

Pearls out at last at Abbots Wood

by Andy Wilson, 04-May-18 03:30 PM GMT

I wandered around Abbots Wood this morning, looking for any Pearl Bordered Fritillaries that might be starting to emerge, now that the weather has finally perked up. I drew a blank at Site 1, but my disappointment was tempered by the sound of a Garden Warbler singing as if its life depended on it.

I went on to Site 2, the south-facing bluebell field, which is looking magnificent at the moment. Sadly no Pearls, but I did bump into Mike Mullis and another enthusiast. Mike said he had seen a single Pearl earlier at another site, so after we drew a blank in the main field he took us there. To my delight, I spotted a single individual (presumably the same one) after only a minute or so, and we all managed to get some nice shots before I had to leave for another appointment this afternoon.



Pearl Bordered Fritillary (m)

Re: Andy Wilson

by trevor, 04-May-18 04:00 PM GMT

Well found !. I was at Abbots wood yesterday, the place looked magnificent, but no Pearls. I expect the promised fine weather will encourage a mass emergence over the coming days. Last year I was with Dave Cook and we saw two on April 18th !.

Great effort,
Trevor.

Re: Andy Wilson

by dilettante, 04-May-18 05:04 PM GMT

I was excited for a minute thinking there were Pearls in Cambridgeshire, then realised I was confusing Abbots Wood and Monks Wood. Still, I'm very happy for you 🍷 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 04-May-18 06:05 PM GMT

Sorry, I am being a bit Sussex-centric. This was Abbots Woods near Hailsham in East Sussex. I know there are other Abbots Woods elsewhere!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Pauline, 04-May-18 06:49 PM GMT

Sussex-centric or not, great find and great shot!

PS we have an Abbots Wood here in Hampshire too but sadly no Pearls there – just PE 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 05-May-18 07:37 AM GMT

Well done, Andy. It's definitely not the 'April Fritillary' this year but nice to see them emerging nonetheless. Given that this emergence coincides with excellent weather conditions, let's hope they have a productive flight period.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 05-May-18 08:26 AM GMT

I remember reading somewhere that the term 'April Fritillary' was coined a long time ago before the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar. When this happened we lost 11 days, so today would still have been April in the old Julian Calendar. The PBF's reputation as the April Fritillary has perhaps only been regained in recent years as a result of climate change.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 09:25 AM GMT

That's great news Mike and a great find – hopefully many more will emerge across the country this weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by Goldie M, 05-May-18 08:37 PM GMT

That's a great find and nice shot too Mike, I'll have to pay a visit to Gait Barrow now but I expect we're way behind you here. Goldie 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 06-May-18 12:18 AM GMT

Andy Wilson wrote:

I remember reading somewhere that the term 'April Fritillary' was coined a long time ago before the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar. When this happened we lost 11 days, so today would still have been April in the old Julian Calendar. The PBF's reputation as the April Fritillary has perhaps only been regained in recent years as a result of climate change.

I'm sure you're right with this, although even given the change in calendar this year is abnormally late for PBF.

More Pearls at Abbots Wood

by Andy Wilson, 10-May-18 09:37 AM GMT

I went to Abbots Wood again yesterday afternoon in search of Pearl Bordered Fritillaries. As expected, since the first sighting last Friday, there has been a significant emergence in the last few days of warm weather, accompanied by an even larger population explosion of butterfly nuts. I must have counted at least 10 on site (nuts, that is, not butterflies!).

Nevertheless, we saw a couple of Pearls at Site 1, with a nice background chorus of birdsong that included a Garden Warbler and a solitary Nightingale. Others reported several Pearls at the main bluebell field at the northern end of the wood, but it was getting cooler and breezy when we arrived, so we saw none. Finally, we saw at least 5 individuals at the site where I saw the first one last week. This supposedly "secret" site seems currently to be the best location at Abbots, and it's not so secret judging from the number of enthusiasts that were also there. I got several nice photos, including one individual that seemed to have excess dark markings, particularly on the hind wings (butterfly, that is, not nut).



