots; secondly, it was still really hot and I didn't want to expose the eggs to the hot sun and as these eggs are in no way attached to anything it is very easy to lose them so please be careful if you try it:





A few more shots:



...and then it was back home for some lunch and a nice glass of ice cold Pimms in a small corner of the garden 😊 :



Re: Pauline

by David M, 03-Jul-18 08:52 PM GMT

Nice shot of Comma and Small Tortoiseshell, Pauline. Your garden looks very lush given the heatwave. I'm sure it's the perfect place for a Pimms!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-18 10:36 PM GMT

Keep me posted on Shipton Pauline 😊 Great shot of the Comma and Small Tort, a nice twofer 😊 Pimms sounds like a great idea though a G&T would be even better 😊😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-18 01:14 PM GMT

David, Wurzel - if you are ever in my neck of the woods you would be very welcome to join me - a selection of beverages is usually available 😊

Sometimes, if you can't find what you are looking for, you just have to make do with whatever is available and I was very happy with what was available today 😊 . I could have watched the Small Tortoiseshells all day:





....and then on the exact same day as they emerged last year a Chalkhill Blue appeared. He didn't stop for long and he covered a good half of the site in not very many seconds so these are record shots only. In a couple of days the place will be teeming with them:



Oh yeah, nearly forgot these:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 04-Jul-18 01:22 PM GMT

Well Guy, I've already started searching for those eggs without any hope or expectation 😊. Needless to say, if I can't even tell male from female (and I've seen a few weaving in and out of various sallows but I assume they both do this?) my chance of success ranges from slim to zero 😊 I'll give it a few more shots tho' - who knows? and whilst I'm looking I come across other delights such as these:



as well as a few more tatty PE's!

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-18 07:07 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

Great selection of moths there, always good to see Elephant Hawks 😊.

I am still waiting on my first Buff-tip in my garden...any chance of sending a couple up this way 😊

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-18 08:52 PM GMT

Thanks for the offer Pauline 😊 Great shots of the Chalkhill and great to see they're out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-18 03:08 PM GMT

Thanks Neil - I'll swap one for a Blood-vein? 😊 Great shot of the LW btw 😊

Great to see them out Wurzel - you're being very kind cos let's be honest, they're not very good shots 😊 Remember it's me you're talking to 😊😊

Just a quick update on the Sallow Kitten and a few shots of him searching for an appropriate place to pupate:







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Jul-18 08:31 PM GMT

Brown Hairstreak has emerged in Sussex!!!! Wow! I had predicted they would be early (in my diary) given that the larva I was monitoring had gone off to pupate very early but I hadn't expected it to be QUITE this early 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Jul-18 06:58 PM GMT

Gosh, isn't it hot!!! Today there were 10 species of butterflies in the garden - I am not overly obsessive about counting them but I do believe that might be the highest daily total. They included SWF and Small Skipper which I don't see often but they were all singletons except for the Whites and the Commas. Many were looking for shade so the only shot I took was this Brimstone who had found some - although I don't know what that smudge is on him:



Yesterday, in a bid to escape the heat and find some breeze, myself and a friend ended up here:



There was hardly any breeze, it was just as hot as in the garden (so I couldn't resist a paddle and even the water was warm) and the butterflies were frantic. The second brood Common Blue is well and truly out here:



This afternoon I had to make a choice between the football and the butterflies – it was a tough choice but the butterflies won and in a bid to improve on those Chalkhill shots I set off to my closest site. I did a bit better but not by much. Only a few more had emerged which surprised me as in this heat I thought there would have been loads. Wurzel, I think I should get you to mark my photos for technical ability, composition, subject matter etc etc. Marks out of 50 would be fine – I think I'd score these at about 20 –22. As much as that I hear you say! 😊



Spotting a couple of DGF gave me an opportunity to try to improve on my previous shots of those too. Getting close to this species is something I find almost impossible. The only real opportunity I had was when I watched the female egg-laying but I wasn't about to disturb her in any way. Without my specs I didn't stand a cat-in-hell's chance of finding the egg but I have marked the spot and will check at some point:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-18 07:36 AM GMT

I couldn't grade your photos Pauline as ;

- a. It's the weekend and I have too much marking already
- b. It would be like the Padawan assessing a Jedi Master 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-18 11:47 AM GMT

Flattery will get you nowhere Wurzel 😊😂

Following reports of the Sussex BH (it still seems ever so early to me) I thought I would check out the vegetation at Noar Hill. This is never an early site for BH, reports from SB usually appearing first. As I expected, the Hemp Agrimony is mostly still very much in bud and I would reckon it will be at least another 10 days before the site 'looks ready' – even then it would still be considerably earlier than recent years.

I am actually regretting having visited the site having been bitten by ants, horse flies and managed to secure about 50 tick larva somehow. I managed to get most off but I guess I will be finding them for some days now 😞😡. I also discovered this poor mole and wondered if it was a casualty of this prolonged heat – the wild life must be finding it so difficult to get food and water:



I remember the first time I took a photo of a dead animal – shrew I believe it was – Mark told me I was macabre! 😊 Thing is, I only took one other shot today and that was this one:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 08-Jul-18 09:37 PM GMT

Yesterday I saw what I initially thought was a male Marbled White being rejected by a female but as I approached that was clearly not the case. I watched their behaviour for about 15 minutes but I am still unclear about what was happening. My shots of moving subjects leave a lot to be desired but I have tried my best to show the interaction which seemed quite repetitive. The butterfly seemed to be very interested in the abdomen of the worn specimen which would occasionally flutter its wings rapidly before settling to nectar, sometimes appearing to hold off the other butterfly by grasping its leg or antenna. A couple of times another male approached only to be chased off by the original who returned to 'butt' the abdomen. This probably sounds very confusing so I will just post the shots and hope someone can throw some light on it:





and a close up







....holding onto antenna?



.....and gripping leg



I've never seen this behaviour before in Marbled White's or any other species so I am curious as to what is happening.

Re: Pauline

by Jack Harrison, 09-Jul-18 05:51 AM GMT

{quote}I've never seen this behaviour before in Marbled White's or any other species...Oh? 😊

Jack

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-18 01:00 PM GMT

That is unusual behaviour Pauline 😊 Is it something to do with a pheromone mix up? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 09-Jul-18 03:53 PM GMT

Lovely Small Torts Pauline. And very interesting Sallow Kitten sequence. 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Jul-18 05:27 PM GMT

That's fascinating behaviour by the Marbled Whites, Pauline, and that sallow kitten larva is something to behold; it's absolutely gorgeous.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 10-Jul-18 07:32 AM GMT

With those Marbled Whites I wonder whether the 'sniffee' had recently mated with a fresh female and the 'sniffer' could still smell her on him?

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 10-Jul-18 05:10 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments although I have to confess Jack, although it is good to hear from you, I haven't a clue what your comment means 😊 I think that all your suggestions about pheromones and recent mating activity are both plausible and feasible but if that were the case it leaves me wondering why I haven't noticed it before. A couple of weeks ago there was a fair bit of mating activity and huge numbers of MW in a smallish area but I have never seen that type of interaction before. I can't believe that my powers of observation have suddenly improved so much (tho' I do try!) that I have suddenly just noticed it. I think I'm just going to have to leave it as 'fascinating behaviour' until and/or unless myself or others observe it in the future. I thought it was worth flagging up tho' not least because it was so prolonged!

I'm glad you found the Sallow Kitten interesting – I do too. This is my final update on the much larger Puss moth larva. Last night I noticed both of them turning a brown/purple colour and becoming quite restless – a sure sign that they are ready to pupate (in just the same way that the Sallow Kitten's colour darkens and becomes more vibrant). I introduced some bark and they were both on it in just a few minutes. I took a couple of shots but by the time they had decided exactly where they wanted to pupate it was getting dark so I had to wait until this morning when the deed was already done!







