

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Jan-18 02:48 PM GMT

That's an ingenious way of summarising your yearly 'missions', Bugboy. You've come a long way since 2014, that's for sure.

I've no doubt you'll bag the Mountain Ringlet this summer to make your chart complete, and you may well encounter one or two more 'exotics' as well!

Best of luck with it! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 01-Jan-18 08:21 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I found myself with half an hour spare at work (ssshhhh)

Nice work Bugboy 😊. That's not a bad return for half an hours looking. Hopefully there is a thriving colony there.

When it comes to the flight season my advice would be to wait until the first WLH are recorded elsewhere then spend your day looking once you know they are out. At the first opportunity when the weather is good of course. Don't be put off if after spending a half day looking you see nothing give it another try a few days later, if you have the time to spare of course. Good luck 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 01-Jan-18 10:43 PM GMT

That WLH is a brilliant sighting. 😊 I wonder how many others are dotted around the parks of Central London?

You've inspired me to look more carefully at the elm suckers in hedgerows on my local patch. One was healthy enough to support a few Comma caterpillars a few years back so you never know.

Happy New Year!

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 02-Jan-18 08:34 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I've kept myself busy on these cold dark evenings when not enjoying the merriment of the season, updating my mission in pictorial form 😊 ...

just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!

That is a great way to show the progress of your mission bugboy...great stuff 😊

All the best with filling that last space with Mountain Ringlet.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Jan-18 09:06 PM GMT

David M wrote:

That's an ingenious way of summarising your yearly 'missions', Bugboy. You've come a long way since 2014, that's for sure.

I've no doubt you'll bag the Mountain Ringlet this summer to make your chart complete, and you may well encounter one or two more 'exotics' as well!

Best of luck with it! 😊

Thanks David, I've certainly managed to pack a lot in in the intervening 3 years 😊 and most enjoyable it has been too 😊

Paul Harfield wrote:

bugboy wrote:

I found myself with half an hour spare at work (ssshhhh)

Nice work Bugboy 😊. That's not a bad return for half an hours looking. Hopefully there is a thriving colony there. When it comes to the flight season my advice would be to wait until the first WLH are recorded elsewhere then spend your day looking once you know they are out. At the first opportunity when the weather is good of course. Don't be put off if after spending a half day looking you see nothing give it another try a few days later, if you have the time to spare of course. Good luck 😊

Thnaks Paul, I suspect a few lunch breaks will be spent watching those Elms too. I'm keeping my fingers crossed the larger suckers haven't yet been struck down by DED!

millerd wrote:

That WLH is a brilliant sighting. 😊 I wonder how many others are dotted around the parks of Central London?

You've inspired me to look more carefully at the elm suckers in hedgerows on my local patch. One was healthy enough to support a few Comma caterpillars a few years back so you never know.

Happy New Year!

Dave

I'm sure there are loads of colonies discretely going about their business in London with all it's green spaces, assuming there's a few Elms dotted around. Historically London Plane's are the tree of choice in the built up areas with their ability to cope with air pollution, but I'd be surprised there aren't a few Elms in places like Hampstead Heath and the Royal Parks. I know they're on Alexandra park.

Definitely worth you having a closer look at any local Elm you know about, especially now you have a lot of extra time on your hands 😊. You'll need to get your eye in though, they don't stand out like the Brown cousins.

Neil Freeman wrote:

bugboy wrote:

I've kept myself busy on these cold dark evenings when not enjoying the merriment of the season, updating my mission in pictorial form 😊 ...

just that one pesky gap to fill on the bottom row!

That is a great way to show the progress of your mission bugboy...great stuff 😊

All the best with filling that last space with Mountain Ringlet.

Cheers,

Neil

Thanks Neil, just have to keep my fingers crossed the weather play fair, I have the second half of June safely booked off 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 06-Jan-18 03:00 PM GMT

There are Plenty of mature elms in Central London and in the SW London Area, and South Croydon. I have seen a few North of the river while on bus conductor duties, but still need to narrow down their locations.

Surrey BC have been mapping Elms for the last few years, there is a nice elm on the South Circular near to Kew Gardens, Bessant Drive on the edge of a green triangle, WLH were found to be on this tree.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Jan-18 11:05 PM GMT

The sun came out for a decent amount of time today so I was able to get a few better shots of my WLH egg today at work. Thankfully it still remains invisible to the numerous small birds that are constantly foraging in the vicinity.



I've done a few searches since finding this single egg but I've yet to find anymore, hopefully there's more higher up out of reach 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 09-Jan-18 08:06 AM GMT

Love those charts Bugboy, a great idea. Best of luck with your mission for this year. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Jan-18 04:44 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew, just a bit of messing around really 😊. Only the one to go noe, what could possibly go wrong 😊😊

I spent the afternoon walking around Epping Forest again today, looking for these mystical Hawfinch that have invaded the east of the country this winter, they remain elusively mystical to me but there was plenty else to see on an otherwise grey, dingy, mizzly day. Light levels were pretty awful however so the photo's are all very much of the 'record' variety.

Nuthatches and Treecreepers were relatively commonplace, foraging amongst the large groups of Long-tailed, Blue, Great and Coal Tits.





and on Connaught Water on the southern end of the forest were some Goosander (and a Pintail drake who stayed out of camera range) mixing in with the usual collection of dabbling and diving ducks. They were drawing a fair bit of attention as you can see on the opposite bank. When I reached the group of Birdwatches they stopped to ask for confirmation of what they were and were all very chuffed to find out what they had been looking at 😊



Goosander drakes. (there was also a single female)



Shoveler



Tufted Duck & a Great-crested Grebe in it's less flamboyant winter getup.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Allan.W., 09-Jan-18 06:09 PM GMT

Love the shot of the Goosanders Bugboy ,and the birders in the background busily checking their field guides !
I also had a look for Hawfinches in part of the Orlestone forest over the Christmas holiday ,and was lucky enough to see 2 (and get a couple of naff

shots) Well pleased ! Regards Allan.W.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Jan-18 11:21 PM GMT

Great shots of the Goosander Bugboy 🤔👍 - not a species to get close to easily - they're either in the very middle or far reaches of a lake 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 12-Jan-18 11:19 AM GMT

I think I have a single pic of a Goosander, in the far middle of a lake, exactly as Wurzel says.. 😊
Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 12-Jan-18 01:17 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, looks like we're seeing the same birds, Goosenders,/Shovelers, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Jan-18 05:56 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel** and **Andrew**, those Goosander were indeed firmly stationed in the center of the lake, luckily it's a smallish lake so still just about in range for me 😊 (the picture is rather cropped 😊)
Looks like it doesn't it **Goldie** 😊

12th January, Bookham

My first trip of the year to (a very muddy) Bookham Commons. Had I had a bit better luck I'd have gone on Wednesday, the only decent day down here in the south east this week. Unfortunately that coincided with the only day I was working this week, so I chose a day when the cloud cover was predicted to be slightly thinner than the others.

Eggs and birds were the menu of today, I found some more Brown Hairstreak eggs including a couple conveniently laid next to the train station, one positioned even more conveniently on an isolated sprig, making it easy for me to find the caterpillar if it survives that long.





My Purple Hairstreak egg is still attached where I left it last year and a bit of searching turned up a further two more on the same low hanging bough (the neatly tied blade of grass is my discreet marker for the egg).



Checking on the single Red Admiral egg I discovered a further three more which must have been laid since my last visit (I can't believe I'd have missed them given how closely I'd searched the area before)



If any mycologists happen to know what this tiny mushroom is I'd be grateful (about 1.5cm diameter)



Birdlife was pretty standard fare for the time of year but a few were getting ahead of the game, some Jackdaws were squabbling over a hole in a tree and the Herons were showing a bit of interest in one of the Heronry's.



A Heron staking its claim!

The Flocks of Redwing and Tits were all still in winter mode though, food the only thing on their minds.



This Nuthatch was hammering the hell out of this dead branch, or something it had wedged in a groove.



Blue Tit



Marsh Tit



You can see I was peering through the undergrowth at this Goldfinch as he stuffed his face with Burdock seeds. A very pleasant way to spend an otherwise damp and cloudy January day

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 13-Jan-18 01:58 PM GMT

Nice shots of the Birds and eggs Bugboy, it will be interesting to know what the mushroom shape is, hope some one knows! Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 15-Jan-18 09:28 AM GMT

Nice selection Bugboy, seems a great area for birds. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Jan-18 12:10 PM GMT

Nice report Bugboy 😊 and good to see a Marsh Tit so as to make a comparison with Goldie's Willow Tit 😊 Good to see the egg haul increased as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Jan-18 10:21 PM GMT

Thanks Goldie, yes I hope I can put a name to it, most of my fungi images are nameless 😊

It is Andrew, it's a good spot to visit whatever your interest I think 😊

Thanks Wurzel, just shows there's always something to find, even on the coldest, dreariest days 😊

16th January, Essex

Back in October I visited Two Tree Island on the edge of the Thames estuary, just over a narrow stretch of water from my WLH site, and had planned a birding trip later in the winter. That day arrived today. Essexbuzzard had recommended I go to the western end where some scrapes and salt marsh lagoons provide safe refuges for Waders at high tide. Thankfully the tide was in when I arrived and as I approached the area I was greeted with the familiar piping calls of various waders.

Redshank were flying along the channel separating the island from the mainland



But the best sights were waiting for me in the lagoon. Waders aren't my strong suit when it comes to birds, particularly at this time of year when many of them moult into very similar winter plumage, but I do know my Lapwing from my Avocet!



The main bulk of waders were, I think, Knot and Dunlin but there were also good numbers of Ringed Plover and a smattering of Grey Plover dotted around.



Pale grey Knot at the rear with slightly smaller, browner Dunlin, closer. at the bottom are four Ringed Plover and a single Grey Plover

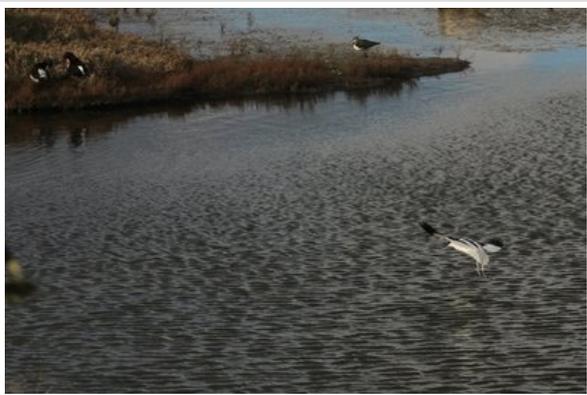


Ringed Plover to the right.

A few Avocet were feeding close to the hide but the main bulk of around thirty were at the other end of the lagoon.



Avocet at the rear with a pair of Shelduck, more Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher having a stretch on the mudflat Black-tailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, the odd Curlew were lurking in amongst the more numerous species



Avocet, Lapwing & Oystercatcher



Curlew & Grey Plover



Black-tailed Godwit and Avocet

In the middle of the lagoon were what I think were a couple of Greenshank, sharing their little Island with a small flock of Turnstone.



Greenshank (I think) and if you look VERY closely on this VERY heavily cropped image you might just see the hint of a Turnstone or two!

A couple of Snipe were also visible making a total of 13 species of Wader, not too shabby and well worth the bracing icy breeze that was blowing in my face for most of the day!



Spot the Snipe (there's 2)

Wandering further around I found the bulk of the local Curlews, preferring to sit out the high tide on the salt marsh vegetation and further out in the estuary, out of camera range, were a few Brent Geese.



I did go and see if I could find some WLH eggs in the afternoon but the vast majority of the elm is fairly mature sucker growth defended by bramble thickets and so out of reach. Can't wait for spring to arrive but days out like these do help make the winter pass a little bit easier 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Jan-18 12:52 PM GMT

Great set of images Bugboy – the area is very reminiscent of Poole Harbour – or at least what it used to be like when the Power Station was still about 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Jan-18 01:26 PM GMT

Weather looking better than here Bugboy, lovely shots , rain snow and sleet here at present UGH! Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jan-18 08:00 PM GMT

Thanks, Here's a couple more images from yesterday. They would occasionally become restless, either spooked by something (I never saw any birds of prey) but I think they could sense the tide turning. I didn't stay long enough to get the full murmuration effect as they left for the afternoon feeding grounds but they still looked pretty amazing 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jan-18 09:51 PM GMT

So far this year, days off from work have mostly failed to coincide with the occasional decent day, so I've had precious little chance of finding a Red Admiral to start my butterfly year off. Another wander round Bookham was an option but with all the recent rain I'd up to my knees in mud so I plumped for another trip to Two Tree Island for some birding again. High tide was at 4.30pm today so I was unlikely to find the flocks I saw last time but I did get to watch them running/flying from the incoming tide before light levels began to wain.

Teal were everywhere!



And in the saltmarsh lagoons some resident Avocets were having a set-to (or perhaps some early courtship rituals, not sure)



Black-tailed Godwits were pretty active too



But my best find were a few Turnstone I found trundling along the edge of a jetty, not particularly phased by me looking down on them.



The sun did make a fleeting appearance as the tide came in, briefly lighting up the the disappearing mudflats with their attendant waders (not sure what these were, Sanderling, Knot, Dunlin? Couldn't pick them out even with my bins)



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-Jan-18 10:15 PM GMT

Great set of bird shots Bugboy 😊 I reckon your waders in the distance are Dunlin as they seem so much smaller than the Oystercatcher and darker than Knot, there could be some Sanderling in there as well but they usually come across as a blur as they race in and out with the tide 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Jan-18 08:04 PM GMT

Keep the bird images coming, Bugboy! Right now I'm happy to gorge myself on any natural event in the UK given that butterflies are still a few weeks away.

Hopefully you'll get your first quite soon and we'll be back to normal service.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Jan-18 06:13 PM GMT

You're probably right **Wurzel**, there were large flocks of them 'hanging out' at high tide on my previous visit 😊
I'll see what I can do **David**, it's just getting the weather to cooperate with my days off! If it stays dry tomorrow I feel a trip to the London Wetlands Centre may be in order, lots of Bitterns are there again this winter 😊 (well I say lots, 4 is the number I was told today but where Bitterns are concerned that equates to lots, especially considering this is central London!)

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jan-18 07:33 PM GMT

Well **David**, the weather was very cooperative today, a lovely crisp January day so it was off to the London wetlands Centre. Who knows, maybe I would even find a Red Admiral.... well, sadly no, but there were plenty of birds around and a few signs of Spring to signal that winters grip is starting to wain.

Robins were singing from various vantage points



meanwhile out on the water Gulls were commonplace, Herring, Great & Lesser-black Backs, Common and Black-headed were all present in varying numbers. Black-headed were by far the most numerous



A Lesser-black Back and Herring mingling with some Black-headed Gulls



A Great-black Backed towering over a Crow lurks in a small flock of Herring Gulls

A bit of action here and there



A Cormorant swoops past the hide



A Gadwall comes in for a bumpy landing whilst being ignored by a Lapwing and some Canada Geese



and a Coots Bum as it dives for some lunch.

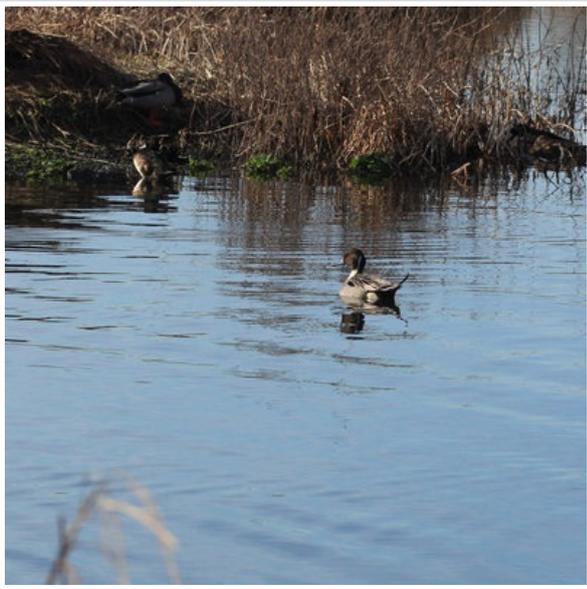
Further out a couple of Great-crested grebe were practicing their moves for breeding



Good numbers of Wigeon and Shoveler winter here every year



More notable was a shy Pintail drake. They're like the duck equivalent of the Long-tailed Blue, one of the most widespread and numerous ducks in the northern hemisphere but only a handful of pairs breed in the UK (although several thousand do winter here).



Here's a Moorhen who couldn't care less about being around people



The highlight of the day came in one hide where on one side, 4 Snipe were showing well, feeding only around 10 feet away at one point



Whilst out the other side a Bittern was skulking in the reeds (nothing skulks like a Bittern skulks!), so lets play spot the Bittern 😊





It never came out whilst I was there

A few exotica and a rather nonplussed Bewick's Swan to finish (all captive hence why they're so close)



Red-breasted Geese



Emperor Goose



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Jan-18 09:09 AM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy, really like the Snipe which are a difficult species to see at the best of times let alone get a clear shot of 🤔🌿 I enjoyed playing 'Where's Boomer?' 😊 Spying a Bittern in the reeds is a bit like those 3D pictures, you stare at it for long enough and suddenly the bird appears 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 31-Jan-18 04:01 PM GMT

You had another good day, BB, and you're right....portents of spring are definitely there!

Well done with the snipe and what a magnificent beast that Emperor Goose is!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 01-Feb-18 07:27 PM GMT

Great shots Bugboy, We've a place near us called "Martin Mere" which you'd enjoy, they've got many species of birds there that are rare it's quite an experience going there. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 06-Feb-18 07:22 PM GMT

That Bittern took a bit of finding in your photos...how on earth did you spot that 🤔

Some great reports and photos from your recent days out 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Feb-18 11:05 PM GMT

Yes although I've never visited **Godie**, I'm familiar with Martin Mere. All the WWT reserves are worth visiting if you happen to be near them since they all attract their own specialties

Thanks **Wurzel** and **Neil**, I thought I'd make 'Boomer' easy 😊 to spot by making sure it was in the center of the image. I can't take credit for finding him though Neil, the hide was already being camped out by the twitchers who had discovered him earlier that day, and were most likely still there watching his every twitch at closing time 😊!

Anyway, bit of catching up,

4th February, Essex again

On Sunday I went back to Two Tree Island, this time in the company of my Padawan. It was bitterly cold again, but enough blue sky helped make the day worthwhile. High tide was 3pm so getting there around 11.30 gave us ample time to wander around and wait for the birds to be chased in by the rising water. The birdlife on display was as expected much the same as previous visits but still plenty to point a camera at.



Wigeon (and the odd Teal)



Several flocks of Lapwing flew over



Teal
The tide starts to push the birds closer



A mixture of waders, Curlew, Dunlin, Turnstone, Sanderling, Knot, Grey Plover



Brent Geese



Lapwing, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Shelduck, Avocet, Oystercatcher



Mostly Dunlin came into the Lagoon today



*A trio of Black-tailed Godwit having a skirmish whilst a fourth tries to stay out of trouble.
5th February, Walthamstow*

On Monday I had a half day and not wanting to waste a pleasant afternoon I spent a few hours birding on my local patch.

The Blackthorn here always flowers exceptionally early, nevertheless it is a sign spring is just around the corner.



In the middle of the Marshes is a riding school and the paddocks provide rich pickings for any birder all year round, I regularly see Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail during passage and it's the only place I know locally where Linnets are resident. During the winter, Meadow Pipits, Pied/White Wagtails and the winter Thrushes always set up camp here and it was the latter that kept my attention today. In fact, the paddocks were teeming with Thrushes, all five species were clearly visible through my bins, not quite so through my camera (one day I may invest in a lens more suitable to this kind of photography 😊).



Pied/White Wagtail



Redwing

The Mistle Thrushes did let me down slightly by not allowing me to get all five in one picture.



One did make up for it though by coming nice and close though, deciding that the fence was plenty protection from me.



On the way home a Goldcrest attracted my attention and I managed to grab a few shot as it darted from twig to twig in search of morsels of food.



The Marshes back onto a water treatment works, the reservoirs of which attract large numbers of water birds. One of the reservoirs has two Island on which a large Cormorant colony breed and as can be seen, they're already staking out nests for the coming months.



6th February, Bookham

Long overdue a wander round here so it was an early start to catch the best of the days weather, and almost immediately I was finding things to capture, a Pheasant surveying his kingdom



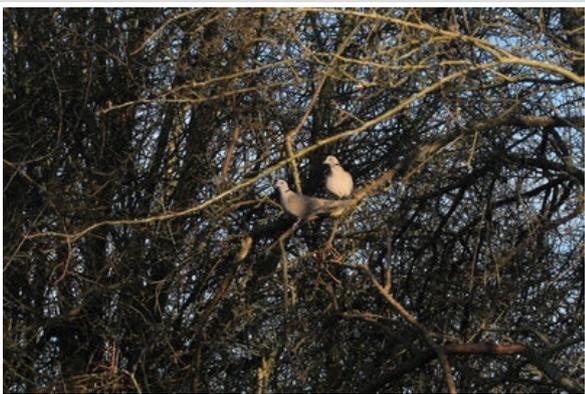
And a couple of Goldfinch dropping down in front of me to snatch a quick drink.



As one would expect, Brown Hairstreak eggs numbers are diminishing but there's still enough around to find without too much effort.



I disturbed a Collared Dove having a sip from one of the many streams that flow here at this time of year, who was quickly joined by it's mate in the tree.



In the wood catkins drip from every Hazel tree and closer inspection reveals the tiny spiky crimson female flowers, amazing to think this will be a Hazelnut in 6 months' time.



the 'male' Hazel catkins

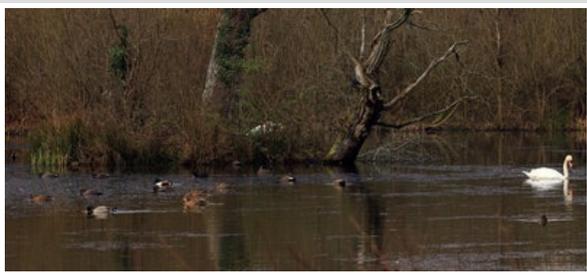


female Hazel flower

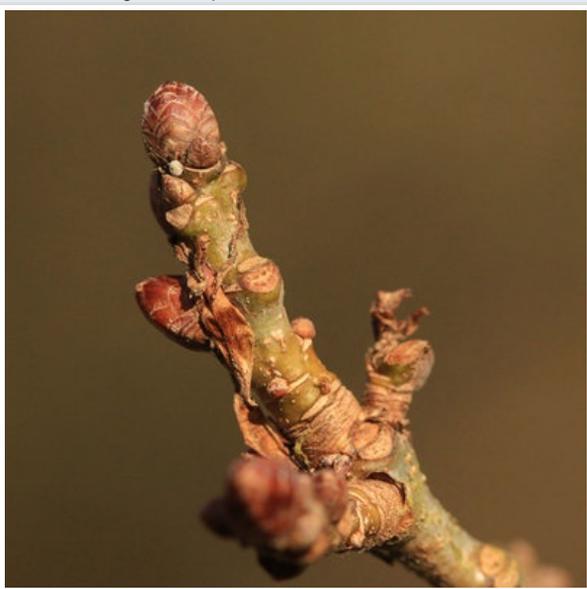
The Red Admiral eggs I'm keeping an eye on were all still eggs, one of which is now at least 59 days old. The colour does seem to be changing though, a slight pale olive tinge perhaps showing some form of development.



For lunch today I settled down in a hide that overlooks one of the small lakes/big ponds which were a hive of activity. Mostly Gadwall with some Mallard, a single Shoveler, some Swans and couple of Dabchick (little Grebe if you're not old enough to remember the superior common name for the species) all being watched over by a Jackdaw.



Moving on I found my three Purple Hairstreak eggs were all still in place and a walk round Banks Common found both Brown Hairstreak eggs I witnessed being laid last year are still intact.



Before leaving I wanted to check out a path I'd only been down once before, at the end of last year, which I'd penciled in to exploring further, since it seemed like a good new place for Brown Hairstreaks. Now that the leaves had fallen the eggs started popping out all over the place, half a dozen in 5 minutes and double figures without much effort.



Interestingly the hedgerow also has several medium sized Elm suckers which were also searched avidly. WLH eggs however proved more illusive but that doesn't mean they aren't present, and a visit during June this year is definitely on the cards.

All this searching in the bushes didn't go unnoticed, I was being watched from the neighbouring field



and a Long-tailed Tit boldly dropped in and foraged within touching distance, only scared of by the sound of my shutter for this picture.



They all seemed quite bold today, here's another one probably fattening up of Purple Hairstreak eggs amongst other things.



A good run of days, just hope this is the last cold spell of the winter and I can get out looking for butterflies soon, we're all gonna get told off by King Pete soon if we keep putting up bird pics 🤪🤪

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Feb-18 11:10 PM GMT

More great shots Bugboy especially the first Long-tail and the Teal in flight is a cracking shot 🤪🇹🇹 A couple more 🇹🇹🇹🇹 as I've either been stuck at work or stuck indoors working 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 06-Feb-18 11:32 PM GMT

You're certainly making the most of your local environment, Bugboy, even if butterflies are nearly impossible to come by.

I'm quite staggered by your blackthorn blossom though....that is abnormally early!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 09-Feb-18 10:26 AM GMT

Great selection of shots Bugboy, I like the one's in flight or motion especially. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 10-Feb-18 09:16 AM GMT

You've taken some cracking shots lately Bugboy, you've certainly taken the weather to task, it's been a long, long Winter up here for us, hope fully it's been good for the Butterflies, Cumbria in particular has had a lot of Snow and more forecast for Sunday I think. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Feb-18 08:36 PM GMT

Thanks guys, here's some more 'birds in motion' 😊

18th February,

Mr Sod and his well-known Law is most definitely working overtime on my life at the moment! You don't need to watch the weather forecast to know what's going to be happening, just a copy of my work rota will let you know exactly when the sunny and rainy days are. Weekends working seem to be mostly bright blue skies leading up to total washouts come my regular Tuesdays off then come my weekends off, either rain, wind or cloud and often all three. This past weekend was different though, off and it was sunny and very spring-like....except I'd already agreed to do overtime on the mornings of both days 😊!

So, come Saturday I rushed off to Tottenham Marshes for the afternoon to see if the recent relative warmth had awoken anything. Even though I was shedding layers, it didn't tempt any of the hibernators out, even in the sun traps that will be alive with them in a few weeks' time. I did however see my first butterflies of the year, a couple of Red Admirals. Neither sat for a picture though so you'll just have to believe me.

Sunday arrived with more sun whilst I was at work and then, as if Mr Sod was watching my every move, it clouded over the moment I got of the train with the intention of going for a wander on Walthamstow Marshes. Oh well birding it was then. Apparently, there's a rare visitor round my neck of the woods, a Little Bunting, but since I've never been a birdy twitcher and I'm not on any birding forums this had gone under my radar. Also, I'm not a huge fan of standing amongst large groups all staring at a solitary LBJ so I went the opposite direction and headed for the paddocks to see what the Winter Thrushes were up to.

Here I found a large flock of Fieldfare, just about close enough for some snaps.





There were also about a dozen Black-headed Gulls one of whom was showing a lot of interest in the Fieldfares and as I watched I found out why. It would seem he's been taking piracy lessons of Skuas. I'm presuming he was waiting for one of the Fieldfares to find a particularly large worm to steal. I'm not sure if he was ever successful but he was a persistent little bugger, even chasing away other Gulls to keep the potential free food source to himself.





Joining the Black-headed was a single Lesser Black-backed Gull whom I photographed as he took off, and with some experimenting I've managed to work out how to make a Gif all by myself which I'm rather proud of 😊 .



Wagtails were about, this is one of our own Pied Wagtails





And this, with its grey rather than black back, is possibly the continental 'White Wagtail' race of the same species. (it could also be a juvenile Pied... its quite confusing to be honest).



It's fun to watch them darting around acrobatically catching the small midges they disturb. They move too fast for me to make a Gif though.

Finally, here's some more Long-tailed Tit action including a lovely view of its little fluffy bum!



I'm actually off all this week and back to work on Saturday... can you guess what the forecast says for this coming week and the weekend 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Feb-18 10:57 PM GMT

Great gif Bugboy 😊 and great set of bird shots 😊 I'd get that Pied/White checked out by the county bird recorder as I know that White Wagtails do pass through on passage and are probably under-recorded but I'm not sure how often they overwinter? If it is a White it would be a great find 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Feb-18 11:27 PM GMT

Don't worry about the weather forecast, Bugboy, you've put sufficient effort in on the bird front to merit your butterfly reward further down the line; and I'm sure you will do just that in due course!

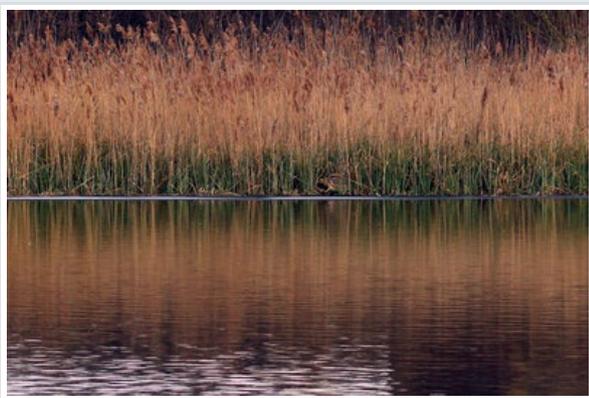
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Feb-18 09:37 PM GMT

27th February

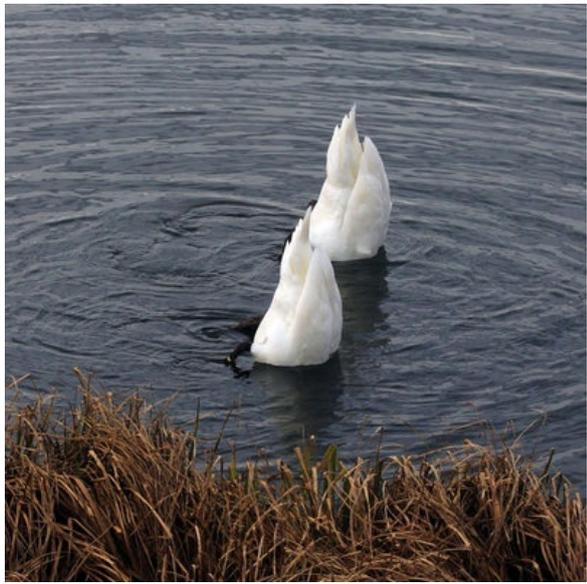
A time when butterflies are likely to be seen seems like a very long way away at the moment so I'm still 'making do' with birding for now. So, at the risk of being stranded south of the river due to a 6" coating of the white stuff (sometimes it's embarrassing being a Londoner!) I set off for another trip to the London Wetlands Centre.

It was nice and quiet for a change, I probably saw no more than 20 people for the entire day and not long after arriving I spied a Bittern stumbling, almost drunkenly, from the reed bed. It was a lot easier to see today, although a fair old distance away so the resulting pictures have been cropped rather savagely. I returned to the hide a few times over the afternoon and it was there all day.



They really are clumsy when active. For a bird that spends its entire life in a reed bed you'd expect them to be a bit nimble when navigating the terrain but this one seemed to be able to trip over nearly every stem it passed 😊

There was quite a bit of activity elsewhere, here we have some synchronized Swan butts:



and here's some Shelducks with a Pintail Drakes butt in the background, perfectly expression the origin of his common name!



A large flock of Cormorant took off from one of the Islands at one point, almost darkening the sky as the flew over

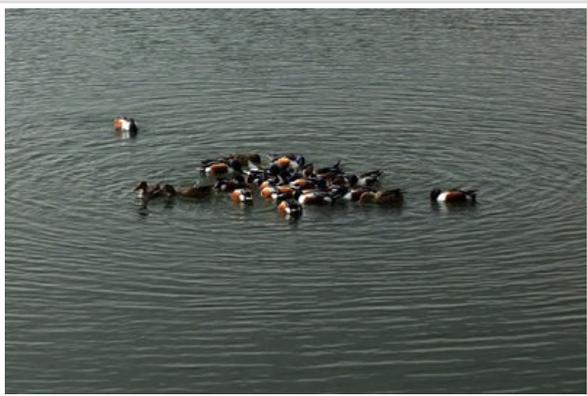


and small numbers of Lapwing were putting on an excellent aerial display

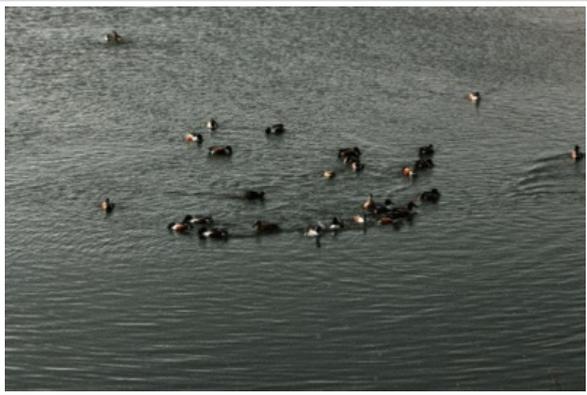
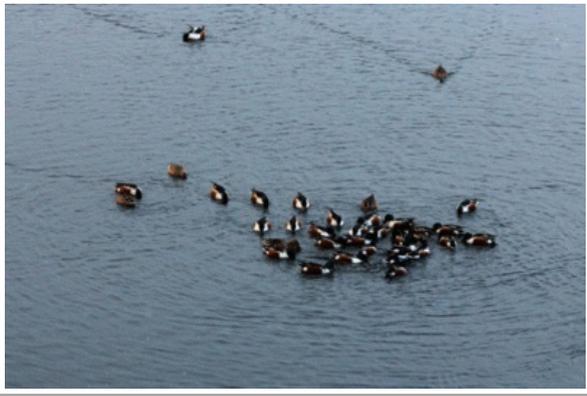




The comedy relief for the day came from a very angry Coot who was most perturbed when a number of Shoveler found a good feeding spot in the middle of his territory



This too was going on for most the time I was there. In the end it just looked like the Shoveler were just winding him up on purpose 😊 I made a few more GIF's 😊



Amongst the flocks of Gulls one stood out as slightly unusual. Unfortunately it stayed far out so all I could get were a few heavily cropped images. It was about Herring gull sized but had a black bar near the tip of its bill... anyone have any ideas? I was thinking Ring-billed Gull... 😊





I'll end with some more exotica, some Falcated Teal, a far eastern Asian species.