Pearl Bordered Fritillary (m)



Pearl Bordered Fritillary (m) (possible ab?)

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andrew555, 10-May-18 11:14 AM GMT

Very nice Andy. I've not made it there yet, but will do soon, and join the nuts. 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 10-May-18 06:44 PM GMT

Great stuff Andy 😊🇬🇧 It's surprising how widely known 'secret sites' become 😊 Your Pearl does look a little dark though I'd wait for more of an expert than me to id it as an aberrant 😊🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 10-May-18 06:48 PM GMT

Lovely to know PBFs are emerging in numbers, Andy. This weekend is my only chance to catch up with them on UK soil and I was worried they were so late that I'd miss them. I shall go with greater confidence now.

Friston Gallops

by Andy Wilson, 15-May-18 05:37 PM GMT

I did my first walk of the year around Friston Gallops this afternoon. Conditions were pleasantly warm and sunny, about 23°C. By far the most numerous butterfly species was Small Heath, especially on the grassy path along the lower eastern boundary of the site, where I disturbed one or more every few yards. I must have seen well over 100.

Dingy Skipper were also present in good numbers (about 30 seen), and there were a few Small Coppers too. I also saw a couple of Wall Browns along the higher western side of the site, which is always a good place for them.

The flowers were beautiful too. In the sheltered north-eastern corner, there is a carpet of Horseshoe Vetch and Germander Speedwell, together with a lot of Cowslips, although these are now well past their best. There is also a large extent of Horseshoe Vetch at the upper northern end of the site, which bodes well for Adonis and Chalk Hill Blue. However, the only blue I saw today was a solitary Common Blue, so I guess they're only just starting and the first generation Adonis Blues are not yet out at this site.

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 15-May-18 11:10 PM GMT

Those are encouraging numbers of Small Heath, Andy. Every year seemingly, I see fewer of them to the point where I'm beginning to consider them quite precious! I'm sure Common Blue numbers will explode soon...and after that, Adonis! 😊

Plenty of Pearls but no Small Pearls yet at Abbots Wood

by Andy Wilson, 21-May-18 06:32 PM GMT

Having heard that the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary is out at Park Corner Heath, I spent 2 hours at Site 1 at Abbots Wood this afternoon, where I saw

them last year after being reintroduced. There were plenty of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and I must have seen at least 20 (even allowing for double counting), but no Small Pearls as far as I could see.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (female I think)

Finally! Pearls and Smalls Pearls together again at Abbots Wood

by Andy Wilson, 25-May-18 05:33 PM GMT

This afternoon at Site 1 in Abbots Wood, I managed to achieve my ambition of seeing Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary flying together in Sussex. Conditions were warm but rather overcast, so they were reluctant to fly, but I saw several Pearls, which are now beginning to look rather faded and worn. One very fresh Small Pearl was also seen, which stood out because of its much brighter background colour. I managed to spot it at rest among the bluebells and bracken, and got some nice close-up pics before it took flight.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 28-May-18 03:43 PM GMT

Wonderful news, Andy. There aren't many places in England where you can see both those species on the same day! 😊

Glanvilles galore -- eventually!

by Andy Wilson, 30-May-18 09:05 AM GMT

It's nice when you go to a site that is known for a particular species, and you see it and tick it off. However, it's far more rewarding to go somewhere that you don't know and have your expectations wildly exceeded. That's what happened to me yesterday.

I know that Glanville Fritillaries have been out on the Isle of Wight for at least a couple of weeks now, and I wanted very much to see them this year. Despite the overnight rain where I live in East Sussex, I decided early in the morning to take a chance and booked myself on the 10:30 ferry from Portsmouth to Fishbourne. The weather on the drive down was rather dull and it was still quite overcast when we arrived on the Island. I decided to make for Compton Bay, where there is a car park in an old quarry in which I saw Glanvilles a few years ago. After negotiating the half-term traffic around Newport and a road closure on the way to Freshwater, we eventually arrived at about midday.