I had to look really hard even just to find this one:



...and the second Sallow Kitten pupa which is just as well camouflaged but obviously much smaller:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 10-Jul-18 10:19 PM GMT

Those are great early stage images again, Pauline - the camouflage is quite remarkable.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 11-Jul-18 12:55 PM GMT

Isn't it just David - thank you. More camouflage below but it is moths this time. I always think long and hard before I post these as I just know I'm going to make a fool of myself in getting the ID's wrong as usual 😊😬 To that end I'll start with an easy one - an old favourite of mine, the Buff-tip:



The one I really wanted to photograph flew away before I got the chance – a pristine Yellow-tail (or I suppose it could have been a Brown-tail – perhaps it's just as well it flew away as that is one less to get wrong! 😊). Now the next one has taken me ages to identify – not all my fault I have to say. The book I am currently using – British Moths and Butterflies by Chris Manley – has an error on Page 182. It lists the following moth as 2025 Scarce Vapourer 😞 I checked online and I'm pretty sure it is actually a Dark Tussock? I've not had one of these in the trap before – just the pale form – and it's such an attractive moth:





I'm pretty sure the next one is Peppered Moth - I've had it before and it has been in Neil's diary:



Willow Beauty followed by Mottled Beauty - or are they both the latter as I have just read it is very variable?





and last but not least some kind of Thorn? I should be able to find this one but all the photos I'm looking at have the wings in a different position 😊



Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 11-Jul-18 01:35 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I would go with Dark Tussock.

The last one is a Scalloped Hook-tip

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 11-Jul-18 07:19 PM GMT

Amazing pupating camo Pauline. 🤩😄 And great selection of moths.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Jul-18 05:58 AM GMT

Thank you for your help Maurice and confirmation of ID's. I really should have been able to find that Scalloped Hook-tip but I ran out of time. Having taken a week off to surf in southern France, the painters are now back and are keeping me extremely busy. I have done more cleaning in the last 3 days than I have in the last 3 months!!! 😊

Thank you Andrew – it was good to get a couple of moths I hadn't seen before 😊

Whilst exploring the moth trap I was kept entertained by a couple of families of Siskins on one of my feeders. Unlike Starlings, who seem to operate a 'creche' system when it comes to their offspring, the Siskins were patiently demonstrating to their little'un how to extract the seed from the tube, aggressively chasing away the youngster from the other family:





As it was cooler yesterday I did some gardening and in a couple of hours I found 1 tiny worm and very few other insects. It must be a real struggle for some species in this long dry spell.

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 12-Jul-18 07:38 AM GMT

Hi Pauline

Nice to see some Siskins again, you seem to have got them a bit earlier than I am used to up here

Phil

Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Jul-18 06:57 AM GMT

I really like your moth images, Pauline. The Peppered Moth stands out (or should I say 'blends in?')

Great that you have Siskins visiting your garden. They're extremely attractive birds.

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-18 04:58 PM GMT

Some great Moths there Pauline 😊

I really like the two photos of the Willow Beauty and Mottled Beauty, a nice comparison of two quite variable species. I find that when you see them together they are not too difficult to tell apart...its when you get them in isolation, especially if they are worn, that they can be a problem.

I have used the following website a few times to help me out <http://www.eakringbirds.com/eakringbirds4/beautymothidmottledandwillow.htm>

All the best,

Neil

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 13-Jul-18 06:58 PM GMT

Hi Phil

Good to hear from you. I seem to have Siskins around for most of the year – or is that just my imagination? I'm enjoying your bird shots btw but if you could label them you'd be teaching me a thing or two 😊

Thank you David. I am lucky enough to have had (knowingly) 63 species of birds in the garden but I am a little concerned that the Turtle Doves didn't turn up this year 😞

Cheers Neil – I'll check out that site later cos I need all the help I can get 😊

After an incredibly stressful week (vets, car problems, etc etc) it was just absolutely wonderful to get out amongst the butterflies for a couple of hours this afternoon. There were loads of them. I wondered if I was just imagining the numbers having been cooped up for a week but I don't think I was. The first ones I noticed were the Whites. It has been a long time since I saw this many in one place. It transforms what is normally considered a quite ordinary butterfly into something special when they can be seen en masse. Although pristine they didn't stay long enough for me to record them. Next up were the Gatekeepers – there must have been hundreds of them with several mating pairs:



There's always a bit of grass in the way 😊





Next up was the Chalkhills and it was good to see females emerging:





Naturally, this meant mating activity:



A DGF female was egg-laying and although I have seen this before it is still just as fascinating. I was loathe to disturb her so I shall look for eggs on my next visit having marked the spot:



She was not the only one as the Small Skippers made the most of the weather with thunder rumbling in the background:



I also noted this brightly coloured something – hover-fly?



Re: Pauline

by David M, 13-Jul-18 10:09 PM GMT

Lovely, vivid images there, Pauline. One species I don't see here in south east France is Gatekeeper so I hope there'll be a few left when I return to the UK next week.

Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 13-Jul-18 11:53 PM GMT

Your pictures are amazing. I am in awe 😲

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 14-Jul-18 06:41 AM GMT

Myathropa Florea is the name that Hoverfly goes by. It's sometimes known as the 'Batman' Hoverfly owing to the thoracic markings resembling Batmans logo 😊

Millerd and I were watching a DGF doing just that the other day. It's fascinating to watch the females prehensile abdomen extend and probe around until she finds the right spot 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-18 08:08 AM GMT

Great set of Siskins from before Pauline 😊 And lovely set of lush images 😊 which remind me to get to my skates on 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 16-Jul-18 06:12 PM GMT

Thank you David. Welcome back - as you can see there are still hundreds! 😊

I'm pleased you like them Old Wolf but you're not doing too bad yourself! 😊

You just beat me to it Buggy - I had looked it up and written it on a bit of paper(honest), but thank you so much anyway 😊

Cheers Wurzel - I have a bizarre image of you whizzing round Shipton on roller skates, camera at the ready - perhaps being towed by a husky!! 😊 I've just had too much sun 😊😊

Things are slowly getting back to normal (whatever normal is round here) but having ordered more fence panels and instructed a tree surgeon I'm not sure how long the peace and quiet will last. I decided to make the most of it this afternoon as I haven't been out for ages. I was interested to find this Meadow Brown which I believe is an ab. but don't know if it has a proper name:



Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 16-Jul-18 08:43 PM GMT

Cracking Gatekeepers and Chalkhills Pauline. 😊 That's a very striking ab. you found. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-18 10:29 PM GMT

Cheers Pauline, your touch of sun has given me an idea or two... 😊
Interesting Meadow Brown, that sort of lack of pigmentation is sometimes pathological?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Jul-18 12:14 AM GMT

That's quite an aberration on that Meadow Brown, Pauline. I've never seen anything like that in this species.

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 17-Jul-18 08:14 AM GMT

Loved the Gatekeepers Pauline and that is a weird looking Meadow Brown – Phil

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Jul-18 09:45 AM GMT

Hi! Pauline, not too much time to catch up on posts but love the shots of your Budgies 😊 Glad you liked my shots, Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-18 03:27 PM GMT

Cheers Andrew but as Wurzel has suggested it could well be pathological and in any case it's not a patch on that rare ab you found 😊

Goodness Wurzel, I dread to think.... 😬 but I am intrigued 😊 😊

Hi David, I've seen a couple in the past with one white wing but nothing quite as extreme. I've looked in the S-S album but nothing much similar.

Thank you Phil. I don't often take many shots of Gatekeepers but there were hundreds of them in great condition just wanting to pose. They are such attractive little butterflies tho' I guess I'll be cursing them soon when I'm looking for BH 😊

I've got 6 eggs Goldie 😊 😊 so if they hatch and you're interested 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-18 03:48 PM GMT



This is the only photo I have of an Empress which was taken almost 10 years ago (doesn't time fly! 😊) so I hope I am forgiven my recent confusion over whether a recently photographed specimen was male or female. There was absolutely no confusion whatsoever yesterday. I had read that the females were huge – almost bat-like – but I was not prepared for the size of them when I saw one glide over the tree tops and start to weave around Sallow, pausing briefly from time to time. It looked about 3 times the size of the many males I have seen this season, though she clearly wasn't. A couple of times I almost managed a distant shot (the first of several 'almosts' 😬 😬) but it was still an exciting encounter.

I only spotted her because I was looking for Purple Hairstreaks and for the second time I 'almost' got a good shot of a PH egg-laying. I have never seen this before so I was probably too engrossed in watching the actual process, rather than focusing on the focusing – if you get my drift. I shall keep the (blurred) shots as it is a first for me but shall only post the resulting egg which is only a few seconds old:



I 'almost' got a nice open wing shot but I was not quite tall enough to reach up any further:



The rest of the shots are pretty much run of the mill but in the heat and the wind they were the best I could get:







Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 17-Jul-18 06:19 PM GMT





You might well be wondering why I am devoting a whole post to a single Common Blue – albeit a very fresh, absolutely gorgeous male Common Blue. The reason is that this is the very first Common Blue I have ever had in the garden bringing the garden total up to 17. When I first spotted the outline I momentarily thought it was a Purple Hairstreak from the Oaks towering above as they occasionally come down. Some might remember last year (or was it the year before?) when I got excited as a Brown Argus turned up on the lawn out of no-where. After that I planted some rock rose and bird's foot trefoil. As I type he seems quite settled on some reeds by the pond:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-18 07:03 PM GMT

Brilliant Purple Hairstreaks Pauline, they can be teases, I finally got onto one the other day that was down low and it refused to open up 😊 Congrats on the garden Common Blue 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 17-Jul-18 10:22 PM GMT

What an extravaganza in blue & purple, Pauline. Emperors and PHs have had the best of times this year. Wouldn't it be great if we could have another, successive year of warm summer weather in 2019 to allow these (and other) species to consolidate?