Surely there cant be more than a few weeks left before I can return to butterfly pictures 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-18 10:34 PM GMT

More great shots Bugboy 😊 Those Falcated Teal are stunning birds 😊 I reckon your gull is either a 3rd winter Less-black Back or a 3rd winter Herring Gull. Ring-bills are only slightly bigger than Common Gulls but noticeably smaller than Herring Gulls, plus a lot of different species have rings and dark blobs at the end of their bills during the winter and the bill looks really heavy and substantial – Common and Ring-billed are more pointy and stabby 😊
😊 That's my tuppence for what it's worth 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Feb-18 11:02 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

More great shots Bugboy 😊 Those Falcated Teal are stunning birds 😊 I reckon your gull is either a 3rd winter Less-black Back or a 3rd winter Herring Gull. Ring-bills are only slightly bigger than Common Gulls but noticeably smaller than Herring Gulls, plus a lot of different species have rings and dark blobs at the end of their bills during the winter and the bill looks really heavy and substantial – Common and Ring-billed are more pointy and stabby 😊😊 That's my tuppence for what it's worth 😊
😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Thanks Wurzel. As far as size is concerned it's a bit tentative since it was so far away. Through my bins it certainly looked adult, I couldn't make out any Juv feathers on the back or wings and I've been looking at images on google of Ring Bills, focusing on the wing tip pattern which does seem close to this bird with just the one 'mirror'... I'm no expert though 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 28-Feb-18 11:57 PM GMT

I did some checking for you on the Wetlands Centre sightings page and your gull is a Caspian Gull 🇹🇹 Hence the robust looking bill and why I suggested Herring (I was following the usually useful advice of 'if in doubt go with the commoner species 😊). I've not seen one of those you jammy Bugboy 🇹🇹 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Mar-18 01:41 PM GMT

Love the images, Bugboy. The synchronised Swan rear-ends are particularly amusing and those teal are positively stunning!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Mar-18 05:44 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

I did some checking for you on the Wetlands Centre sightings page and your gull is a Caspian Gull 🇹🇹 Hence the robust looking bill and why I suggested Herring (I was following the usually useful advice of 'if in doubt go with the commoner species 😊). I've not seen one of those you jammy Bugboy 🇹🇹 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Possibly should have been my first port of call 😊

Thanks **David**, they are a lovely species aren't they. Oddly they are apparently more closely related to our Gadwall than our Teal 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 02-Mar-18 09:51 AM GMT

Great shots and detail Bugboy, keep it coming, it's too cold to move outside here, even the birds are hiding. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 02-Mar-18 10:57 AM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy, good job with the gifs. Love the Shoveler sequence. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 02-Mar-18 07:26 PM GMT

Interesting reports and photos Bugboy. I must admit I don't know much about waterfowl or gulls but it is good to see stuff that I don't usually get to see myself 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Mar-18 08:43 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

I did some checking for you on the Wetlands Centre sightings page and your gull is a Caspian Gull 🇹🇹 Hence the robust looking bill and why I suggested Herring (I was following the usually useful advice of 'if in doubt go with the commoner species 😊). I've not seen one of those you jammy Bugboy 🇹🇹 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Hi Wurzel, I stuck the pictures on a Facebook birding group and the consensus seems to be that it was a just common or garden Herring Gull... feel free to retract your mrgreen!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Mar-18 08:51 PM GMT

Goldie M wrote:

Great shots and detail Bugboy, keep it coming, it's too cold to move outside here, even the birds are hiding. Goldie 😊

Thanks Goldie, the birds are being really bold in this weather, most of the natural winter foods (berries etc) have already been eaten and open water is becoming rather sought after, so they're 'willing' to come closer than would be normal.

Andrew555 wrote:

Great stuff Bugboy, good job with the gifs. Love the Shoveler sequence. 😊

Thanks Andrew, I watched Mr Coot for quite a while from the relative warmth of the hide, he was getting so wound up. Everytime he went into the group they would just coalesce again behind him 😊

Neil Freeman wrote:

Interesting reports and photos Bugboy. I must admit I don't know much about waterfowl or gulls but it is good to see stuff that I don't usually get to see myself 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

They're not my strong point either Neil. When it comes to birds I prefer the small woodland and meadow ones but they're all interesting to watch 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Mar-18 06:00 PM GMT

I've been having fun with Gif's recently so in an attempt to take this diary back to our lepitopteran friends here's a couple more using some pictures from last year 😊





Re: Bugboys mission

by Chris Jackson, 05-Mar-18 06:31 PM GMT

Good work Bugboy.
You really have your 'nose to the ground'.
An example to be followed.
Chris

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Mar-18 12:20 PM GMT

The gifs makes the Grayling look even more Alien like 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 10-Mar-18 01:55 PM GMT

Excellent work, Bugboy. She's quite a contortionist by the look of things. I'll look forward to more of these images as the season unfolds.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Mar-18 08:58 PM GMT

13th March, Walthamstow Marshes

Ok so I have a confession to make. I may have had a little splurge on some new kit last week. A few household bills that were significantly lower than expected, combined with a nice whack of overtime at work recently created a little bit of extra cash burning a hole in my pocket. I've been eyeing up various zoom lenses to get better pictures of birds when the butterflies aren't around, and I plumped for the Sigma 150 - 600mm. My finger did hover over the buy button for more than several seconds but today was the day to take it out for it's first test drive. Suffice to say I'm very happy with the results. To give an idea of what it can do no photo's have been cropped in the making of this post (although some exposure tweaking may have taken place).

The day actually started off rather nice, with good sunny spells giving a nice spring feel to things and I began hoping I'd find a few butterflies, but it wasn't to last. Cloud thickened, temperature dropped and I was left focusing on the birds, of which there were plenty



A worm fighting a losing battle against a Blackbird



A male Wood Pigeon being ignored by a female



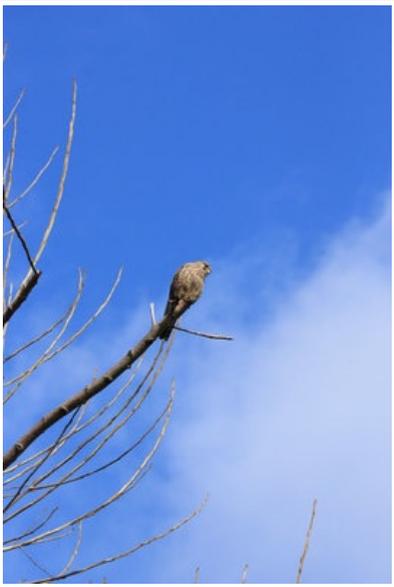




This was a sopsy tame Kestrel, first seen as she plopped down in the grass barely a foot from where I stood, was easy to stalk when she perched low down.



These two shots of her half way up a poplar tree are either end of the zoom range.







Look closely and you can see the cloud of sawdust behind her

Bird of the day came at the end of my wander, a species you rarely see and one I've never seen here, a Water Rail. I would have got even better shots had it not been for a Cetti's Warbler landing next to me in full view distracting me, I think they were working as a team!



I certainly won't be making any more camera themed purchases in the near future, but I fully expect to get a good few years use out of it and it will definitely come in handy during Emperor season if they decide to stay up high.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 13-Mar-18 10:30 PM GMT

Nice bit of kit Bugboy! 🤔😄 Sounds like a beast of a lens.
Great shots, looking forward to more. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 14-Mar-18 12:01 AM GMT

Great shots of the Water Rail and Woody Bugboy 😄 This is a strange time of year as it's possible to photograph butterflies and winter bird visitors on the same day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 15-Mar-18 01:02 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I use the Sigma, 70mm -300mm F4 - 5.6 DJ Macro and its great, I must think about your 150mm - 600mm I could use another lens just for Bird's 😊 I love the shot of the Kestrel Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 15-Mar-18 03:26 PM GMT

That's a handy piece of kit judging by those images, Bugboy. It'll be interesting to see the results when you reacquaint yourself with butterflies...which surely can't be too far off now?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Mar-18 12:00 AM GMT

Yes **Andrew**, It is a bit of a beast of a lens, quite weighty to, the OS system on it is pretty essential if you do mostly freehand photography like me!

Thanks **Wurzel**, not much hope of butterflies at the moment, only winter visiting birds over the weekend me thinks 😊!

Thanks **Goldie**, it's a big lens, weighs nearly 2 kg and not cheap either. It does seem to be worth the money and effort of lugging it around 😊

Thanks **David**, once this final cold snap is out the way we can only be days away from getting our fix although I'll be sticking with my macro for most of that photography. If I were to be carrying this beast around on all my day trips I'll be having a hernia op before the year is out. It may come in handy if I come across another Large Tort or if HIM stays up high this year though.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-Mar-18 10:27 AM GMT

Hi±! Bugboy, sounds like the lens would be far to heavy for me, still!!! I could shove it onto my Husband to carry 😊😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Mar-18 05:43 PM GMT

I'm lead to believe that is what husbands are for **Goldie** 😊😊

I have to say this is one of the most extreme changes in weather conditions over 24 hours I've witnessed, even by UK standards and it does seem to keep up with my run of bad luck so far this year, with this being the start of my 4 day weekend 😊 I've had my camera at work all week, hoping my year would start as it did last year with a Comma sighting but I've still only got two Red Admiral flybys to show for this year so far.

It did however give me the chance to have a close inspection of the White-letter Hairstreak egg, to my naked eye it's just a grey pin head. With my camera however I could see that it had hatched:



As I suspected the sucker it is laid on is too young to flower so if the cat is still there it's going to have to hunker down and wait for the buds to break (I understand there's some evidence that they are capable of doing this if their Elms don't flower)

In related news, here's the new Elm (the hybrid cultivar 'Letece') recently planted by my horticulture dept at work specifically for WLH so if all goes to plan there will be a thriving colony in years to come 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-18 07:42 PM GMT

This has been a dire start to the season Bugboy but at hopefully things will get back onto a more normal footing soon, they have to don't they 😊 Good to see the hybrid Elm – we need many more of these 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Mar-18 10:22 PM GMT

18th March,

Since winter came back with vengeance there was nothing for it but take my new lens out for another test drive with birds in mind. I figured I'd go the London wetlands Centre again and see if I could get some better pictures of some of the residents. Bitterns it would seem had heard about my new lens and were all in hiding (or gone to wherever they spend the summer), none were seen whilst I was there.

Despite the wintry scenery the signs of spring were there to be seen, Great-crested Grebes were all now sporting breeding plumage



And a pair of Sand Martin had turned up to get first dibs on the artificial sand bank.



Although the Bitterns were all in hiding, a Common Snipe was putting on a really good show, practically showing off as though it was auditioning for the front cover of the Snipe edition of Vogue!



At the other end of the reserve (not auditioning for Snipe Vogue) were a couple of it's smaller, less common relative, the Jack Snipe.



I also managed a slightly confusing image, where does one Gull end and the other begin 🤔?:



A quiet but pleasant day but with April less than two weeks away I just hope winter ends soon!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 19-Mar-18 09:09 AM GMT

Lovely Snipe Bugboy, great close shots. Nice to have a co-operative subject. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Mar-18 02:51 PM GMT

Some mighty fine shots with your new lens Bugboy 😊👍, I've not seen a Jack Snipe for years but when you get a view like what you had the're really stand out different from a Snipe 😊 Just seems odd that there are Sand Martens while there is still snow on the ground, mind you they say 'in like a Lion, out like a Lamb' so fingers crossed we'll have a very good spring when it finally arrives 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 19-Mar-18 08:35 PM GMT

Lovely shots Bugboy, it looks like it was a good out lay buying your Lens, well worth it. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Mar-18 12:30 AM GMT

Thanks **Andrew**, yes he was exceedingly cooperative and he had only two observers for the entire time!

Thanks **Wurzel**, I have my fingers crossed winter has now finally ended, I have the last week of March booked off... I do hope that statement isn't noticed by Mr sod and his law 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, I'm trying to get the most out of it before I go back to my macro for the butterflies...

19th March, 2 Tree Island

My new lens had a day out in Essex today, seeing what it could do with flocks of waders. I got there an hour or so before high tide, just in time to witness the magnificence of a wader murmuration as Knots and Dunlin came into the sheltered lagoon to sit it out. It took some time for them to settle, several times all flying up for a couple more circuits and quite often almost within touching distance above my head, the sound of them whirling around just adding to the spectacle. I don't think any pictures can ever do justice to this kind of thing but armed with my new lens it would have been rude to not let it have a go, although it was very much a case of point and shoot and hope the autofocus could work out what was going on! Because of this I did come home with well over 1000 images to sift through 😊





More signs of spring were around, despite the snow on the ground and the biting cold wind, some of the Black-tailed Godwit were molting into their striking summer plumage



Elsewhere all the usual winter visitors were still hanging around, the Brent Geese were much closer today than on previous visits



And good numbers of ducks were still active, Shoveler, Teal and Shelduck making up the majority



Although the lagoon was full of Knot and Dunlin there was still room for small numbers of other species, Avocet, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Grey Plover, Redshank and some Bar-tailed Godwit





Throughout the afternoon (I sat in the hide for about 3 hours, sheltering from the wind and watching all the activity going on) something kept spooking the birds and finally on the fifth or sixth time everything went airborne I found the culprit, a Marsh Harrier. Here it is trying to blend in with some Avocet



A thoroughly good few hours. (I promise I'll post some butterfly images soon)

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 20-Mar-18 10:57 AM GMT

Safe to say that lens has definitely proved it's worth Bugboy. 😊 Great shots of those flocks, and the other birds. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Mar-18 08:38 PM GMT

Thanks **Andrew**, I agree, it did well with those moving targets 😊

20th March

One last trip out with the new lens today before back to work for a week. This time I was after woodland creatures in Epping forest, which don't sit still like the coastal relatives. I managed a few though.





I promise the next post I make will have at least one butterfly in it!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Mar-18 10:52 AM GMT

Great set of bird shots Bugboy – that new lens is a peach 🍑🌿 Hopefully there will be at least one or two good butterfly days in the foreseeable future 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Mar-18 02:48 PM GMT

Don't worry about the lack of butterflies in your images, BB, the bird photos more than compensate, particularly the ones of the Marsh Harrier being 'harried'. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Mar-18 07:41 PM GMT

Thnaks **Wurzel** and **David**, yes it is proving its worth and no need to worry about a lack of butterflies anymore 😊

26th March, ...and we're off! (as promised butterfly pictures are present in this post 😊)

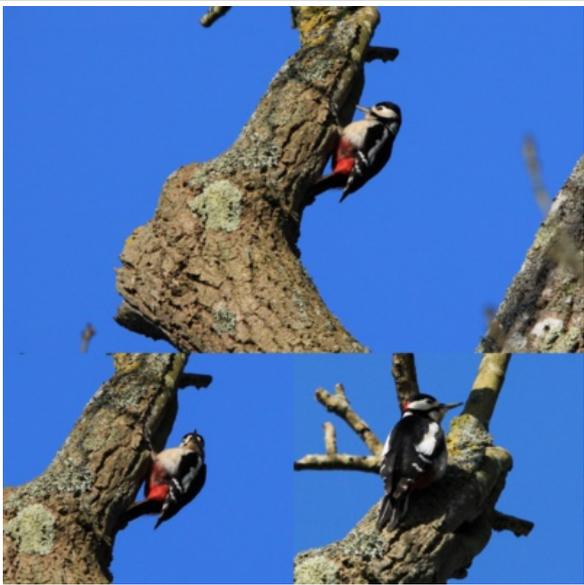
Like several others the warm springtime sun drew me out of the house in search of our favourite subjects. I normally stay local until things really get going with the locally restricted species emerging but I decided to take my new lens for its first foray into deepest Sussex, hoping its reach would help in search of Large Tortoiseshell at North Stoke. The early cloud soon vanished and by 10 it was wall to wall blue sky and with the temperature rising, layers were removed. Despite the sun and warmth though butterflies were rather thin on the ground, still feeling the effects of the recent cold spells no doubt but as noon grew close a couple of male Brimstone, my first of the year, began patrolling, such a wonderful sight!

Another butterflyer turned up for a bit but like me only Brimstones were observed. In the absence of anything settling I turned my attention to the birds. I've recently discovered how to combine images, hopefully this will help save Pete some memory space for the site (I'm assuming this is how it works)

There were several Buzzard encounters as they flew quite low.



A male Great-spotted Woody was hammering away, trying to attract a mate



A couple of Robins were having a turf war, lots of aggressive posturing going on.



And various other small birds were flitting around getting in the springtime mood. I was quite impressed how my lens picked out the female Bullfinch from in amongst the twigs, I'm so used to my macro getting totally confused with shots like that.



Neil Hulme popped by for a couple of hours but even his presence couldn't tempt much more out of wherever it was hiding, and we concluded things really were very much in the early stages at this site currently and needed a run of a few warm days to properly wake things up.

I did manage a couple of Comma's though, again my first of the year. The first one flew up from under my feet and settled up in some Sallows. The second one just before I left, causing my heart to miss a beat when I glanced a butterfly shaped orange blob basking on the other side of the fence.



The Brimstones did start to settle but not close so here's a 'spot the Brimstone' picture.



As I was walking back to the station I also saw my first Peacock of the year, just a flyby but plenty more chances in the coming weeks no doubt 😊

So no Large Torts today but Spring has most definitely sprung (until tomorrow that it...)



Just a word of warning, if anyone's tempted to venture here in the coming weeks, pack your wellies, you'll need them, it's very wet and muddy!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 26-Mar-18 08:31 PM GMT

Well done, Paul. All we need now is some sustained decent weather. All we've had so far is the odd nice day. I have been following your bird images, superb stuff !. As for Large Tortoiseshells you had better head for Switzerland, Guy almost has an infestation on his doorstep.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 27-Mar-18 07:57 AM GMT

Great selection of bird shots Bugboy 😊, what a lovely day to be out and about. Glad you had some butterfly action as well. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-18 12:52 PM GMT

A cracking start Bugboy! 😊 I had fun with the 'Spot the Brimstone' 😊 Looking forward to seeing some Large Torts – on your posting, it's a bit too far for me really 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-18 05:05 PM GMT

Great start Bugboy, but i must admit it was the Robins that caught my eye 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 27-Mar-18 09:27 PM GMT

You delivered on your promise, BB! Butterflies are now on your menu and I'm sure you'll see plenty more (with hopefully a Large Tortoiseshell or two thrown in).

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Mar-18 06:55 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, yes Guys large Torts are something to drool over aren't they 😊 !

Thanks **Andrew**, Yes Butterflies at last... however short lived it may be 😊

Thanks **Wurzel** but don't go holding your breath for Large Torts here, It's a bit of a trek for me and I'm still struggling to get the weather to play ball

with my time off work, its starting to get very frustrating 😞

Thanks **Goldie** Robins are quite comical when getting territorial but all the posturing is for a good reason, if it came to blows they're quite willing to fight to the death!

I did deliver **David** but only just. I too am hopeful for a large Tort again this year, but far from expectant. Finding one of these elusive butterflies in the UK really is the proverbial needle in a huge haystack. Won't stop me trying though 😊

29th March

Well it looks like butterflies were just a brief interlude. There was a bit of sun this morning after yesterdays monsoon but not enough for anything to show itself so my wander of local patches came up blank on that front. A shame too since much of the local Blackthorn is now in full bloom, some even starting to go over. There were plenty of bees around, Dunnocks were busy setting up their territories..



and a trio of Blue Tits were playing hide and seek in some Sallow



But the sun soon vanished and by noon the rain clouds came back 😞

Things don't look too good for the rest of my break from work 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Mar-18 06:47 PM GMT

Looks like it's going to be one of those 'stop, start' Springs Bugboy 😊 Mind you at least you have your new bit of kit to keep you occupied, soem more great avifauna shots 📷 😊

Have a goodun

Wurze

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 31-Mar-18 05:31 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

...A shame too since much of the local Blackthorn is now in full bloom, some even starting to go over..

I see what you mean, BB. That's very surprising as I haven't seen it even begin to emerge near me, and we haven't had the bitter cold like you further east.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Apr-18 05:51 PM GMT

I think you're right Wurzel 😊. I have heard a rumour about a mini heat wave in mid April 🤔 The new lens has certainly been the saving grace this spring.
It's really only this patch that flowers so early every year David. The very white patch in the centre is actually some kind of wild Cherry I think. Based on the way Blackthorn grows via suckers, I'll wager a bet that most of this is one organism.

1st April

Even on a grey, chilly Easter Sunday, most of my local patches would be teeming with people, but not wanting to waste a day without rain I spent a few hours wandering around Epping Forest this afternoon. There wasn't a great deal to see, most of the activity could be heard rather than seen in the tree tops but I came home with a few images



Playing hide and seek with a Green Woodpecker and a Goldfinch



I'm back to work this coming Wednesday so I'm sure that will herald the return of spring!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Apr-18 07:42 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I'm back to work this coming Wednesday so I'm sure that will herald the return of spring!

Looks like your sense of pessimistic irony is going to be proved right, BB.

The forecast is dreadful all week except for one sunny day- Thursday! 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Apr-18 08:00 PM GMT

I was going to comment with commiserations earlier but then I watched Countryfile...if these things can be believed next weekend might be quite spring like and then we're into the usual April showers. Fingers crossed they've gotten it right... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Apr-18 10:57 AM GMT

David M wrote:

bugboy wrote:

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Looks like your sense of pessimistic irony is going to be proved right, BB.

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Wurzel wrote:

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Have a goodun

Wurzel

I'm thinking about publishing my holidays on here so you can all know what days to avoid going out, so far this year it has been more accurate than the met office 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 03-Apr-18 02:17 PM GMT

Shame that Green Woodpecker couldn't swing round to the front of the tree trunk. When I see them they seem to fly off at great speed at the drop of a hat. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Apr-18 10:01 PM GMT

Yea that's Green Woodpeckers for ya **Andrew**. I wasn't sure I'd managed to pick out the woodpecker until I looked at the picture at home, this new lens continues to impress 😊

3rd April, Walthamstow Marshes

The forecast hinted there might be a bit of sun this afternoon so on my last day of freedom before the return of work I spent the afternoon wandering the local patch for signs of life. The sunny spells did actually appear albeit rather fleetingly but it was definitely significantly warmer than recent days so I hoped something lepidopteran would show itself.

Birdlife was fairly obvious today, lots of Chiffchaff's chiff-chaffing away, a friendly Blue Tit posed well whilst some of the winter visitors have yet to leave.



When you get close to a Starling you realise what amazing looking birds they are, just a shame the sun didn't come out properly to make that iridescence even brighter



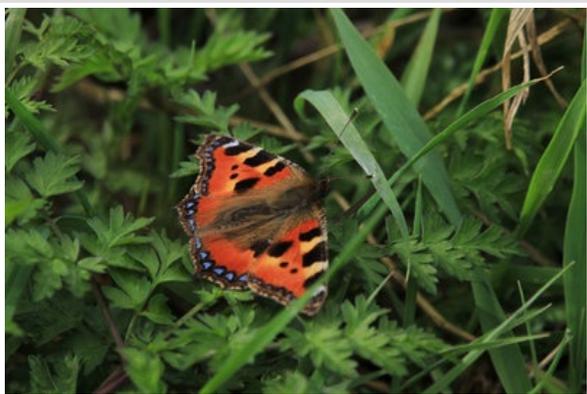
The more secluded spots, where butterflies traditionally turn up at the beginning of the season, were as waterlogged and muddy as the main paths, I don't think I've ever seen the place this waterlogged (I guess that's why it's called a marsh though...). It was whilst exploring one of these areas that an autumnal looking leaf fluttered weakly from under my feet and settled a few feet away. At last, the first butterfly on my local patch this year. 😊



It didn't hang around for long though and fluttered off in the weak hazy sun over the hedge, the boggy ground making it nearly impossible to do anything other than watch it go. A short while later I noticed a dark butterfly gliding around the top of a blackthorn hedge. It was just a black silhouette to the naked eye but the new lens soon aided the ID. Two butterflies, things were looking up.



It was some time before I saw any sign of more. Having yet to see any kind of Tortoiseshell this year I headed over to the spot where Small Torts normally hang out. It took a lot of wandering, mainly waiting for a break in the thicker cloud but I finally managed a hat-trick of species. Again it didn't hang around for long, had it of done I'd have swapped lenses to get some better shots, but at least I know things are starting to wake up here now.



A forth was seen a while later but it never settled and was some distance away, but it was probably a Red Admiral.

Near the end of my wander I stopped off at an old water treatment works that been turned into a nature reserve which backs onto the marshes. Here I found some very aggressive bathing from some of the wintering Teal



And a good variety of other birdlife (and a bat that I tried and failed to get a picture of). Not sure what the Pochard was looking at, perhaps a bird of prey that I couldn't see.



Well it's been a faltering start to the season for me but let's hope things pick up soon. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 03-Apr-18 11:38 PM GMT

Well done Paul, three of the hibernators on a day like today is good going. I went out looking this morning, but nothing. This time last year I had already seen an Orange Tip, and photographed a Holly Blue and some Speckled Woods. I have a feeling that this season might run a little late.

Well done again,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 04-Apr-18 04:43 PM GMT

That's great Bugboy, I bet you were pleased 😊 Nothing here yet . Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Apr-18 10:25 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy 😊 This part of the season is always a bit start stop only more so this year 😊 I will revise my weather forecast as the Beeb now has tomorrow and Friday the only decent days for the foreseeable future 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 04-Apr-18 11:47 PM GMT

Aah, you are now seeing several species of butterfly, BB! We are turning the corner for sure (although keep the bird images coming as they are most welcome in the relative absence of butterflies).

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 06-Apr-18 03:10 PM GMT

Well done Bugboy. Great shots, I like the Starling in particular. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Apr-18 07:50 PM GMT

It may be running late **Trevor** at the moment but as long as we don't get any silly cold snaps I reckon it will soon catch up 😊

Yes **Goldie**, I was very pleased to see anything on what was definitely a borderline day for butterflying 😊

It looks like your revised forecast was spot on **Wurzel**, and just as I predicted when I returned to work 😊

The corner has most definitely been turned now judging by the flurry of reports over the past few days **David** 😊

Thanks **Andrew**. I just wish it was a bit brighter, in the right light starling look like a living rainbow! Here's another shot of another one in the flock showing very well how they got the name Starling



6th April.

I was determined not to totally waste the current short lived good spell of weather so I took my camera to work with me today, planning on stopping off at my local patch on the way home in the hope I could stumble across anything soaking up the last rays of the day. I finished work at 4 today but it still takes an hour to travel across London so arriving at just after 5pm I wasn't expecting a lot, although thankfully the sun was still strong enough to cause me to shed my coat.

Half an hour into my wander I spied my intended quarry, a dark butterfly circling the ground and landing behind a clump of grass. It flew up as I got close enough to ID it but thankfully not far and settled to have a last feed before going off to find a roosting spot. Sods law dictates that if you own two lenses but leave one at home because you don't fancy carting all the through London rush hours then it is that lens which you would need but my macro managed a few passable shots (with a bit of cropping). So that's all the adult hibernators finally recorded for posterity for the year (barring the elusive large Tort of course)



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 06-Apr-18 08:07 PM GMT

Great to see your Peacock, well worth the rush hour crush.

As for extra lenses they can be a pain, Butterflies don't usually allow time to change them, unless it's a nice settled Purple Emperor !.

Here's to a great season 😊 .
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Apr-18 11:16 PM GMT

That's nicely posed Peacock, Buggy. 😊 They are very fond of the tree blossom at this time of year and don't often seek out the dandelions like their Tortoiseshell cousins do.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 07-Apr-18 11:19 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, now what you want is the Orange Tip 😊 good shot too considering the distance 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-18 08:10 PM GMT

Great Peacock shot Bugboy and that Starling is a beaut 😊 I'm still eagerly awaiting the mini heatwave, fingers crossed it happens over a weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 08-Apr-18 03:00 PM GMT

I'm sure you'll get that shot sooner or later Bugboy. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 10-Apr-18 09:48 PM GMT

Is it just me or is there something abnormally reassuring about seeing butterflies nectaring on tree blossom?

Love the Starling too. He seems to be full of the joys of spring and looks like he knows something we do not at the moment!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Apr-18 08:19 PM GMT

Thanks guys. Middle of April and I'm still struggling to see anything 😊. I have my fingers crossed for this weekend but depending on what I look at we'll either get rain or sun. Probably a mixture of all sorts since it is April. One I can confirm though is that we will definitely get two full days of weather!

I think this seasons poor start is accentuated by last season amazing one. Looking back at my records I was up to 14 species by the 11th April last year, I've only seen 13 individual butterflies so far this year! I've had a bit of a play with my pictures to illustrate how the past three seasons compare to this year up to 11th April:



2015



2016



2017



2018

There you go, a post in 2018 full of butterflies even though none of those images are actually from this year 😂😂

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Apr-18 08:45 PM GMT

Sounds an awful lot like my posts so far... 😊 😊 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-18 06:45 PM GMT

Having had my chortle I looked properly at your year on year comparisons...some absolutely cracking shots Bugboy 😊. Hopefully the comparatively slow start of this season will bring greater rewards later in the year, 2017 seemed to start early and then fizzled out quite quickly (with a few notable exceptions of course).

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 12-Apr-18 10:07 PM GMT

We can tell you're hurting, BB. We're all equally frustrated but things can't go on like this indefinitely, and by all accounts next week will see a welcome change to mild and sunny conditions, and I suspect we'll all have filled our boots by this time next Thursday!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 13-Apr-18 02:12 PM GMT

I'm on a par with you Bugboy, as regards the Butterflies, remember the old saying though" Every thing comes to those who wait" 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Apr-18 08:22 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, just a minuscule selection from my vast back catalogue 😊

Thanks **David** but after yesterday, all is forgiven 😊

Everything does indeed come to those who wait **Goldie** 😊

14th April, Bookham

Finally the weather Gods took pity on me and provided a sunny warm spring day that coincided with a day off, enabling me to do this years first proper days butterflying. I knew things were going to be good (little did I know how good) when a Brimstone fluttered along Bookham Railway station as I arrived and then just through the gate I nearly trod on a Peacock. The Brimstone wasn't stopping for anything that didn't bear more than a passing resemblance to a female Brimstone but the Peacock happily settled for its photoshoot, even waiting patiently for me to switch lenses.



One reason for coming here was to return some rescued Brown Hairstreak eggs. 5 in total. Hopefully they've survived the winter in my fridge, the Blackthorn sucker they were laid on was destroyed by some heavy machinery clearing scrub to attract Nightingale, so it's a miracle they survived in any recognizable state in the first place. Elsewhere other eggs were still unhatched but possibly close to hatching.



As the morning continued to warm up, Brimstone and Comma became the dominant butterflies. The latter being far more willing to pose than the former...as one would expect, various types of animal droppings being far more interesting than a strange man standing over them. It seems like forever since I was last spoilt for choice at what to point my camera at, but an event would later become the focus of my attention and eclipse all the other days events.



Since I got my new lens there's one bird I've been trying to get, the Jay, and today I came across one willing to sit for me. It'd found an acorn so was happily stuffing it's face whilst I clicked away (and no, that's not the event I was alluding to).



Noon came and Comma numbers soon reached double figures, which is no surprise considering how many larvae and pupae I was finding last summer.



It was difficult to say how many Brimstone I was seeing due to their more wandering habits, but it was probably also double figures, but none settled within camera range.



Upon reaching the spot where I followed a few Red Admiral eggs over the winter I stopped and had a good look around. No larval tents were found but just as I was about to leave an adult glided down from the canopy and settled long enough for one snap. I wonder if this was the female responsible for the eggs 🤔



The return trip threw up the same bunch of Comma's and Brimstone and a few small detours threw up several more individuals, all posing too well to ignore (the Comma's that is). Still the days event's had far from peaked though...



Hoping for a bit more variety I ventured out of the woods where Peacocks started to appear here and there, looking resplendent under the clear blue sky.



On Banks Common a solitary Roe Deer stared at me whilst a few Buzzards circled overhead



And as the afternoon grew to a close and I made my way back to the station for the journey home a single Small Tortoiseshell joined the Comma's and Peacocks, tussling over territory. One female Peacock was even displaying egg laying behaviour, searching for that one special nettle leaf that is good enough for her eggs, they're certainly making up for lost time!



So no new species to add to the yearly tally but a day that was most definitely worth the long wait. But what was it that made the day so special, you'll have to wait for the next post to find out, sorry 😊 .

Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSp0ck, 15-Apr-18 09:24 PM GMT

Things should be starting at Hutchinsons Bank in the next 2 weeks, 30 butterflies so far on the 2 transect walks. I expect you will be visiting during the Dingy/Grizzled/Small Blue flight. The 17 consecutive weeks we had Small Blues last year, seems to have been the longest recorded on transects last year. Brown Hairstreak eggs are more numerous too, with 86 found on Featherbed Lane Verge.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-18 10:25 PM GMT

Looking forward to the next post with bated breath Bugboy 😊😊 Saturday was a great day for butterflies only to be brought back down with a bump today 😊 And as expected the weather is set to be great all next week...now I'm back at work 😊 so make the most of it 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 15-Apr-18 10:55 PM GMT

How can you end your episode with such a cliffhanger, Buggy? 😞😞 I had wondered what Bookham might offer at this time of year, and that looks like a pretty comprehensive visit (with a surprise still to come as well). That seems to be a very fresh Red Admiral – I have yet to see one round my way in any condition, considering how many there were in November.

I think I might have to include Bookham as part of a day out this week...

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 16-Apr-18 07:05 AM GMT

Not another Large Tortoiseshell I hope !.
I share the urge to tease when something a bit special is discovered.
Hopefully normal Butterflying can resume this week. (don't forget the sun cream).

Good luck,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Hi! Bugboy, I'm waiting with bated breath 😊 Well done with the Blue Jay, we've got a few in Hall-Lee-Brook and I've tried loads of times to get a shot without luck, they're such a secretive bird. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 16-Apr-18 10:58 AM GMT

Very nice indeed Bugboy. 😊 Well done on the Jay.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Apr-18 09:34 PM GMT

Ooooh dear, hope I've not overdone the suspense a tad 🤪😄. Anyway I felt this worthy it's own post since it's apparently rarely seen so...