Another enthusiast was already parked up, but he said that he had been there an hour and had only briefly seen one. Conditions were cool and rather windy, and it was clear that if any Glanvilles were around, they were very reluctant to fly. However, after about half an hour of scrambling around the old quarry, including following the false trail of a Wall Brown for a few minutes, we eventually found a rather faded old male Glanville Fritillary.



Box ticked, but rather unsatisfied, we decided to go elsewhere. Lower down at the beach at Compton Chine it was, if anything, cooler and more exposed, so we gave up on that. I decided that the best place to go would be Wheelers Bay and walk along the undercliff, where it would hopefully be less exposed. However, my car's satnav took us along the old road from Niton to Ventnor, which I soon realised was closed due to a landslip (and, as I found out, joining dozens of people every day who make this mistake). I decided to park and have a look around. It was much warmer here and there were several butterflies flying around the lovely gardens of the houses. My spirits were lifted to see a fresh Painted Lady on a clump of Valerian, my first of the year.

We decided to walk down towards the coastal path, and then follow it west towards St Catherine's Point. The path was narrow and close to the cliff edge, so I was concentrating more on where I was placing my feet than looking for butterflies. The weather was also still rather dull, but after half an hour, my wife flushed up something that flew for just a few yards before going back down. It was a Glanville! I took a few pictures and then we looked around and realised that there were several others, hunkering down from the wind. We found two which were sitting on a clump of lovely pink Thrift flowers. They were quite torpid, and my wife managed to persuade them to crawl on to her finger.





Further along, where the path dropped down to the beach, it was more sheltered, and we started to see Glanvilles flying -- lots of them. At one point I could see at least 6 flying simultaneously. I reckon altogether we saw about 40 along a short stretch of the path about 100 yards long. This was all around Grid Ref SZ524758. Time was now running short, so we headed away from the cliff path and climbed up through damp woodland to get back to the car, but I'm sure there were many more Glanvilles to be seen along this stretch of the coast if we had stayed longer.

So, in the end we had a very successful day trip to the Isle of Wight, and found a glorious glut of Glanvilles galore!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Maximus, 30-May-18 09:28 AM GMT

Hi Andy, i'm glad that you found plenty of Glanville Fritillaries on your recent trip to the Isle of Wight. In our experience they are reluctant to fly in cool, windy conditions. During our recent visit conditions were the opposite, hot and sunny, so they were particularly lively, but we found large numbers. That first female on your wifes finger is a nice looking ab.

Re: Andy Wilson

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

Indeed Andy a lovely looking aberrant showing interesting markings both top and lower side 😊🍀 I'm glad your persistence paid off and Lady Luck dealt you a good hand in the end 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:21 PM GMT

I'm very envious of your trip to the Island, Andy. I looks to have been very well worth the effort in the end, with that rather splendid ab. as a bonus! 😊

Dave

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 30-May-18 10:06 PM GMT

That's a very striking aberration, Andy. What started out as a frustrating day certainly transformed into something far more satisfying.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 30-May-18 11:32 PM GMT

Thanks for your posts about the aberrant Glanville. I suspect they're a rather variable species, so I didn't want to say it was a definite aberration rather than something within normal bounds. Anyway, I had a great day and thanks for all your comments.

Re: Andy Wilson

by trevor, 01-Jun-18 09:13 AM GMT

Glad to read of your successful visit to the IOW for the Glanvilles, I was over there on Wednesday, the weather not so good. Talking to a local BC member at Wheelers Bay, he told me that Glanvilles are having a bumper year.

All the best,
Trevor.

Friston Gallops – Take 2

by Andy Wilson, 02-Jun-18 04:29 PM GMT

I went to Friston Gallops for the second time this year. Conditions were about 19C and quite bright, but with a fresh sea breeze. At times this blew in a bit of mist which (literally) cooled down the butterfly activity, but gave me a chance to get some photos.

Small Heath were still the most numerous species with well over 100 seen. Once again, they are most prevalent along the lower eastern margin of the site, with one or two seen every few yards. However, this time they have been joined by the Blues. There are good numbers of Common Blue all over the site, and I saw one unusually blue female. I don't know if this is a specific aberration or just normal variation.