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 17-Jul-18 11:15 PM GMT

You actually got a shot of purple Pauline with the Hair Streaks, that's great I've tried to get that this year 😊 Must have another go. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 17-Jul-18 11:30 PM GMT

Congratulations on your garden "first", Pauline! 😊 And those are terrific Purple Hairstreak shots. I'm very envious! 🍷 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 18-Jul-18 01:10 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel but to be fair they're past their best now 😊. I was chuffed with the garden Blue tho'. He was still there this morning but gone after I returned later. Just hope one of the many birds didn't pick him off!

It has been a bit too hot for my liking David (and the animals). Today I was looking around at the foodplants of the DGF where I saw the egg-laying and they are all shriveling up, desperately in need of rain. I am wondering what the implications will be for the larva if we don't get some water on them soon.

Cheers Goldie but I think it would be more appropriate to say half a shot 😊😊 Your last couple of posts (and Wurzel's response) made me chuckle - great finds tho' 😊

Thank you Dave. I'm going to be really boring now as I realised it was actually 18 I have seen in the garden. Would you believe it was Holly Blue I forgot about 😊 and it wasn't until I read your diary that I remembered. So, for my own benefit and future reference here is the list:

Small White, Large White, Green-veined White, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Purple Hairstreak, Green Hairstreak, White Admiral, Comma, Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Peacock, Holly Blue and last but not least the Silver-washed Fritillaries which were here again today with one being fairly obliging:



After taking his fill he settled down on one of the tables:



Re: Pauline

by MrSp0ck, 18-Jul-18 07:30 PM GMT

Im Surprised you havnt had Orange Tip in your garden as its not on the list.

Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 18-Jul-18 07:44 PM GMT

Great pictures and that really is a great haul of visitors you have had.

Am I right in thinking that you plant for butterflies? If so, it looks like you are doing great with all the laying going on in your garden.

Re: Pauline

by Allan.W., 18-Jul-18 08:34 PM GMT

Some stunning shots there as usual Pauline ,particularly your Siskin shots and your Meadow Brown AB ,What a great find!
And the Gatekeeper shots are excellent too. Thanks for comments for my Purple Hair shotI got lucky ! took six identical pic,s on burst ,and that's the only one that shows double Purple . If you get a moment have a look on the Sussex BC ,Website ,its a bit of a way back ,but have a look at the male PH shot posted by Kirsty Gibbs at Ditchling Common onfri june 22nd.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 19-Jul-18 10:20 AM GMT

Yes that Kirsty Gibb shot is enough to make me throw the camera away.
Possibly the best Butterfly image ever taken by anybody. Do look, envy guaranteed .

By the way I think your ' him ' on the table is a her.

Good to see you the other week,
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 02:24 PM GMT

I was going to mention the gender of the Silver-washed as well but great shots of a cracking addition to any garden list 😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-18 04:59 PM GMT

How could I have forgotten the Orange Tip Martin?? 😊 After all, it is only a couple of month ago that I was posting shots of the eggs they had laid in the garden and I still have the pupa. Thank you for reminding me. As I was thinking about it I also remembered a few years back I had a Painted Lady in the garden so that brings the total now to 20 – unless there's any more I've forgotten! 😊

Thank you Old Wolf. I am not really a gardener and plants that thrive do so in spite of me rather than because of me 😊 That said, I do try to be accommodating – I planted violets around the Oak trees (which are covered in moss) hoping the SWF might lay and I have a huge Thistle in one of the borders on the slim chance that a passing Painted Lady might lay on it 😊 , several patches of nettles etc. A new addition this year is the bedstraw as I get Hummingbird Hawk moth every year and that is one of their food plants.

Thank you Allan, it is very kind of you to say so. I have checked out the image that yourself and Trevor mentioned and it is indeed a very fine photograph 😊

Cheers Wurzel, Trevor – my only excuse is that I had just seen ANOTHER PE and I had HIM on my mind 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-18 05:16 PM GMT

A quick visit to Oxenbourne this afternoon provided a few record shots of a single SSS:



I shall be back!

Re: Pauline

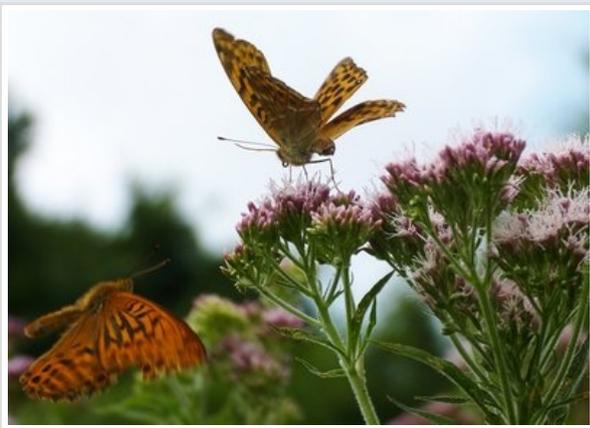
by Pauline, 19-Jul-18 08:38 PM GMT

I decided to have a quick look around Noar Hill this morning. It was teeming with butterflies but I didn't see any BH. SWF were numerous – there were some aged and worn but many really very fresh individuals – which provided a great opportunity to observe them as they interacted with each other. Most folk know the well-documented rejection sign given by female whites whilst some other species drop to the ground and play dead. I hadn't realised that female SWF's give quite a different sign – head goes down and abdomen which is initially straight curls under. The male's initial interest in the abdomen seems to be the first stage to the courtship ritual as his nudging and touching either results in the described rejection signal or the pair of them taking off to do that frequently observed ritual with one looping round the other as they fly along. I watched this 4 times with different couples – 3 resulted in rejection and the 4th flew off together. It would seem that the male doesn't even have to get very close to trigger this signal – if a female detects a male approaching and doesn't want his attentions then she will curl the abdomen under. Not the best pics but I hope they are good enough to illustrate what I am trying to describe:





There were a couple of times when I saw him tapping her with his antennae
...and some other couples:



Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Jul-18 08:54 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Pauline, Love the Silver Washed Frit, If your seeing the SSS they must be out here shortly ,love your shots of them , in fact all your shots are Brill ! 😊 you've more in your Garden than I have, 😊 How did you go on with the Boules Mauve 🤔 Did you take a cutting 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 19-Jul-18 08:57 PM GMT

There were of course a few other species which caught my attention, not least some glowing Commas and lots of Skippers:





and then it was back to those fascinating Fritillaries:







Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 10:28 PM GMT

Great sets of SWFs Pauline, especially the close-up 😊👍 Where about's is Oxenbourne - I have some time on Saturday so might be able to make a trip?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jul-18 12:01 AM GMT

Aah! Silver Spotted Skippers. I wondered when they would be out!

Only Scotch Argus & Brown Hairstreak to go before the list of emergences runs its course once more.

Nice SWFs by the way, Pauline. I hope to catch up with them myself real soon.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-18 10:15 AM GMT

Thank you Goldie. Following your advice I did indeed take half a dozen cuttings and they have gotten so big I had to re-pot them a few days ago. I was astonished that it was so easy and that being the case, why do they charge £9.99 for a small plant?!

Cheers Wurzel - it seems a long way to come for a single Skipper and a cup of tea? Why not wait a week or two when there will be a few more about and you can cover Noar Hill for Hairstreaks at the same time? I will pm you shortly.