14th April, Bookham, the main event

Ok so what was so special about Saturday. Well mid afternoon I was starting to slowly meander my way back to the station when out of the corner of my eye I saw a kerfuffle of deep crimson by the side of the path. Focusing my attention, I was greeted by eight large eyes looking back at me, a pair of courting Peacocks, something I've never witnessed before. Both were in excellent condition and the female also possessed some very impressive hindwing ocelli. The behaviour seemed very similar to Small Tortoiseshells, lots of nudging and foot & antennae tapping from the male. The recipient of the advances seemed very receptive, making no real effort to escape, merely shuffling a few inches along the ground occasionally as if to test the male's perseverance.





After about 5 minutes of this (I've no idea how long this had been going on before I arrived) the female took to the air. I fully expected them to vanish over the hedge or up into a tree but to my delight she just fluttered flirtatiously into a dark recess under a small fallen branch with the male in tow (if she had fingers she would definitely have beckoned him to follow her) and submitted to his eager advances. It was nearly impossible to get anything image wise without the use of flash and it was also very uncomfortable laying belly down on damp thorny scrub, so I tentatively looked to see what the branch was attached to (I wouldn't normally interfere with mating butterflies but so far they had sat tight despite me moving several offending twigs and stems close to them).



The branch turned out to be just resting on the ground so being very careful, I slowly moved it a bit at a time, keeping a close eye on the Peacocks. Not a flinch or twitch from either until finally I'd swiveled it 180 degrees, exposing the mating pair. At this stage the sun was hiding behind a cloud and it felt a little chilly which most likely helped to keep them settled.



When the sun came out the female stirred but my worries were soon put to rest, she just soaked up a few rays whilst her suitor continued with the task in hand, females eh 😊!



It's a shame the male didn't do the same, that would have made an impressive picture but I guess males can't multitask!

I waited for the next cloud to pass and the female to close her wings before putting the branch back to how it was and leaving the Peacocks alone to get on with the important business.

An experience to make the long winters wait well worthwhile 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Apr-18 09:57 PM GMT

That is indeed an extraordinarily unusual sighting. An excellent spot and worth many 🍷 😊

Brilliant, Buggy. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 16-Apr-18 10:05 PM GMT

Not another Large Tortoiseshell, that's saved some mrgreens.
But mating Peacocks are not seen on here very often.
So a mrgreen for that 🍴.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Apr-18 05:36 PM GMT

Well spotted Bugboy, you certainly get a green from me 😊🍴 I've never seen Peacocks Mate before 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-18 08:44 PM GMT

An absolutely fantastic find Bugboy, I don't think I've ever even witnessed courtship in this species 😊🍴🍴🍴

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 17-Apr-18 10:35 PM GMT

Well, BB, what can I say? I was hoping for Large Tortoiseshells but in a way this is even better as it is behaviour so seldom seen! I note with interest the time of day you observed these two getting down to business. It's remarkable how infrequently this family of butterflies are seen in cop and I suspect they are doing it in plain sight only at a time when most of us are not paying attention!

Food for thought!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 19-Apr-18 08:42 AM GMT

Brilliant find Bugboy! Well done. 🍴😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Apr-18 10:36 PM GMT

Thank you everyone, after the long wait it was good to get the season off with a bang 😊 Anyway, I'm getting a little behind in reports so I better get a crack on or Wurzel will overtake me, god forbid.... The shame of it 😊!

15th April, Essex

Like several of us the highs of Saturday were brought crashing back down to reality by a dreary, drab Sunday. I did have tentative plans but upon looking out the window I shelved them and planned a day in catching up on boring houseworky stuff, until a friend messaged me to ask if I fancied a day out. The destination was a place called Coalhouse Fort on the north side of the Thames estuary in Essex. A quick look on google maps suggested I should take the camera 'just in case' the sun came out. Coalhouse Fort is a Napoleonic defence that was then repurposed during WW2 but the surrounding area is very green, with lots of saltmarsh and long walks in both directions along the coast. Birdlife was plentiful, here's a kestrel putting on a good show.



The cloud cover wasn't too thick, making it borderline coat wearing weather, which in my experience also makes it borderline butterfly weather and as we walked along the odd butterfly (Peacocks mostly) would give teasing flybys, blown along in the stiff breeze.

At times the cloud thinned enough to make a faint disc in the sky that had been so prominent the day before just visible enough to raise the temperature a couple of degrees and it was during these moments that I managed a few snaps. Although there were several Peacocks jostling over territory it was a couple of Small Tortoiseshell that I concentrated on, not just because I've seen less of these so far this year, but they were also much better behaved!



It was whilst we wandered on a little further that I spied of in the distance a white butterfly fluttering towards us, whatever it was it would be a new species for the year, but would it settle long enough to get an ID? Well yes, eventually, and I added Green-veined White to my yearly tally.



Had the sun been out I feel sure I would have been spoilt for choice as to what to point my camera at. Ahh well, maybe another time and it was nice to mooch around a brand new site 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-18 11:45 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy I especially like the second Small Tort shot, really captured the engrossed way that they feed 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s I've got a few reports already written and ready to go... 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Apr-18 08:55 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, You'd have thought the Tortoiseshell hadn't eaten for months the way it was stuffing it's face 😊

16th April, a sunny afternoon...not!

This was my half day at work and potentially the start of the long-promised heatwave. The morning looked promising, a few clouds about but a nice amount of blue sky but by lunchtime (home time for me today) practically all the blue had vanished and it had become noticeably cooler. Nevertheless I'm nothing if not stubborn and I stuck to my plan of wandering around Tottenham Marshes for a few hours on my way home.

The cloudy conditions stuck fast but I hoped the sunny morning would have woken a few up who may still be visible. You know you're in the zone when you can spot a Comma with it's wings closed from a fair distance! (although it was sitting on a big green leaf)



Closer inspection revealed a nice female with a broken 'comma'



The second butterfly was a basking Small Tortoiseshell who flew off the second I saw it, never to be seen again.

Just over an hour later I came across the third and final butterfly of the day, another spot proving I was in the zone, my first Small white of the season, snoozing on a leaf.



Hopefully the next day would be better, I planned to have another wander round Large Tortoiseshell territory. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 20-Apr-18 09:40 PM GMT

Good luck with the Large Tortoiseshell, BB! Hope the weather picks up for you. It was great here this afternoon but thunderstorms are promised for tomorrow 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pete Eeles, 21-Apr-18 03:23 PM GMT

Congrats on the Peacock mating pair, Paul ... I can't recall ever seeing an image of that! Apols for the delayed post – I'm in the process of catching up!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-18 03:53 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, hope you see the Large Tort, we've not seen any GVW's either yet here but hope fully that will change soon. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Apr-18 10:15 PM GMT

Good luck with any Large Tortoiseshell mission you undertake, BB. I'd love it if we could get evidence of this majestic butterfly's presence on UK shores again this year!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Apr-18 10:53 PM GMT

Thanks everyone, there will always be a lot of luck in locating LT in the UK, they are there but they are so elusive. One has already been photographed in Sussex **David**, a month or so ago 😊

Thanks **Pete** and no worries, I'm having trouble keeping up with my own PD never mind about anyone else's!

17th April, North Stoke.

On my last day of freedom before having to go back to work for the duration of this unseasonably warm spell (which, with military precision, was due to come to an end on my next day off), I decided another attempt at locating a Large Tortoiseshell was worth a stab. Other reports suggested the site had come to life since my last visit, so packing my wellies I left early and got myself onto a train that would get me there for 9am. Some early mist cleared as I traveled down, and the forecasted blue sky joined my arrival at Amberley station. The forecast had gotten a little worse as the days progressed, but I was still promised good weather at least until 1pm, plenty long enough to work the site over a few times. Whilst waiting for the butterflies to come to life I watched the plentiful birdlife, Pheasants by the bucket load in nearby fields, various birds of prey and countless small passerines all enjoying the onset of spring. I also had a fright when I caught sight of this ceramic toad perched by the side of a path



Just after 10 I started seeing the first butterflies, Peacocks and a few whites who turned out to be of the Green-veined persuasion.



It was all looking rather good until 10.30 when a huge bank of cloud cancelled the start of action and for the next 3 hours the sky looked something like this:



And no, that blue sky wasn't heading my way, it was moving parallel to me. As if to further rub salt into the wound, some sort of topographical witchcraft was happening above my head. As the cloud bank passed over the ridge of the site it visibly broke up and dissipated 😡.

Oh well if last year taught me anything it was don't give up, I explored further afield than on previous visits, seeing the occasional butterfly, hoping the day hadn't come to a premature end.



Finally, the sun returned, and I was greeted with an explosion of butterflies, Peacocks, Commas, whites and Brimstones all making the most of things. One of the Whites turned out to be the season debut of an Orange-tip for me. I took this as a good omen since last years Orange-tip debut was also a female and on the same day as I saw the Large Tortoiseshell here.





It was a short lived sunny spell though with more clouds spilling over me (the clear sky either side of me making me feel slightly cursed) and this was how the rest of the afternoon progressed, every time the action looked to pick up another cloud would send everything back to roost but despite all this I did manage to come home with a camera full of images to sift through, sadly though not a sniff of any Large Torts... and oddly none of its smaller cousins.



Poised like a WW2 spitfire ready to do battle with the Luftwaffe



Despite almost completely missing one fore wing this chap was still able to fly, albeit rather more feebly.



The usual Brimstone springtime shenanigans!



Pheasants everywhere!



I think I was spotted!

It was a good day for birds of prey, along with a couple of Red Kites and the usual Buzzards a Kestrel spent some time hovering near me and a Peregrine glided over.

It looks like there will be no Large Tortoiseshells for me this year but hey ho, it's always going to be a long shot 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 21-Apr-18 11:34 PM GMT

I'm very envious of your Brimstone, Bugboy – I can't catch them with their wings open! 🍷
Is it an illusion or does that third Peacock have a much bigger eyespot than usual?
Shame about the LTs – hope you get another chance this year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 22-Apr-18 07:23 AM GMT

And there was me praying for some cloud so the Orange Tips would settle for a millisecond.
The recent fine weather has done wonders for Butterfly numbers around here.

Great report from Amberley, next year for an LT. or two ?.

I expect I'll see you around,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-18 08:08 PM GMT

Great set of images Bugboy especially the poses thrown by the Peacocks, I know what you mean about Spitfire like 😊 Good work with the Brimstone shenanigans shot – I've never seen a courting pair of Brimstone 🍀 I hope you have more luck with the LT next year...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Apr-18 09:06 PM GMT

Hi **Janet**, the trick with Brimstones is to find a courting couple, set your shutter speed as fast as you can get away with, and point and shoot. They flap their wings relatively slowly compared to many other species so it's quite easy to freeze the action once you've got them focused 😊. Another trick is to find one having breakfast or mid afternoon tea and again point and shoot. That's the beauty of modern digital photography, you can afford to shoot off 50+ shots and not worry too much that 49 of them will be binned 😊

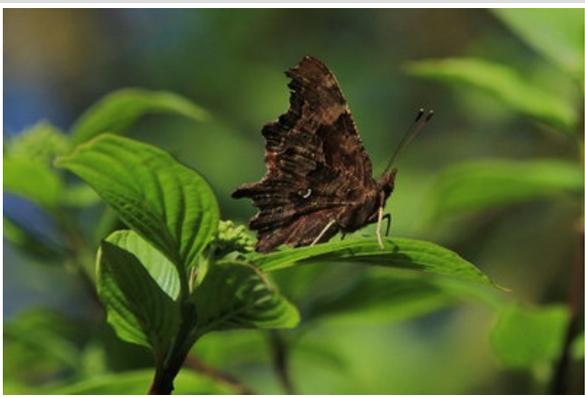
Thanks **Trevor**. Oh the vagaries of our weather. I would have been happy with the odd fluffy cloud, just not 3 hours solid of it hanging over me, it really did put a lid on the temperature and activity. There's always a chance for a LT there, from what I've read, personal gut feeling and speaking to more knowledgeable people the site is close to perfect for them. The main problem is that about 90% of it is inaccessible, making locating an already elusive butterfly even more difficult to point that it's pretty much pure luck if you find one.

Thanks **Wurzel**. That surprises me that you've never seen courting Brimstones, I can almost guarantee seeing half a dozen or so every spring. I was watching a couple at work yesterday 😊

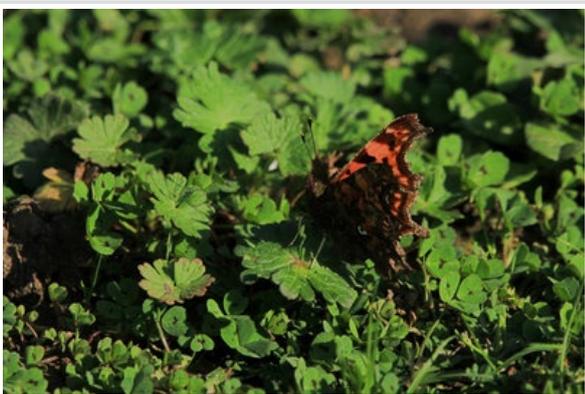
18th April, Scorchio!

For the rest of this week I resorted to guerrilla style butterflying, grabbing my chances when I could and turning any negative situation to my advantage. Today's negative situation being a dentist appointment, just a check up, but you never know what those sadists might find! Anyway, it was in the middle of the afternoon giving me not enough time to return to work after but (assuming I got the all clear) enough time for an hour or two on my local patch. I escaped unhurt 😊.

The forecasters had got it right about it being a scorcher, even at 4pm it felt uncomfortably warm and many of the butterflies I saw seemed to be struggling. I got my first glimpse of a speckle for the year, but he was disturbed by a dog walker before I could get a snap. I don't think I would have got a worthwhile image though, he was too busy temperature regulating to pose properly. In the same corner a supercharged male Comma was defending his patch against every flying insect, falling blossom petal or bird that dared come close. I managed a few snaps in-between angry bouts of aerobatics.



Elsewhere I came across more Comma and some Peacock but only a few would settle long enough or pose to make an image worthwhile, so I made the most that were willing.





Whites were plentiful, only one of which I managed to get close enough to photograph. The only other white I managed to get close enough to ID was a female Orange-tip but she escaped my camera. Two females now but still no males!



A nice way to forget about the earlier appointment 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 22-Apr-18 09:46 PM GMT

Bad luck again with your endeavours tracking down a Large Tortoiseshell. Nothing seems to have gone quite right... 🙄 Spring butterflies and heat don't seem to mix, do they? I'm sure Orange Tips in particular are simply not geared to flourish in anything much over 22 degrees or so. Some nice shots there though of those prepared to brave the heat. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 23-Apr-18 03:01 PM GMT

Great reports and shots Bugboy. Love the Brimstone pair. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-18 04:41 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, we're struggling here to find GVW and Small Whites, even the Speckies don't seem to have arrived yet or the Holly Blues, nice shots of the Peacock's by the way and there's still time to find your Large Tort I think. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Apr-18 12:32 PM GMT

Having a static line of cloud above your head with blue skies tantalisingly beyond is one of the greatest frustrations any butterflyer can have, BB. 😞

That said, you nonetheless got some tremendous images of many of the spring species and I'm sure if any Large Torts are about, you are the man to find them.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Apr-18 12:40 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, I see one turned up at Dungeness the other day, probably an immigrant.... I wonder if that means we're having another influx? You're right about the heat, springtime butterflies heat regulating mid morning is something not often witnessed!

Thanks **Andrew**, I always stop to watch courting Brimstone, they look so graceful 😊

You'll get them soon **Goldie**, it's still early days 😊

Yes **David**, hugely frustrating but there's nothing you can do but sit it out with fingers crossed.

19th April, More Scorchio!

I attempted doing my transects at work but it became clear very quickly that it was just too hot to get results. I'd seen a good few Whites and Brimstones during the morning but by 1pm they were all seeking shelter and invisible to my eyes, so I shelved that idea and hoped I'd get better results the following morning. I didn't have my camera with me, but I did manage one snap late in the day on my phone, much to the amusement of colleagues!



20th April, even more Scorchio!

I remembered my camera today and managed to sneak off for 10 minutes early in the morning to look for a speckled Wood I'd seen the previous day and get my first speckle snaps for the year. It wasn't even 10am but he was already temperature regulating himself 😊



Later in the morning during my transect I noticed a female Brimstone egg laying on an up to then, unknown Buckthorn.



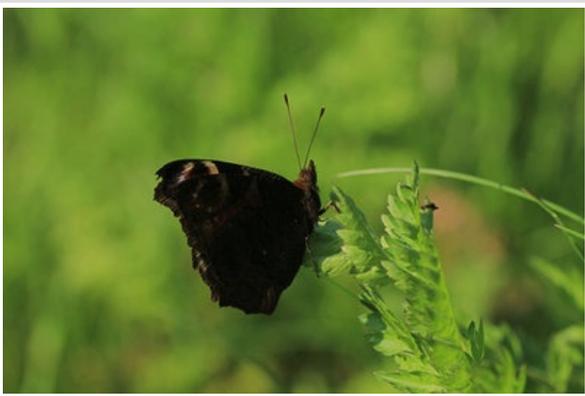
Near the end of my Transect I found another unsuccessful courting attempt from a male.



Later in the day whilst doing some actual work (so no camera available) I stumbled across a holly blue and managed a few phone snaps.

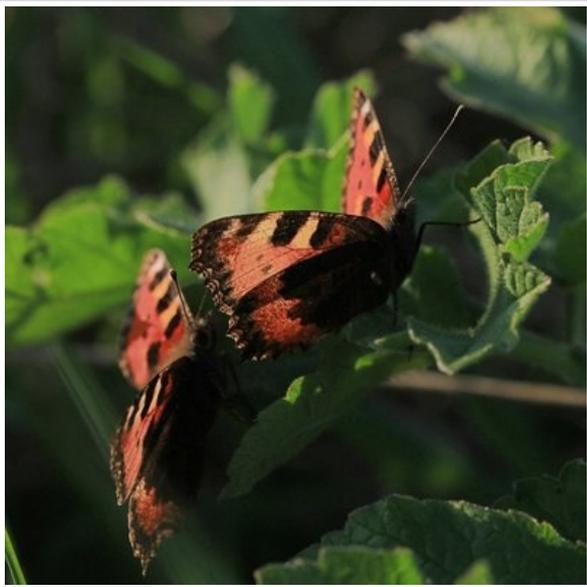


I finished at 4 today which meant I might well have enough time (as long as it didn't cloud over) for a bit of butterfly hunting on the way home at Tottenham Marshes. It didn't cloud over and by 5pm I was seeing the first of dozens of whites. I think they were mostly GVW but it was still ridiculously hot, so none were willing to stop for more than a second or two. The first grounded butterflies I came across were a few Peacock and Comma but like the Speckled Wood that morning it was difficult to find one willing to open its wings for any length of time.



In the same spot mixing in with a couple of whites were two male Orange-tips, but I didn't really have a hope of either settling for photo opportunities.

I moved on to some of the more open areas where Small Tortoiseshells often turn up, encountering countless more whites when up from my feet flew a pair of Small Tortoiseshell. They didn't fly far and were very easy to follow around. The female was definitely receptive, making no attempt to lose her suitor and in the hope of seeing a second Vassened pairing in a week I ended up following them around for about half an hour. They were an exceptionally good-looking pair, the intensity of colour on both quite spectacular. The activity centred around a patch of lush Nettle growth and on the odd occasion when they flew off out of sight I'd just hang around and await their return. It's always fascinating watching behaviour, and in this case listening too, the males head butting being clearly audible at close range.



My hope of witnessing a pairing though ended in near Shakespearean tragedy though. The female landed on a Cow Parsley flower head, giving the poor lovesick male nowhere to perch close enough to continue his headbutting courtship shenanigans. As he circled he took his eye of the goal at the exact second she fluttered off, leaving the poor male circling the flower in a desperate bid to re-locate her. In his single-minded search he blundered into a spiders web, his frantic fluttering then attracting another male which too ended up trapped in the web. The owner of said web was plenty large enough to cope with then so having observed him for so long (I almost felt like his friend) I felt obligated to step in and free them.

I returned to the spot where the Orange-tips were flying in the hope they had started to slow down but even at 6.30 it was still too warm. They were actually following the setting sun up the side of the hedge and now patrolling mostly above head height. All I could get were a few in flight shots as they dipped down.



Elsewhere the Peacock and Comma were more willing to open up now.



I left at 6.45 with butterfly activity not looking like it was willing to cease until the sun was well and truly set

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-Apr-18 01:43 PM GMT

You can almost feel the heat from those photos, Buggy. 😊 Unreal for the time of year (but back to normal now of course...). A very splendid pair of Small Tortoiseshells there. I always feel minded to rescue butterflies from spiders too – there will always be another meal along for them, hopefully a parasitic fly of some sort! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-18 02:00 PM GMT

Well done Bugboy for rescuing those Tortoiseshell's, I hate to see Butterflies caught in Spider's webs especially Small Tort's 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 24-Apr-18 06:30 PM GMT

What a marathon, BB. You blew away a few of your own cobwebs there by the look of things, as well as saving Tortoiseshells from them.

Is it just me or are Orange Tips proving particularly difficult to photograph this year? It's like they're all on Red Bull!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-18 08:28 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy, especially the Comma on perched and ready for combat 😊 I've seen the Brimstones flapping about but never them settling down and doing the more intimate aspects, oh well there's always another day 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Apr-18 08:07 PM GMT

Thanks guys, it was a hectic week last week, trying to make the most of the good weather 😊

22th April, starting to cool down but still Scorchio for April!

I managed to fit the new weeks transects at work today and got a few snaps. Early in the morning I saw a white feeding so grabbed my camera for a few snaps, this is the first white at work I've managed to ID, everything up 'til now just hyperactive white blur shooting past.



I found a female Comma busy peppering nettles with her eggs



And some mating Speckled Wood, a first for me. They were desperately trying to escape the heat and my pictures were horribly contrasty, so it's been tweaked rather savagely...



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-18 08:37 PM GMT

Great shot of he Specklies even if it's been tweaked a little bit 😊👍 I've still no seen one this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-Apr-18 09:58 PM GMT

Something I've only seen once, when a pair fell out of a tree in front of me! Very nice shot – the tweaking has really brought out the great patterning underneath. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Apr-18 01:57 PM GMT

Given how common this species is, it's surprising how seldom one sees a pair in-cop so well done with that one, BB.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Apr-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks guys, another simple case of right time, right place 😊 (Look away now if you've still not seen any Specklies Wurzel 😊)

23rd April, Normality resumes

It was with the sort of inevitable pinpoint accuracy that professional weather forecasters can barely dream about that having started the day after my last day off, the heatwave ended the day before my next time off 😊! My Monday half-day started off quite bright but by lunchtime it was overcast and noticeably cooler, but I had a plan and I was sticking to it!

It's becoming a bit of a regular stop off now, Tottenham Marshes on my way home, and it was here I found myself on a cloudy afternoon. It was thin cloud though so I hoped bright enough for something, although I was only likely to find roosting Orange-tip which had the sun stayed shining, would have been the primary target.

My first sighting was indeed one of these sleeping beauties, a male on some Cow Parsley which was going to be the plant of choice as the afternoon progressed.



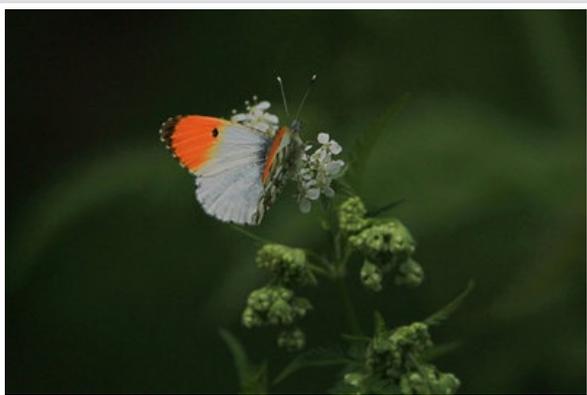
Occasionally the cloud thinned enough to produce a hazy sun and a few Speckled Wood came out to play. In total there were three egg laying females in one small area but only one took a break somewhere that was useful to me.



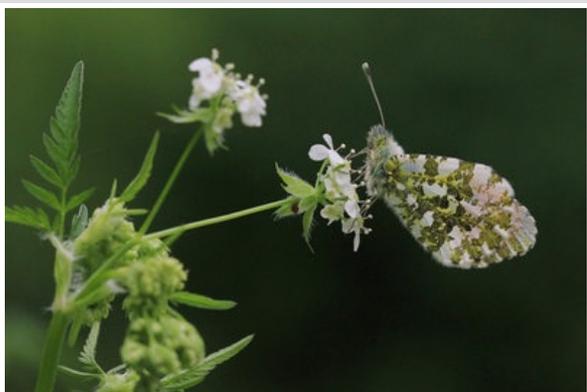
The next butterfly was the first of many Green-veined White, a nice fresh female enjoying a short-lived period of hazy sun.



A second Orange-tip was found roosting low down next to the path was unfortunate to be in the way of a happy go lucky dogs wagging tail. This did however give me the chance to grab a rubbish upperside shot when it settled again. Unfortunately my camera was on the wrong setting but its all I have to show so far this year.



Camera settings adjusted I got better shots as he went back to sleep.



Over the next hour or so several more Green-veined Whites were found, mostly just sitting around not doing much, occasionally one was feeding.



The afternoon was rounded off by a nice Comma, another egg laying Specklie who went up to feed on some Field Maple flowers and a Small white.





Not the best afternoon but I saw enough to make the afternoon stroll worthwhile 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 27-Apr-18 01:30 PM GMT

I do believe you can find butterflies when nobody else can, Bugboy! Even on a dull day you find them 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-18 03:53 PM GMT

Keep them coming Bugboy, your cheering me up 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-18 06:54 PM GMT

David M wrote:

Given how common this species is, it's surprising how seldom one sees a pair in-cop so well done with that one, BB.

Indeed, even with the resident Specklies in my garden I have only seen a pair in cop a couple of times and both times they were well hidden down in the vegetation. Well spotted 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Apr-18 10:09 PM GMT

😬 I'm not sure I'm that good Janet 😬

Glad you're enjoying my ongoing saga Goldie 😊

Thanks Neil, this pair were also discreetly nestled down in the vegetation, they just got disturbed by some oaf in his big work boots wandering around with his camera 😊

24th April

My day off arrived just in time for what was to be the cloudiest day of the week. The heatwave already but a distant memory I resigned myself to a day of chores, the Hoover seemed to have been doing a rather good job at collecting dust in the corner all by itself whilst I've been off clutching at chances to find butterflies.

By the afternoon though it seemed that the cloud cover was thinning. Thinking my luck was in, I grabbed my camera and shot out to Walthamstow Marshes to see if had awoken anything. Had I left an hour earlier and caught the main part of the brighter spell I may well have been in luck but unfortunately, I just caught the tail end and nothing was on the wing. A single Orange-tip lightened my spirits a bit and as I knelt down to get a few shots I noticed a Green-veined White a few feet away.



Two hours later that was all I had seen and since it was starting to rain it was all I was likely to see, so I scarpered back home to finish the chores.

25th April

Work returned the following day along with significantly more sun and so it was back to guerrilla style butterflying, camera on standby for any encounters. A lunchtime wander threw up several Specklies, no mating this time, but they did throw some nice poses



26th April

Another lunchtime wander today produced a few more species, a few hyperactive Brimstone escaped me but a nicely marked Green-veined White stopped off near me and a female Comma tried and failed to blend into the background during a passing cloudy spell:



When the sun returned she made a beeline for the nearest patch of nettle



And a 4pm finish meant yet another stop off at Tottenham Marshes, but despite the sunny afternoon there was surprisingly little about. I suspect the cool breeze had sent most things to an early bed. All I found was a freshly emerged GVW and a nice looking Small Tort.



And that brings me up to date with my weekend off about to start....hmmm I wonder what the weather forecast is looking like 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Apr-18 11:35 PM GMT

Still no Specklies but I looked anyway Bugboy 🐛😄 Great sets of reports and it's good to see another 'Lunchtime' butterfly, I'm going to write to my MP and encourage him to get 'lunchtime butterflying' as policy 😊
Don't look at the weather forecast, just don't do it 😊 Much better to just wake up and look out the window...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Apr-18 05:46 PM GMT

Fabulous stuff, BB, especially the grounded Comma. I've seen very few Whites so far this year, so it's good to know that they're about elsewhere in the country.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Apr-18 05:24 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, lunchtime butterflying is this seasons new black 😊 Oh and I looked...

Thanks **David**, GWW's seem to be having a really good spring in my neck of the woods 😊

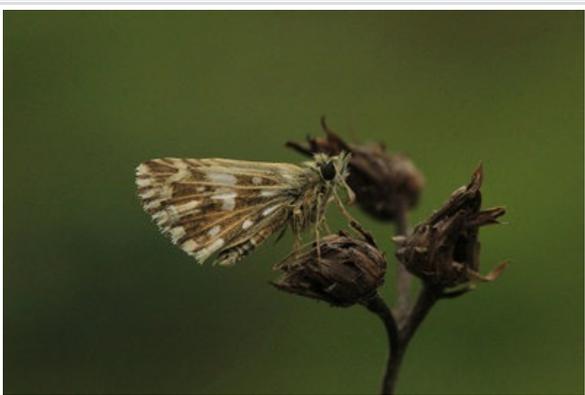
28th April, Winter's coming...

Despite the god-awful prospect for the weekend, (it would seem Spring over reached itself last week and decided to go for a weekend break, leaving Winter to hold the fort for a few days 😞), I was determined not to waste my weekend off. I decided to hop on a train to the south coast where apparently, there was a hint of some bright(er) weather at some point. Mill Hill near Shoreham seemed worth a punt since two species I've yet to see this year are on the wing, one of which I had a fairly good chance of finding without the aid of sun.

As I reached the sheltered lower slope the first thing of interest I found was this gorgeous moth, the Purple Bar, one of the Carpet moths. Despite being common and widespread this is my first one.



Nearby I spied my first target species of the day, hiding in plain sight as they do. The first Grizzled Skipper of the year.



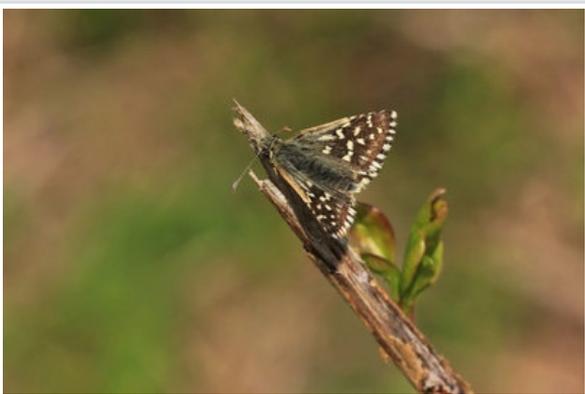
The cloud cover showed no sign of going anywhere so finding the second target for the day, Green Hairstreaks, was put on hold and I focused on looking for more Grizzlies. I didn't find any more in the northern corner of the site but come across a roosting Large Red Damselfly in my careful searching.



I decided to have a wander further afield, perhaps I'd locate an Orange-tip or two? I didn't find any, but the soundtrack was rather pleasant.



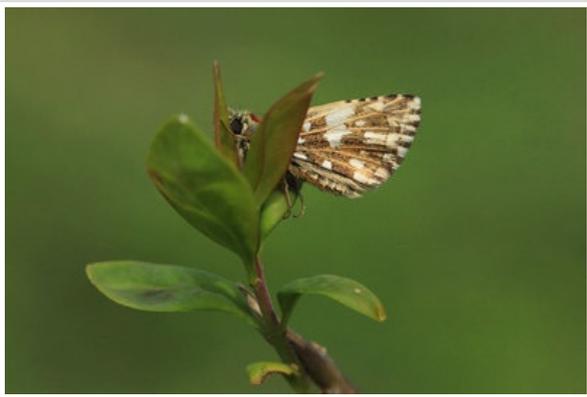
After a few hours the cloud cover did indeed look like it was starting to thin so I returned the lower slopes and discovered a second Grizzlie. A small patch of blue sky passed at just the right moment and I got my shots.





With the sun warming the air here and there I hoped it would be enough for the Hairstreaks. Although I'm not sure of the known hotspots here I searched the various areas that looked promising but sadly none showed themselves to me, perhaps it was too little too late.

Before leaving I couldn't resist another few snaps of the second Grizzlie. It'd been warm enough to move but not far and I quickly relocated it, looking rather cute peering at me from behind a leaf.



Sadly it was when I had to leave that the sun really made an effort to rid the sky of clouds but I did manage a Holly Blue to finish the day with 😊



I'm glad I made the effort to stop the weekend being a total right off 😂😂 !

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Apr-18 06:24 PM GMT

It seems as though we've already had two short seasons so far this year.

On a spring like February day I photographed a Brimstone, then we had the beast and mini beast.

More recently a mini heatwave, with plenty of action on the slightly cooler days, now tomorrow your Grizlie might get sleeted on at Mill hill.

I share your frustration, but at least I'm free to go out whenever the Sun shines. (chores get abandoned !).

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Apr-18 02:06 PM GMT

Perseverance paid off Bugboy things over this way are still really quiet with very few records and none yet of Grizzlies 🐻 And you managed to 'do a Millerd' 😊🐻 Hopefully the promised decent weather will actually materialise...they've got to get it right eventually 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 30-Apr-18 02:18 PM GMT

Great reports and shots Bugboy, looks like you have made the best of these mixed conditions. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-May-18 08:34 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, this has been an extremely frustrating season so far, hopefully with summer just around the corner things will settle down now 😊
Haha, thanks **Wurzel**, that Holly Blue wasn't quite up to Millerds standards, a bit crumpled looking. Give your local Grizzlies a week or two yet, Mill Hill is a south facing slope on the south coast so it's always going to be an early site.

Thanks **Andrew**, I do try my best when opportunities present themselves 😊

1st May, Spring's here...?

Well would you Adam & Eve it, a sunny forecast coinciding with a day off. A rare thing for me this year but since I've waited quietly and patiently(😊) for such an occurrence, I certainly wasn't going to waste it. I set my sights on my first visit of the year to Denbies and some Green Hairstreak. As always, the walk from the station was a distracting stroll, Speckled Woods inhabiting most the sunny glades along the more wooded parts of the walk, although a little disappointing not to find any Holly Blue which more often than not join them.