Common Blue (f, ab?)

At the higher northern end of the site, there is a very extensive carpet of Horseshoe Vetch, where the flowers are now just past their best. In this area, Common Blue are outnumbered by Adonis Blue. I must have seen over 50 in a relatively small area, mostly males but a few females, including a mating pair. I have never had much luck with first brood Adonis Blues at this site, so these numbers are by far the most I have ever seen here. It bodes well for the second brood later in the year, and also for the Chalk Hill Blues when they emerge in a month or so. Perhaps we will have another population explosion like we did in 2011? I live in hope!



Adonis Blue (pair in cop.)

I also saw Dingy Skipper (2), Grizzled Skipper (2), and my first sightings this year of both Meadow Brown (2) and Large Skipper (5), one of which posed nicely for me. Moth-wise, there were several Silver Y, Cinnabar, and a Burnet Companion which also posed for me.



Dingy Skipper



Grizzled Skipper



Large Skipper



Meadow Brown



Burnet Companion moth

Re: Andy Wilson

by ernie f, 02-Jun-18 06:47 PM GMT

Andy - Great you got a pair of mating Adonis but even better was the very blue female Common Blue.

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 03-Jun-18 08:08 PM GMT

Absolutely stunning female *icarus*, Andy. Is it possible for them to be more radiantly blue than that?

Marshes at Martin

by Andy Wilson, 05-Jun-18 05:01 PM GMT

I went to Martin Down at the extreme west of Hampshire on Sunday. Conditions were sunny and very warm, about 26C. I've never been there before and it is a wonderful place, with an extensive tract of unimproved chalk downland and meadows full of wildflowers.

There were butterflies everywhere, especially Common and Adonis Blues, and Small Heath. I also saw a few Green Hairstreaks in places where there were Hawthorn bushes. However, my target species was Marsh Fritillary. I got a possible sighting quite early, but was too slow with my camera. Later, we got some advice from someone with local knowledge, and he recommended a lower-lying flat area by the Bokerly Ditch earthworks (roughly around Grid Ref. SU050187). Sure enough, we found some there, but they were quite flighty and I found it very difficult to get a good open-wing shot. However, I did get some nice undersides when they were nectaring.



Marsh Fritillary



Marsh Fritillary

Anyway, another tick in my Fritillary box for this year. Are the Heath Fritillaries out in Kent yet?

Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling Common

by Andy Wilson, 13-Jun-18 04:27 PM GMT

I had been seriously contemplating a trip to the East Midlands to see Black Hairstreak this year, when I read with astonishment the news that a colony of them has been found at Ditchling Common Country Park. This is only 15 minutes from where I live and I know it well (but obviously not well enough!).

I went there today and joined the throng of other butterfly enthusiasts, who completely filled the car park and the blackthorn hot spots at the south-west corner of the site, causing a lot of head-scratching among the regular dog-walking community. My wife and I got there just before 10, and I just managed to get a quick few shots of a Black Hairstreak that had been found in the bracken. This gave me a lifetime first! After that, we saw a few more jinking about high in the blackthorn, but none came down to lower levels. It was getting very hot now, so at about 11:30 we decided to call it a day and go home.

After lunch, there was a bit more cloud cover, so we went back at about 2:30. This time, we managed to see about 4 hairstreaks at close quarters and I got some better photos.



I think they will need a multi-storey car park there this weekend. My advice, both for the butterflies and the parking, would be to get there early!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-18 06:58 PM GMT

If you manage to make it to Martin Down again the best bit for Marshies is the hollow to the West of the main car park, it's also good there for DGFs 😊
Great set of Blackstreaks 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by trevor, 14-Jun-18 08:45 PM GMT

Good to meet you and your wife at Ditchling common.
At least, living locally, you should be able to re-visit the common, if the weather returns to ideal.
And yes, the car park was indeed full on Wednesday.

Best Wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 15-Jun-18 09:48 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. I doubt I'll get back during this year's flight period, but I've made a note for the future.