Thank you David. It passes so quick doesn't it? - and my season is even shorter than most 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-18 10:43 AM GMT

Whilst I have been looking for PH and SSS and BH I have been coming across other stuff so I shall post it now before I forget about it. I shall start off with what I believe is a Drinker moth discovered at Oxenbourne. I've not had one of these in the trap before - probably too big to get in! 😊 :



... and then there was the Small Coppers. Allan, Hoggers and others might be surprised to know that I have seen the grand sum of 5 in total this

season!!!! I tried to emulate Katrina's lovely image of a SC and failed miserably:



and nor could I match her glowing Chalkhills posted a little while back:



I found this poor creature which I thought was dead but he wasn't. Perhaps the kindest thing would have been to finish him off but I can't do that so I just placed him somewhere safe out of harms way:



A Brown Argus recorded as it is the first one I have seen this year (unless there was another half dozen I have forgotten about!!! 😊);



...and at last I managed to snatch a quick snap of one of the many Whites which just keep flitting from flower to flower. Although very picturesque it can also be very frustrating:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jul-18 12:13 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

A Brown Argus recorded as it is the first one I have seen this year (unless there was another half dozen I have forgotten about!!!)

Have you posted the wrong image, Pauline? That doesn't look like a Brown Argus to me.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 20-Jul-18 01:11 PM GMT

Thanks David – that is certainly a Common Blue female. I have other images of both sides of her. I'll sort out the other one when I get back from the vet.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-18 08:11 PM GMT

Lovely dusky Small Copper Pauline 😊 Hope things went okay at the Vets 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 20-Jul-18 10:54 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

Thanks David – that is certainly a Common Blue female. I have other images of both sides of her. I'll sort out the other one when I get back from the vet.

No worries, Pauline. I too have been guilty lately of hastily labelled images. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 21-Jul-18 04:31 PM GMT

Bear with me folks. I am trying to keep too many balls in the air at once. I saw and photographed a Brown Argus but seem to have deleted it. Things didn't go too well at the vet Wurzel (thanks for asking) – I have read that SSS have been out at Broughton since 11/7 😊 and BH at Shipton almost a week ago (I shall be there soon hopefully). I didn't find any on a quick look round NH this am but there were some lovely Peacocks, female DGF and a huge, pristine Painted Lady which would not allow me anywhere near so all shots on full zoom and heavily cropped:



I know how easy it is for a Grayling to 'disappear' but a Painted Lady is a huge, mobile brightly coloured creature but can you spot it?



Re: Pauline

by David M, 21-Jul-18 10:07 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I know how easy it is for a Grayling to 'disappear' but a Painted Lady is a huge, mobile brightly coloured creature but can you spot it?

Right in the middle of the image, Pauline (although it's rear-end on so you can't see much of it)!

I guess hemp agrimony blends well with a Painted Lady's ground colour.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-18 08:02 AM GMT

I was shocked to hear about the SSS being out for so long at Broughton – things have gone a bit hectic this year 😬 These butterflies are sneaky, not only do they have cryptic camo but they also orientate themselves in the least revealing way possible 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 24-Jul-18 01:26 PM GMT

Exactly so David – amazing camouflage!

It has been a strange year for butterflies, that's for sure Wurzel 😬

Before my next post I would just like to introduce you to Bramble and Berry – yes, I have increased my flock from 2 to 4 and how pleased I am with them even tho' they are only 15 weeks old:

**Re: Pauline**

by Pauline, 24-Jul-18 01:49 PM GMT

Yesterday I had another first. It was the first time I have ever been to Shipton Bellinger and not seen a single Brown Hairstreak. A couple of observers had seen a few earlier before they retreated to the shade, hanging under leaves. I did wonder why the Gatekeepers, of similar size and colour to the Hairstreaks, seemed relatively unconcerned by the sweltering temperatures. The only shot I took was of these 2 Brimstone:



I had a couple of appointments this morning so it was not until much later that I was able to visit Noar Hill. Given the lack of sightings yesterday I was not expecting much but I stopped by the large Beech, more to catch my breath in the sweltering heat and seek some shade than anything else. I was about to move on when I noticed something fluttering by my feet and I watched in astonishment as I realised it was a Brown Hairstreak taking up minerals. I have not ever seen that before. I had the camera on the wrong setting, I was on the wrong side of the butterfly for the light, but I grabbed a shot anyway. As I did so I realised there was another one in the grass on the side of the track. I tried to adjust my settings but as I did so they both flew up the track. I lost one but sprinted after the other (yes, up hill in that heat and they can move incredibly quickly!). Every so often it would touch down for a couple of seconds, just like the PE's then carry on a few inches from the ground. For those who know the site I followed it up to the top gate by which time I was shattered. Not sure this shot is worth all the effort but it was all I got:



I carried on into the site where I found another couple. Usually, when a BH comes down to nectar it is relatively easy to get a few shots but today I had to be quick as they were only spending a few seconds down on the Hemp Agrimony and then flying back up into the shade. Consequently, some of these shots aren't great but with temperatures forecast to reach 35 by the end of the week I am not confident I will see any more:







No sign of any second brood Dukes so I strolled along to see the Rufus Grasshoppers which were also very active in the heat:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 24-Jul-18 10:24 PM GMT

Those chickens are adorable, Pauline (very like the Cream Legbars we have in Abergavenny).

The Brown Hairstreaks are equally luscious. It's hard to believe they're on the wing so early, so it's now incumbent on all of us to get out and see them before they burn themselves out like so many other species seem to be doing right now!

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-18 10:51 PM GMT

Thanks for the tip off about the Brostreaks Pauline. I'm doing a recce there tomorrow afternoon and then I'm hoping to visit on Thursday so I'll aim to get there by 10ish before it gets too hot 😊 Interesting to see the behaviour shot, these are strange times in deed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-18 06:13 AM GMT

I'm looking forward to my blue eggs David 😊

Cheers Wurzel – we were there well before 10.00am and by all accounts were way too late. It was incredibly hot even then. Having said that, my visit to Noar Hill was at a much later time. Good luck!

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-18 02:52 PM GMT

Keen to monitor the situation at Noar Hill in this extreme and unusual weather I had intended another trip this morning. However, events conspired against me and by the time I got there it was after mid-day and blisteringly hot. Many butterflies were extremely active but I had no sightings of the BH. After about 40 mins I could no longer see properly as the sweat was dripping into my eyes, making them sting, so I decided to call it a day. I made my way down the track and almost trod on a butterfly that was slow to move. Today I was a bit quicker to recognise it as a Brown Hairstreak as it flew over a Hazel bush but there was another still on the ground. I don't know if these were the same 2 from yesterday but it was in about the same place at

about the same sort of time. It wasn't quite as flighty today but I still couldn't get close and after a few shots it, too, flew up into some Hazel. Anyway, these are the shots:





I also saw a couple of Purple Hairstreaks flying low in Oak but I was distracted for a second by an orange butterfly which turned out not to be a BH and I lost them!

Re: Pauline

by ernie f, 25-Jul-18 03:08 PM GMT

Great BH shots, Pauline. If I can bear the heat I shall try an early afternoon visit.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 25-Jul-18 08:22 PM GMT

Be sure to take plenty of water with you Ernie as it's going to be even hotter tomorrow 😬 If the heat doesn't get you the ticks most surely will as each time I visit I have been covered in them 😬

It is almost a week since I visited Oxenbourne when I saw just a single SSS. Having been informed that 6 individuals were reported as being on the wing I was feeling a little more optimistic. Some might remember that I have been expressing concerns about this site for several years now. The area suitable for the SSS is getting smaller and smaller. When I contacted the relevant bodies last year I was advised that a 3-pronged approach was planned to better manage the site, but I fear any work that may have been/will be carried out will be too little, too late. I made a return visit later this afternoon and compared to Noar Hill I was surprised at just how few butterflies were on the wing. The number of Chalkhill has dropped massively in the last week and the Small Skippers have all but disappeared. I watched all that egg-laying a week ago but I wonder how protected their eggs will be in grass that is frazzled with the heat of the sun. Anyway, back to the SSS. I was only there a short while but could only confirm sightings of 2 males. Let's hope things improve here:



Re: Pauline

by trevor, 25-Jul-18 09:10 PM GMT

How unusual to see Brown Hairstreaks on the ground, great shots. Wonderful Silver Spotted Skipper images too.

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-18 10:44 PM GMT

Lovely set of Silver-spots Pauline 😊👍 Shipton was productive today despite the heat but you to look further afield than just the Hedge 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 27-Jul-18 12:00 AM GMT

Pauline wrote:

I'm looking forward to my blue eggs David

Yes, they're quite something aren't they, Pauline? I've taken a few into work and my colleagues look at me in bewilderment when I insist they're chicken eggs! 😊

Well done with the Silver Spotted Skippers & Brown Hairstreaks. Hopefully numbers will increase over the next week or so to give us a fitting swansong to the 'regular' season.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 27-Jul-18 09:44 AM GMT

Lovely stuff Pauline, great Brostreak shots, and I like your Silver-washed selection. 😊

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 27-Jul-18 10:36 AM GMT

Yes your Silver Spotted Skippers pictures are excellent, Pauline. A species I have a great love for.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jul-18 04:56 PM GMT

Hi Mark – they're so very charismatic aren't they? They are definitely my favourite Skipper – I'm pleased you like the pics 😊

Thank you Andrew. I was pleased with the BH shots as they demonstrate behaviour not often seen.