In the more open areas Whites were present, mostly sporting a distinctive flash of orange as they zoomed past, sadly I was too late to catch any breakfasting, but it was meant to get a little cloudier later so hopefully I'd have better opportunities on the return trip. A Small White did stop long enough though.



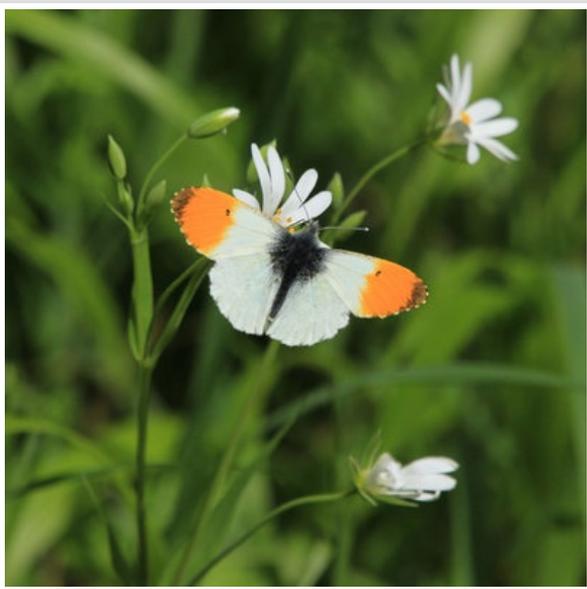
As usual the wind at Denbies was amplified but at the Hairstreak 'master shrub' it was sheltered enough for it not to matter. What did matter (to me) was the complete lack of Hairstreaks 😊! In fact, for the entire hour I wandered the slope I saw just one solitary Butterfly 😊😊.



I presume this lack of activity is just a blip brought on by the up and down April. Hopefully a second wave of Hairstreaks will appear soon along with the spring Skippers and Lycids, fingers crossed for next week 😊

Little fluffy clouds had begun to appear so I turned my attention to Orange-tip hunting. I had several flybys on the return but the spot that seemed the best was a sunlit lane leading down to the winery. A dark cloud had appeared just in time and very quickly I located a grounded male. As the cloud passed there was a sudden hive of activity, three males jostling for my attention along with an unfortunate male Green-veined White who had to put up with continued dive bombing male Orange-tips. Common Vetch seemed to be particularly attractive.





Just before reaching the train station I found a female, not fully asleep and my attention caused her to flutter around a bit but she did pose exceedingly well when settled 😊!



My next destination was Bookham. It's damp meadows are another good spot for Orange-tips plus I hoped I'd be able to locate a few larvae.

It was with some disappointment that I arrived under a grey sky. The little harmless fluffy white clouds now replaced with foreboding dark blankets 😞. It's a good job I give scant regard for forecasts these days I thought as I put on my coat to the first spots of rain.

I easily located my first target though. Two years in a row now I've managed to locate a Brown Hairstreak egg on a small isolated sprig of blackthorn, making finding the resulting larvae that much easier. This one's already moulted once or twice from the looks of things. My rescued ones I returned last time are all still unhatched but then they've only had a fortnight of spring to start development.



The cloud cover remained, accompanied by the occasional light shower so I was left to look for sleepers, finding just the one, another female, hanging like a mossy tear from some Greater Stitchwort.



A little sunny spell awoke her briefly from her slumber where she fed as quickly as she could before settling again, showing off the remarkable camouflage this species possesses, something I shall never tire from seeing 😊 .





Spot the Orange-tip.



Butterfly-wise that was it for the day, which, considering the sunny start, was a little disappointing. On the upside, at least I had Orange-tips, even if the most compliant ones lacked the orange 😊 .

Looking for sleepers inevitably meant eggs were found and given the number, and that i saw no larvae, I'd say I have a good few weeks left here before they are done for another year 😊 .



Some new birds did fall victim to the new lens. A Garden Warbler. I know it was a Garden Warbler because I spent ages looking for the singing Blackcap until I noticed the sound was coming from this rather nondescript chap.



And another Warbler, the Whitethroat.



Things look to be getting better after tomorrow so I can only hope it's true, I'm off all next week and all other plans are currently shelved in favour of chasing butterflies!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 01-May-18 09:20 PM GMT

I like your 12 th photo down a lot the female orange-tip counter balancing the white flowers – very nice 🍷🍷
Katrina

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 01-May-18 09:26 PM GMT

It's a shame you drew a blank with Hairstreaks at Denbies, Buggy. Next week should be better. Very nice Orange Tips though, and that Brown Hairstreak larva is a goodie too. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 02-May-18 10:19 AM GMT

Love your OT shots Bugboy and you even got a Grizzled Skipper 🍷🍷 that alone would make my year 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-May-18 11:01 AM GMT

Things are still slow going but we're getting there 😊 Love the lemon blush on that open wing female OT 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 02-May-18 11:19 AM GMT

Well done locating female Orange Tips, that open wing shot is what I'm after.
My local site has plenty of males, but no females yet.
I've even been scrutinising every white Butterfly, even though the flight pattern is wrong in the hope of a female. Last year there were plenty and they were easy to spot.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 02-May-18 05:49 PM GMT

You certainly look to have exorcised your Orange Tip demons, BB. All we need now is for the explosion of mid-spring species – Green Hairstreak, Small Blue, Dingy Skipper, Dukes, et al.

I've a feeling this Bank Holiday weekend is going to be busy for all of us! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 02-May-18 06:46 PM GMT

Great selection of Orange-tip photos Bugboy 😊

I like that shot of the two Specklies together as well, at first glance I thought it was a male trying to court a female but a closer look shows it to be two males, unusual to catch males together like that early in the season without them trying to chase each other off.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-May-18 09:56 PM GMT

Thanks **Katrina**, rather chuffed with that one myself, not least because it was a rushed snap. I was late for my train and was just leaving when I saw her settle there so very quickly clicked of a run of shots and then legged it for the station, I was a 20 minute walk away and the train was due in 10. I was very happy when I checked them whilst getting my breath back on the train 😊

Thanks **Dave**, yes I hope Denbies comes to life next week, Hairstreaks, Skippers and perhaps a few Brown Argus would suit me just fine 😊

Don't worry **Goldie**, you'll get your Grizzlies soon I'm sure 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, it has been slow going with several false starts but I think this weekend is when things will finally kick off properly for us unfortunates who still have to work for a living! 😊

Thanks **Trevor**, although I see you finally got lucky with one of your own at last 😊

Sure did **David** 😊 still a good few weeks to enjoy their company too, had a male flying round me at work today, brightened up my day no end 😊

Thanks **Neil**, I have to admit that until I read your comment I was still assuming it was a pair 😊. It was quite early in the morning so they were still warming up, perhaps still a little too bleary eyed to notice he was chasing another boy 😊 I'm sure an hour later normal male battles were well underway with this pair sharing the same glade!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 04-May-18 11:25 AM GMT

Very nice shots Bugboy. I like the Bluebell Brimstone, and the OT's are great. 😊

Always like a 'multi-site' day.

Cheers

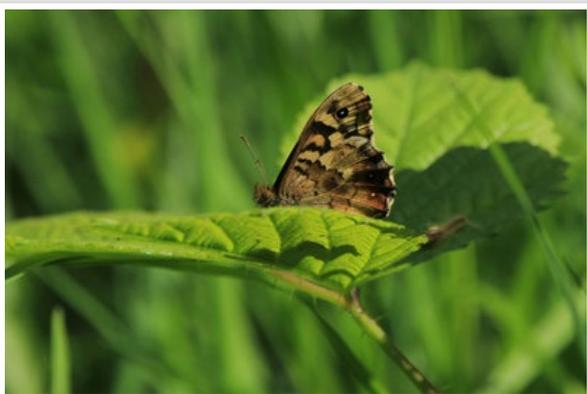
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-May-18 10:11 PM GMT

Thanks **Andrew**, I think it's safe to say a Bluebell makes any butterfly picture that little bit better 😊

4th May,

Another sunny day at work (my week off can't arrive fast enough!) so it was another day of snatched opportunities. A lunchtime wander round one of my transects gave me a couple of Holly Blue flybys and a few better behaved Specklies.



After work I stopped off once again at Tottenham Marshes. Although time was getting on it was still warm and bright enough for plenty of activity. Whites abounded all over the place, mostly to active for a positive ID but both GV and Small were definitely present (I've still yet to see a Large this year).

After trying and failing to get a few snaps of them I made my way to my usual sheltered hotspot where I spent a good hour watching and chasing various species. GV made up the bulk of the Whites and they proved a little more approachable than the ones in the larger meadows.



Also in attendance were a couple of battle scarred Peacock who were both obsessed with the Cow Parsley when not battling over territory with some stropky Commas.





At least three Orange-tip males patrolled back and forth but none settled. A couple of male Blues also dropped over the hedge briefly, mid battle, and vanished equally as quickly. A single female however settled on some Hawthorn budding blossom long enough for a couple of snaps.



Not a bad hour or so at all. Just the weekend to get through then a week of freedom 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 04-May-18 10:52 PM GMT

Good luck next week. If the forecast is correct, there should be some good stuff around by then!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 05-May-18 07:59 AM GMT

Lovely stuff, BB, especially the Peacock on the cow parsley. I never knew butterflies were keen on this plant; I've don't ever recall seeing any nectaring from it.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 09:20 AM GMT

Lovely set of images Bugboy – that lemony Green-veined White is a real stand out butterfly 😊🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 05-May-18 02:10 PM GMT

Another good selection, Buggy. GV Whites seem to be abounding this year in particular. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 05-May-18 08:27 PM GMT

Nice Butterflies Buggy, I'm still looking for Hollie Blues 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Hi Buggy, some very artistic and creative poses there especially the Peacock and GVW. Lovely! Looking forward to seeing what you find next week when you've more time to explore.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-May-18 04:45 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments, much appreciated 😊. It's been a week since I've updated my diary and I'm running the risk of being overtaken by Wurzel, so I thought I'd better make a start documenting my week off. Suffice to say it's been hectic but ultimately very satisfying 😊

7th May, part 1

The plan for my week off was to catch up on a few species not yet seen this year, hopefully a week of season debuts. My first day was set to be another scorcher, probably too hot for springtime butterflies, so get anything on camera would mean either getting out early or waiting until the sun was about to set! I had an eye test booked for late afternoon, so I couldn't go on one of my long distant trips but a hot bank holiday Monday on one of my local patches is most definitely a place to be avoided at all costs, you might as well go to Hyde Park, far too many people!

The chosen site was Hadleigh Country park where I'll hopefully find lots of White-letter Hairstreak in 6 weeks' time. It's also a pretty good place for Orange-tip so the plan was to get there in time to find them waking up.

Arriving just after 8, it was already warming up but the resident Green-veined Whites were still lolloping around. Sadly, the same wasn't true for the Orange-tips. The first one I saw was in full patrol mode, dashing all hope of any pictures, in fact I didn't see one touch down for a second all day! Green-veined Whites were by a very long margin the most numerous species and unlike the Orange-tips I could have photographed every individual I saw for the first couple of hours.



Also flying were my first Large Whites of the year, who offered no photo opportunities, and a handful of Speckled Wood.



The park backs into some arable fields, not all of which seem to be used. In the 4 years I've been visiting there's one in particular that seems to have been untouched and is full of some sort of crucifer left to go to seed. Small Whites love this field and I spent some time following an egg laying female around trying to catch her in the act, with mixed results.



Back on the main path I spied a silvery blue speck fluttering along the hedge. She opened up but not in a particularly useful position.



Had I looked behind me I would probably have ignored her completely though. On the path were several large muddy patches, remains of the recent deluges, and it was at one of these I was about to have what can best be described as a **'Millerd Moment'**:





One in particular was so engrossed that he ignored all attention and disturbance, including several fast cyclists zooming past. He made an exceptional subject, and I got a fair few funny looks as I crouched over the muddy ground.



This mud, it would seem, tasted rather good, a couple of Green-veined Whites joined the mud licking party. A sure sign they were feeling the effects of the unseasonal heat.



The only other species I saw in the morning were two or three Peacock.



By midday even the GVV were impossible to pin down so with a few hours still to kill I changed tack and wandered over to Two Tree Island to see if there were any baby waders running around. A few Avocet could be seen on nests and a pair of Oystercatcher amongst others put on a good show near the hide but what did catch my eye was a female Small Tortoiseshell looking for somewhere to lay on the bank of nettles directly in front of the hide.



After half an hour or so relaxing in the cool of the bird hide it was time to head off to find out how blind I actually am, walking past countless more Whites and a smattering of Orange-tip.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-18 07:26 PM GMT

Great shots of the Holly Blues and Green-veined Whites having their mud licking party 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-May-18 09:12 PM GMT

It's great to see a group of Holly Blues puddling together - I've never managed more than two together down like that and they didn't sit particularly close together. GVW puddling too - we're heading for a continental-style butterfly get-together at this rate! That would be good... 😊😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by IAC, 12-May-18 07:35 AM GMT

Very well done on the Holly Blue trio. Outstanding!! I could imagine that would have been quite exciting to see. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 12-May-18 08:23 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy I've never seen so many HB's together like that before they always seem to be single ones I find, Great shots 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-May-18 10:03 AM GMT

Thanks guys, they were all initially on separate areas but as they got disturbed by various passers by they seemed to be attracted to each other and ended up in the tight cluster in the pictures. The Whites spent as much time squabbling with each other as feeding!

7th May, part 2

Well it turns that other than a bit of age related long sightedness (reading glasses are recommended) my eyes are fine, and since I'd seen three or four

Holly Blues flying around the high street to and from the opticians, I decided to end to end the day with a wander round the Marshes for an hour. Hopefully the bank holiday hordes would have mostly gone by now.

I really was having a Millerd kind of day, Holly Blues were still out in good numbers but the heat even this late was enough to keep most of them too active for photography. Just one female taking a break from egg laying sat for me.



Whites and a few male Orange-tip were still in patrol mode, but a couple of female Orange-tips stopped to feed.



I couldn't resist a few bird snaps, a Goldfinch looking particularly striking against the clear blue sky



Lastly, I had a couple of Small Tortoiseshell basking in the evening sun, it was still rather warm at 7 when I left, and I suspect it was only the sun vanishing over the horizon that would have put all the butterflies to sleep for the night.





A good start to my week off 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 12-May-18 03:51 PM GMT

Just seen your recent posting Paul 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 need I say more????!! Really well done even if it was by accident 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-May-18 11:53 PM GMT

Thanks **Pauline**, just another case of right place, right time 😊😁

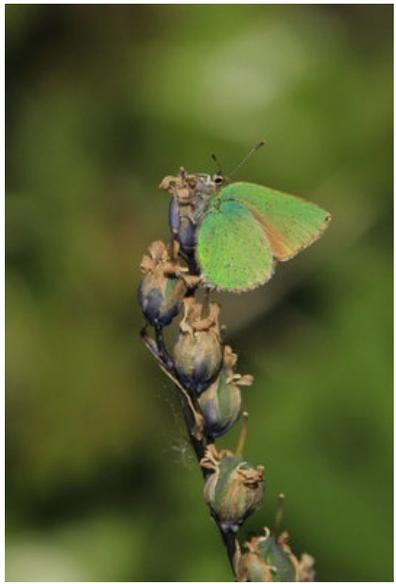
8th May, Pearly Abbots

Tuesday was set to be another unseasonably warm day so I decided to choose a woodland site to give myself a little shelter from the heat. I had a crazy plan that I'd be able to get to Abbots Wood early enough to catch the Pearls warming up. It didn't happen and as is now traditional I got hopelessly lost on the years first visit of the year, finding the Pearls, already super charged, almost by accident. Although they've only started emerging the site looks to have been well worked but I was pleased to see that people seemed to have been sticking to the paths through the clearings so hopefully there's been minimal fatalities from squishing to both Pearl species.

I resigned myself to having to wait until the end of the day to catch a Pearl not in motion, but at the far side of the largest clearing I could make out three tiny glittering butterflies knocking bells out of each other. My second season debut of the day turned out to be somewhat more approachable, not quite fresh but still photo worthy.



I willed them to settle on a Bluebell long enough for me to grab one of those classic shots but all I got was a dead bluebell head.



Once I got my fill of Hairstreaks it was time to go exploring to the sound of a springtime English wood. Blackcap, Garden & Willow Warblers and Nightingale all competing against the resident songsters.

I'd seen very few butterflies apart from Fritillaries and Hairstreaks, just one or two distant large Whites but as if to prove the opticians conclusion about my eyesight the previous day I somehow caught sight of a Brimstone sheltering from the heat, I've no idea how my peripheral vision picked him up from this!



My attentions disturbed him and after fluttering around for a bit he settled again, this time in an easier spot, although I still had to lay belly down.



For the rest of the morning and early afternoon I concentrated on the non butterfly inhabitants. Broad-bodied Chasers being particularly numerous.



A Blackcap and Garden Warbler sat quite well for me but the Reed Warblers who were singing away in the Reeds around the lakes kept out of sight. I was also rather chuffed when a noisy Nightingale showed well and allowed me to get quite close.



I did see a few more butterflies, a couple of tatty Peacock, a handful of Green-veined White and just the one single Speckled Wood

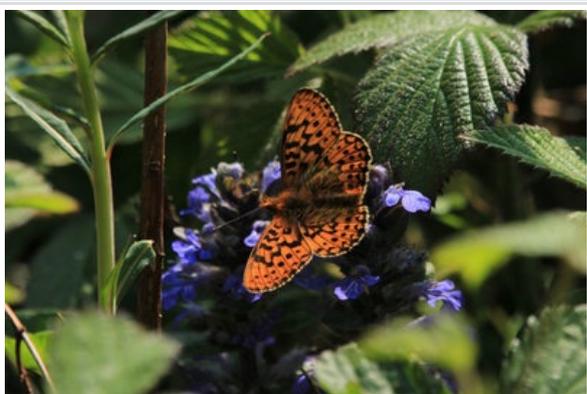




As the afternoon progressed the temperature showed no sign of abating but I hoped the Fritillaries would switch to feeding mode. Just like clockwork I saw the first one settle on some Bugle at 3pm on the dot and as they calmed down their numbers seemed to increase. One plopped down on one of the narrow paths in front of me and promptly snapped it's wings shut. Within 30 seconds another flew past and practically dive bombed it, the first one was obviously a female. I didn't witness any actual mating though as another passing male shot down to be in the action and the trio shot off out of sight.



My run of bad luck was about to strike again though, I only managed about 15 minutes of bright feeding activity when the sky turned milky and then thicker cloud sent all my targets to an early bed 😊.





Cursing my luck once more I took my queue to leave, but not before taking a snap of a Lizard who was trying to absorb the last of the days heat from a log whilst keeping his beady eye on me.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 13-May-18 07:29 AM GMT

I know for a fact there is better to follow, Paul,

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-May-18 07:19 PM GMT

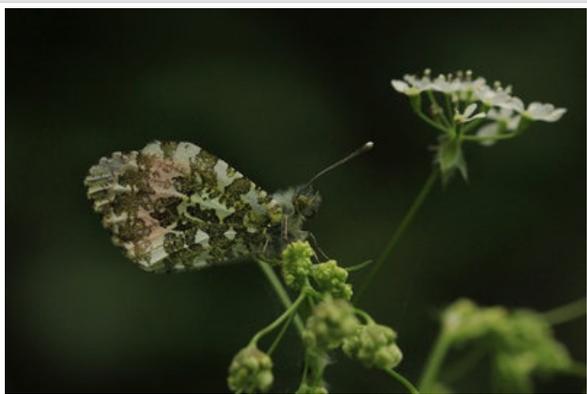
Here you go Trevor 😊

9th May, Bugboys big day out. part 1

Wednesday's events have already been well documented but hopefully my account won't be too samey. Dave (Millerd) had offered to take me down to deepest Sussex where we were to meet up with Trevor and visit a few sites. I left bright and early to meet Dave at Staines at 8.30 for the drive down. traffic was a little problematic, but we eventually found Trevor's place, in a maze of cul-de-sacs and after a quick chat we made our way to his local patch, the old railway line. Unfortunately, our visit coincided with some large dark clouds and not a great deal was about. A few Holly Blues were active in the brief sunny spells, but Dave's charms failed him this time and they stayed up high, but a male Beautiful Demoiselle posed well



A female Speckled Wood was busy looking to lay some eggs, behaving for all the world like she'd mislaid some keys and at the far end of the path I found a slumbering Orange-tip.



We regrouped and headed for Abbots Wood (it hadn't occurred to me the previous day this might be one of the days destinations). We arrived with little cloud cover to help subdue our targets (I was starting to think my run of bad luck might be jinxing the day) so after chatting to some fellow enthusiasts and chasing a few Fritillaries around and getting a handful of distant shots each we decided to head for High and Over.



More bad luck, there was a strong breeze blowing along the Wall hotspot. A Small Tortoiseshell toyed with us for a bit, doing a fair impersonation of a Wall from a distance and a single Small Heath, my first of the season, gave us a runaround but we moved on to try and find a more sheltered spot.



Along the sheltered path we were able to watch in awe as Dave demonstrated his whispering talents.



The Blue was quite happy to stay licking the leaf for sometime.



On the other side of the white horse there was again a distinct lack of Walls but we stayed for a little bit admiring the view. A single Mute Swan looked oddly incongruous as it drifted along the river down below and my zoom lens was able to pick out a pair further out, one of which was sat on a nest with at least 3 cygnets.



While we stood a single male Wall flew past, over the fence and down the steep slope. I did consider giving chase momentarily but figured I'd break at least one limb in the process!

It was mid afternoon now so I suggested returning to Abbots Wood where hopefully the Pearls would be a little more approachable. As we wandered back to the car park we found a male Orange-tip looking for a roosting spot, who gave plenty of opportunities for us once he'd found his bed for the night





Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 13-May-18 10:26 PM GMT

It's great getting a different perspective on the day, Buggy! And there is more to come as well as that was in the end just a taster for the day... 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

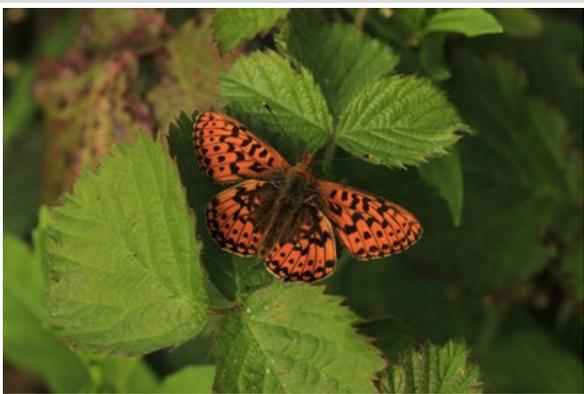
by bugboy, 13-May-18 10:32 PM GMT

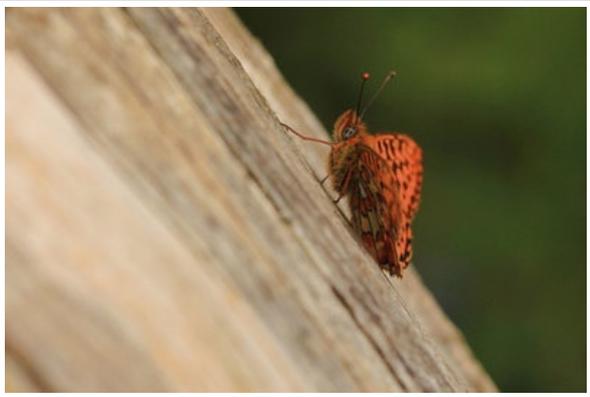
9th May, Bugboys big day out. Part 2

Our return to Abbots wood proved to be a lot more fruitful even with (like the previous day) cloud cover ending play early. Luckily for us Dave found one stranded on an Oak sapling, trying to soak up the dying rays to gain enough energy to join his siblings/cousins etc in the trees. In the end he failed and only had enough energy to flutter down onto the low undergrowth allowing all three of us to fill our boots with images.



Here's Dave branching out (get it 😊) and doing a bit of PBF whispering.









We nearly ended the day there when Trevor bid us farewell to walk home, and I would have made it home at a reasonable hour, but we decided a quick detour to Mill Hill would be worth a risk. It was cloudy but the light still seemed good enough to look for roosting Skippers, hopefully we'd be able to find both species.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-May-18 10:43 PM GMT

You've been busy posting Bugboy – so not only am I now behind on my own posts I'm behind on commenting on yours 😊😄
So to business...

Millerd moment 🍷🍷🍷

Pearls from first set 🍷🍷

Pearls from second set 🍷🍷🍷 Especially as there still haven't been any reported from Bentley Wood 😊 Soon be time to head to the Hill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-May-18 06:57 PM GMT

Yes and there's still plenty more to come Wurzel 😊 I'm sure they'll be out near you soon, it's still early days in Sussex, and it looks like good weather for this weekend.

9th May, Bugboys big day out. Part 3

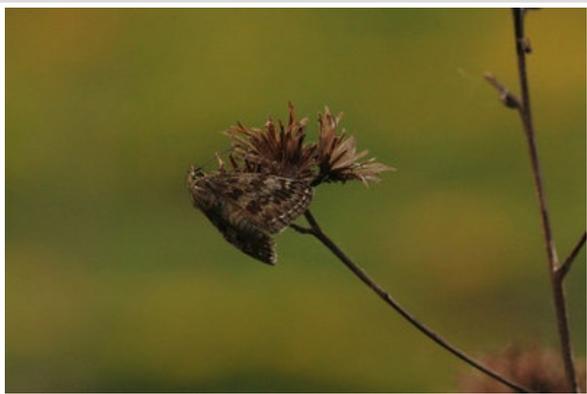
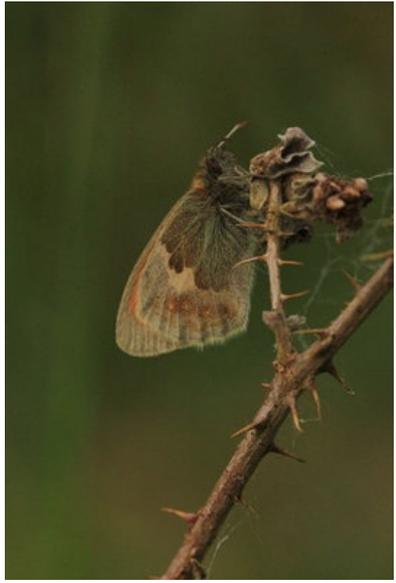
As we drove past heavy traffic going the opposite direction, it seemed like a fortuitous decision to extend our day out. We parked at the bottom car park and set along the middle path, discovering a section of the lower slope had been sectioned off due to recent herbicide spraying.

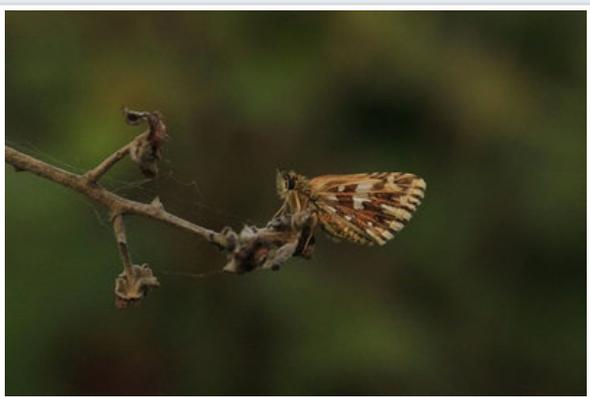
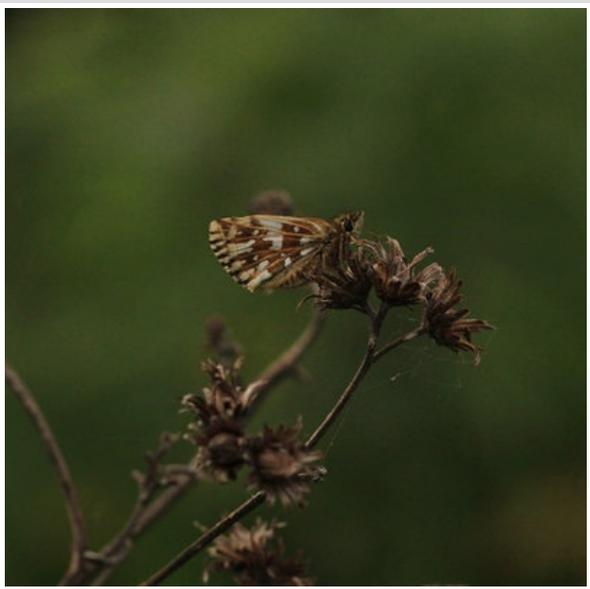
Once past this area it didn't take long for the Grizzled Skippers to start appearing before our eyes, mostly on the Hawthorn sprigs, sometimes in little groups.





Having yet to see Dingy Skipper this year it was them I was keeping my eyes peeled for though. A single Small Heath was discovered about halfway along and Grizzlie numbers reached double figures, but it wasn't until we reached the far bottom corner that we finally found a couple of Dingies, hugging onto the remains of last year's dead flowerheads.





And so ended a pretty successful days butterflying 😊 ... well, the actual butterflying did anyway, despite the roads being mostly clear on the way back I still didn't get home til gone 10.30 that night!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 14-May-18 07:19 PM GMT

You're certainly saving the best till last Buggy! 😊😄

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 14-May-18 08:16 PM GMT

An awesome 3 part saga there Bugboy, what an epic day. 🍷 😊
(also love those Holly Blues 🍷)

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-May-18 06:34 PM GMT

I think I know what you're waiting for **Pauline**, hopefully tomorrow 😊
It was rather epic **Andrew**, but thoroughly worth it 😊

10th May, The Duke of the Chiltons

I had a bit of a lie in the next day, as you might expect after such an epic previous day. Even so butterflies were still top of the list (I did say all other activities were shelved for the week since it may be the only chance I get to see some of them this year.)

Today's target was the Duke. They also enjoy a lie in so there was no rush to get to Ivinghoe Beacon, the easiest site for me to get to. A warm day with some cloud cover was predicted so I hoped perfect for the target, and also any other species I may come across. Aldbury Nowers was rather quiet, just a single Grizzlie and Small Heath found, but it was still a little chilly and the cloud cover hadn't really broken much yet.

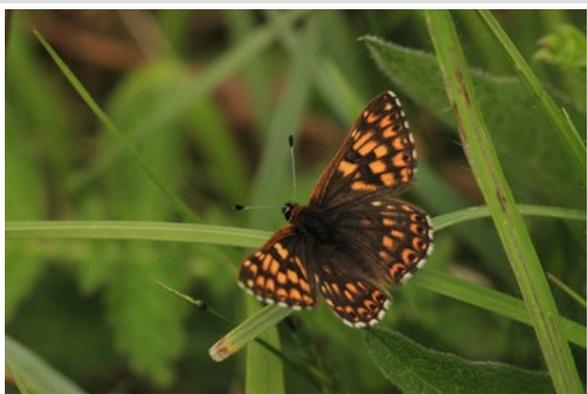
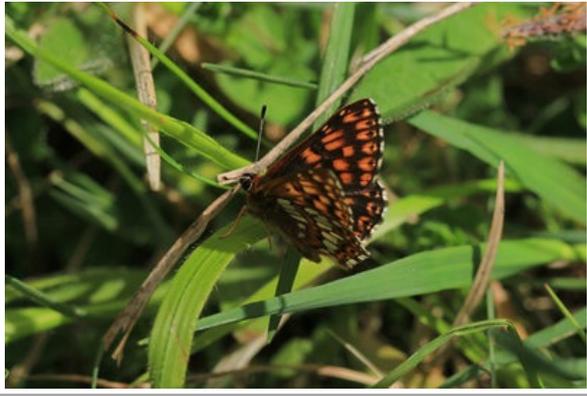
There was a strong breeze blowing across the Chilton's but thankfully the scrubby gully's and alleys the Dukes frequent were mostly sheltered from it and I found my first, a male only a few hours old, where I always come across my season first, behind the car park. When the sun came out he took what may well have been his maiden flight and landed all by himself on some Cowslip.



I didn't find any more here, so I made my way down to the well-known gully to find 3 more, another fresh one and 2 older individuals, one clearly the same one Millerd found with the damaged wings a few days earlier.



Further on at the next hotspot were several more Dukes plus a Duchess, all looking very fresh.



I bumped into a chap doing a Duke survey for the national trust who reckoned we were a week to 10 days from peak emergence. He was pleased to hear I'd seen a female.

On the return I checked out another spot which I've always thought should have Dukes but had yet to see any. Today however two males, again both fresh, were present 😊.



Signs are it's looking good for them here this year and if this my only audience with them this season, I'm glad I got to see so many fresh animals 😊

Obviously there was plenty of activity from other species too, who will fill a post all of their own.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 15-May-18 07:37 PM GMT

Just catching up on your 'epic' day Bugboy...great stuff 🍷 😊

Great Dukes from Ivinghoe Beacon too, I really must try and get down to one of the Chiltern sites to see these one of the days. In the past I have always headed down to Prestbury Hill near Cheltenham but I reckon the distance is probably about the same just south-east instead of south-west to me.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 15-May-18 08:47 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

I think I know what you're waiting for Pauline, hopefully tomorrow 😊

Tease 😊 😊 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 15-May-18 09:22 PM GMT

That is a great selection from around Ivinghoe, Buggy. I really must range out a bit more when I visit the area! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-May-18 09:25 PM GMT

I can recommend Ivinghoe Beacon **Neil**, just for the views alone, but there's always lots to see there as you can see from this next post (and this doesn't cover all the non butterfly life!). If you need help locating the Duke hotspots just drop me a message 😊

Good things come to those who wait **Pauline** 😊

There's a good variety all over the site **Dave** as long as you're ok with lots of clambering up and down steep slopes!

10th May, The Duke's companions

As I said, there was plenty of non-Duke action throughout the day once the sun had warmed the air.

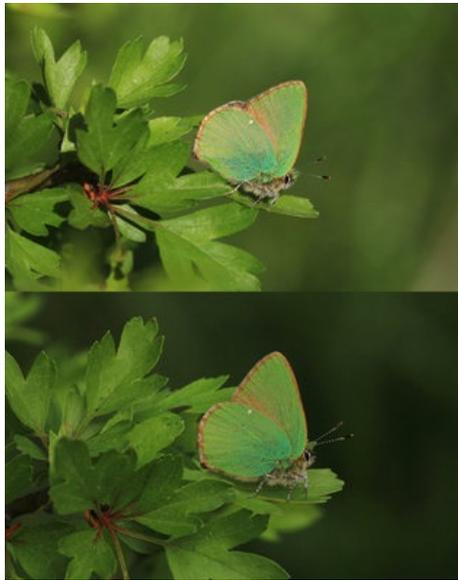
A Grizzlie and a Small Heath were all that were flying at Aldbury Nowers Nature reserve but as I said it was still a little chilly.