Thanks also Trevor. It was very nice to meet you and I will be going back to Ditchling Common, but probably not this weekend when the world and his wife will be there! I might call in there on the way back from Knepp on Monday.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Pauline, 15-Jun-18 03:13 PM GMT

Glad to see that despite the shaking hands you managed some nice shots of the BH Andy. I've also just noticed that fabulous Glanville ab – great find – and that beautiful blue female CB. Well done! 😊

Been to Blean, and it's heaving with Heaths

by Andy Wilson, 15-Jun-18 05:07 PM GMT

After all the excitement about the Sussex Black Hairstreaks and the Purple Period hopefully imminent, I decided today to head east on my annual Canterbury pilgrimage. On parking the car at East Blean Woods, I immediately saw a Heath Fritillary even as I still had my hands on the steering wheel. Three others were also flying close to the car park, together with some Holly Blues.

We then left the car park and walked on through the woods on the route I have taken in past years and... nothing! Just a solitary Meadow Brown. Although I had seen a few of my quarry at the car park, I was starting to get worried. However, we then turned left back towards the road and soon a solitary Heath Fritillary came into view. I took a few quick snaps and walked on. Suddenly, there were butterflies everywhere... and what was noticeable was that this was an area that had been much more recently coppiced, with maybe one or two years of growth in the Sweet Chestnut. The other significant fact was that there was quite a carpet of Cow Wheat along the sides of the path, whereas in the older coppices it is absent.

Anyway, having found the right area, we must have seen hundreds of Heath Fritillaries. When the sun came out, they all sprung into life, and at times I could see at least a dozen flying simultaneously in my line of sight. Fortunately, a few clouds passed over from time to time, allowing photo opportunities, and my camera drank its fill. This site is certainly a credit to the people who manage it.

If you want to get straight to the Fritillaries from the car park, turn left a few yards after leaving it, and follow the path that runs parallel to the road.



Heath Fritillary orgy

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 15-Jun-18 06:18 PM GMT

Nice to see the Heaths, Andy, especially your penultimate one, which I'd have had down as a False Heath Frit if I'd seen it in France!!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 15-Jun-18 11:29 PM GMT

I see what you mean, David. It does have a darker background. Perhaps it's for the best that we have only two *Melitaea* species in the UK!

Knegative at Knepp

by Andy Wilson, 16-Jun-18 03:55 PM GMT

Following a single report of a Purple Emperor at Knepp yesterday evening, I spent a couple of hours wandering around there today. Conditions weren't good, being rather cool and cloudy, and worst of all, windy. I am definitely crazy or a wild optimist (probably both).

No Emperors were seen, but during the occasional sunny interludes I saw 3 Admirals (2 white, 1 red) and there were lots of ordinary seamen (Meadow Brown and Speckled Wood).

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 08:04 PM GMT

Great set of Heaths Andy 🤔🇬🇧 I've only been to East Blean twice and the second time the Heaths were in a totally different place, they do like the more recently cleared areas 😊 Was it this species that was known as 'the woodman's friend'?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 16-Jun-18 10:27 PM GMT

Hi Wurzel. Yes, that's right. It seems they favour the recently cleared areas, hence the name the "woodman's friend". The other clue, especially in this Kent site is, follow the Cow Wheat. There are extensive swards of it in the area that the Heath's are flying this year.

Knepp today

by Andy Wilson, 18-Jun-18 11:22 PM GMT

I spent about 6 hours at Knepp today. Conditions were cool and cloudy at first, but improved rapidly... apart from the wind, which was still gusting badly at times. My first few hours were fruitless, Emperor-wise, but I did get a little over-excited about some White Admirals, of which I saw about 6.

At about 3 pm, I met up with a certain Mr Oates, and, would you believe it, almost immediately we saw a shadow pass along the ground. We looked up and there was an Emperor up in the canopy. Matthew then showed me a few other favoured spots, but no one was in residence. Finally, however, we saw a couple of males in combat on the lee side of a line of tall oaks.

A lovely day out, but I have a lot to learn. Thank you to Matthew for his company and knowledge.