Thank you David. I certainly hope numbers of both those butterflies increase – time will tell what effect this season has had on them.

Cheers Wurzel – I did in fact look further than the hedge exploring various tracks as I made my way up from the village. Perhaps I just didn't look hard enough but then I only had 90 mins or so. I see from Paul's report that a successful day was had, including females and a Wall Brown!!! 🍷

I think it is very unusual Trevor – thanks for the compliment. Would you believe it's raining here 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jul-18 05:06 PM GMT

Today another short visit to Noar Hill. I arrived, rounded the corner and was met with:



As I was taking the shot I noticed out of the corner of my eye another Hairstreak behind. My first thought was WLH as I had found a worn one at almost the exact same place last year, but no, it was of the Purple variety:



Try as I might I couldn't get them both in the same shot!



A pristine second brood Small Blue was spotted but still no second brood Dukes found:



The only other butterfly of note was this Ringlet with an odd ring!



The Ash trees here really seem to be suffering with Ash die-back. I wonder how long it will be before they all succumb:



Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 27-Jul-18 06:09 PM GMT

This morning I had the first Hummingbird Hawk-moth of the season in the garden. I struggle to tell if they are male or female – possibly even more than I struggle to get any shots of them 😊 I usually have several each year so I hope one of them decides to make use of the Bedstraw supplied just for them. I must remember to check it:





The wings just go too quick!

Looking around the garden last night to see how many more plants had died (did I mention it's raining 😊😄) I noticed a Comma about to pupate on a Sallow which only had 2 leaves left. Thankfully this morning the Comma had pupated. The Silver-y moth had also gone to find pastures anew:





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 27-Jul-18 11:14 PM GMT

Lush Brostreaks and Hummingbird Hawk Pauline 🤗🇮🇪 Shipton did come up with the goods in the end despite the heat 🤗

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-18 06:06 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel – I'm pleased you had a really good day, just a bit sorry I won't be around to read your report 🤗

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 28-Jul-18 06:20 PM GMT

I was keen to know whether there were any female SSS out at Oxenbourne but I couldn't get out until 3.00pm today and the wind, well, it was blustery to say the least. Unsurprisingly the site was deserted and the Skippers who had been so keen to perch up off the hot ground a few days ago were now hunkered down out of the wind. This made my task of counting them a little easier as I did a quick circuit of their favoured area. To cut to the chase on just one side of the path there must have been at least a dozen (really 🤗) including a definite 2 and possibly 3 females. I was literally almost tripping over them, sometimes taking a step and 3 would fly up 🤗 This might not sound like a great deal but it definitely is for this site and is certainly the most numerous I have seen them here in recent years. Don't forget, their suitable environment has shrunk to an area not much larger than my garden!!! 🤗 (OK, I exaggerate a little but you get the gist 🤗). Most of them were very fresh including one little chap which I almost stood on in the middle of the path so I moved him somewhere safer. A couple of courting pairs were seen, but alas, they took off and I lost sight of them:





Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 28-Jul-18 06:23 PM GMT

Some nice fresh looking butterflies Pauline. As for Dukes, that's one species I fear for the most with this drought, and I do hope none are wasted on a second brood where there's likely to be precious little if any foodplant left for them. I reckon every single one that's survived will be needed next spring. I hope I'm wrong though 😊

Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 28-Jul-18 06:53 PM GMT

Even though I am probably beginning to sound like a stuck record....amazing pictures.

There are so many in you recent selections of butterflies I have never seen and it is great to browse through them 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-18 09:36 AM GMT

Cracking set of shots Pauline 😊 Especially like the SSS on the finger, that's one I need in my collection 🍷🍷 I'm trying to get caught up on my PD so I'll try and get the Shipton report written and up before October 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 29-Jul-18 02:01 PM GMT

Lovely SSS Pauline, I went looking yesterday, too windy, still I gave it try, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-18 07:22 PM GMT

Cheers Buggy - I share your concern which I expressed a couple of weeks ago and not just for the Duke's. I guess time will tell.

That's the sort of stuck record I'm happy to listen to over and over again Wolf 😊 - thank you for your very kind words.

Thank you Wurzel. I am keeping my fingers crossed (again) that they're not lost from this site.

I'm pleased you like them Goldie - I'm certainly enjoying all the shots you are posting 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 29-Jul-18 07:36 PM GMT

Looking out of the window it's hard to believe that only 48 hours ago I was praying for rain and now we have it in torrents. Until the drought I hadn't realised that I have 120 potted plants around the garden and watering them with a watering can was an impossible job. Jaffa is not too keen on the hose and seemed intent on stopping me using it:



but the Doves certainly enjoy a spray:



Several times in the evening I popped up to Noar Hill just to see how the butterflies were coping so a few more general shots from there. It's not possible to tell from this shot but this Holly Blue seemed quite a bit larger than usual making a change from the many tiny Common Blues I have been seeing this season:





I was surprised during the dry spell to find so many fungi in the garden. There were some very pretty ones in the rabbit run – silvery-white, small, delicate looking, pointed cap, but I disposed of them just in case. This is another – quite large, leathery and substantial looking. I'm sure I have a book somewhere



Re: Pauline

by millerd, 31-Jul-18 03:00 PM GMT

Just catching up, Pauline – some nice Hairstreaks shots from Noar Hill. Now I'm home I must try and get down there. Hopefully the rain will have refreshed and revived things a bit. 😊

Dave

Re: Pauline

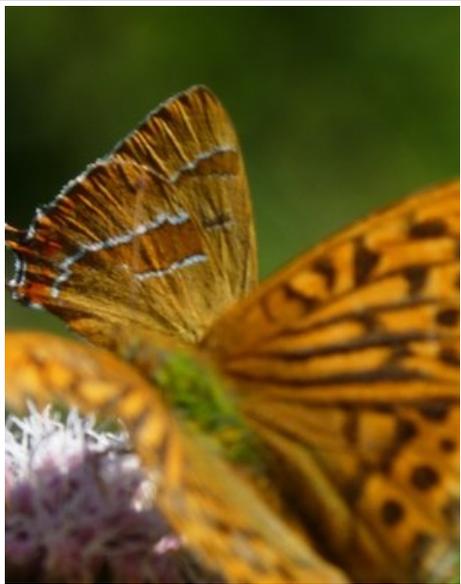
by Pauline, 31-Jul-18 08:10 PM GMT

Cheers Dave – speaking of Noar Hill I've been stuck in for what seems like ages thanks to a load of domestic issues (not least my car!) but today I escaped briefly late afternoon. It was about 4.30pm when I arrived at Noar Hill and a male and female BH were already down nectaring. The female flew up immediately but I saw another a few minutes later. In total, in the first 15 mins I saw 2 male and 2 female. All were very skittish still, spending only seconds on each plant, not helped by the other species who were constantly disturbing them. A few shots which didn't come easy:





Rotten shot but see what I mean?



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-18 09:31 PM GMT

Still a great set of shots Pauline. 😊 The behaviour of the Brostreaks that you describe seems a little odd – I was always under the impression that the golden hours were between 1am and 3pm and also at Shipton the same male was down for an hour at least on two thistle heads, is there something different about Noar Hill? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 02-Aug-18 04:58 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel. I have been thinking long and hard about the questions you raise. Firstly, when I was new to butterflies, a few well-known and knowledgeable folk informed me that Brown Hairstreaks were just a 'morning' butterfly and it was no good looking for them in the afternoon. You and I both know that this is not true. However, I think there are still too many generalisations made that somehow become set in concrete. It is fair to say that many male BH come down to nectar in the morning and some females come down to egg lay in the afternoon..... but many do not perform within the hours we have set them. Butterflies also behave differently at different sites where there are differing environments. (This is all based on just my personal experience).