It was a bit too breezy to find anything along the walk across to Ivinghoe Beacon (it's a very exposed ridge) but once there the first thing to buzz me was a Dingy Skipper. There were at least two present, toying with me before I found my first Duke 😊.



Down in the Gully I spent a while with a Green Hairstreak, it's interesting how different they look when the sun is on them compared when it's cloudy.



A very fresh Green-veined White seemed to be learning how to fly, like my first Duke I suspect she was only hours old





At the third Duke colony I made the most of a male Orange-tip. I've really struggled with them this year, I've not seen them in anything like normal numbers anywhere yet. He was a good looking chap though, and the occasional cloud cover helped pin him down 😊.



Grizzlies and Green Hairstreaks were both present here too, one female Hairstreak looking most rotund!





A stunning Holly Blue put in an appearance, and sat just long enough for one snap before returning to laying eggs on Dogwood.



I'm not sure if it was the same female I'd seen earlier but this pairing posed irresistibly!



At the fourth Duke colony both skippers were again present



And further along the walk home a couple more Grizzlies were found, one looked to have more than the usual amount of white but probably not

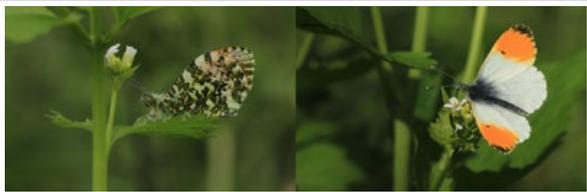
enough to make it a *taras*.



I finally made it back to Aldbury Nowers late afternoon where cloud cover had put anything that was active back to bed. I did however find a couple of Orange-tip and a Grizzlie who had clearly got lost from the neighbouring field and was roosting along a country lane.



The sun occasionally peeked out, each time awaking the Orange-tip and giving me loads of easy opportunities to get my annual OT fix





Another thoroughly satisfying day 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 15-May-18 09:37 PM GMT

That is rather a nice female Holly Blue, Buggy. Most of the egg-laying females I've seen this week in a variety of locations have been distinctly worn, but she is a beauty. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-May-18 11:00 PM GMT

Great set of Dukes Bugboy especially the the second side on shot – interesting viewpoint 🤩📷 Those final OT shots seem to show really dark makings on the fore wing tips 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 16-May-18 10:37 AM GMT

Your having some great day's out Bugboy, with some smashing results 📷📷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-May-18 09:31 PM GMT

Isn't she just that **Dave**, She may well reappear on the favourite picture thread come winter 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, I do like to try and get a different from the normal image when I can 😊. Your right about the OT as well, it stood out in real life as well. Thanks **Goldie**, I'm back at work now so my week off is now just memories but at least I have the pictures to help bring them to life 😊

I know a few people have been patiently waiting for this post, so without further ado...

11th May, Meet Padfield 😊

No week off is complete without a trip to Bookham for me. I'd hoped, almost expected, the Small Coppers were emerging here and perhaps a Common Blue or two as well, so it was with some disappointment that no sign of either was found. There was in fact very little at all on the wing, small numbers of the three species of White, a few Orange-tip, Speckled Wood and Holly Blues. Most stayed mobile but I got a few photo opportunities.





I had a look for my Brown Hairstreak larvae but sadly found no sign of him. I was pleased to find that four out five of my rescued eggs had hatched although again, I could find no sign of the inhabitants.



Over on the Oak, after some searching I managed to find one of my Purple Hairstreak larvae, almost invisible, tucked up at the base of the leaves.



I was surprised to come across a male Comma, somewhat worse for wear but still frisky enough to start a fight with an innocent passing Speckled Wood.



And at the end of the day as I was leaving I also came across a female laying eggs on nettles. She seemed to be in fine fettle considering her age.



The best find of the day though, who's already been introduced in the May sightings page, was my first ever Purple Emperor larvae, who I instantly christened **Padfield** for reasons that will be plainly obvious to everyone reading this 😊. I've looked for them countless times but this one was discovered by complete luck/chance. I'd taken a detour to avoid some mud, and brushing past some Sallow something familiar caught my eye. It must have been all those images posted by Guy that's burnt their image on my retinas, but somehow it stuck out like a sore thumb to me.



He was hanging on a rather exposed leaf at the end of a small branch overhanging the path, about 5 foot of the ground and obviously preparing to moult. There was a stiff breeze which was blowing in just the wrong direction causing poor little Padfield to get blown ragged. They really do have a good grip which was definitely being put to good use.





Look at that cute little pointy hairy butt!

I will do my best to keep track of him, but unlike his namesake I can't visit here everyday. There will however be at least one more update of him plus more pictures in the next post 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-May-18 09:37 PM GMT

He really is a splendid creature (Could be a she I suppose...). An incredible leaf mimic right down to his tail (as you more inelegantly put it!). Let's hope you can continue to keep track of him.

A terrific find, by the way! 😊👍

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 16-May-18 09:46 PM GMT

Great pics of "Padfield", Bugboy. What a find.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 16-May-18 10:00 PM GMT

I'm thrilled for you Buggy – and flattered, as I said before! I suppose it is possible that my obsessive postings helped to prime your eye ... I'm glad they served some purpose!

Whether or not you are able to follow Padfield through to greater things – and as I also said, it is possible he will decide to settle somewhere else on his tree after his latest upgrade – it will be worth revisiting the area you found him in late July/early August. For every caterpillar that survives into 5th instar, tens of eggs at least will have been laid the previous year (0.5% – 1% of eggs survive to adulthood). Eggs are quite easy to find and almost as much a delight as the larvae.

Your other postings have been great too – but you will understand I have a special interest in this one!

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-May-18 10:45 PM GMT

Thanks Dave and Ernie, I was really chuffed with finding him, even more so because I wasn't even looking 😊😊

Padfield wrote:

I'm thrilled for you Buggy – and flattered, as I said before! I suppose it is possible that my obsessive postings helped to prime your eye ... I'm glad they served some purpose!

Whether or not you are able to follow Padfield through to greater things – and as I also said, it is possible he will decide to settle somewhere else on his tree after his latest upgrade – it will be worth revisiting the area you found him in late July/early August. For every caterpillar that survives into 5th instar, tens of eggs at least will have been laid the previous year (0.5% – 1% of eggs survive to adulthood). Eggs are quite easy to find and almost as much a delight as the larvae.

Your other postings have been great too – but you will understand I have a special interest in this one!

Guy

Thanks Guy. The Sallow he's on isn't huge but I know full well from your images that that doesn't mean it will be any easier to locate him. It is however isolated from nearby Sallows so unless he goes wandering off on Hawthorn or Blackthorn he should stay on this one. I have a feeling you may like the next post even more though, but I'll keep you guessing for another day 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 17-May-18 06:22 PM GMT

I'm afraid you posted this after my bedtime Buggy 😊 so apologies for the late congratulations 🎉. If he does go missing and you'd like some help looking for him 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-May-18 08:24 PM GMT

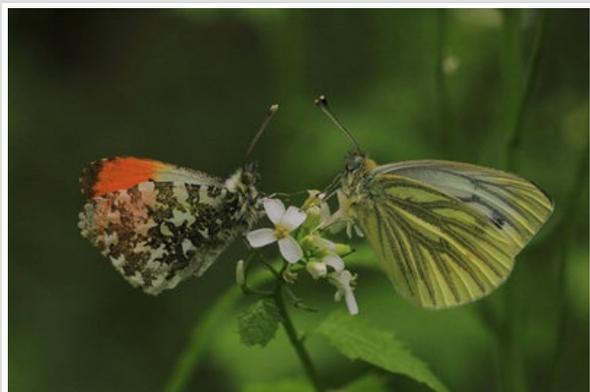
Sorry **Pauline**, it was actually a bit after my bedtime too 😊. I'm not sure when I'll next be able to go to Bookham, maybe Monday afternoon but if not then, not until next weekend 😊

13th May, Bookham & More Padfield

Remarkable as it may seem I actually took a day off from butterflying on the Saturday, the weather didn't seem up to much anyway. The forecast for Sunday seemed initially similar but I'm glad I went out as it ended up being a much nicer day than predicted, and it's not often a forecast is wrong that way round!

I couldn't resist another trip to Bookham primarily to see if Padfield was still visible.

The day started off rather gloomy, but I managed a few sleepers along a shady path. I had to ramp up the ISO a bit so the picture's are a little noisy and I can't deny the two on the same flowerhead may be slightly staged, but I like them. The Orange-tip seemed to have something wrong with one forewing and couldn't retract it properly, foiling the usual near perfect camouflage.



As the morning progressed though, the clouds broke and the cool start to the day evaporated. On the way to Padfield I had another good search for Small Coppers, but still no sign of any. Speckled Woods and Whites became active and a few Orange-tips made worthy subjects of my attentions.



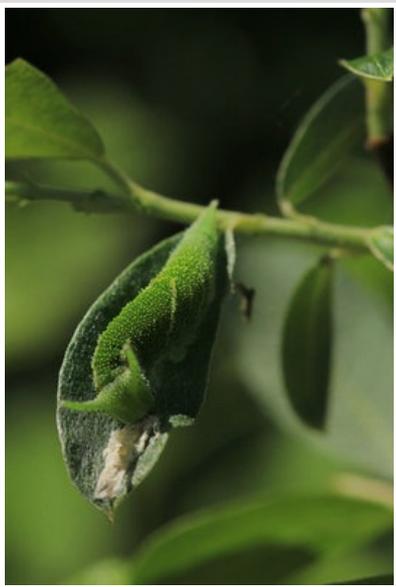
All this was just for starters of course. Padfield was happily very easy to find, sitting on the same leaf as two days previously, only this time looking very proud and regal in his brand new skin. There was only a light breeze today so he was able to hang peacefully as he dried.





I then proceeded to look around for more, discovering in the process lots of Sallows I hadn't noticed before and several species of moth caterpillars, but no more Emperors.

Returning to Padfield, I found he'd woken up and was busy eating his old skin and was completely oblivious to any disturbance. In fact moving his home around until it caught a shaft of sunlight bothered him not one jot and enabled me to get some very closeup snaps as he tucked into his first meal in his final instar.







As he was active, and therefore more likely to be seen by predators I felt obligated to stand over him until he'd finished and went back to hanging around, motionless 😊.

At this stage I have no idea whether this will be the last I will see him but fingers crossed he (or she) makes all the way.

Leaving, I had time to point my camera at a couple more inhabitants.



I think the run of bad luck I had at the beginning of the season has run out of steam, it just couldn't keep up with me this past week 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 17-May-18 08:41 PM GMT

What a remarkable set of pictures of Padfield. It had me gripped all of the way through. I was expecting a Minnie me to appear in the pictures as well 😊
A great, upbeat report. Glad you have found your mojo. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 17-May-18 09:17 PM GMT

Wow!!! You have rendered me speechless – and that doesn't happen often!!! 😊😊 Great shots 🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 17-May-18 09:34 PM GMT

Outstanding pictures – and very interesting, too. Well worth the wait! 😊

Frowhawk states (perhaps on the basis of relatively few, captive observations – maybe even just the one he is describing – see <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/species.php?species=iris>) that the skin is not eaten after the final moult. Padfield is obviously tucking into his discarded skin with relish!

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-May-18 10:05 PM GMT

Great observations, Buggy! They could even be a unique series of photos in the wild in the UK. Once again I hope you continue to track this little chap down through to pupation at least. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 17-May-18 10:11 PM GMT

Right place, right time and a great pair of eyes !. Well done/ found/ observed. 😊👍

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 10:55 PM GMT

Fantastic documentation of behaviour Bugboy 😊 Nature leads the way as usual; nothing is wasted 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-May-18 09:34 PM GMT

Thanks **Art**, yes Mojo found and very well used last week 😊

Not sure if that's a good or bad thing **Pauline** 😊

Looks like your namesake is re-writing the textbooks **Guy** 😊. Reading Frohawk's account it does seem like it was based on the one individual. Padfield scooped his skin in about 10 minutes and nothing was wasted!

Thanks **Dave**, could well be, I imagine observations like those are scarce in any species 😊

Indeed **Trevor** 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, yep we could learn a lot from nature if we just all sat back and observed couldn't we 😊

15th May, Mill Hill

Tuesday arrived and looked set to be another gorgeous day. Having heard Neil's reports of the first blues appearing down at Mill Hill, and chatting to Millerd the night before about the prospect of maybe a few more season debuts down there such as Small Copper and Brown Argus, an early start was again on the cards. I arrived at 9 to find Dave already there who showed me evidence of a couple of male Adonis on the wing. Dingy & Grizzled Skippers, Small Heath and a few Green Hairstreak were also around, and another enthusiast said at least one Common Blue lurking in amongst all the other species. It didn't take long to find my first Adonis of the season.



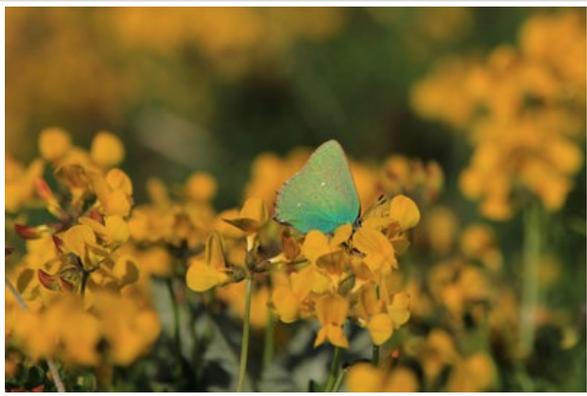


And not long after my first Common Blue of the season was also located.



As the morning progressed both Skippers, Small Heaths and now Green Hairstreaks began to turn up with increasing regularity.





a bit more Millerd whispering

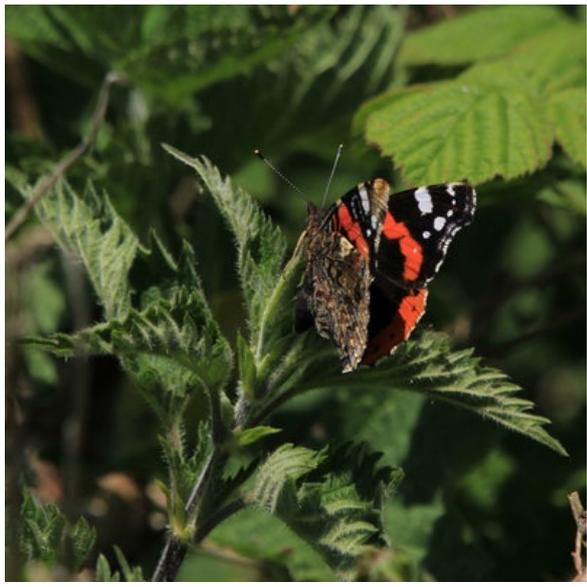
An hour after arriving Dave called out 'Copper', and there taking up residence in the far bottom corner of the slope was another season debut, picking fights with anything and everything including another Common Blue.



In the scrub near the top car park Dave had located a few Walls who, in the heat were being typically problematic to get close to. I'm glad I had my zoom lens with me



I took a wander along the lane that goes of past Mill Hill, finding a pair of Brimstone and an egg laying Red Admiral but it was a bit breezy up there so very little else was about so I returned to the slope to find Adonis numbers seemed to be exploding. I saw several still excreting meconium as they flew up from under my feet.



Skippers and Small Heaths were also all over the place now and I watched a Dingy Skipper lay an egg on some Horseshoe Vetch, giving me the chance to add another species to my egg collection.



Also appearing now were a few female Adonis and the one I managed to photograph was a real pin up for the species!



Dave was still around and together we found an equally attractive female Common Blue



I left Dave around 1pm to check out the harbour area. I'd noticed good amounts of Kidney Vetch there last year, so I was curious if any Small Blue were present. Shortly after I left I got a message from Dave that yet another species had turned up, a Brown Argus meaning between us we got a days tally of 18 species!

The only butterflies I found at the harbour were Small and Green-veined White who were both very active so I turned my attention to the bird life who seemed to think there was some sort of professional photoshoot going on!



A great day to end my break from work 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Some great shots from the day at Mill Hill, Buggy. I am particularly envious of that beautiful female Adonis, which you found while I was elsewhere on the hillside. She is quite something! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 18-May-18 09:57 PM GMT

Mill Hill is a great site, isn't it? Great selection you have there. I'm hoping to find my way down there in the very near future...

Re: Bugboys mission

by keving, 19-May-18 08:09 AM GMT

Bugboy – Those shots of the Adonis Blue are lovely. They are such a striking species when fresh. Well done with the female too, she's mighty fine.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-May-18 10:34 PM GMT

That is particularly fine Adonis Blue female Bugboy 😊👍 A great set of shots and those Adonis males practically leap out of the screen 😲😊👍 I see you had the assistance of Dave, I had that pleasure today, they seem to flock to him 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 20-May-18 06:05 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Bugboy, lovely females there. 👍👍 What a place! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 21-May-18 09:26 AM GMT

Love that Adonis Blue Bugboy, what a fantastic colour, you've really caught the Blueness of the Butterfly 👍👍 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

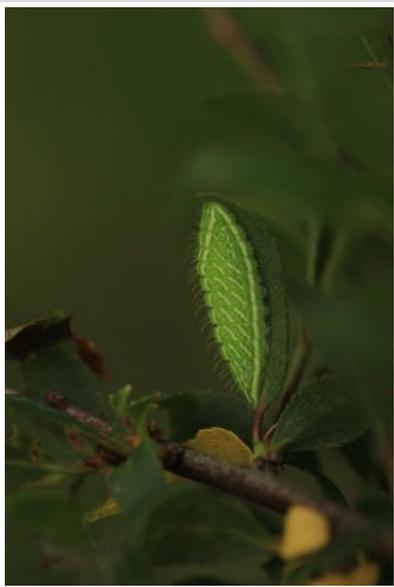
by bugboy, 21-May-18 10:26 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments, sometimes those Adonis are so **blue** I worry the pictures look as though I've 'touched' them up!

21st May, Bookham – Caterpillars & Pauline

I was in two minds whether to go to Bookham this afternoon, it's a little bit of a rush on a half day from work and the sunny morning had deteriorated to a muggy, overcast afternoon. In the end I gave in to temptation based mainly on the fact I was after larvae rather than adults and just hoped I wouldn't get caught up in one of the predicted sharp showers that were possibly loitering in the general area.

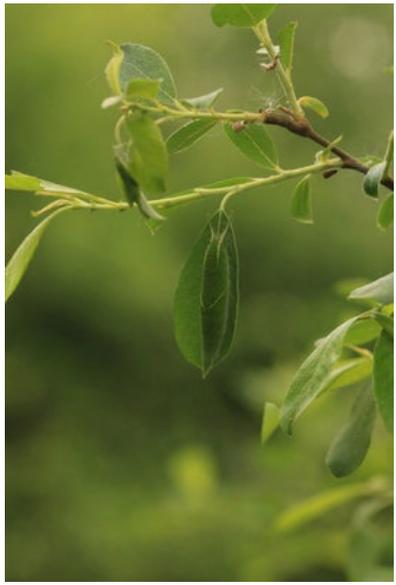
The first 'thing' to be found as I entered the site wasn't a 'thing' at all but a lady brandishing a camera who, guessing who I was, introduced herself as the one and only **Pauline** (hope you weren't waiting outside the station for too long 😊). After introductions Pauline showed me a couple of Brown Hairstreak larvae she'd found in an area I'd not even looked for eggs over the winter.



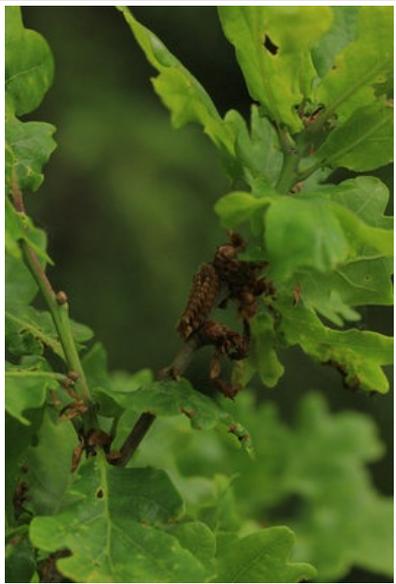
I then showed her my rescued eggs and we quickly found one of the resulting larvae, at least a couple of instars behind the ones that had spent the winter on site.



Next I offered to show Pauline Padfield (assuming I could still find him), well it would be rude not to introduce the two of them! I was very pleased to find him, not too far from where he'd moulted and still quite low down. I was pleased, Pauline was ecstatic about seeing her first ever Emperor caterpillar!



After that I offered to show Pauline where my Purple Hairstreak larvae live and after searching for a few minutes I found a nice chunky final instar, Pauline's first wild sighting.





We parted company at this stage, with Pauline practically skipping off to her car 😊 (I later found out she inadvertently took the 'scenic' route 😊).

I stopped for a few more snaps of Padfield and then some snaps of the brown Hairstreaks Pauline had found. A quick search of nearby Blackthorn turning up another 3 of my own.





It was just about warm enough for some adult activity mostly Green-veined Whites, but also seen was a single Peacock, an ovipositing Red Admiral and a nice male Muslin Moth.





Nice to finally meet you Pauline and I'm glad I helped make your year 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 22-May-18 03:17 PM GMT

Actually Buggy, I was loitering in the car park for hours hoping to catch a glimpse of you!! 😊😊😊

Seriously, your photos are great Buggy and once again a massive thank you 😊. I am sure that actually seeing one in the flesh so to speak will help in my future searches. Please do keep us informed of any progress. Just as an aside, I am fairly certain that your Muslin Moth is a female having photographed one recently in the wild – the male (brown) turned up in my moth trap the other night.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-May-18 04:02 PM GMT

It's definitely a female Pauline, I knew the instant I saw it. Apart from the colour there's no feathery antennae. Schoolboy error from rushing the report 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 22-May-18 04:39 PM GMT

More great pictures, Buggy!

In my experience, the 5th instar purple emperor caterpillar spends 17–18 days in 5th instar before beginning the process of pupation. During these 17–18 days he might or might not wander in search of pastures new. At the end, whether or not he has been moving about previously, he will start looking for that perfect place. When he finds it he will crawl over the top of the leaf and rest head-down on the underside for a day or two. During this time he will change his appearance somewhat, then he will pupate. Some caterpillars head up to the light and warmth of the canopy but some pupate just a few feet above the ground.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 22-May-18 09:41 PM GMT

More brilliant reportage and photos of the various larvae, Buggy. I hope you'll be able follow them all as far as is possible... 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-May-18 09:08 PM GMT

Thanks Guy for the information, I shall do my best to keep track of him, hopefully he'll stay low down for me although the bush isn't too tall so I may still be able to find him if he tries to reach for the sun 😊

Thanks Dave, following the youngsters does add an extra dimension to butterflying 😊

22nd May, Green, Blue, White & Copper. Part 1

Today's outing turned into a bit of an epic event, although not entirely all of my own making. I'd arranged to meet up with Suzie at Denbies where we'd move on to Chiddingfold after a bit to get my fix of the Wood White, one of last year's lifers for me.

I left early since I didn't want to keep Susie waiting but the wonders of the rail companies and their marvelous rearrangement of train times combined with delays meant it took significantly longer to arrive than planned. The next surprise was the discovery of travelers who have set up home on Steers Field at the top of the site, complete with lots of loud, rather intimidating dogs and busy dumping garden waste, just the kind of hideous selfish human behaviour I do my best to escape as often as possible in my many trips out of London 😡!

Thankfully they had left the hillside alone, the steepness most likely saving it, and it was here I saw someone in the undergrowth doing a bit of Hairstreak bothering 😊.



Walking up to the steps where the Green Hairstreaks can normally be found the first of the days season debuts showed itself to me, a Brown Argus.



Susie was enjoying herself with the Hairstreaks who were posing rather well, I went all artistic with some soft-focus framing. Small Heath were also rather numerous, flitting around.



Further out onto the hillside the Blues started to make their presence felt, both Adonis and Common as well as several more Argus. The occasional Green Hairstreak was also seen, this one giving me a nice view of some upper side courtesy of a large missing chunk of hindwing.



It was already very warm and the Blues were all rather active, but some did settle long enough to allow photographs including one rather attractive abstrata. This particular individual settled often and was followed around by the pair of us, giving the chance to get shots of both sides, illustrating the asymmetrical patterning of the forewings.





A few fresh Common Blues (who ironically but predictably were far less common than the Adonis) posed well.



A pair of Adonis posed exceptionally well with absolutely no help whatsoever 😊



Whilst a nearby pairing were being molested by a very persistent third party 😊 .



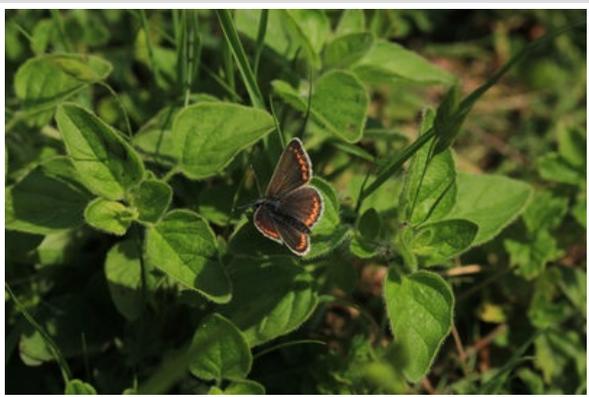
I only saw a couple of Dingy Skippers, Grizzled were a little more numerous and we watched a female lay on some Salad Burnet giving me the chance to

add that species to my egg collection



We ended up wandering the hillside for a couple of hours, enjoying the sight of half a dozen or so species going about their business. A few fresh female Blues were seen and before leaving we couldn't resist a final bit of Hairstreak action and then some more Brown Argus.





The final snaps here were of an Orchid which neither of us were familiar with, I'm quite sure there's someone reading this that can put a name to it though 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 23-May-18 09:17 PM GMT

Hi Buggy. Your orchid is a white helleborine, *Cephalanthera damasonium*.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 24-May-18 12:30 PM GMT

I do like your creative, artistic GH shot Buggy but what really caught my attention was the Grizzlie egg – never seen that before 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-May-18 07:58 PM GMT

Thanks **Guy**, that's a new species for me.

Thanks **Pauline**, like nearly all my egg pictures, they come from watching an egg laying female 😊

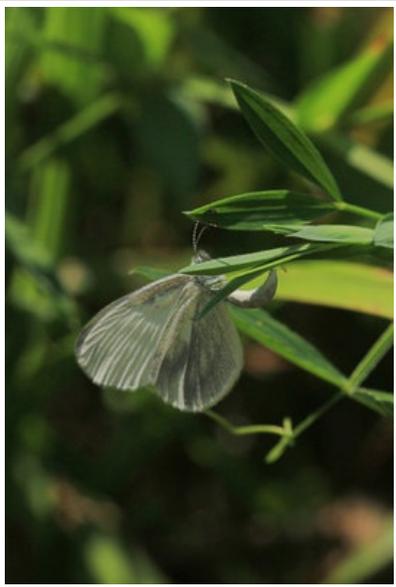
22nd May, Green, Blue, White & Copper. Part 2

We decided to leave Denbies just before noon, Susie had things to do and if we didn't leave soon we wouldn't get more than 5 minutes with the Chiddingfold Wood Whites. In hindsight we probably should have found a different exit point but we walked up past the traveler encampment again where I was set upon by a particularly nasty little Jack Russel, nipping at my ankle and drawing blood just above my walking boots. More of a scratch than an actual bite but we took a slight detour into town to get some antiseptic cream.

Wound soothed it was then on to Chiddingfold. Signs were good when we arrived with the first one being seen quite close to the botony bay entrance, a lonely male fluttering around. Brimstones were common as we walked towards the hotspot. Approaching the small bridge across the stream an orangy butterfly looking a lot like a PBF flew up and vanished into the loose undergrowth along the stream. I found out later there was a failed release a few years ago so perhaps they are still hanging on by their tiny toes here?

Anyway, Wood White numbers increased as we approached the usual hotspot. Most of them were rather active given the cloudless sky but enough sat to make the trip worthwhile. I saw a fair bit of behaviour, the usual tongue lashing from eager males, although no pairs sat right for me and egg laying aplenty.





Shame the autofocus failed me!



There was much crouching and lying on the ground when the occasional one would land and pose, they don't really perch high do they.





An hour later and it was time to leave. I still had a fair bit of time so I decided to take in another site before heading home. We said our goodbyes with Susie dropping me off at Box Hill station ready for the third part of my day.

Thanks again Susie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-May-18 08:45 PM GMT

Sorry to hear about your run in with the Travellers Bugboy – at least you got some great Wood White action as consolation, we do have to suffer for our hobby 😊😊 Looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-May-18 11:01 PM GMT

I have a good idea where Part Three might be set Buggy... 😊

Lovely Wood Whites: hopefully laying (sorry!) the foundations for a good second brood. Great shots of the eggs. 😊

You're right about not getting up very high! Much above head height and they become visibly distressed until they drop back to the comfort of ground level. They are also the only species you can overtake at a walking pace, though they can travel a long way without stopping.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 25-May-18 02:21 PM GMT

Hope your legs okay Bugboy, that's the trouble when looking for Butterflies, you have to go into the hedges etc, if it's not the dogs that get you it's their Poo!!! 😊

Last time I saw Wood White's was on a visit to Pauline 's, they've brought back some fun times,(I really like your 6th shot) Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 25-May-18 02:36 PM GMT

Given that the autofocus failed you that's a pretty good shot Buggy. I think the images of butterflies involved in doing all things they naturally do are far more interesting than just shots of them sitting there (even tho I take a lot of the latter) and is probably one of the reasons why your diary is so popular 😊. After the dog bite I doubt whether this will concern you but there are an awful lot of ticks at Chiddingfold 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-May-18 09:55 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, I'm just glad it wasn't more than a scratch

Well **Dave**, I have no idea how you can possibly guess where part 3 is set...

Thanks **Goldie**, just a few scabs as a souvenir of the encounter 😊

Thanks **Pauline**, I do like to go for some action shots where possible but that image would have been better had it focused on the actual butterfly rather than the leaf she was laying on! I've only had the one tick on me so far this year 😊

22nd May, Green, Blue, White & Copper. Part 3

I'd heard from Dave (Millerd) earlier in the day that some Coppers had at last emerged at Bookham, so I decided to end my day there. Southern Rail however did it's best to ruin my plans and decided to cancel my train, a service that with the brand spanking new timetable was already 50% less regular.

I eventually made it to Bookham via bus, arriving a good hour after I planned to get there but thankfully it had stayed sunny. I stopped off at the Brown

Hairstreak larvae that Pauline and I had found the previous day to get some better shots.



one of Pauline's 'twins'



From below



Spot the caterpillar



one of my rescued ones

I found the eggs that Pauline's 'twins' had hatched from and managed a few of them with it's now fat occupant nearby to show just how much they have grown.



The Peacock we had seen the previous day was also still around and several Green-veined White passed by, stopping occasionally.



Obviously, I stopped to check on Padfield who was still hanging from the same leaf as the previous day.



Despite the late hour Banks Common was still bathed in early evening sunshine and after a bit of searching I found a single Small Copper who despite being rather flighty posed for me at regular intervals 😊 .



Also found was Common Blue in mint condition, alternating between roosting and basking



I finally left at 7. A very long day but at least I didn't have to deal with the rush hour once back in London, every cloud and all that 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 25-May-18 10:48 PM GMT

More nice shots of those caterpillars, Buggy. 😊 I'm glad at least one Copper hung around for you after your rather interrupted journey, plus a nice new Blue.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 26-May-18 05:13 PM GMT

Lots of great shots Bugboy, love the caterpillars, very interesting. 😊
And the Wood Whites, who were a first for me this year. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-May-18 10:39 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, there were a few more there today 😊

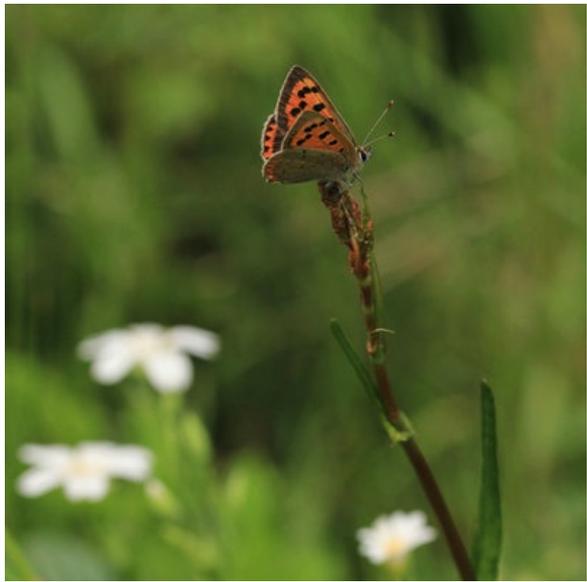
Thanks **Andrew**, Wood Whites (both species) were lifers for me last year 😊

26th May, Bookham

Bookham was the destination today, starting off at Banks common. On the walk along a sun dappled footpath Speckled Woods flitted around, aged individuals sharing the clearings with the next generation.



A stiff and rather annoying breeze greeted me once in the open, blowing along the hedge where you can normally find the best butterfly action. Near the stile I found singles of Small Copper, Brown Argus and one of Millerd's Dingy Skippers. Neither of us have come across this species here before. The wind and ever changing light levels made photography challenging and I had to make do as a spectator most of the time.





A slow walk along the hedge threw up half a dozen Coppers, including a mating pair.



Moving on into Bookhams Commons proper to try and find some shelter from the wind and check on some youngsters I found a few more Coppers and a nice Common Blue.



Young Padfield however was nowhere to be seen 😞 . I'm going to presume he's moved up high out of my reach and not contemplate any other outcome 😊 .

In the woods a small posse of Beautiful Demoiselle were living up to their name.



It was shortly after this that I realised I'd lost the lens cap to my zoom so now had no choice but to retrace my steps, finding a second Skipper and (probably) the same Coppers at Banks Common as well as a few 'honorary butterflies'.