Re: Andy Wilson

by essexbuzzard, 19-Jun-18 12:35 AM GMT

If you have a lot to learn, you have gone straight to the top with Matthew Oats as your teacher, Andy!

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 19-Jun-18 08:56 PM GMT

essexbuzzard wrote:

If you have a lot to learn, you have gone straight to the top with Matthew Oats as your teacher, Andy!

Absolutely! I was fortunate enough to bump into Neil Hulme one morning at Botany Bay and his wise words of advice still resonate!

Knowlands Wood

by Andy Wilson, 20-Jun-18 10:15 AM GMT

Due to other pressures on my time, I wasn't able to get to Knepp yesterday. However, I managed to escape for an hour in the afternoon and went to Knowlands Wood in Barcombe, which is just down the road from me. There were several White Admirals, including this nice fresh one which posed beautifully for me.



No Silver-washed Fritillary there yet, as far as I could tell, but it's a good site for them so hopefully they will emerge soon. Of course first prize would be to spot an Emperor, which as far as I know has not yet been recorded there.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 20-Jun-18 10:37 PM GMT

Lovely fresh White Admiral Andy 😊 They don't often pose that well 🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

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

White Admirals are particularly beautiful early in their flight period. I'm highly envious as I doubt I'll see this species in the UK this year and will have to make do with scrabbling around for the odd worn individual in France in a couple of weeks. 😞

Fritillary mission accomplished

by Andy Wilson, 23-Jun-18 10:54 AM GMT

I made a last-minute decision to forsake the Purple Emperor for a couple of days and headed down to Devon. To make it worthwhile, we booked a room in the excellent Hunters Inn, right in the heart of the Heddon Valley.

After arriving on Thursday, we walked up the steep lane in Trentishoe Coombe. It was just after midday and there were several "big" fritillaries that were very active. I climbed up on to the bracken covered south-facing slope beside the lane and proceeded to hop around like an idiot, trying to get close to one of the very flighty butterflies. It's made a bit easier now by the National Trust's bracken flattening robot, which has made pathways through it, but it's still awkward and exhausting to clamber around. The flies and other nasties trying to bite you make it doubly unpleasant. Eventually, I got a few record shots of one individual from a distance, and inspection proved that it was a High Brown Fritillary. Box ticked, but this is a very hard place to go butterfly hunting.



High Brown Fritillary



High Brown Fritillary

We then decided to walk down the easy path to Heddon's Mouth to eat our picnic. The path is mainly shady, but when we got to a more open area close to the beach, there were several Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries flying around. However, these were very worn and faded.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Walking back up, I got excited when I saw another big Fritillary at close quarters. However, within a split second it took flight and landed much further away on some brambles. I got a record shot and was surprised to see that this one was a male Silver-washed Fritillary. Not what I was looking for, but the first one I've seen this year. Another box ticked.



Silver-washed Fritillary

On Friday morning, we walked up the valley through some woods. It was quite early, and there was little butterfly activity at first. However, after about 20 minutes walking, we found a sunlit clearing with a lot of brambles growing. My eye hit upon a big fritillary peacefully nectaring on a flower. Could this be my big chance? Could it heck! Despite trying to be as careful as possible, as soon as I lifted up my camera it was gone.

We hung about, and it became clear that there were 3 or 4 of them here. I never got close enough to any of them for a good picture, but I got some record shots that proved them to be High Browns.

We continued on our way and after a long climb we eventually made it to the coastal path, with magnificent views of the steep cliffs to the east and west, and the coast of South Wales visible across the water. There were some big fritillaries here too, but they were very active and never stopped. After a while we took the path back inland to Trentishoe and found one area on the bracken slope where a lot of thistles were growing. This was a bit of a hot spot for several large fritillaries, and after more gallumphing around in the bracken, I eventually got some more record shots that showed they were Dark Green Fritillaries.



Dark Green Fritillary

I apologise for the rotten pictures, but at least they show that I have bagged the 3 species that I needed to fulfill my self-imposed quest to see all 8 UK native Fritillary species in a season. Now I just need another Queen of Spain in Sussex as the icing on the cake!