Being so close to Noar Hill I have been visiting at different times of the day and sometimes 2 or 3 times per day to try to monitor the behaviour of these butterflies in this prolonged heat. As I have already posted, getting any shots has been difficult as the butterflies have only been settling for a few seconds at a time (all male except for one female). Today, for the first time, the males have been staying down for prolonged periods and most are looking worn and faded. There were 6, possibly 8, down in one small area. A single female came down, flew around a blackthorn, almost touching down but not quite, and then returned to the trees. I can only assume that this skittish behaviour is down to a combination of high temperatures and the need

to get on and mate. The males (as I predicted) emerged early but were forced to seek shade, only diving down for moisture and nectar when desperate. The females have now emerged and mating is paramount so yet again we have seen little of the males. Their work is now done and they can afford to be a bit more relaxed. Now it is the turn of the female and I think we shall see most of the egg-laying next week. I am not sure that Shipton is so different. There are not the numbers of butterflies there that there are at NH (and many species have been bothering the BH, eg, Common Blue, Comma, SWF, MB and especially the flies and wasps) but I think my single visit to Shipton co-incided with that period of intense heat when they were seeking shade. By the time you saw them the females had emerged (by all accounts) and presumably mating had occurred so the males were more relaxed. These are just my thoughts so please feel free to comment but in the meantime I shall post some shots from the last couple of days:









Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-18 10:04 PM GMT

Great set of shots Pauline 😊 Also interesting reading about the behaviour. I reckon you're onto something but at the end of the day I also think that this butterflying is a funny old game and butterflies are anything but predictable 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 02-Aug-18 10:07 PM GMT

That's a good day with the Hairstreaks. I got my first fix of them yesterday, a nice fresh female just finishing drying her wings, a frustratingly short encounter but a good start 😊

As far as their behaviour is concerned what I will say is what I often say to newbies who often quote from books, "the butterflies don't read the books!" I also think there's a lot of chinese whispers that goes on in butterfly books, with many using previous books as sources. So something which may have been true at one site 60 years ago gets quoted as gospel everywhere through a succession of editions. You can't beat personal observations, if you see

a butterfly doing something a source says they don't do, then who's wrong, you or the source!

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 02-Aug-18 10:26 PM GMT

An excellent selection of Hairstreaks, Pauline. I think Bugboy is right about all the received wisdom in books – it's quite possible that you could trace some of these "facts" back through the literature to one single observation made by one elderly Victorian Gentleman in the 1840s! Anyway, I shall be heading down to Noar Hill very soon... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-18 10:28 AM GMT

Great shots of the BHS Pauline, 😊 I'm hoping to go to Gait Barrow this week-end so keeping my fingers crossed the weather holds out 😊 They've had a lot of rain up there, but it makes your mouth water when you read that the Bros Streaks are out at GB and the Scotch Argus and HBF are at Arnside 😊 Can't Wait! 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Aug-18 11:13 AM GMT

Scotch Argus and HBF are species I'll probably never see Goldie 🍷 Thank you for your kind words.

Cheers Dave, Paul. What you have both said is what I was trying to express but you have done it so much better and more concise. Seems we are all of a similar mind. It is the reason these days I cross-examine folk when they tell me something new 😊. A whole investigation follows like 'how do you know that?, Where and when did that happen?' etc etc. When we get to a point where we are trying to work out WHY a butterfly does such and such then I think much of it has to be just speculation eg the wing-rolling.

I couldn't agree more Wurzel. I am sure A. will not mind me recounting a conversation we had many years ago whilst searching for BH at Shipton. As we rounded a corner he was telling me that BH never nectar on thistle heads and there were 2 Brown Hairstreaks sitting on adjacent thistle heads! A lot was learnt that day – yes, butterflies are certainly unpredictable! With that in mind and their need for shade I have recently been searching in every nook and cranny for BH. I thought I had spotted one very high up hanging from under a leaf. It was too far to see with the naked eye so I took a shot and blew it up:



It is a shame to start a new page with a photo of a dead leaf but some might say it is one of my better ones 😊 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 03-Aug-18 02:39 PM GMT

I had plans today but by the time I made sure all the critters were fine the heat was overwhelming. Never mind I thought, I would go to a fairly local pub and treat myself to their delicious crab and avocado salad (australian blue swimmer which has a very sweet meat) and be back to check all was OK. Sadly, the crab was just about off – I could smell it before they served it. It must be the first meal I have send back in over a decade but they were very apologetic. This meant I was able to watch the butterflies in the garden – a couple of tatty GVW egg-laying. The question is, how am I now ever going to be able to cut the grass???:



Re: Pauline

by MikeOxon, 03-Aug-18 04:10 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

.....It is a shame to start a new page with a photo of a dead leaf

I have taken quite a few of those, too. perhaps they merit a new thread 😊

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-18 07:29 PM GMT

To be fair Pauline that it the most Brostreak leaf I've ever seen! 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-18 08:19 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

..It is a shame to start a new page with a photo of a dead leaf but some might say it is one of my better ones 😊😊

That is a pristine looking dead leaf Pauline 😊

Joking aside though, it does illustrate how Brown Hairstreak underside colouration has evolved to blend in at this time of year.

All the best,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 04-Aug-18 11:40 PM GMT

You can be easily forgiven for mistaking that dead leaf for a butterfly, Pauline. It is positioned in just the same way as you'd expect a Hairstreak to be.

Re: Pauline

by Paul Harfield, 04-Aug-18 11:52 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

I too have taken a lot of 'leaf' shots whilst looking for hairstreaks 😊

I am also curious what plant your Green-Veined White is laying her eggs on? Is it some sort of bittercress?

Your lawn looks green 😊. Mine is dry and brown 😞

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-18 05:30 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments about my 'Brostroke' leaf 😊 I really did think it was a BH Wurzel, David – the shape, colour, markings, position, everything. You are so right Neil; I have seen them before in this sort of position, very well camouflaged, which in part was why I was fooled – just goes to show! Perhaps a new competition category Mike – the leaf most like any butterfly 😊😊

Paul, when it comes to plants you're asking the wrong person but I would be interested to know. In the next day or two I shall take a better shot of the plant and perhaps yourself or someone else might be able to identify it.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 05-Aug-18 05:45 PM GMT

Last night I put the moth trap out for what will probably be the last time this season (thank God for that I hear you say in anticipation of ID's!). Just like this time last year it was over-run with Hornets, followed by wasps – not surprising given I have a nest near the back door.



Amazingly there were no casualties this year (unlike that poor Burnished Brass) and there were some interesting moths. Unfortunately, because it was so warm (even at 5.45am) several that I was quite interested in flew off. These included the lovely Blood Vein which I commented on in Neil's diary. It was in immaculate condition but sadly no photo. The other I think might have been a Purple Clay – only a blurred shot. There were some lovely little micro moths (I know!!!!!! Am I getting dragged in? 😊). I do like this one – I have had it before and Maurice informed me it was *Rhyacionia Pinicolana*:



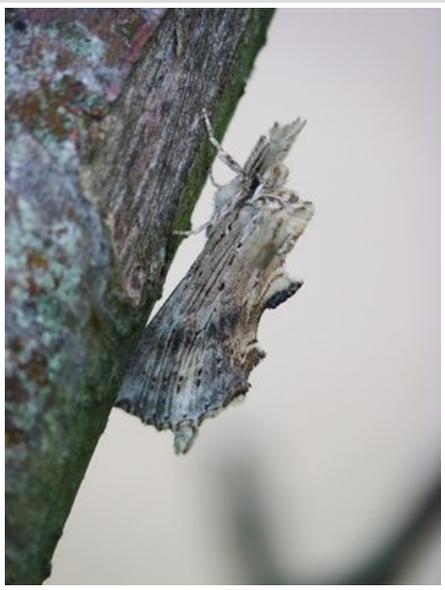
The next one I THINK is a Marbled Orchard Tortrix (or perhaps Plum?):



I've no idea what this one is but it was very striking:



My favourite however was this Pale Prominent. I don't recall having seen this before except in Neil's diary (did you ever think it would be used for educational purposes?). I think it deserves a couple of shots:





I'm not sure what this one is either. I've looked but can't see anything similar. I'm not sure why I was attracted to it among the various 'Beauties', Flame Shoulders etc but it was quite appealing:



Re: Pauline

by bailey1409, 05-Aug-18 06:28 PM GMT

Hi Pauline

The last image looks like a Bee moth, a micro although it is large for a micro.

Not sure about the other micros, not my area of expertise, sorry. Too many look a likes.

Nice images.