In the open parts of Bookham more Coppers appeared, another Brown Argus (never seen them in this part before) and some Common Blues.





Eventually I found my lens cap, bloody thing is very loose, and went to have a look at my rescued Brown Hairstreak cats, locating a second one.



Looks like Bookham is livening up, it will soon be time for the summer Skippers, large skippers should be out any day now surely!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 26-May-18 10:57 PM GMT

I should definitely explore a bit more widely when I go to Bookham, Buggy, as there is plenty to be seen elsewhere clearly! 😊 I particularly like the partially backlit Brown Argus where the sun is shining through the orange spots.

Female coppers must have appeared now – there were none the other day. And Large Skippers are out – down at Hutchinsons Bank at any rate, so they'll soon be everywhere.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 27-May-18 12:25 AM GMT

A lovely set of pics Bugboy – I especially like the Copper atop a forget-me-not. Bookham looks the place to be!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-May-18 11:02 PM GMT

A cracking sequence Bugboy especially the mating pair –I've still not got that particular pairing in the collection 🍷 Also love the shot of the Dingy 'preparing for take off' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-May-18 09:21 AM GMT

Lovely Coppers Bugboy, 🍷 I've yet to see them , some unusual shots you've taken 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-May-18 08:44 PM GMT

I can give you a guided tour of some of the other highlights Bookham has to offer if you like **Dave** 😊

Thanks **Janet**, Bookham does have a lot going on throughout the season as long as you know where to look 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, that's only my second mating pair, the first was last year also at Bookham.

Thanks **Goldie**, I think getting down to their level helps to give the subjects more character although my joints are starting to creak when I get up so I'm not sure how much longer I'll be able to do that for 😊

I've been meaning to put young **Padfield** the PE caterpillar's home in some context. As I briefly touched upon in my last post I couldn't locate him in my most recent visit and I'm just hoping he's wandered off. The image below taken on my phone gives a wider context of his home. The small circle is where he was found, approx 5 feet from ground level. The large circle denotes the whole Sallow so as you can see, if he's gone up high he will be rather difficult to locate.



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

27th May, a date with a Duke & Duchess

I wasn't planning on going out on the Sunday, the forecast the previous day was all about thunder and lightning, but waking up it would seem that the risk had dissipated somewhat so I decided to hop on a train up into the Chilton's to say goodbye to the Dukes for another year.

Arriving at Tring just before noon, it was very warm and muggy but a few butterflies were willing to pose, including my first few snaps of a Large White for the year, I was beginning to think the year would pass without any settling for me. He didn't want share his flower with the Brimstone though.



Elsewhere most things were in solar powered hyper drive but surprisingly, an Orange-tip settled long enough for a few snaps, there were three or four males patrolling here today.



In the meadows of Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve again very little settled but I did manage to pin down a Brown Argus and a couple of Common Blues. Dingy Skippers, Small Heath and Small Coppers were less helpful though.



Further on more activity was found with various Whites, a female Brimstone searching for Buckthorn and a female Orange-tip played hide and seek as she fed on some Herb Robert.





The walk to Ivinghoe was a rather warm and sweaty one, there is little cover, but I was kept entertained by the endless butterfly activity. Common Blues and Brown Argus vied for dominance, closely followed by Small Heath and Dingy Skippers with the odd Green Hairstreak and Grizzly thrown in for good measure. Very little sat still though.



The first thing that caught my eye at the Beacon was a rather fresh looking Grizzlie, quickly followed by a slightly less fresh Duke.



There were no more Dukes behind the car park, just a few Dingy's and Burnet Companions doing fair imitations.

Moving onto the first gully I found a handful of males still lurking in various states of disrepair, hoping for a late emerging female, and a moff lifer in the form of a Wood Tiger 😊, a very handsome devil.



It was rather cloudy at this stage of the afternoon, but still warm so everything was basking with wings wide open, making them all easy targets.



Moving onto the next Duke hotspot I had plenty more encounters with Blues and Skippers but the one butterfly that demanded my attention was a rather pale, sandy coloured Small heath with some particularly well-developed hindwing ocelli that were quite obvious some distance away.



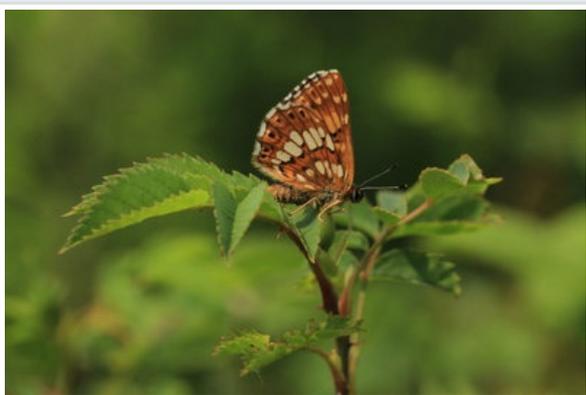
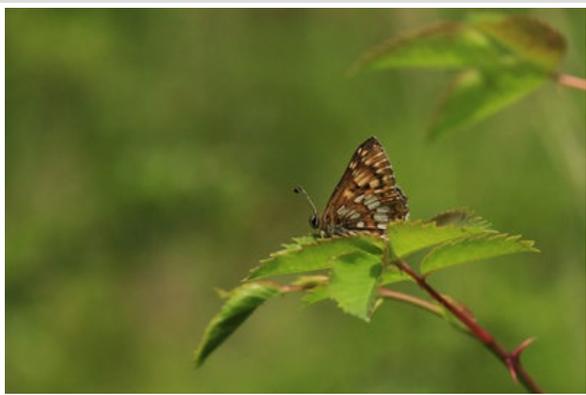
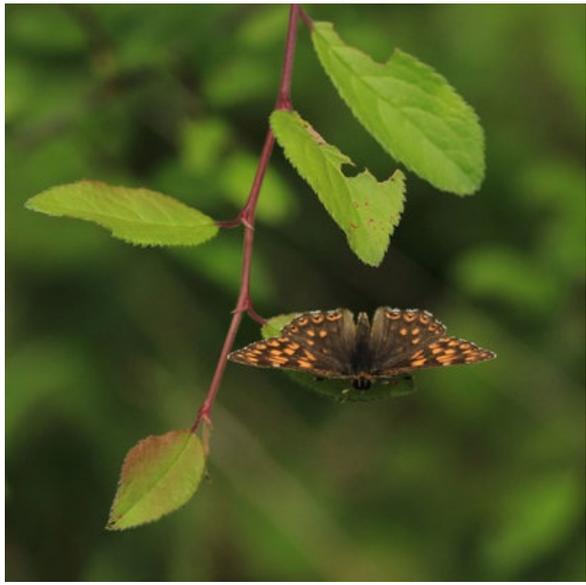
A nice female Common Blue also sat still for more than a few seconds too.



The Dukes here didn't disappoint either, with plenty more willing subjects to aim my camera at.



Returning to the gully under brighter conditions gave me a bit of underside action and I came within seconds of adding in-cop Dukes to my photographic collection. The male disengaged and flew off, no doubt in search of his next conquest, before I could even raise my camera leaving me with a near pristine Duchess at my disposal.



I watched a few more aged Duchesses run the gauntlet of this gully before I left, each being harassed by the males as they passed through the territories 😊 .

I was hoping it would have cooled a little for the return but no, very little was going to sit still. I got lucky with a mint Common Blue, doing a passing

impersonation of an Adonis and a well posed Small Heath!



To illustrate the heat these Rooks aren't calling, they're panting to cool down 😳 .



Several Corn Buntings were calling and with some careful stalking I was chuffed to get a few decent shots of one 😊 .



Back at Aldbury Nowers, still with a 'fresh glow' about me, the Blues and Argus's had all gone to roost, leaving me with just a Lizard for company. He kept a very close eye on me as I took his picture sitting on a stile.



Although the Blues had all gone to bed (it was 6pm now), as if to illustrate just how warm it still was, more than one male Orange-tip was still in full on patrol mode and in overcast conditions too 😳 .

A last minute decision turned out rather well, even more so when I found out there had been a thunderstorm or two back home 😊 . Had I stayed local which was the other option I would have got drenched!

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 30-May-18 03:09 PM GMT

I'm practically breathless reading all that, BB. I'm surprised you've had time to eat or sleep with all the hours you've been putting in!

Well done especially for the mating Coppers – not something you see every day.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-May-18 08:14 PM GMT

It's great when you make the right decision Bugboy innit 😊 A great report from a very busy day 😊 Interesting to see the Dukes sitting open winged in the heat, when I saw them at Noar Hill and it was equally as open wing shots were at a premium as they kept shutting their wings to absorb less heat 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-May-18 08:26 PM GMT

That is an unusual Small Heath, Buggy. It almost looks like one or two of its continental cousin species. 😊 I suspect that after such a warm and sunny season for them the Dukes are soon to disappear for the year – and the Orange Tips too. Good to see them still flying though.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-May-18 10:57 PM GMT

It does read rather hectic doesn't it **David** but as far as eating, what better place to sit down and eat a packed lunch than on a hillside overlooking the best the British countryside has to offer watching nature happen 😊

I love it when a plan comes together **Wurzel** :). All my open winged shots of those Dukes were in overcast conditions, as soon as the sun poked out from behind a cloud they shut up shop!

It really was **Dave**, really stood out from the crowd that one

28th May, Hutchinsons Bank

I only had a few hours spare so no long trips today. I plumped for this site as I've yet to see a Small Blue this year and obviously the outside chance of a Glanville Fritillary. Fritillary wise it's another lean year here with only a handful sighted so far, mostly from fleeting flybys although perhaps this isn't such a bad thing. If there's any chance of them establishing here, at some point you have to bite the bullet and let nature sort things out. Allowing the few that are able to survive to pass their genes on unhindered and put all your energy in making sure the habitat is as good for them as possible.

So I didn't see any Glanville's but Small Blues were easy to come by, not exactly the plagues I witnessed last year but by far the most numerous nevertheless. However, it was very warm and muggy so very little was settling. Common and Holly Blues vied for second place after the Smalls with Small Heath, Dingy Skippers and Brimstones popping up regularly plus a couple of male Orange-tip still patrolling.

Photo opportunities became easier (although not exactly easy) when it clouded over for a bit and it was during this period of relative calm that the vast majority of images were taken.





I ended up staying for around two hours, doing a slow meandering circuit before having to head off. It's always worth keeping your camera handy on the lane back up to the tram stop though, today I came across a little 'family' of Brimstone larvae and an Orange-tip



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 31-May-18 11:46 PM GMT

Nice Small Blue shots, Buggy - I could have done with some cloud when I was there to keep them settled for two seconds. 😊 I should have taken the plod back up the hill a bit easier too - it looks like there were thing to see with those assorted caterpillars.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

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

I pity the fool...that doesn't make the right decision Bugboy 😊 Great set of Small Blues and that is also a lovely coloured female Common Blue, a real dark blue 🍷 Cheers for the heads up on HB think I'll save the petrol this year 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Jun-18 08:29 PM GMT

'Plod' is the right word for that hill **Dave**, but yea, there's usually a fair bit of activity along there 😊

Well, I ain't no fool, **Wurzel** 😊. Yea, I think if you want to see a Glanville on UK soil this year, best save your money for the ferry to the Isle, it looks like a very good year down there from what I can gather 🍷 🍷

29th May, decisions, decisions

My day off this week was somewhat touch and go, very much depending on what forecast you looked at. Most seemed to agree that London and surrounding areas would be rather wet and thundery for most of the day but further south the rain and thunder would clear off early morning (heading north). Some forecasts suggested it would then turn a bit sunny down there whereas others said it would remain solidly cloudy. after a bit of umming and aahing I plumped for Abbots Wood, hoping for a glimpse at least of a SPBF.

It was certainly gloomy when I arrived but also rather muggy and it felt warm enough for some activity if the sun decided to show itself. I few thunder storms rumbled past but thankfully I escaped a soaking. Sadly, the closest I got to seeing the sun was a vague disc when the cloud very occasionally thinned a bit and it wasn't enough to wake any Fritillary, oh well 😊 .

Despite the gloom there was still plenty around and I spent a good few hours wandering around and finding various inhabitants of the wood, giving me the chance to practice a bit of low light photography. Moths ended up being the main targets and Longhorn Moths were particularly numerous, mostly flying around above head height but the occasional one would settle within reach. (I'm not 100% sure of all these ID's so feel free to let me know any misidentifications.)



Nemophora degeerella

Another one which looks superficially like a longhorn was also quite common.



Alabonia geoffrella

My favourite find of the day was a ridiculously well posed Peacock Moth.



Brown Silver-lines were easily disturbed and quite difficult to approach



And this Brown China-mark proved a worthy adversary, a good 10 minutes of stalking to get anything, not helped by its penchant for alighting on the underside of leaves.



Tortrix Moths were also common.



Aethes tesserana & ?

Speckled Yellows weren't as numerous as they usually are, but a few braved the gloom, showing that they're not always very yellow (old and worn) or very speckled.



A Common Swift completed the moff fest.



On the lakes, Pond Skaters lurked, waiting patiently for dinner to arrive.



And a couple of Harlequin Ladybirds enjoying some private time displayed just how variable the species is



Close to noon in one of the Fritillary hotspots, I thought my luck might be in when a Black-tailed Skimmer zoomed past since Dragonflies operate at similar temperatures as butterflies, but no, so I had to remain satisfied with her. She sat well though 😊.



With no sign of the sun and the forecasts that were predicting some now changing their mind, I decided to leave around 1. I found what I think is a Grey Chi moth larvae along one of the darker paths and just before leaving the site my one and only butterfly of the day, a mint Small Heath.





A couple of hours later, arriving back in a rather damp London I discovered that part of the forecast had indeed come to fruition, with several thunderstorms and torrential rain for most of the day by all accounts. Only the one butterfly but overall, I made the right choice in the circumstances 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 01-Jun-18 10:22 PM GMT

Right decision, definitely – one more butterfly than I saw all day on a thoroughly wet day... 😊 A great moth selection, Buggy. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Jun-18 10:52 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy even if there was only the one butterfly – that's how it goes some days 😊😊 'Geoff' is a cracking looking little moth 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 03-Jun-18 09:03 AM GMT

Hi Bugboy, you might have only had one butterfly but you got a great photo of it 😊👍 A nice selection on moths there too 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 02:56 PM GMT

Always good when your choice turns out well. 😊 Great selections, I really like the Wood Tiger. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jun-18 10:10 PM GMT

Thanks guys 😊, here's a few more moths.

Recent goings on.

I'm just coming to the end of a 7 day stretch at work (it feels a lot longer!)

During last weeks work transect I finally saw my first Large Skipper of the year, no camera so no pictures. That was on Saturday and since the transect week starts on a Sunday this year I did the next weeks one the following day, this time with camera, but all I saw were Speckled Woods, mostly hiding in the shade.



Today (4th June) I wangled myself a half day which gave me the chance of an hour on my local patch. There was the promise of breaks in the cloud cover but I must have blinked when that happened because I never saw any blue sky 😞 .

Moths were relatively common, quite a few Burnet Companion who seem to really enjoy overcast days, none stopped for a second. This one, according to the books, is quite localised in the southern half of Britain, *Sitochroa verticalis* and is rather attractive.



Flying in amongst the Burnet Companions was a Straw Dot.



Whilst roosting in amongst the Burnet Companions were a couple of Common Blues.



The most numerous inhabitant today though (by a very significant margin I would later surmise) was the Holly Blue. Not adults however, but eggs and larvae.



6 eggs plus 1 larvae



4 eggs

On this one medium sized plant I counted 31 eggs (hatched and unhatched). If we say there are 100 hundred such plants (that's a very conservative estimate) then it doesn't take a genius to work out we are talking four figures here. I may be facing a second brood of biblical Millerd proportions 😬!



I didn't notice the smaller larvae here until I got the pictures on my computer.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 04-Jun-18 10:22 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy

Just catching up with your diary. I should know this but what plant are those Holly Blue eggs on?

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 04-Jun-18 10:27 PM GMT

Great photos of the eggs and larvae, Buggy. 😊 Those numbers certainly do add up – and if you add in all the other eggs laid on other plants since the first females appeared at the start of May, I wonder what you would come up with. 😊

I suspect the survival rate can't be all that high, or we really would be knee-deep in shiny blue butterflies. I could live with that... 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

That *Sitochroa verticalis* is a cracking looking moth, lovely colours 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 05-Jun-18 10:32 PM GMT

Your eyes have definitely become attuned to these early stages, BB. Amazing how many you can find when you follow your instincts.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Jun-18 07:00 AM GMT

Paul Harfield wrote:

Hi Bugboy

Just catching up with your diary. I should know this but what plant are those Holly Blue eggs on?

Sorry Paul, I've only just seen your comment, that plant is Goats-rue, a non native legume. It seems to be the main foodplants choice of the spring brood here once the Dogwood has gone over.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Jun-18 10:10 PM GMT

Those numbers do indeed add up **Dave**, and it would seem I have vastly underestimated the amount of Goats-rue here, more about that in a future post.

Thanks **Wurzel**, I'm glad I put the effort in to get him, he was a right buggler to pin down!

Thanks **David**, I put it all down to fieldcraft and observing what the butterflies are doing rather than just taking a picture and walking off 😊

5th June, Summer begins

A half day who's promise was to brighten up in the afternoon. I wasn't banking on it though given the previous day, the morning had been a bit on the gloomy side. It's been a week since I've been to Bookham, a long time for me, and arriving around 1.30 the gloomy conditions were still dominating. It didn't feel particularly warm either though the occasional Speckled Wood would fly by here and there. I checked for various early stages but today I found none of my previous youngsters, just a batch of Peacock who were in the middle of moulting. It is starting to become a little overgrown though, so thorough searching isn't really possible anymore without running the risk of harming what I'm looking for.



Whilst looking in the undergrowth I couldn't help but notice the all the families of Tits (it sounded like hundreds). Blue, Great, Long-tailed and Marsh Tits seemed to be everywhere, and a family of Blues were being particularly obvious and noisy, it's no wonder most of them end up as Sparrowhawk and Crow food!



"For the love of God can someone feed me before I fall off this perch!"



The parents really do look utterly knackered!

I noticed a chink of blue sky as I headed for Banks Common which slowly became larger as I walked along. The brightening conditions woke up several more Speckled Wood who were willing to pose as they soaked up the rays. I'm not sure if I'm imagining it but this new wave of emergent's seem very large, possibly approaching Grayling sized in some cases. I also saw my first Meadow Brown of the year.



When I got to the far side of Banks Common, where the best of the action can usually be found, there were a handful of golden winged creatures jostling for my attention. Surprisingly though not a single Copper (And no Blues or Brown Argus either). Today it was all about the Large Skipper... until they got gatecrashed.

Just as I was settling into the chase, they really were full of beans, a larger, paler butterfly soared past and landed on a nearby thistle. The Skippers could wait, they weren't going anywhere after all, whilst I followed the egg laying Lady. You had to be quick, the whole process was over in a matter of seconds, but I managed a few shots I'm happy with.





And here's one of the results, another egg to add to my growing list of ticks.



She disappeared as fast as she had appeared, so it was back to the Skippers. A walk along the hedge threw up around a dozen fresh males plus one (perhaps two) less fresh Dingies and a few more Meadow Browns.





After this I took a wander down one of the rides into the wood, now blessed with an almost cloudless sky! I was hoping for an early *hutchinsoni* Comma. Apart from Speckled Woods there was little activity here (in a months' time it will be teaming with Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Purple Hairstreak, Ringlets, Skippers and Meadow Browns etc etc). A Red Admiral played hide and seek, and a single Comma was found. Not a *hutchinsoni* but a very old female still laying eggs. These offspring, hatching so close to the summer solstice, will most likely become hibernators, bypassing the *hutchinsoni* stage.



Whilst wandering I found a family of Marsh Tits, one fledgling sitting quite low down.



I was surprised no Coppers or Blues were around, especially since both were found just a week previously but just as I was approaching the station to head home a couple of male Blues showed themselves... except the one that settled wasn't a male, I'm beginning to find it very difficult to sex Common Blues without seeing them settled 🤔 😊 !



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Jun-18 10:50 PM GMT

Another great report from Bookham, Buggy – you are certainly good at finding Painted Ladies there, along with everything else. Hopefully there will be some home-grown ones a bit later on after the activity you watched. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Jun-18 11:30 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Painted Lady Bugboy 😊 And that final Blue almost leaps out of the screen 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Jun-18 10:45 AM GMT

Well done for capturing the ovipositing Painted Lady, BB. With Large Skippers and Meadow Browns now appearing, your post's title 'Summer begins' is wholly accurate!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Jun-18 11:34 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave** 😊, to be honest I think this one found me!

Cheers **Wurzel**, with the variety and general 'blueness' of them these days, I find it almost impossible to pass one by without stopping for a snap!

Thanks **David**, I have my new lens's autofocus to thank for getting many of those shots of that Lady 😊

6th June, Sunny Sussex (part 1)

A change in my work rota means I'm back to having Wednesdays off and the forecast looked promising for a trip into the depths of Sussex, firstly in another attempt to find some Small Pearls and then onto another site if time permitted.

It was rumoured by the weather people that it would start off cool and overcast and start to brighten up mid-morning, which would be perfect for me if that came to fruition. It was indeed a little cool upon arrival at Polegate and it remained so all the way to the Fritillary hotspots. Continuing on from the 'moff fest' from my last visit I found a Light Emerald, which I took to be a White when it floated over my shoulder and into the grass in front of me. They start off a pale green and fade to a greenish tinged white after a few days.

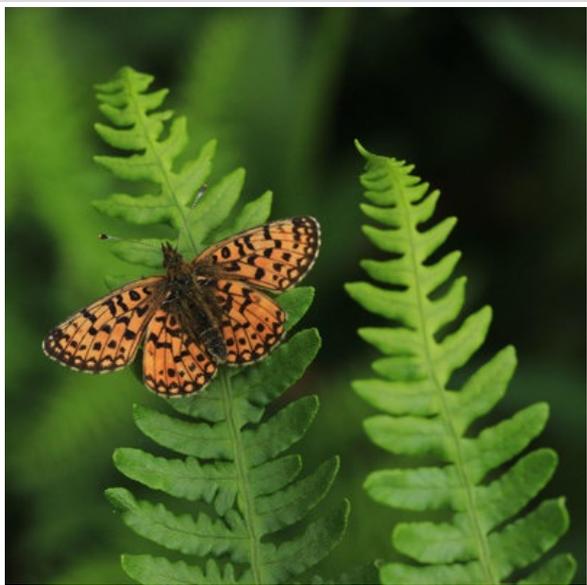


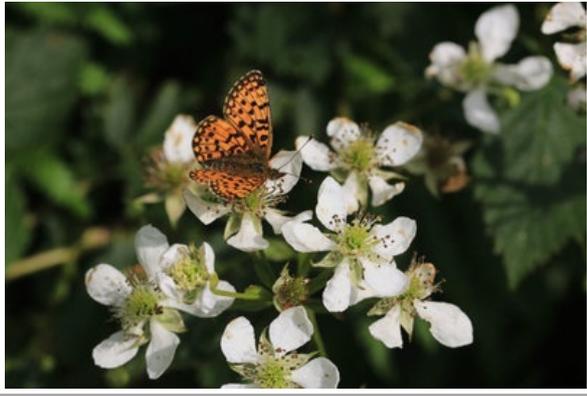
At the hotspot, with the cloud cover just starting to thin, I caught site of a Fritillary. It's worn appearance instantly marking it as an old Pearl. Nevertheless I was buoyed by this, if it was warm enough for them to be active then it should be warm enough for Small Pearls as well. I spent a bit of

time with this one though since it did pose rather well in the conditions.



Nothing else showed itself here so I wandered to the next hotspot. By now the cloud cover was starting to break, causing the temperature to rise quite noticeably at times. It didn't take long for my target to show itself, partially hidden to the side of one of the bracken edged paths. It was warm enough to flutter around and alternated between basking and feeding and made for a very amenable target.





I stayed with it for about half an hour, not seeing anymore before moving off for a wider search. I noted several Dragonflies here, mostly Broad-bodied Chasers but also one male Emperor and wondered how many Pearls and Small Peals had fallen victim to them.



Just as I walked off from the Emperor another Small Pearl swooped past me, heading straight for the jaws of butterfly doom. It settled here and there but never in particularly helpful places and I lost track of it as it flew past where I last saw the Emperor resting... 🤔



Further on down the track I bumped into a couple of chaps searching for the same thing as I (I think one of them was head honcho of Abbots Wood) and one was located feeding in semi shade on brambles near the path. A bit of patience proved worthwhile and I finally got a few decent shots of it stuffing its face.



By now the cloud cover had all but vanished and it was getting rather hot so the choice was either stay as a spectator to orange things darting all over the place or take in another Sussex site... of which there are many to choose from.

It was a slow meandering walk back to Polegate, with the sun out now there was plenty of stuff about, mostly too lively, but a few did sit still long enough for a snap including a brief appearance of a nice blue female Common Blue.



Speckled Wood were rather common in sunny glades, a male Broad-bodied chaser had taken over a large puddle and was soaring over it rather proudly over it and where I'd seen the Emerald in the gloomy morning I found a worn Small Copper enjoying the sun.





tbc

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-Jun-18 11:50 PM GMT

That looks like a successful outing, Buggy, with your Small Pearls sitting nicely – they do seem to have a liking for the brambles now they are in flower. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 09-Jun-18 06:06 AM GMT

Those shots of the Blue Tits are adorable Buggy. Well done with the Painted Lady and egg too – more great shots 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 09-Jun-18 12:12 PM GMT

Great series of shots Buggy especially the Painted Lady, that's quite a lovely Blue has well 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Jun-18 08:46 PM GMT

Great report Buggy 😊 Lovely set of Small Pearl shots and another lovely looking female blue. 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Jun-18 09:18 PM GMT

Yes **Dave**, Bramble flowers did seem to be the main attractant, although this is most likely due to the lack of choice of anything else as much as anything!

I'm pretty sure if you were their mother **Pauline**, 'adorable' would not be a word you would use to describe those noisy, demanding little buggers 😊!

Thank you **Goldie**, I got a bit lucky with the Painted Lady I think 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, but just wait until you see the next female Common Blue I found... 😊

6th June, Sunny Sussex (part 2)

Since its just one stop up the line (but an extortionate price of over £8 for a single ticket I was to discover 😞) I thought id take my first wander across Malling Down of the year, overlooking Lewes. I was hoping the Adonis would still be showing well. It started pretty much as Abbots Wood had ended with Speckled Wood occupying the shady path up to the top. I always start on the northern side, where the old chalk works are and here Small Heath and Common Blue ruled supreme with a few Brown Argus and the occasional Dingy Skipper. In the heat most were super charged so photographic evidence of what I was seeing was hard to come by.



An accidental upperside shot...nearly in focus!



I did follow a male Common Blue who looked nice and fresh who, not for the first time this year, turned out to be one of the fairer sex!



Over on the other side where I'd hoped for the Adonis it was disappointingly quiet to start with. A few fresh male Meadow Brown flopped by and I was buzzed by the occasional Common Blue, but it wasn't until I was halfway down the slope that the distinctive flash of Adonis appeared. Not many though and in varying states of disrepair. There was however the odd late emergent to focus my attention on.





The older males were still on the search for females and still seemed to have a good amount of feisty energy about them. I tried to get pics of a female giving the brush off to one of these old boys but due to the constant motion I think it works better as a gif.



The fresh males weren't immune either 😬 !



At the bottom of the slope and along the path overlooking the allotments Common Blues again took over.



Quite a successful day in the end and leaving now I'd hopefully miss the London rush hour 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 10-Jun-18 10:47 PM GMT

That's a pretty good shot of the open winged SH! 🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Jun-18 09:10 AM GMT

Woah see you what you mean Bugboy 🤩🍷🍷 Great video clip – needs the Benny Hill backing track 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jun-18 10:12 PM GMT

Thanks **Janet**, pure luck/chance 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, she was a proper stunner, I've noticed that many are starting to do away with the red spots as well.

6th June, Sunny Sus... Walthamstow (part 3)

Arriving home at 6 the still clear blue sky and warm temperatures tempted me out for an hour onto Walthamstow marshes. I hoped to get some better images of the Holly Blue early stages and also see if the Common Blues were still active.

I don't know if anyone else has noticed but there seems to be an above average profusion of Bramble blossom this year, and it was on one such thicket that a number of butterflies were dining whilst enjoying the dying rays of the sun. A handful of Holly Blue, I suspect mostly males from the behaviour, a Comma high up and a Red Admiral at the perfect height.



Moving on to the Holly Blue nursery I easily located the same two larvae I photographed last time as well as loads of eggs.



Thumb for scale!



I also did a bit of a survey along the path, picking at random various Goat's-rue plants as I went, I couldn't find any that didn't have Holly Blue eggs on! Last time I made an 'off the top of my head' estimate of 100 plants along this path which I now think is a woeful underestimate and is probably closer to 1000. They all grow along the sunny side of a straight path and given that I've watched the Blues lay all along here over the past few years it's a reasonable assumption to say the majority have eggs. Rounding down to say 20 eggs per plant and a 1% survival rate still gives a very rough but still impressive estimate of 200 adults in July!

And the eggs are still being deposited!



Further out into the meadow there were indeed several Common Blues about, alternating between attempting to roost and flitting around looking for a final snack for the night and were mostly hard to approach. Flying with them were a few fresh male Meadow Browns.



And there ends another very long but very satisfying day.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Jun-18 10:24 PM GMT

Excellent stuff with those Holly Blues, Buggy. My local ones are still laying too, on the same plant. I wonder what the success rate on this foodplant actually is – it's going to be great finding out, I hope! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Jun-18 07:38 PM GMT

It is going to be interesting isn't it Dave, imagine clouds of them flitting around late summer Ivy growth 😊

8 – 10th June,

The continued fine weather allowed me to get out during lunch breaks at work and get the weeks transects completed. Large Skippers have appeared about a week or so later than is usual, no doubt caused by the spring cold snaps. Still not seen any females but I suspect numbers are just days from exploding, although with a fortnight leave fast approaching I may miss the main emergence.







A few other usual suspects are around, Small whites and Speckled Woods both looking particularly fresh at the moment, and I was pleased to find a batch of Peacock larvae. Although no adults have yet been recorded this year at work, it does prove at least one female found my workplace suitable for her children. Even more pleasing since it was on a patch of nettles that I had specifically asked my horticulture dept to leave alone for just such a visitation, since it did seem to be growing in the perfect spot 😊.



Re: Bugboys mission

by MrSpOck, 12-Jun-18 08:30 PM GMT

At least Ditchling Common is only a short walk from Burgess Hill and its station [1.5km], not all sites are as handy.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-18 10:58 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy 😊 The blues are waning, the Browns are waxing, all change! 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-18 10:53 AM GMT

Lovely shots of the Skipper Bugboy, things are quiet here at present ready for the next invasion I hope 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 13-Jun-18 03:31 PM GMT

Still some lovely blues you've found Bugboy, nice gifs. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Jun-18 10:32 PM GMT

Indeed it is MrsP0ck, although I'd already made other plans...

I'll let you off that typo **Wurzel** given how manic this site has been this season (I've given up trying to keep up with everyone's diaries now, skimming them on the train too and from work is all I can do now)

Given the way things are running along down here it's only a matter of time for you **Goldie**, as long as the incoming storm doesn't do too much damage



13th June, a trip to the Black Country

The Black hairstreak had fallen off my radar this year. Suddenly it was June and a couple of messages to **Phil** over the weekend had me making some rushed plans to rectify this oversight. With train tickets booked on Monday evening I went onto UKB to find THAT announcement! I was in the area last week but the situation in Sussex was still being assessed so had yet to be made public.

Well anyway, Phil was promising me a day to remember, this year at Castor Hanglands Nature Reserve just outside Peterborough.

I left at a nice civilised time, a 45 minute train ride arriving at Peterborough just before 10 where Phil met me for the 20 minute drive to the site.

The site itself looks well managed; a mosaic of meadows, scrubland and woodland with areas fenced off areas to protect flora rich sensitive meadows from idle trampling. It didn't take long to see our first Hairstreak, surprisingly fluttering low over a meadow towards the hedge we walked along. When it landed I took a few record snaps, as you would with a supposedly rare species, but Phil hurried me along, telling me not to worry about that one! We passed several more fluttering here and there and the sightings increased as we entered a maze of freshly mown rides that snaked through thickets of Blackthorn. As we continued along these paths I gave up counting individuals, Black Hairstreaks already far outnumbering all other species combined, which mainly consisted of Speckled Wood and Large skippers. I did manage a few more record shots, little did I know how much better things were to become though!



We made camp and Phil said to just wander around the rides and wait for one to sit low. I did, and they did, with relative frequency. The only problem was there were too many of the bloody things. You'll just see your target, and another would fly by and put it up.

Eventually I found one unaccosted long enough for some snaps and what a little stunner she was, auditioning for the Hairstreak version of Vogue!



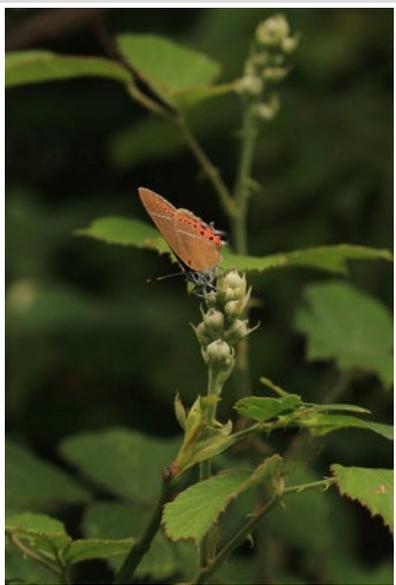
I would hazard a guess that for everyone that settled low down there were another 5 or 6 that stayed up high.



I'd been wandering around for about 30 mins when I realised I'd become totally disorientated and had no idea which direction to go to find Phil and base camp and it was almost by accident that I stumbled across him again.

As morning became afternoon low down landings became more commonplace and you could even be confident enough to pick and choose your target, "skip that one, bit tatty", and we were able to concentrate on fresh specimens, all seemingly trying to outdo the previous one in Vogue posing stakes.

Much to our surprise it wasn't just females that are still emerging either, we came across at least 3 mint males as well, the third of which seemed rather unsteady and was almost certainly only hours old.