Re: Andy Wilson

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Jun-18 08:59 PM GMT

Well done on completing the Frit mission! I hope you manage to find a Queen of Spain 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-18 10:37 PM GMT

Great stuff Andy – It's great when you can finish a task that you've set for yourself 😊 Great going with the HBF, I've still to see a British one 🇬🇧

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Trousered at Knepp

by Andy Wilson, 27-Jun-18 04:05 PM GMT

I visited Knepp this morning for the third time this season, this time with my wife providing a second pair of eyes that are sharper than mine. We wandered about for over 2 hours, seeing a total of about 40 Emperors up at tree-top level, and one that buzzed us at head height. Eventually, my wife tracked one down that was settled at head height in a willow. This turned out to be a female, and she sat there contentedly for several minutes while I shredded my legs in brambles, trying to get a reasonably close-up shot of her.



Purple Emperor (female)

By now it was nearly 1 pm and the nearby Countryman pub was beckoning, so we trudged back north along Green Lane. Within 30 yards of the gate out onto Countryman Lane, I spotted a male on the ground among some horse poo. He flew up and buzzed excitedly around my legs for several seconds, as if he was trying to get rid of me. Eventually he settled right between my feet, and I got my first ever double-purple wing shot from directly above him. He was a little battle-scarred already, with a bit missing from his right forewing, but I don't care about that!



Purple Emperor (male) on the ground

He then flew up and landed on my wife, who proceeded to get a trousering. I'm told this is only the second such event ever witnessed at Knepp!



Purple Emperor (male) giving a trousering

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-18 11:25 PM GMT

A first double blue 🤔🤔🤔 Something I'm still after 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Knowlands Wood again

by Andy Wilson, 28-Jun-18 01:26 PM GMT

I visited Knowlands Wood near Barcombe, East Sussex again this morning. Since my visit last week, there has clearly been a large emergence of Silver-washed Fritillaries. In today's heat, they were flying fast and loose all along the woodland rides, and only very occasionally stopping for nectar on a bramble flower. I must have seen at least 30 individuals, all male except one female which looked as if she was egg-laying. The circle of life never stops. I also saw several White Admirals, about 20 in total, but they too were very active and difficult to get on camera. The best location for these is on the ride which goes westward from the clearing at the eastern end of the wood. There are several large patches of sunlit bramble on the right-hand side along here.

There was a myriad of Meadow Browns bimbling about along the rides and on the brambles, accompanied by a smaller number of Ringlets. There were also a few Marbled Whites. No Gatekeepers yet, as far as I could see.

I also spent a lot of time staring up at Oak trees. As far as I know, Purple Emperors have never been seen here, but I live in hope. However, there were a lot of Purple Hairstreaks up the trees and I was lucky enough to spot one at low level, giving me my first ever semi-decent photo of this species.



Purple Hairstreak

Re: Andy Wilson

by Pauline, 28-Jun-18 03:59 PM GMT

Well done with that double purple Andy – better than I've managed so far and that PH is not to be sniffed at either – another difficult species. Sounds like you're having a whale of a time and after all, isn't that what it's all about? 😊

Re: Andy Wilson

by Andy Wilson, 29-Jun-18 08:51 AM GMT

Thanks, Pauline. It seems that all my Christmasses and birthdays have come at once at the moment. I am trying to get in as much butterflying as possible at the moment until my grandchildren arrive next week, after which I will be otherwise occupied for much of the time! I just need to get a nice shot of a WLH low-down. Maybe a trip to Brighton is in order.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Goldie M, 29-Jun-18 11:43 AM GMT

Fantastic Butterflies Andy, 🍀🍀 all of them i'm hoping to see this year if Possible 😊 so here's a few more green's 😊 Goldie 🍀🍀🍀

Chalking up the species at Friston Gallops

by Andy Wilson, 02-Jul-18 04:28 PM GMT

What a month I've had! With all the excitement about the Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling Common and the population explosion of Purple Emperors at Knepp, I think we can declare the so-called June Gap dead, deceased, pushing up the daisies... (insert random Monty Python reference).