Cheers

Maurice

Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 05-Aug-18 11:53 PM GMT

I'd go for Bee Moth as well Pauline 😊, but for the others not a Scooby sorry 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Aug-18 12:37 AM GMT

You've got some interesting visitors to your moth traps, Pauline. Glad to know the hornets behaved themselves this time.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Aug-18 03:32 PM GMT

I certainly struggle with the ID's David so I really appreciate your help Wurzel and Maurice. I don't know how that Bee moth can call itself a micro tho! - it was larger than some of the macros 😊 I see what you mean Maurice about too many variables.. I thought one of them might have been a Bud moth

as I see from photos that they vary considerably and then I thought it might be something called Pammene Fasciana and then I remembered why I tend to steer clear of micros 😊 I even get the macros wrong – as you well know 😊 I have decided that the one I got a poor shot of was in fact a Ruby Tiger and not Purple Clay 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 06-Aug-18 03:57 PM GMT

From my observations on Noar Hill I had concluded that although the BH had emerged earlier this year the unusually high and prolonged heat had interrupted and postponed their usual activities. Their first need, that of survival, meant they needed to seek shade, resulting in fewer individuals (males) being spotted. The second need (or driving force), that of procreation, may or may not have been affected by the heat. However, the males have been out a couple of weeks now and it was my prediction that egg-laying would begin in earnest this week. Because of the heat my fear was that the females would dive down into the depths of the Blackthorn, lay their eggs, and either rest there in the shade or shoot straight back up to the trees, in which case we are unlikely to see too many females. In fact that is exactly what was happening today. I watched 2 females do exactly that. It would have been so easy to overlook them and almost impossible to photograph. The first one I saw about 11.45am was in really good condition when she flew down onto a nettle leaf and stayed there for less time than it took me to switch on my camera!! 😊 I only got one poor photo of her and her egg before she was back up:



If the weather forecast for the end of the week is correct then hopefully we may see more of them.

A few of the butterflies are looking a bit worn now but there were plenty of fresh ones around including Small Heath. Normally lying around on the ground all the ones I saw were up away from the hot earth which prompted this shot:



Vibrant Common Blue all over the place with tiny females, many the size of Small Blue, egg-laying and some fresh Speckled Wood:



A couple of Small Copper (my first here this year) were chasing each other and anything else which came within range but by now the sun was just too hot for any further exploration.





Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-18 08:28 PM GMT

I know what you mean about the Brostreaks Pauline – the females have been very surreptitious this year. It almost seems that the heat has slowed things down as almost three weeks after their first sighting at Shipton I was still seeing fresh looking males, normally after that amount of time they're in a right old state 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 06-Aug-18 11:44 PM GMT

Interesting comments on Brown Hairstreaks, Pauline. You'd have thought 2018 would be a bonanza year for them, given prolonged near perfect conditions in the early stages, However, suppressed adult numbers thus far seem to contradict this, and it will be fascinating to see how this species reacts and behaves over the next few weeks.

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 07-Aug-18 03:26 PM GMT

You really have got some great sights and shots of the BH Pauline. I also like your SSS's, moths and lovely Small Heath shot. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-18 08:07 PM GMT

I'm hoping that with some cooler weather in the next few days they might be a bit easier to spot Wurzel 😊 😊

As you know David I monitored quite a number of BH larva this year and I am fairly certain they pupated early due to their size and early disappearance. I had mentioned a couple of times that I expected an early emergence because of this. As you rightly point out the weather conditions were ideal. I don't think the numbers that have emerged have necessarily suffered as a result of the heat – rather it is the sightings that have decreased as the butterflies remain in the shade. Hopefully, with slightly cooler weather on the cards in the coming days we may get a better idea of numbers. I am looking forward to reading reports from Steyning as this is a much later site for BH than Noar Hill and if the temperature drops as predicted it will be interesting to make comparisons.

Cheers Andrew. I have seen a few interesting things this season which I haven't seen before and it is exactly that which keeps me interested.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 07-Aug-18 08:14 PM GMT

I had some sad news yesterday so just had to get out among the butterflies. I chose the SSS for no other reason than because they were close by. I took a few shots whilst I was there – not to demonstrate anything or illustrate anything, just because I was enjoying watching them. I didn't even count them although I was aware there were both male and female around:





Re: Pauline

by David M, 07-Aug-18 11:35 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...As you know David I monitored quite a number of BH larva this year and I am fairly certain they pupated early due to their size and early disappearance. I had mentioned a couple of times that I expected an early emergence because of this. As you rightly point out the weather conditions were ideal. I don't think the numbers that have emerged have necessarily suffered as a result of the heat – rather it is the sightings that have decreased as the butterflies remain in the shade. Hopefully, with slightly cooler weather on the cards in the coming days we may get a better idea of numbers.

Interesting observations, Pauline. Brown Hairstreaks appear to have largely retained their normal flight period in contrast to many other species whose flame has burned out early.

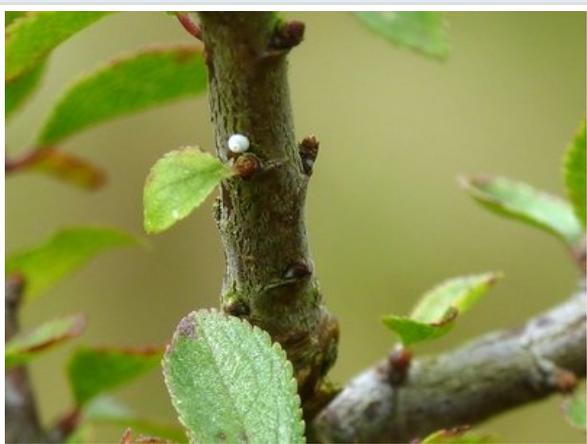
Neil H has just posted that egg laying has begun in earnest round his way and this seems to follow the pattern of previous years.

Not quite sure why this is, but with any luck the majority of us will see plenty of females coming down to the blackthorn suckers over the next couple of weeks.

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 09-Aug-18 03:00 PM GMT

Hi David, as I keep saying, butterflies behave differently at different sites depending on the environment. For example, unlike NH, it is not usual for male BH to come down readily at Steyning (at least that's what I was told and why Sussex folk have visited NH for photos) so folk there tend to wait for the females coming down to egg-lay. Typically NH is an 'early' site for BH and by the time the females are coming down to egg-lay at Steyning it is all but over at Noar Hill. Interestingly, I paid 2 visits to NH yesterday. I have now been there 12 times since 24 July and have seen BH on 9 of those visits. I didn't see any yesterday so I used the time to look at Blackthorn and quickly found half a dozen eggs including the one below which was not laid in a typical location (tho I'm sure it's not unheard of for them to lay eggs in the middle of a branch as I know PH do this). So it would seem that egg-laying has been going on at NH unobserved but for how long is anybody's guess. I shall keep watching:



and an egg I found which is presumably one of last years:



Re: Pauline

by David M, 09-Aug-18 09:21 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. I take your observations on board.

All butterflies are fascinating, but there's something about Hairstreaks that is particularly interesting.

Once down from the trees, they're particularly easy to observe, so we should all try to indulge whilst the *betulae* flight period is at its peak.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 10-Aug-18 02:19 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, I saw some BHS eggs at Gait Barrow but that was it, still you might say I saw their beginnings 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-18 03:27 PM GMT

Hi Goldie

It's great that you saw the BH eggs – hope you took the opportunity to get a few shots 😊 . I can sympathise and empathise regarding insects bites. I have recently had to have skin samples scraped off me and sent away for cultures to be grown 😞😞 Nothing new as I am usually on antibiotics by the end of the season 😞

Thank you for your positive views David. As I'm sure you will recall Hairstreaks are my favourites 😊 . As an aside I have just added a couple of Wheaten Marans to my flock – only 12 weeks but lovely girls (no photos yet) – Conker coloured eggs 😊

Re: Pauline

by Pauline, 12-Aug-18 03:53 PM GMT

It is that time of the year again – it doesn't half come around quickly, doesn't it?! – and I am getting totally bogged down with jobs that must be done before the Winter, despite trying to get as much done as possible during the season. Perhaps I should have gone into Estate Management instead of Business Analysis! 😞 I'm not sure how my body is going to cope with much more as it constantly aches from cutting down hedges, painting, putting up fences and running up and down hills in pursuit of butterflies 😞 . Still, it's what keeps me fit.

I wasn't sure which direction I would take this season but I have spent a lot more time out in the field watching the behaviour of butterflies in all their stages, which has involved even more time seeking out repeatedly the immature stages, as many inevitably 'disappear' for whatever reasons. As a result of the additional time this takes I have done very little captive rearing this season and because of that I have 'dropped' that category from my annual summary. That has been replaced by a new category – 'Firsts'!