A friend of Phil's turned up mid afternoon (I forget your name, sorry), after getting stuck in traffic for a few hours, and another couple of enthusiasts stopped by but apart from them we had the place and what was probably hundreds (if not thousands over the entire site) of Hairstreaks, to ourselves.

It really was an incredible day and will go down as one of the highlights of the year for me. In Phil's 20 years of observing them he can't remember a year like it and one of the other enthusiasts who had 50 years in the bag said the same thing. We really are experiencing a once in a lifetime event with them this year, even without the Sussex population appearing! I remember bumping into Neil Hulme at North Stoke a few months ago and saying I had a good feeling about this year, I didn't think it was going to get this good! Big thanks once again to Phil, good to catch up and have a natter 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 13-Jun-18 11:01 PM GMT

That sounds like a terrific day at a real hotspot for the Hairstreaks in amongst what seem to have been many hotspots this year! Lovely fresh butterflies and great shots too, Buggy. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

Sorry about the typo Bugboy, been a bit hectic at work (teaching lessons at 7:30am is getting a bit draining on the little grey cells). Your shots are cracking of the Blackstreak, but also very envy inducing as I probably won't get to see them this year when it looks set to be the best year ever for them 😞👍👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 14-Jun-18 10:47 AM GMT

Looks like you had an amazing day yesterday, with some great shots of the 'abundant' 😊 Black Hairstreaks 😊

Mike

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 14-Jun-18 11:02 AM GMT

I've never seen Black Hairstreaks and your pictures are amazing! 😊👍👍👍

Re: Bugboys mission

by PhilB, 14-Jun-18 11:34 AM GMT

It was good to meet up with you again Paul.

I'm glad you could make it up to Peterborough to witness what is likely to be, as you say, 'a once in a lifetime experience'.

I do like your head on shot of the recently emerged male as it well shows those lower wing hairs which the butterfly loses so quickly.

I wish you the best of luck for the rest of the season, especially with your quest for your last British butterfly. Is it then mission accomplished?

Phil

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Jun-18 10:13 PM GMT

This will certainly go down as a particularly memorable year for Black Hairstreaks, BB, maybe even a groundbreaking one!

It may be some while before we see such numbers again, so folks are entitled to fill their boots whilst the phenomenon lasts and you clearly did precisely that.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-18 10:53 AM GMT

Great report and photos of the Black Hairstreaks Bugboy, they certainly seem to be having a fantastic year at most of their usual locations as well as the now famous discovery in Sussex.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jun-18 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments, it really was an amazing day. To think, 3 years ago I was over the moon at seeing a single tatty female for about 30 seconds 😊

16th June, Fairmile Common

Silver-studded Blue was today's main target and I had the choice of two sites, my usual SSB hunting ground of Chobham Common or Fairmile Common where I've been once before, two years ago. I chose fairmile since the weather seemed rather questionable and it's a much smaller site to find my, possibly roosting quarry, I'd found them quite easily in light rain two years ago.

As it turned out I needn't have worried, it was mostly overcast but still warm and entering the site I was soon greeted by the sight of lots of silvery blue butterflies fluttering low over Heather and Gorze. I actually ended up wishing it was a little cooler as these boys seemed full of beans and very reluctant to settle.





They were still emerging here, quite literally at times as I found more than one still drying it's wings.



I managed a couple of females as I followed the males around until I came to the far end of the site. Here females seemed to outnumber males and I spent a fair amount of time following these around. Having other things on their mind, they're much more willing to pose (and usually have a far better set of studs). Several had the blue markings on the hindwings, first seen on one by Millerd a week or so ago. It would seem it's the new fashion accessory for this season.





I'd also been keeping my eye out for mating pairs, to add another species to my in-cop list and near the end of my visit I stumbled across just what I was after 😊



Another impressively studded female with the freshly emerged oily shimmer and then a second mating pair presented themselves to me. I ran off a run of shots before realising I was overexposing them. As I reset the camera though the male disengaged and then proceeded to bask over his most recent conquest, such shively 😊😊!



I could have stayed here for a couple more hours, but I wanted to go and see what was happening at Bookham since both Purple Emperors and White Admirals have both been seen now. Sadly, the weather took a turn for the worse and I was left looking for roosting butterflies for the majority of the latter half of the day although I did get one White Admiral flyby during the one and only brief sunny spell.



I left when it started spitting with rain but still, a good few hours with some lovely SSB 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Jun-18 09:39 PM GMT

It's a really good spot for them, Buggy – you saw far more females than I did as well. There must be something in the local gene pool to bring up the blue-splashed ones so regularly. My visit to Chobham was nothing like so productive as it was windy and quite cool as you might expect on a more exposed site – yours was a good choice! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-18 11:37 PM GMT

Cracking set of Silver-studs Bugboy, some of those females seem to have a air bit of blue on them a la Miller 😊 could this be the for a simailar reason as all the blue female Common Blues?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 18-Jun-18 10:28 AM GMT

Great SSB's Bugboy. The mating pair shot is a cracker. 😊 I visited some recently and fell hook, line and sinker for them! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by kevlings, 18-Jun-18 07:27 PM GMT

Blimey Bugboy, you've got about since my last look at your diary. Some great photos of the Black Hairstreaks, which are having a bumper year. Also loved the SSB's. I saw my first ones this weekend and they were splendid.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by Gary.N, 18-Jun-18 07:34 PM GMT

Great series of SSB's and Black Hairstreaks Bugboy. Love the shot of the Female SSB on the Heather flower. 😊

Gary

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Jun-18 09:58 PM GMT

Yup **Dave**, that was exactly my reasoning for choosing Fairmile over Chobham, a nice little compact site 😊
Who knows **Wurzel**, but it is a rather small site so it wouldn't take many generations for such a variation to become fixed in the population.
Thanks **Andrew**, I was well chuffed to find that mating pair posing for me so well 😊
Haha, I do get about a bit **Kev** 😊
Thanks **Gary**, They look out of place on anything other than heather to my eyes 😊

17th June, Essex Heaths

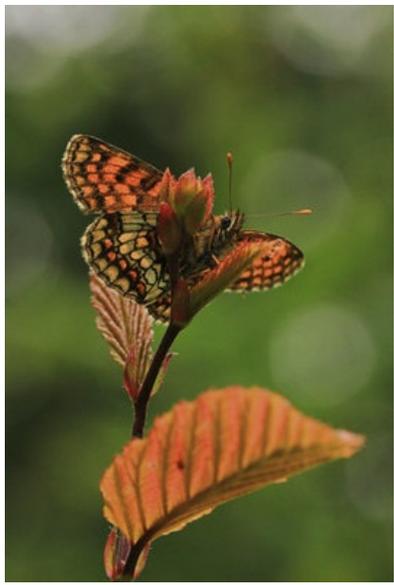
I'd umm'd and aaah'd about Sunday. The forecast seemed pretty dire, no rain but plenty of cloud. In the end I had a lay in and ended up doing some odds and ends and a visit to the farmers market at the end of my street. It was while out when the cloud seemed to start breaking and I decided to take a risk and head off to see some Heath Fritillaries in one of the Essex colonies. My heart began to sink on the way though, the sunny spells became just a distant memory and I arrived at my destination under a thick blanket of cloud. Still I was here now and it wasn't exactly cold so I just had to hope it find something roosting.

It didn't take long, rounding a corner as I approached the area they inhabited last year I saw the first of my quarry, and to my surprise not even roosting! I took plenty of snaps, not entirely sure if this was just a fluke and would be my only sighting, and it gave me both uppers and unders.



It was while I was getting my camera out my bag for this one that I saw the only other person with a camera. I presumed another enthusiast when he asked if I'd seen anything interesting. I pointed out the Fritillary which he looked mildly excited about, then turned back to me and asked if it was rare...? I said very, which garnered a little more mild interest then he wandered off without taking a snap. I guess he wasn't here for the butterflies after all 😊😁!

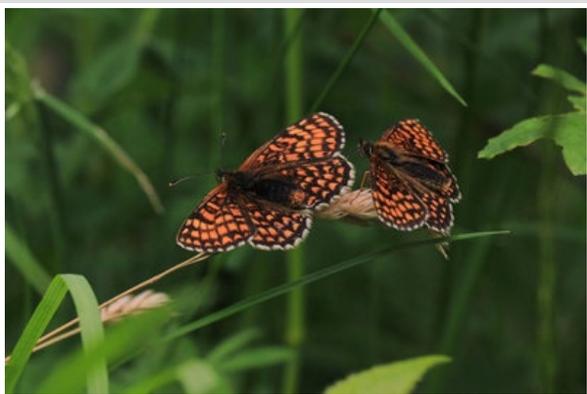
Once I got my eye in though the Fritillaries started popping out all over the place, often in little gangs, and I was glad I made the decision to go. Most of them seemed to be fresh animals with several emerging as I walked around.







Although the sun never appeared during the couple of hours I was there, on occasion the cloud would thin and wake some up who would try and bask in the barely noticeable extra warmth. One pair roosting on the same seed head awoke during just such a spell, and turned out to be a male and female, much to the male's excitement, or at least as much excitement as he could muster under the cloudy conditions.



All I can say is that although the rumours about them only being active during sunny weather is true, don't let a cloudy day put you off, they make no real effort to hide away (I counted around 40 in the end) and make perfect targets to aim your camera at. My afternoon turned out far better than I anticipated. Just be very, very careful where you walk, even better, stick to the paths!.



Pulling a face!



Little & Large!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 19-Jun-18 06:17 AM GMT

I absolutely love that last shot Buggy for so many reasons. Another species I have yet to get a half decent shot of and I don't think that will be rectified this season!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Art Frames, 19-Jun-18 02:36 PM GMT

Lovely pictures which are really saturated in the overcast light. Just imagine how washed out they'd have been if it had been sunny. 😊

Wonderful shots, great message too. I spend far too much time looking at weather forecasts trying to guess which will be the right day. Just go and see. Yes, I will do more of that.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Jun-18 08:46 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy with soem really cracking dark amrked individuals 😊👍 The first time I saw Heaths there wasn't a bit of sun all day but that was great as they sat still and I could get all manner of shots. Last time it was sunny and they were bombing around all over the place (well if you can call their bumbling flight 'bombing' 😊😊)

On the other hand don't bother going for Large Blues unless there is the hint of some sun as I discovered on Sunday 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by kevling, 19-Jun-18 09:16 PM GMT

Nice Heath Frits Bugboy. Useful to know they like cloudy conditions too. I was at that spot last year and it was very special.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Jun-18 10:46 PM GMT

Lovely to see those Heath Frits, Bugboy, although given an imminent trip to the French Alps, I fear I'll almost be sick of the sight of them by mid-July!!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Jun-18 07:07 PM GMT

Thanks **Pauline**, quite pleased with that one myself 😊

Thanks **Peter**, I do like bright cloudy days, Adonis Blues I find take on an extra glow in that light. I too spend far too much time watching weather forecasts, even more pointless when you take into account just how unreliable they are in this country!

Thanks **Wurzel**, 'bumbling' is the perfect description of those cute guys, hope you managed your Large Blues in the end, they don't seem to enjoy blazing heatwaves either...

Thanks **Kevling**, I wouldn't say they 'like' cloudy conditions as such, more that they are just much easier to get up close to 😊

Thanks **David**, oh to be sick of the sight of a Heath Fritillary... 🍵

Well I'm back after a weeks traveling with some very intermittent and dodgy internet access but plenty of butterfly pictures to trawl through. You'll have to wait and be patient for them though, I still have a few days before I left to get through first and if I don't start now, **Wurzel** will come racing past me and we can't have that now can we. So without further ado lets go back to 9 days ago...

18th June, 2 sites, one day...

I'd not yet been to Box Hill yet this year and with Millerds reports of the Dark-greens out now as well as Marbled White the place was definitely well overdue a visit. It's normally the place I see my first Ringlets too so I had three targets for the morning half of the day.

The day started rather cool, cloudy and rather subdued as I started the hunt down on Burford meadow, which sits in the shadow of Box Hill, where I've had good success with the Fritillaries in previous years. There's a patch of Red Clover in the centre that seems to act like a magnet to them so all you have to do is hang around there and they come to you! Well, not this year, the Clover it was seem had an early year and was all brown and withered and going to seed.

In the conditions the only thing flying were Meadow Browns so I filled the time awaiting things to liven up chasing them as they flitted and hid in the long grass. They were mostly, as you would expect the standard versions but one I noticed had a few more hindwing ocelli than in normal and I spent a good amount of time following her around until she settled long enough to get some snaps. I've never seen a MB with such a collection of spots, enough to give any self-respecting Gatekeeper a run for it's money!



Ten o'clock arrived and the merest hint of blue sky started to push through the cloud, so I started up the slope, almost immediately finding the first target of the day flitting around, Ringlet. A few Large Skipper were also waking up and the moment the sun peered out a break in the cloud, clouds of Marbled Whites magically appeared out of nowhere.

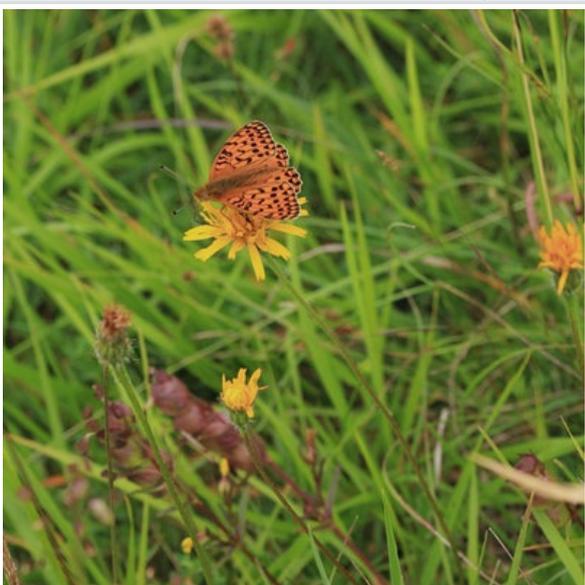




The Marbled Whites all looked very fresh and were clearly emerging as I walked through them, as shown by a freshly emerged one who was clearly no more than half an hour old if that!

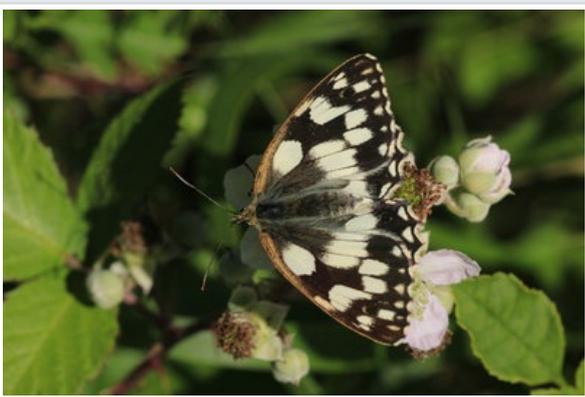


I dragged myself away from them as the clouds breaks grew, searching for target number three and on the main path up the slope I was rewarded by a bright orange flash zooming past me. Up here the breeze was irritatingly brisk forcing him to land either deep down in the grass or perch on a swaying flower, so my photos were rather hit and miss but I managed a few.





After he zoomed off looking for his next conquest I decided to try and get out of the breeze by going to the little valley where Zigzag Road zigzags. Here there was much the same collection of butterflies but by some topographical wizardry the wind was also present, blowing in almost the opposite direction. I managed a few snaps but decided to retrace my steps and have another look round the Meadow before taking in another, nearby site for the afternoon. Obviously I couldn't resist a few more snaps of a perfectly posing Marbled Whites.





I had another brief DGF encounter before reaching the bottom of the slope but much of the butterflies were now fully warmed up for the days events.

Not long after entering Burford Meadow again I saw a couple of large orange butterflies whooshing around, occasionally swirling around each other and giving chase before vanishing of into the distance, only to return minutes later to repeat the entire thing. It was still early enough in the day for a patch of flowering bramble to stop them in their tracks from time to time, just not long enough for me to get close enough. A Brown Argus did catch my attention for a while.



It was a passing cloud that gave me the chance to get what I wanted as one of the large whooshing orange butterflies decided to settle in the grass and allowed me to get close enough to train my zoom lens on him. I swear I could see him huffing and puffing as he sat there!





Tongue hanging out in exhaustion!

Well with the day now warming up it was time to hit the second of the days destinations, no prizes for guessing where that might be!



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

I got the LB in the end Bugboy but it was hard work 😊 Cracking set of shots, love the Large Skipper on the Orchid 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 27-Jun-18 11:33 PM GMT

Those Heaths from your previous post are gorgeous, Bugboy – I especially like the Little and Large shot! Are you going to make Irton Fell/ Fleetwith Pike this year?

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 28-Jun-18 08:06 AM GMT

Yep. "Little & Large" and "Skipper on an Orchid" does it for me too, Bugboy. Great shots.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-18 09:48 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, love your Heath shots, the Marbled White do it for me though, I just love that second shot of it on the Bramble 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Jun-18 10:04 AM GMT

That part of Box Hill really comes into its own at this time of year, and you made the most of it, Buggy. Those DGF just don't keep still for long, though! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Jun-18 06:37 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, glad you got them in the end. Like many species, they're not easy in this heat!

Thanks **Janet**, I am rather proud of that shot. Unfortunately I missed the Irton Fell flight period this year. I booked the second half of June off for them but they chose the first half this year to fly at Irton 😞

Thanks **Goldie**, there's always shed loads of them at Box Hill 😊

You're not wrong there **Dave**, some great species to catch up with 😊. I do like watching those Fritillaries scooting around like idiots even if it is rather frustrating with your camera hanging rather limply around your neck 😞😞

18th June, 2 sites, one day... part 2

Well obviously I was heading to Bookham for the afternoon. White Admirals and Silver-washed Fritillary were hopefully on the menu.

Walking through the open areas didn't produce much at all, that first brood Small Copper really seemed to last for a week and then vanish but once I got close to the woods White Admirals started to appear quite regularly. I'd seen my first of the year whilst chasing Black Hairstreaks with Philib but with hopefully so many about I'd get the chance for some snaps this afternoon. It didn't take long with one settling on the path, always keeping one step to far for the macro lens but then it hadn't reckoned on my zoom!



They were indeed everywhere, mainly floating around the tree tops but often coming down and significantly more than in previous years settled on the paths.





Also on the path was a rather nice Red Admiral doing his best impersonation of a Purple Emperor.



"I know there's some poo here somewhere..."

My first Hutchinsoni Commas showed themselves and I saw my first Silver-washed Fritillaries of the year, predictably they didn't settle though.



Another Red Admiral posed well before I turned to retrace my steps but it was definitely a day for the White Admiral!



Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 29-Jun-18 01:00 PM GMT

Superb Heath Frit's Bugboy. 🍷😄 And I love a fresh White Admiral. 😄

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 29-Jun-18 07:10 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

... Unfortunately I missed the Irton Fell flight period this year. I booked the second half of June off for them but they chose the first half this year to fly at Irton 😞 ...

I believe that early June or even late May is fairly normal for Irton Fell, this is by far the earliest site for them due to the lower altitude with the colony higher up at Whin Rigg flying a couple of week later.

Doing a bit of catching up and just seen your last photo of the double Heath Fritillaries...superb, that really is one I wish I had taken 🍷 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Jun-18 08:35 PM GMT

Thanks **Andrew** and **Neil**, I reckon it's pretty obvious which picture will make an appearance on the fav Heath Frit photo thread this year 😊 I should have done my research a little better Neil 😞 😞 😞

19th June 1 day, 2 sites.... again.

I'd completely missed the Ditchling Common festivities (sounds like it ended up like an impromptu UKB meetup from the various reports I read), having already made my Black Hairstreak plans hours before the big announcement, but I decided to at least give the site a little recce and perhaps be lucky to find myself a late one. At least I'd find out just how easy it was to reach.

The morning turned out to be a rather cool grey affair, with little action apart from the usual suspects.



I did actually see one Hairstreak, but only just long enough to confirm id before a fly decided to shove it out the way! It was a rather battered and worn

individual though so you're not really missing anything. I also found my first Small skipper of the year, and a rather lovely hutchinsoni Comma paid me a brief visit.



I'd also read recently of a mass emergent of Purple Hairstreaks in a clearing in a nearby wood so I took a wander there. Turns out the wood in question is mostly private property with a public path running through the middle. I didn't find any Hairstreaks but in a small glade I found a handful of White Admirals feeding.



One last look around the Common and it was off to site number two of the day..... not quite as close as the previous day, but here's a small clue as to where I was heading



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-18 10:13 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy though I', still none the wiser where you're heading 😊😄

Have a goodun
Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jun-18 07:46 PM GMT

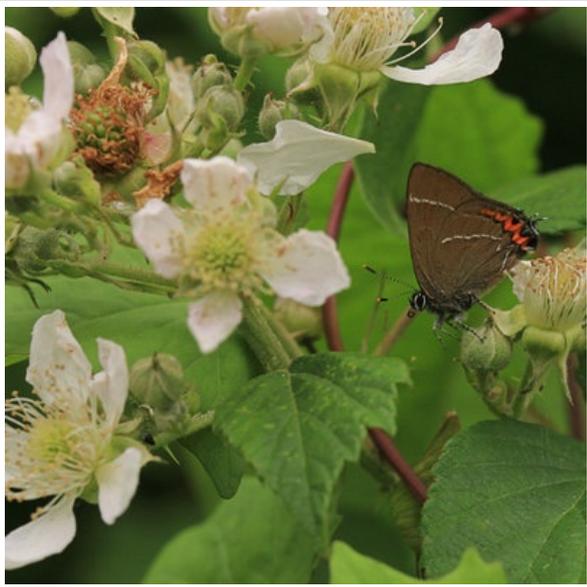
Essex for my very reliable WLH site Wurzel 😊

19th June, 1 day, 2 sites.... again part 2.

A few hours later I was arriving at Leigh on Sea station with the intention of ticking off Hairstreak number 3 of the year. It was still somewhat overcast but this didn't seem to put them off, in fact there may have been more than last year and that was pretty spectacular.

For around 2 hours I wandered up and down this short stretch of path, long enough to catch the evening sun as the cloud finally broke and long enough to come away with a shedload of images.



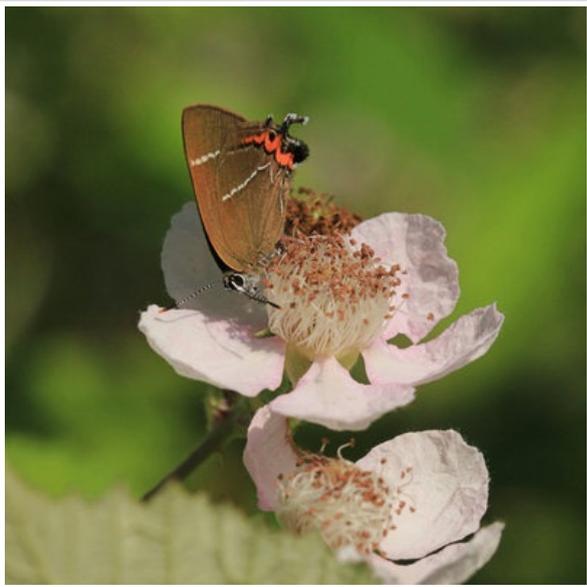




With so many around collisions were inevitable...



This handsome chap was sporting a rather swarthy curve to his fore wing streak 😊



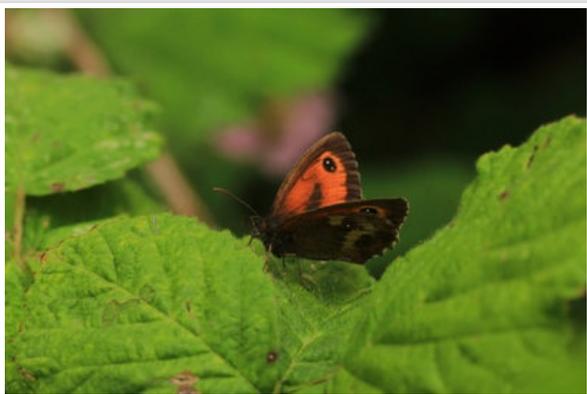
Got. to. get. that. last. drop. of. nectar!

There were other butterflies around other than WLH. This site is also very good for Comma and there was some stonking *hutchinsoni* around, including one with the 'comma' joined to create circle.



ab. O-album

Biggest surprise of the day was a very early Gatekeeper though



But even he couldn't take me away from the Hairstreaks for long, I mean just look at the tails on her... "Phwoah!"



I left at gone 6 with the butterflies all still active, I suspect they were still there for another hour. Brilliant end to the day 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-18 10:25 PM GMT

That certainly is a reliable site Bugboy 🤖 🍷 🍷 Cracking set of shots of immaculately turned out Whitters 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Jul-18 10:47 AM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, it's like clockwork that site, the entire population just comes down every year 😊

20th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 1

Well, as most of you will be aware of, the 'mission' was to try and photograph every UK species in 5 years. This started 4 years ago when the target total stood at 59. Last year this total increased to 60 since it's almost certain now that the Large Tortoiseshell is back, just in very low numbers. At the close of play last year my total sat at a tantalising 59 (I'd found a male LT in the spring) plus a Brucy Bonus in the form of a Queen of Spain Fritillary.

All that remained was the Mountain Ringlet, which I came within a whisker of getting last year on the way back from nabbing the Chequered Skipper. Unfortunately we arrived at Irton Fell during a bleak foggy spell and with little time to hang around we couldn't wait for things to clear up (which it did an hour after we'd left if the weather forecast was to be believed).

This year I'd booked the last two weeks of June off in the hope I could complete the mission but unfortunately my lift had to pull out at the last minute, so I was left scratching my head as to how I could get to any of the sites (to the newbies here, I don't drive and rely on public transport or helpful friends with cars). At the last minute a friend who had always wanted to go on a road trip to Scotland stepped in and booked a week of work, which

meant that last Wednesday I was sat in a car at 6am on the way to Cumbria with a basic skeleton plan for the week. We made excellent time and were up there about 7 hours later.

With Irton Fell pretty much over for the season I'd contacted **CallumMac** a few days previously for some advice as to where I should head for. The peak known as High Road was his suggestion so with appropriately purchased OS maps in Kendal we made it to the tiny village of Hartsop by 3pm, worked out the route as best we could and started the climb. Surprisingly I found the 2000 feet climb relatively easy, my chauffer for the trip quickly discovered she's not as fit as she thought she was but still made it. The weather was a bit iffy, a mixture of cloud and sun but as we got closer to the summit the cloud seemed to be increasing and it became worryingly overcast. We wandered for some time up there, me pointing at various grassy spots and wondering if it looked right, but never quite sure if they were too sheltered, too exposed or if that even mattered to these illusive creatures. In over 3 hours the only lepidoptera we saw were some tiny micro moths, but on the way back down, pondering the plan for the next day, I did find something to point my camera at. A fledgling Meadow Pipit who seemed rather confused, not sure whether to sit tight and hope the strange people go away or fly off himself.



Despite the lack of butterflies, it was still a very good start to the week-long expedition, the scenery in this part of the world is quite spectacular when not shrouded in gloom, mist and fog.



Where are those pesky butterflies?!

Re: Bugboys mission

by CallumMac, 01-Jul-18 07:20 PM GMT

Stunning scenery, Paul, and a nice Meadow Pipit. People are going to think I give bad advice! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Jul-18 10:29 PM GMT

I've got a sneaky suspicion that the next post might feature species number 60, at least I'm hoping it does, fingers crossed... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 02-Jul-18 08:41 AM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Hair Streak Bugboy, love the third shot 😊 I hope you got your MR , looking forward to your next post 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Jul-18 10:51 PM GMT

Thanks **Callum**, but yea you need to up your game in the advice dept! 😊

Shush **Wurzel**, you'll spoil the surprise!

Thanks **Goldie** 😊

21st June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 2

The whole week was a very last minute plan, and no accommodation was arranged in advance, which meant we had the freedom to choose where to go every day. We did however pack a tent and camping gear and with camping sites being ten to a penny in these parts, plus being out of season, we had no problem finding somewhere to sleep. The first night was spent at a camp site just down the road from Hartsop which meant we could get an early start and make a second attempt at the previous days site.

First though I contacted **CallumMac** again to see if he could provide some more precise coordinates to aim for. Being in a rather 'hilly' part of the world, internet access was somewhat hit and miss, and you had to buy access at the camp site, £1 an hour, so I sent off the message and just hoped Callum was in. Thankfully I didn't need to buy anymore, Callum replied with some very exact coordinates and the next morning we set off for another climb. Unsurprisingly it seemed a little steeper and my camera felt a little heavier for this second climb and my friend did struggle a bit more, but halfway up I found the first butterfly of the trip. Not exactly what I was after but in the absence of anything else the camera came out the bag!



We made it to the top again and took the turn we'd missed the previous day, we'd actually walked straight passed it! The weather was pretty much the same as the previous day, I just hoped the cloud didn't take over too much. Off course there was also the very real risk I'd missed them at this site as well. We walked (or rather got blown along) from the High Road peak to High Raise without seeing a single butterfly. Walking up towards the eastern slope of High Raise, which provided a little shelter from the harsh westerly 'breeze', I was in the process of voicing my fears to my friend that we may have missed the flight period here, when a small dark butterfly fluttered weakly past us. Bingo! Now I had to wait for it to land and get my all important first snap. He did land fairly regularly, I think to take a break from struggling in the wind. It may not be the best image of one, but this picture is what completed my mission 😊😊😊.



It was obviously nearing the end of the flight period here with perhaps half a dozen seen on the slope, mostly looking a little worn.





One male however looked to be in reasonable shape, and not wanting to leave with just grass obscured shots, I took him to a large sheltered rock for his photo shoot. I was very pleased to find him exceptionally well behaved and he posed perfectly for me, what an absolute star 😊!







So yea, I've only gone and blooming done it!!! 😄😄😄

It's also quite a nice place to eat lunch!



relaxing after achieving my goal with a year to spare.
Big thanks to Callum, I owe you 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-18 11:31 PM GMT

Huge congrats Bugboy 🎉🎉🎉🎉🎉 What's next? Are you going to try for all the moth species? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Pauline, 03-Jul-18 05:55 AM GMT

Congratulations from me too Buggy – what adventures you've been on. Love those BH shots especially the one on Bindweed 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by CallumMac, 03-Jul-18 08:53 AM GMT

Hooray! Congratulations Bugboy. 🎉 Next time I will give 6-figure co-ordinates from the off rather than just site names... 😊

The MRs are friendly little things, aren't they! This one on Whingill Head literally flew on to my leg and then as I was photographing him, on up to my hand. No encouragement needed!





Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 03-Jul-18 09:09 AM GMT

Fantastic Bugboy, 🍷🍷 what an adventure and you've completed your mission 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Vince Massimo, 03-Jul-18 11:56 AM GMT

Congratulations, Paul. I salute you 🍷

Vince

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 03-Jul-18 07:06 PM GMT

Congratulations.
I think this was an excellent idea and am glad that you completed the set.

Well done 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Jul-18 10:08 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments 😊. I am so chuffed at getting the whole set. Its certainly been a journey in every sense and I couldn't have done it without the help of this website and it's users so big thank you to everyone who's helped me over the years 😊. I'm not going to hang up my camera though, there's always something new to see out there 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 03-Jul-18 10:43 PM GMT

Well done for completing your quest, Bugboy 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 03-Jul-18 11:50 PM GMT

Congratulations Paul! You did it! 😊😊😊😊 I'm so pleased the mission was successful – only sorry you had to wait another year when an hour's wait might have bagged it for you last year. It's been lovely following your diary 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 04-Jul-18 07:31 AM GMT

Bugboy

Fantastic. So you've done it. I only came on board right at the end but I am glad I did otherwise I would have missed it.

So now what for the future?. Any other missions to tackle? Or is it too soon to ask?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Jul-18 07:14 PM GMT

Thanks again guys. Don't worry Janet, we weren't to know at the time 😊
I'm just going to keep getting out there Ernie. I've learnt loads over these past few years and there's so much more to observe 😊

22nd June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 3

So, with the 'mission' now complete would the next 5 days become a bit of an anti-climax? Hopefully not!

We decided to cross the border the next day and try for the Scottish race of the Mountain Ringlets, well I might as well finish in style!



Ullswater



Philib had recommended Ben Lawers as a good and easily accessible site, so that's where we headed. We found a camp site nearby, a 10 minute drive away, set up the tent and then drove up to the main Car Park. Once getting ourselves sorted we wandered off along the footpath that took us to a fenced off section. This area was being protected from over grazing from deer and sheep to allow native flora to flourish and I'm sure is a botanists nirvana if the gumph in the guides is anything to go by. However it certainly didn't look right for the Ringlets. In fact very few butterflies were seen, a couple of unidentified Whites (probably GVW) and a worn SPBF flew by. There were loads of Oak Eggar caterpillars and Golden-ringed Dragonflies around though. My friend found these to be very impressive, which I think is an appropriate response for a newbie to have 😊!





After wandering around for an hour or so we left this area and tried a bit of tentative off roading, following sheep tracks up the slopes but all we found were Small Heath. Hmmm perhaps we were too early for the Scottish race to be flying. With time getting on, and hunger pangs brewing, we went into town looking for food and a phone signal. Time to pester another contact for more precise site details...

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-18 07:26 PM GMT

Congratulations and well done on completing your mission Bugboy 😊

Now you will need to go after all the sub-species, regional forms etc. 😊😓

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 05-Jul-18 10:44 AM GMT

That's awesome Bugboy, well done. 🍀😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 05-Jul-18 10:43 PM GMT

Looking forward to seeing if you have any luck finding the Scottish race Bugboy 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Jul-18 09:00 PM GMT

Thanks **Neil**, yes there are a few races I fancy getting now, I quite fancy a trip to the Scilly Isles 😊

Thanks **Andrew** 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, you'll have to wait til the next post to find out if I got it though 😊

Well, UKB seems to be working ok tonight so here's the next instalment 😊

23rd June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 4

With food on the way and signal acquired I dropped **PhilB** a message. He agreed I maybe a bit early as the weather hadn't been so good up here but did give me some pinpoint areas to check out, if any MR are out I will find them there apparently!

The next day started off with some sun and some birds who were flitting around and singing in the trees around our tent. I couldn't quite place the song until one settled to feed on some nearby Dock seeds. I'm not used to seeing Siskin in the summer, being just winter visitors to south east England.