So now we have started July, I decided it was high time for another visit to Friston Gallops, my favourite site on the South Downs. I arrived at about 10:30 am and it was already 28C, but the heat was tempered by a fresh north-east breeze. What I love about this site is the species diversity. Within a few minutes of getting on to the open downland, I saw the following species: Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Marbled White, Small Heath, Small Blue, Small Copper, Large White, Small White, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and my first of the year of both Gatekeeper and Chalk Hill Blue.



Chalk Hill Blue (m), Friston Gallops

Later, as I did my usual walk around the perimeter of the whole site, I added Green-Veined White and a solitary Small Tortoiseshell to the list, making 17 species in total. I saw about 10 Chalk Hill Blues overall (all males), but hopefully this is just the start of a large emergence.

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-18 08:48 PM GMT

Brilliant news Andy – I was walking on my local Down this afternoon wondering when the first Chalkhill would be seen 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Chalking up the species at Friston Gallops

by David M, 08-Jul-18 10:12 PM GMT

Andy Wilson wrote:

So now we have started July, I decided it was high time for another visit to Friston Gallops, my favourite site on the South Downs. I arrived at about 10:30 am and it was already 28C, but the heat was tempered by a fresh north-east breeze. What I love about this site is the species diversity. Within a few minutes of getting on to the open downland, I saw the following species: Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Marbled White, Small Heath, Small Blue, Small Copper, Large White, Small White, Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Essex Skipper and my first of the year of both Gatekeeper and Chalk Hill Blue.

That's an impressive list of species, Andy, and even more impressive temperatures. No wonder butterflies are emerging in big numbers.

Mid August at Friston Gallops

by Andy Wilson, 17-Aug-18 06:40 PM GMT

Due to holidays abroad and other family commitments, my butterflying has been non-existent for the last 6 weeks. Today, I decided to pay another visit to Friston Gallops before the season is over. Conditions were fairly sunny and warm, but there was a moderate south-westerly wind blowing in which caused many of the butterflies to hunker down in the grass. However, there were still good numbers of blues: Common, Chalk Hill and Adonis, and I reckon I must have seen about 50 of each. There were more females than males, which I guess is a sign that the flight period is coming to an end. The females were particularly numerous in the high northern section of the site, which had a lovely carpet of Horseshoe Vetch in flower earlier in the year. Hopefully, they are all busy making next year's butterflies.

As well as the blues, there were plenty of Meadow Browns and Small Heaths still flying, plus 2 Wall Browns, about 5 Brown Argus, 2 very tatty Small Coppers and an even more careworn Painted Lady. I drew another blank with Silver-spotted Skipper, which (for me at least) has always been absent at this site.

My first Clouded Yellow of 2018, on October 10th!

by Andy Wilson, 10-Oct-18 04:18 PM GMT

It's nearly mid October, and so far this year I haven't seen a single Clouded Yellow. On this lovely warm day, I went to Hope Gap near Seaford to try to put this right, and was almost immediately rewarded by the sight of one flying purposefully northward in the warm breeze coming in from the sea. Altogether, I saw about 15, including one that posed for me with the sunlight coming through its wings.



Clouded Yellow, Hope Gap

I also saw a surprisingly fresh female Meadow Brown, a Small Heath, a Small Copper and another comparative rarity this year (at least for me), a Peacock.

Re: Andy Wilson

by millerd, 10-Oct-18 06:56 PM GMT

Right now seems to be the best time in 2018 for Clouded Yellows, Andy. They are all along the south coast at the moment. I like that backlit shot too. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Andy Wilson

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-18 08:18 PM GMT

Great stuff Andy – love the backlit shots of this species 😊🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Andy Wilson

by David M, 14-Oct-18 11:25 PM GMT

Nice, bright image, Andy. It's a beautiful butterfly and a shame it doesn't appear in the same numbers as the likes of Painted Lady & Red Admiral.

I've yet to see one in Wales this year and doubt I will now. 😞