One of my objectives was to seek out creatures, places and people that have not been encountered before instead of repeating 'same old, same old'. I have a lot to thank Paul (Buggy) for in this respect as he showed me both Purple Hairstreak larva in the wild and PE 5th instar. 😊 I have also met a fair few new folk this season and in my summary they are represented by Dave as for so long we frequently just missed bumping into one another. It was a pleasure to meet Andrew too – a diary I shall certainly keep my eye on.

I have probably not made much progress on the Moth front. Part of this is just lack of time but I confess to feeling quite overwhelmed when trying to identify them. I must take this opportunity to thank Maurice, Wurzel and Neil in particular for being so long-suffering and helpful in pointing me in the right direction as I floundered, and for not laughing too loudly when I got it hopelessly wrong!

The Hairstreak group continues to be my favourite category and to that end have a compilation of their own. In the extreme and prolonged heat it was Brown Hairstreaks that provided me with my first sightings of Hairstreaks down on the track searching for moisture and with similar motivation the Purple Hairstreak apparently taking moisture from the larva of another species (Hoverfly?). Those amazing Black Hairstreaks that turned up in Sussex provided me with 2 'firsts' – my first visit to that venue and my first opportunity to take photos of them in the wild (although I have many shots from when I captive reared them a few years ago).

I have, as usual, included a few personal favourites in my summary. Not necessarily the best of shots but special because of other factors – who I was with, what the circumstances were etc.

I would like to think that I have made the most of this season. Many domestic issues have got in the way this year – property maintenance and a few sad happenings with the animals to name a couple – and the weather has been challenging to say the least. I hope you have enjoyed my diary this year whether you were just looking at the photos, following the text or actively contributing. To the latter I would say a big thanks as it is great to get your feedback. I hope you enjoy the latter part of the season and I shall see you again in the Spring. It just remains for me to post my usual summary, in no particular order:



Firsts



Marsh Fritillary in Eastern Clearing



Wild Purple Hairstreak larva



Black Hairstreak



Milleret



Meadow Brown larva



Garden Speckled Wood



Garden Common Blue



WIM FE larva 5th instar



BH seeking moisture

Moths



Elephant Hawkmoth



Pyrausta Aurata (Mint moth)



The Drinker



Hummingbird Hawkmoth



Wood Tiger



Mother Shipton



Dark Tussock



Pass Moth



Buff-tip

Favourites



Wood White



Purple Hairstreak



Grizzled Skipper



Silver-studded Blue



Glanville Fritillary



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Brown Hairstreak



Black Hairstreak



Dark Green Fritillary

Immature Stages



Purple Emperor Larva



Brown Hairstreak Larva



Duke of Burgundy Ova



Common Blue Ova



Orange-tip Pupa



Brimstone Larva



Duke of Burgundy Larva



Green Hairstreak Larva



Brown Hairstreak Ova

Immature Stages



Sallow Kitten Larva



Comma Pupa



Pass moth Pupa



Pass moth Larva



Purple Emperor 5th Instar



Brimstone Larva



Grayling Larva



Orange-tip Pupa



Purple Hairstreak Ova

Hairstreaks



Black



Green



Purple



Brown



White Letter



Black



Purple



Brown



White Letter

Favourites



Garden Red Admiral



Garden Small Tortoiseshell



Garden Comma



Clauded Yellow



Male and female Brimstone



Silver Spotted Skipper



Garden SWF



Painted Lady



Purple Emperor



Re: Pauline

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-18 05:44 PM GMT

A fantastic season by all accounts Pauline with some real crackers of both photos and behavioural observations 🤔👍👍 I hope the 'closed season' treats you well and keep an eye out for the Winter Social dates 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Pauline

by David M, 12-Aug-18 07:40 PM GMT

Pauline wrote:

...As an aside I have just added a couple of Wheaten Marans to my flock – only 12 weeks but lovely girls (no photos yet) – Conker coloured eggs

Yes, good choice, Pauline. The eggs are a gorgeous chocolate brown.

We've had a few in our time, but my recollection is that they're not the most productive of layers. 😊

Beautiful birds though, and a docile temperament....a bit TOO docile at times and they can get bullied by the bolder breeds such as Speckeldy & Bluebell.

Good luck with them and I look forward to an image or three! 😊

Re: Pauline

by trevor, 12-Aug-18 08:59 PM GMT

It's a shame that you are shutting up shop so early this year. But I understand your commitments. I enjoyed your company with the Emperor. My finger is still aching from hovering on the camera shoot button, whilst waiting for that male to open up !. 😊

See you next season, al the best.
Trevor.

Re: Pauline

by bugboy, 12-Aug-18 10:40 PM GMT

Happy to help out in the 'firsts' dept. 😊 and also nice to see Millerd getting a spot too, he might need a favourite picture thread all of his own over the winter season 😊

Re: Pauline

by David M, 19-Aug-18 01:28 PM GMT

Great series of mosaic images, Pauline.

I've now had time to pore over them and you've crammed a hell of a lot into the short window of spring/summer this year.

I must say the Purple Hairstreak with the larva is the one that stands out for me; I've never seen such behaviour before.

As ever, good luck with all your chores during your 'off-season' and I will very much look forward to seeing you on here again next spring.

Re: Pauline

by Goldie M, 19-Aug-18 07:34 PM GMT

Hi! Pauline, you had a slow start but you certainly made up for it 😊 Fantastic shots of so many lovely Butterflies, keep in touch with the e-mails over the Winter Goldie 😊 PS wish I lived nearer to you 😊

Re: Pauline

by philm63, 20-Aug-18 09:53 AM GMT

Lovely sets of images Pauline. Hope everything goes ok till next season
Phil

Re: Pauline

by andy brown, 20-Aug-18 10:00 PM GMT

Hi Pauline,

As usual a great finale to a very unusual butterfly year, will catch up soon and hopefully get out over the coming weeks for some larvae/Ovum etc.

Take care

Andy

Re: Pauline

by Andrew555, 21-Aug-18 02:35 PM GMT

It was really great to meet you this year Pauline, and thank you again for showing me those lovely Silver-studded Blue's. 🍷 😊

I've very much enjoyed reading your diary this year. Interesting, varied and always with some excellent photos, as evidenced by your great summary selections. 🍷 😊

All the best for now,

Andrew

Re: Pauline

by essexbuzzard, 27-Aug-18 09:37 PM GMT

All the best for the autumn and winter, Pauline. Be great if you could make it to the winter social this year.

Re: Pauline

by millerd, 28-Aug-18 10:18 AM GMT

Hi Pauline. I am honoured to be included in your hall of fame for the year! Perhaps not my best side, but very typical! 😊 It was good to finally meet you in the field (though I recall you were actually in a ditch the first time... 😊)

That is a fascinating record of your year, and worth going through in detail. It is an inspiration to branch out and look beyond just the standard poses of adult butterflies – there is so much more out there.

Have a good winter, don't work too hard, and as Essex says, do come along to the social – it can't be all that far from you.

All the best,

Dave

Re: Pauline

by Janet Turnbull, 28-Aug-18 11:56 AM GMT

Hi Pauline, that's a very inspirational summary of your year. I'm struck by how much you actually get in your garden, too. Thank you for sharing, and thanks for the help you have given me with ID-ing moths! Looking forward to seeing your diary again in the spring. – Janet

Re: Pauline

by David M, 29-Aug-18 08:57 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Hi Pauline. I am honoured to be included in your hall of fame for the year! Perhaps not my best side, but very typical! 😊 It was good to finally meet you in the field (though I recall you were actually in a ditch the first time...

LOL! 😂 What an introduction..one in a ditch and the other about to get knees dirty on the track.

All in a day's butterflying. 😊

Re: Pauline

by Neil Freeman, 29-Aug-18 09:25 PM GMT

Blimey Pauline, is it that time of year already 😲 These seasons are whizzing past faster and faster.

Great sets of photos, I like the way they are presented by subject 😊

All the best for the winter,

Neil.

Re: Pauline

by David M, 02-Sep-18 07:55 PM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

..Great sets of photos, I like the way they are presented by subject..

Yes. There's a real effort gone into that and it has a real impact. Puts my own PD (and most others) to shame.

Re: Pauline

by Maximus, 02-Sep-18 08:08 PM GMT

I totally agree with you, David (and all the other comments), a lovely way to present a summary of your season.

Re: Pauline

by Old Wolf, 02-Sep-18 08:25 PM GMT

Hello Pauline,
Great summary of an exceptional year.

Thank you for sharing all of your great photos, observations and information which is going to be very helpful in my search next year.

I wish you all the best over the autumn/winter and look forward to following your diary next year.

Take care.