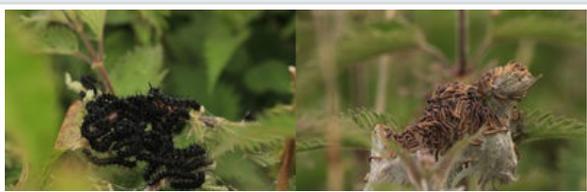
It didn't take long for the sun to vanish and the forecast was for a rather cool overcast affair so we decided to leave going up Ben Lawers for a day and check out some familiar places for some other species. It's been 3 years now since I've seen a Marshie so first thing we headed of the Shian on the west coast, stopping for breakfast on the way. Although cloudy I did hope we might disturb a few... we didn't. We did have a nice wander through the wood here, me keeping my eye's peeled for a late, snoozing Chequered Skipper but all we saw were a few Speckled Wood. It is a pretty place though and we did find some exquisitely marked moths and several nests of Peacock larvae.



Shian Wood Wildlife Reserve



Silver Ground Carpet & Beautiful Silver Y



The next stop off was Glen Loy where I'd had success finding Chequered Skipper last year. This year my main target here was some Large Heath which Neil Freeman had found two years ago. We stopped off briefly at the bridge, just in case there was a late Skippers about. There were no Skippers but I did find a roosting Heath but what size was it? I was pretty sure it was a Small and it was cool enough for me to be able to tease out the forewing to reveal the eyespot which sealed it, Small Heath!



After 10 minutes we returned to the car and drove right to the end of the road. It remained rather cool and nothing was flying without being disturbed for 5 or 10 minutes, which mostly consisted of various small moths, when something notably larger flew up from under my feet. Noticeably larger than any Small Heath and with a distinctly different flight, almost bat-like I thought as I kept my eye on it so I could see where it touched down. It wasn't the most graceful of landings, somehow hanging in the grass 😊 .



In the end we found three or four but in typical Heath fashion all proved right little sods to get close to.





Whilst chasing them we also came across something which is normally just a blur, a Male Eggar moth, this one being the Northern Eggar who's life cycle apparently takes two years. Probably my caterpillars from the previous day at Ben Lawers were these rather than Oak Eggars.



Whilst here I wanted to try and find the wet meadow populated by Fritillaries that Janet and I discovered last year. A few spots looked vaguely familiar but a fortuitous thinning of cloud cover just at the right time that provided the help we needed. It was just bright enough to wake a few females up and we finished the day surrounded by a handful of SPBF flitting around,





Oh and a frog 🐸



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Jul-18 10:50 PM GMT

24th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 5

Day five dawned bright and sunny and promised to be a bit of a scorcher. My friend fancied a nice big breakfast this morning from a diner we'd passed on the way back from yesterday's trip. The diner was a fair bit further away than she remembered meaning that we didn't actually get back to Ben Lawers til gone 11 (It was a very nice breakfast though 😊).

The first thing I saw upon getting out the car was a SPBF which fluttered past, landing on a thistle at the edge of the car park. I spent a bit of time with her whilst my friend sorted out her footwear for the hike ahead.





Just after leaving the car park a Green-veined White also stopped to feed but little else showed itself, besides some very active Small Heath, for the next half hour or so.



We headed for a pass which **Philib** had said to aim for but there was a distinct and obvious lack of small dark fluttery butterflies. Suddenly something caught my attention to one side, something small, dark and butterfly shaped feeding on a buttercup just up the slope. Creeping up on it I managed just one record shot and it was off. I quickly discovered that Mountain Ringlet are very similar to other Satyrids in bright sun and warm temperatures, they don't sit still very long and are easily spooked. Despite following him for a few minutes I only managed a few more distant record shots. Never mind, anything after Cumbria was a bonus anyway and the scenery like the rest of this trip was glorious.



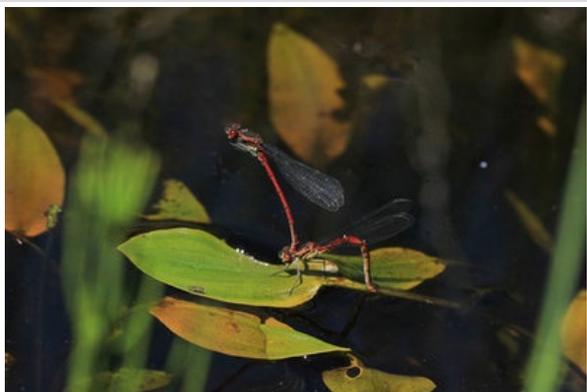


We walked a bit further on, hoping he was a prelude to greater things but no more materialised, had I possibly stumbled across the first emergent of the season up here? We'll never know but my friend did find some rather impressive Lichens, looking decidedly alien.



We had plans to drive to our next destination in the afternoon, so we descended, seeing the same Small Heaths and a very brief visitation from one of those orange crazy loons, a male DGF.

Near the car park a few pools were rather popular with the local damselflies and I was able to point out some paired Large Reds as the females went about ovipositing



A few hours later we were saying our goodbyes to Scotland on our way to our next stop off..



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-18 07:46 AM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy 🍷🍷 Have you started going for all the races already 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Philib, 09-Jul-18 08:47 AM GMT

Congratulations on completing your mission Paul.

You may well have spotted one of the first MR on Ben Lawers, I was there on the 28th and they could be seen in their dozens. Although, with a temperature of over 30C and cloudless skies, I was lucky if I got within 10m of one!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 09-Jul-18 09:21 AM GMT

Congratulations on the magic 60, Buggy – and all the extras as well in the way of migrants, races, subspecies etc... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Jul-18 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I might as well get a head start eh 😊

Thanks Phil, it wasn't far off 30 when I was there and I was given the run around with my one. Thanks for the tip and site details 😊

Thanks Dave still lots to see yet 😊

25th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 6. A flurry of Fritillaries (part 1)

So where was the next destination? A certain northern Mecca for any self-respecting butterfly enthusiast that's where. We'd booked ourselves a couple of nights in the hostel at Arnside which is very conveniently positioned at the foot of the Knott. We arrived too late for a quick recce up the knott but plenty of time to grab something to eat and settle down for an early start the following morning.

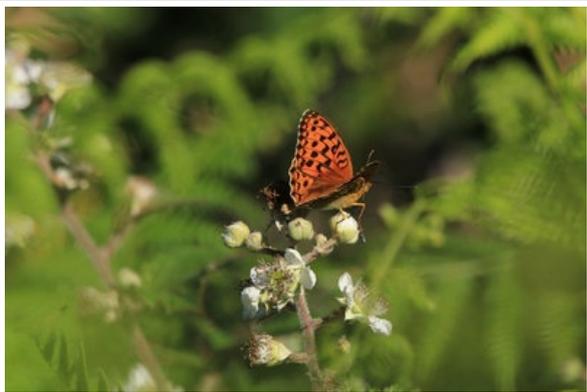
With breakfast devoured we got to the car park just before 9 but I quickly realised we were too late to find any butterflies warming up for the days events, it was already ridiculously hot. We started on the lower slope where I'd had success with High Brown Frits two years ago. Here Meadow Browns and Ringlets flitted around, already seeking shade where they would find the speckled Woods.

The odd faded smaller Fritillary would flutter past, but I only managed a few distant record shots. I put these down as old PBF (a schoolboy error, closer inspection later showed they were all male SPBF)

15 minutes into the search for something larger, he appeared, feeding frantically on Bramble blossom. Time to get the long lens out. Once in the viewfinder on maximum zoom I didn't need to see the underside to know I'd found Arnside Knotts lepidopteran jewel in the crown.

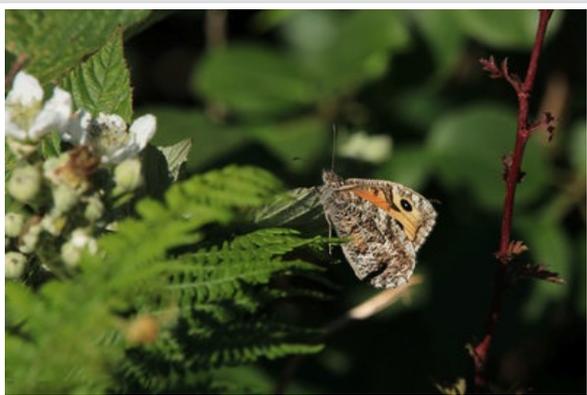


I snapped away as I crept closer, getting plenty of shots as he stuffed his face. I only had him for a few minutes before he shot off over the bracken, fully charged and fuelled for that all important search for a virgin female.





Further searching put up a second one (I did see two on the wing briefly) but no more landings materialised. Whilst searching I did however manage to tick off the season first Grayling, with this cheeky chap hiding behind some leaves. They're an odd species the Grayling, seemingly ignoring the general rule of emerging further south first that most other species adhere to.

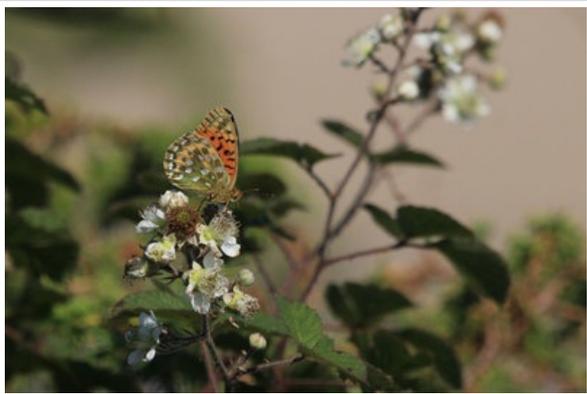


After an hour or so we started the climb up to the top with more faded SPBF and fresh Grayling mixing in with Small Heath and a healthy population of Large Skippers.





Near the top I spied something large and orange feeding on a patch of Bramble. It was pretty intent on feeding and being late morning, I suspected a female. She kept her wings mostly closed so once close enough to get her in my viewfinder, ID was easy. Up until this point I'd not had much luck getting DGF underside shots, but this lady changed that and I'm pretty chuffed with what I got. Had this been Guy Padfield taking the picture that pale background would be recognisable as the River Kent estuary.



All morning there had been male SPBF flitting here and there but the females proved typically much more elusive. When one did show up they were invariably in much better nick than the boys, they just weren't willing to sit in the open. But then who can blame them with so many rampant, randy males all over the place!



By late morning it was roasting hot and it would be a waste of time trying to chase butterflies down for pictures. We were also getting a bit peckish but just before leaving I noticed a Small Heath who was completely lacking in the eyespot dept. He was a bit worn and never provided a clear shot but still worth a record shot.



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 10-Jul-18 06:19 AM GMT

A belated congrats. from me on the completion of your quest. Quite a task when one considers the distances involved, and the isolation of some sites. I am getting there, with two new species this year, but will probably never catch you up !.

Great achievement Paul,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Jul-18 08:42 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**, It's been a lot of fun getting them all and seeing more of the UK in the last 4 years than I have in the previous 40 odd years! I'm sure you'll get the rest. You have two advantages over me, ability to drive (legally) and retired!

25th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 6. (part 2)

We went down to the seafront for food, but even here with a slight breeze it was ridiculously hot. After this we drove to the other side of the estuary to the Foulshaw Moss Nature Reserve on the other side. I was hoping to see some more Large Heath, but I'd already given up any hope of obtaining more pictures in the heat.

We were pointed in the direction of various star attractions of the reserve by the friendly guide stationed in the hut by the car park, and set off along the boardwalk. Large Skippers were everywhere and so were Dragonflies. Some small finches caught my eye and like the Siskins a few days previously, I found myself watching something I'm used to seeing when I'm wrapped up in winter woolly's, some Lesser Redpoll.



A few Large Heath flitted around but as I'd predicted they didn't settle so I just watched them go about their business. I suspect there were more about, but most were likely hiding from the insane heat.

The same couldn't be said for the Dragonflies. They were mostly four-spotted Chasers and unlike the Heaths they were only too happy to strike a pose for me. I can honestly say I have never seen such a high density of Odonata!



A few Darters and Emperor Dragonflies were around but I was keeping my eyes peeled for a White-faced Darter which was reintroduced to this site a few years ago and seems to now be doing well here. All I managed was a female Black Darter though.



Damselflies were also doing rather well, Azure and Large-red making up the bulk with a few Blue-tailed in the mix too.



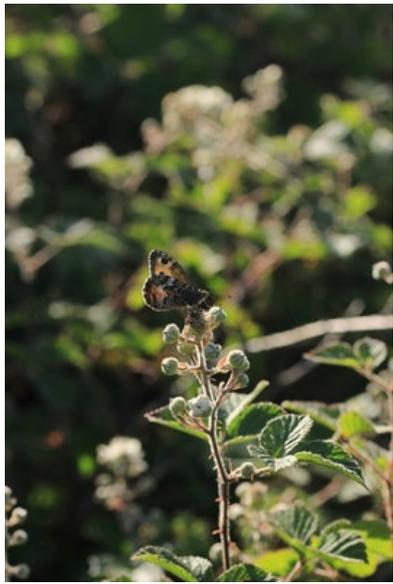
Ovipositing Blue-tailed Damselfly

After an hour or so we returned to Arnside, I'd promised my chauffeur an ice cream treat for her troubles 😊.

I wanted to go back onto the Knott in the evening, hoping things would have cooled down and the butterflies would be a little calmer. Of course I was out of luck there, most the butterflies seemed to switch from hyper charged to roost with no in-between late afternoon basking session. I left my friend sunbathing in a clearing on the lower slope whilst I went searching to see what was willing to sit still for more than a few seconds. I found a Coal tit having a pre-bedtime spruce-up in the sun and quite possible the latest ever sighting of a Dingy Skipper (not including second gen). He had definitely had a long and adventurous life but still seemed full of beans! Nearby was a female Common Blue who was rather blue in flight but was still too warm to bask.



On the upper slopes I was again accosted by Grayling who occasionally settled for me.

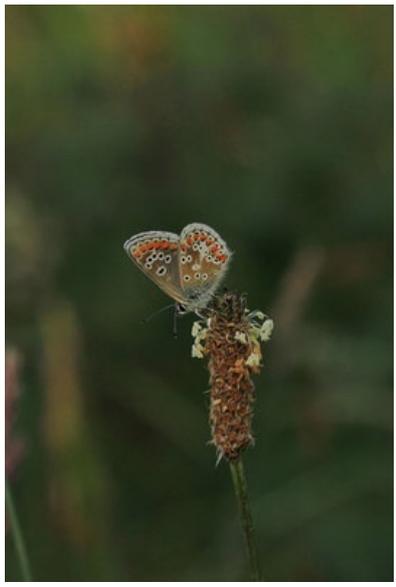


SPBF were again in evidence, males all rather tatty but all the females were in tip top condition



I bumped into another enthusiast who I found out had been up there all day trying to get HBF. He'd managed a few distant blurred shots but I couldn't help to confirm what species it was either way. As we chatted the one he'd been after all day continued to toy with him, settling on some thistles for a few seconds periodically but never long enough to confirm the species 😊.

That morning I'd also seen what I'd assumed were Northern Brown Argus, but they hadn't sat still for a second, so I couldn't confirm. In the evening I could confirm this sighting, but they proved much more difficult to approach than their southern cousins. With some perseverance I did however manage to tick off another race, so I now have both *salmacis* and *artaxerxes* in my collection 😊.



Back on the lower slopes I located my friend, made sure she hadn't been eaten alive by ticks and did one last circuit, managing another NBA and a basking HBF. He was sat quite high so all I managed were some zoomed in shots from a dodgy angle this time, he zoomed off the moment I tried to get closer.



Later, as we sat on the seafront watching the birds we noticed what I'd assumed were just crows strutting around like they owned the joint. There was a certain arrogance about them and the Gulls were very uncomfortable with their presence. With my zoom lens on them they were clearly not any ordinary Crow, Ravens really do think they the dogs proverbial!



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-18 11:08 PM GMT

More great stuff Bugboy – two races of NBA as well as HBF 🤔🇩🇪 I've seen High Brown in Czech but is it the same race as in the UK 🤔 If not have another 🇩🇪🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 11-Jul-18 08:24 AM GMT

Just been going through your recent reports, Bugboy. The pic of the backlit Grayling does it for me. Its hard enough to get a shot with its fore-wings up but to get the light behind it too... Wow!

Oh yes, and those cheeky Raven.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 11-Jul-18 07:06 PM GMT

Cracking stuff from your Northern trip Bugboy. Love the High Brown and Grayling. Great selection of other species as well, the Silver Y and Blue-tailed Damsefly caught my eye. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Jul-18 09:21 PM GMT

A brilliant series of reports, Buggy, with some real envy-inducing shots of the Mountain Ringlets especially. 😊 Your experience of the ever-moving NBA at Arnside matched mine, but at least you got a couple of decent shots – and that ancient Dingy Skipper is definitely worth a bonus point or two. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 11-Jul-18 10:36 PM GMT

It's taken me a while to catch up on everything, BB, but reading the last few posts of yours has given me great satisfaction. Well done on completing the

'mission' and I have to ask this question now:

Are you ready to dip your toe into Europe?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jul-18 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, according to the species profile on this site, the HBF we have is represented from the Pyrenees to Austria.

Thanks **Ernie**, just a case of right time, right place. Best time to get them with their eye's open is when they're feeding when they keep them exposed to distract bird attacks when exposed and active.

Thanks **Andrew**, nearly finished writing it all up which seems to have taken longer than the actual trip itself 😊

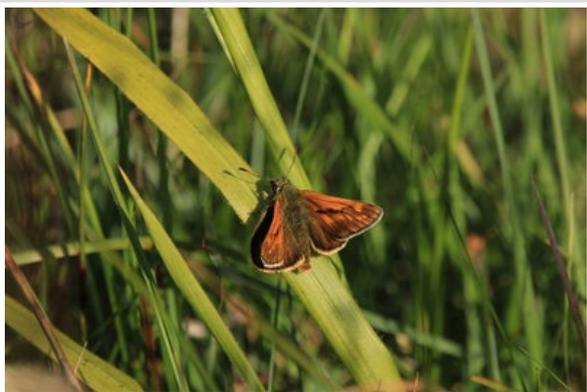
Thanks **Dave**, I reckon the species just isn't used to these kind of extended temperatures, I wonder if the Scotch Argus will cope?

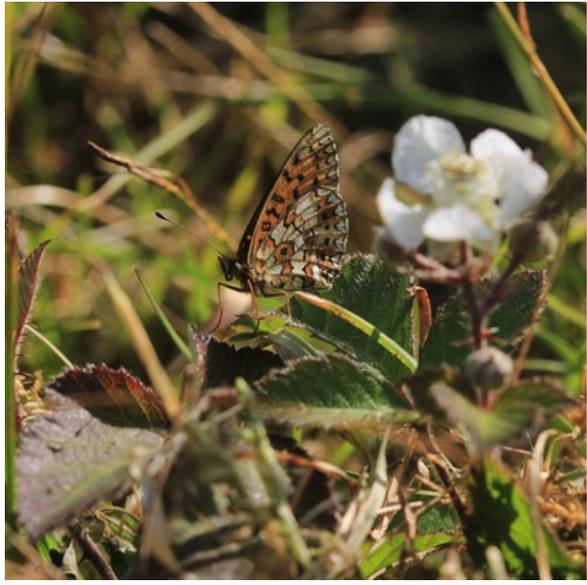
26th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 7. Another flurry of Fritillaries

What begun as a trip to tick off the last species on my mission seemed to have turned into a Fritillary bonanza, and it still hadn't ended! We checked out of the hostel nice and early for one last visit to the Knott before driving off to the final stop-off of the roadtrip. Even so it was still nearly too late to catch the Fritillaries warming up. On the lower slopes I came across another male HBF feeding but I only had his company for a couple of minutes before he was off.



Moving to the upper slopes again the SPBF were also awake, as were Large Skippers, Grayling, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small Heath, Speckled Wood etc.

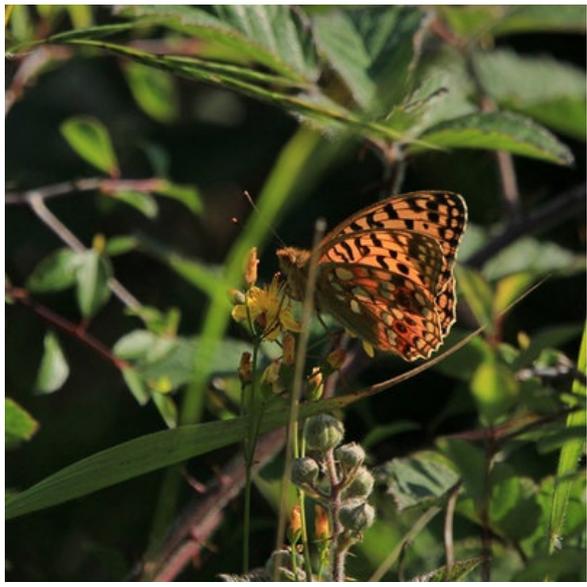




Staking out the same batch of thistles as the previous day we found the enthusiast. He showed us some pictures he'd managed after we'd chatted the day before. He'd got what he was after, some clear HBF shots but he was after more!

What he was unaware of was that a few feet away, just around the corner I'd just had another nice HBF encounter. This chap had sat for me several times, not always in the perfect spot, but then when I've got one of these sitting still I'm not going to complain too much!





Up at the top of the Knott a pale orange butterfly zoomed up from one side, circle us and landed again, another species to add to the growing list of this trip.



There had been a few NBA darting around but again they never seemed to settle. There were still loads of SPBF around which kept me occupied and it was whilst aiming at one of these that I finally saw a NBA settled, a *salmacis* with a hint of *artaxerxes* about it.





Walking back down the slope I couldn't resist a few more snaps of the Graylings.



6 hours later I was at our final stop before returning home.... But where was I?



Find out in the final installment of this epic trip 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-18 11:10 PM GMT

Great stuff Bugboy I've not a clue where you're jetting off to next but 6 hours later could mean anywhere, even abroad! 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Jul-18 11:16 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

Great stuff Bugboy I've not a clue where you're jetting off to next but 6 hours later could mean anywhere, even abroad! 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

I'll give you a clue Wurzel, it wasn't a million miles away from where you were that day 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 11-Jul-18 11:21 PM GMT

Breathless stuff, BB. Do you run on Duracell?

I'm looking forward to the next instalment.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Jul-18 08:55 PM GMT

Sorry **David**, I missed your earlier comment, I am pondering whether to take on european butterflies, a little bit intimidating with all those Blues and Skippers and Ringlet etc but there are several species that I've wanted to see since I was a kid. A bit of planning might be needed and I suspect there will be a bit of a steep learning curve and lots of questions 😊. As for what I run on, well one advantage of having a 'chauffeur' at my disposal for these long trips is that I can nap in the car 😊😊

26th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 7, a west country Brucie Bonus.

So instead of driving straight down to London we took a minor detour.... via Gloucestershire, and a certain pub called The Daneway. Arriving in the searing heat of mid-afternoon I hopped out the car and did a recce of the bank whilst my chauffeur sorted out the overnight accommodation. There was a lot of general butterfly activity but not much in the way of the target species. I decided to give it a couple of hours in the hope I'd catch something later and helped put up the tent before relaxing in a cool pub with an even cooler drink, flicking through the thousand or so pictures I'd amassed during the week. It was whilst I was relaxing that I think a certain Wurzel was prowling the bank.

Two hours later we returned to look for Large Blues. The butterflies seemed torn between roosting and being hyper active in the still silly heat, but still no Blues of the Large persuasion showed themselves. For an hour we wandered the slopes, Skippers and Brown's all over the place. We did find some blues, but they were far from Large.





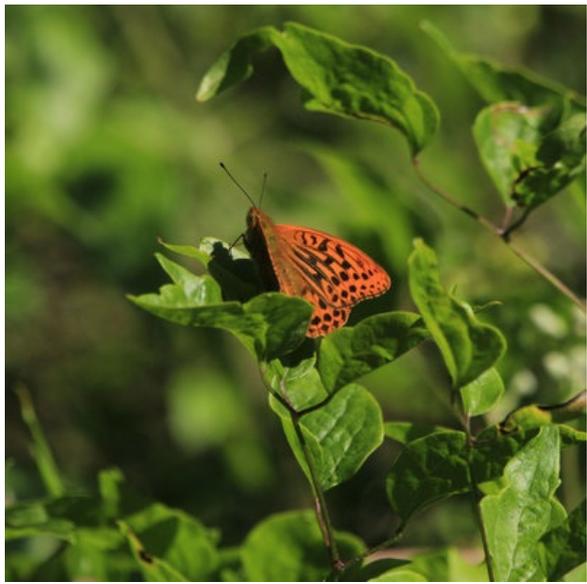
It was just as we were leaving to have a well-earned meal at the Inn when the unmistakable shape and hue (I think the technical term at this site is Deep Blue) flew past and vanished round a bush. Oh well, at least I knew they were about.

27th June, Bugboys Big Northern Trip 2018, day 8, a west country Brucie Bonus cont.

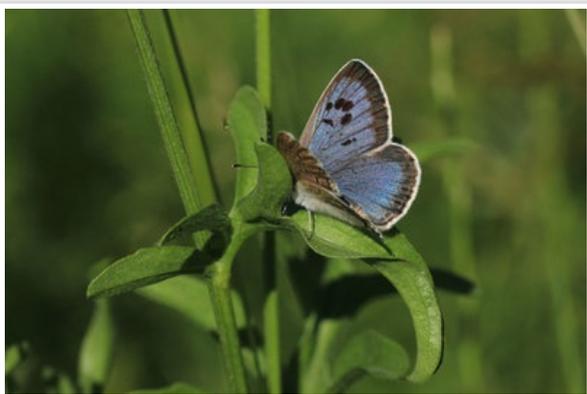
We got up early the next morning, but yet again the heat beat us. At 7.30am everything was already up and about and mostly not willing to sit still. It took a while but eventually a Large Blue showed up. From the look and behaviour I suspect freshly emerged. She was most unwilling to open up but with a bit of perseverance I managed some underside shots.



No more showed up on the lower slope so we moved to the upper bank, Brown's and skippers erupting with every footfall. A very large orange butterfly appeared from nowhere, circled us a few times and landed halfway up a tree. I wasn't expecting a SWF to make it's season debut here.



Up here another Large Blue also appeared and gave me the runaround for a bit, but it eventually landed and coyly opened its wings for a minute or two.





I'd say more of a Cobalt Hue myself but then what would I know.

Happy to achieve some upper sides we moved on. Large Blues becoming more common as we circled back round to the lower slope again. I probably saw around a dozen before we left at 9.45, most of them now super charged up and not worth chasing around, trampling all over the habitat in the process. How ridiculous, butterflying that early in the day and getting your shots in before breakfast!





So that's it really. Mission complete with a shed load of bonus species in the bag too. My friend had work the following day, but I still had four days before returning to work, four days of relaxation..... 😊😊 you know me better than that by now surely 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-18 10:40 PM GMT

Glad you got them in the end 😊, I must have missed you by a whisker 😊 Looks like the early morning was a better idea than the early evening as none 'oped up' for me, still got my shots though 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 13-Jul-18 06:48 AM GMT

Beautiful Large Blues, BB, with wings open too! 😊 There won't be many who achieved that this year with wall to wall sunshine.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Jul-18 11:49 PM GMT

Early morning and perhaps several degrees cooler **Wurzel** 😊

It was hard work and ridiculously early **David**, but worth the effort as always 😊

28th June, normality resumes.... Bookham, a purple bonanza.

Every time I found connection and had a quick browse of UKB during my northern trek I felt like I was being bombarded by Purple Emperors, so as soon as I got back I felt the need to go to Bookham to find one for myself.

There was a good amount of general butterfly activity, Small Skippers and Brown's darted and flopping around in the morning sun but the first thing to really catch my attention were the dozens of Purple Hairstreaks that were flying low over the bracken, I've never seen numbers like this low down. It wasn't just one sex or freshly emerged insects either, both sexes were actively flying down from the tree tops. They were very active even when settled so photo opportunities were not common, but there were enough around to manage a few. They all seemed to be searching for something to lick so I wondered whether the recent temperatures have caused the honeydew to dry up?





I could see a few fellow Emperor hunters up ahead and seeing me they waved for me to come over, but they hadn't seen what I was looking at. I called over to point out an Emperor on the path between us. Like the Hairstreaks he was an active fellow as he wandered around on the ground, constantly opening and closing his wings, making catching the purple a bit challenging. Still he didn't seem in any rush to go anywhere fast, so we had plenty of time with him.

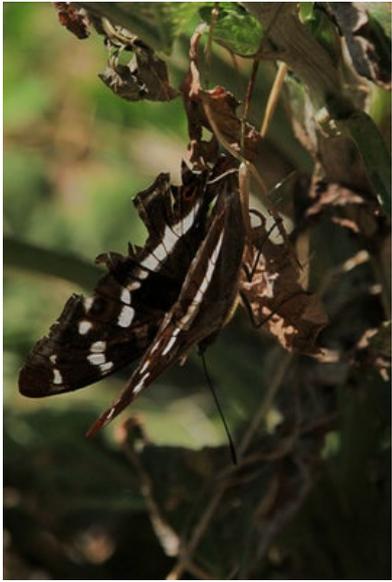


At one point he discovered, much to his joy, some dog mess, so I poured a bit of my squash onto a mossy log and with the help of my sweaty brow moved him to a more photogenic position.

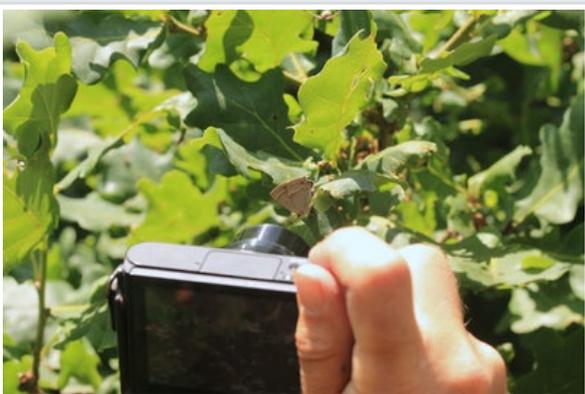


Once he'd finally returned to the tree tops to start some fights with anything that moves I decided to call it a day, dropping Millerd a message about all the Hairstreaks. I got a reply nearly straight away that he was 10 minutes away, so I made my way to the car park he normally uses, both of us arriving at the same time.

10 minutes later, as we wandered along, chatting about what he would likely see during his impending trip to Arnside an Emperor landed amongst some foliage on the side of the path. This chap stayed in the shade and wore some battle scars, I suspect he was the local thug.



Now things had warmed up the Hairstreaks were somewhat less willing to sit and we had to settle for being spectators for the most part. That was until we were leaving. Walking along the side of Banks Common we saw an Emperor fly into an isolated oak, quite high up and out of sight but shortly after a Hairstreak settled lower down. It was relaxed enough that we were able to pull the branch down to get closer to it and grab some pretty decent shots.



It wasn't all about the colour purple though, here's some of the others who caught my eye



A good day, with the Hairstreaks being an excellent bonus 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 15-Jul-18 07:42 AM GMT

It's been a remarkable year for 'Purple', Paul. It would seem that your Purple experience has rivalled mine this year!, with more Emperors and Hairstreaks around than normal.

Great images,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 15-Jul-18 03:20 PM GMT

Love the open wing Large Blue Bugboy, I must go next year. Glad you got some Purple action. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-18 06:31 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Bugboy 😊 Brill Emperors but I have to reserve the 'greenie' for the Hairstreaks as those are great images 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Jul-18 08:31 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, I was following your diary whilst up north with a certain amount of envy!
Thanks Andrew, it's a great site to visit during Large Blue season. Small and compact but with a large range of species plus somewhere close to relax if the weather turns 😊
Thanks Wurzel but you might want to pace yourself before dishing out too many of those greenies 😊

29th June part 1, more purple.

Before we parted company the previous day, Millerd and I agreed to meet back at Bookham the next day, well the purple ones seemed to be performing rather well so it would be rude not to 😊!

Again, it seemed to be raining Purple Hairstreaks at every sunny glade along the paths and again they were annoyingly active, and in some cases, there were simply too many. Like the problem I have with my WLH site in Essex, you zone in on one only to disturb an unseen closer individual which then disturbs the one you're focused on, oh what a predicament to be in! With so many around though, we did manage enough to not leave empty handed.





The best one was a freshly emerged individual I found clumsily clambering up a grass stem.



Unfortunately, Dave was otherwise occupied, and it flew off just as he was coming over.

We bumped into another enthusiast, who was indeed rather enthusiastic, who finding out we had yet to see an Emperor that day, proceeded to give us directions to one of the master trees, and betted his camera (a rather nice DSLR with an impressive lens) that we would see some there. After standing under said trees for several minutes I concluded I should go and collect my winnings, but we didn't bump into him again.

We didn't see any of the bigger purple inhabitants today but there was still a lot to enjoy, Bookham really does come alive at this time of year.





Note the obvious beak mark indicating a close shave





Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 15-Jul-18 09:18 PM GMT

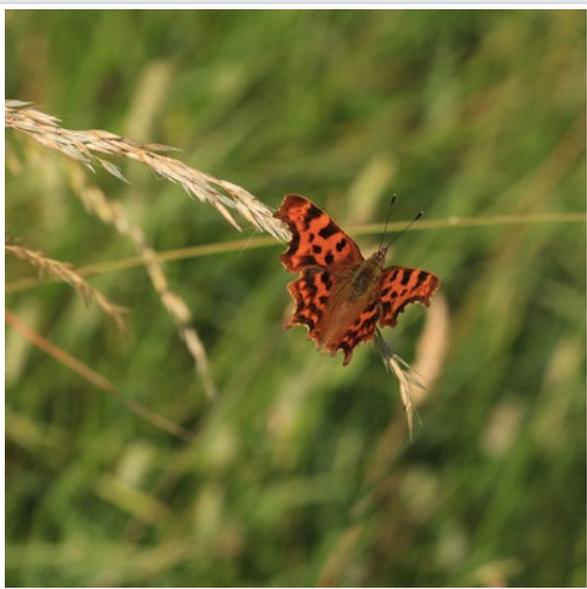
29th June, part 2, a touch of orange

We parted company after midday, my plan was to head off the Essex to see if there were still some WLH around and to rectify the minor detail of not yet seeing an Essex Skipper this season. It's become a tradition to see the first in the county that gave it its name now.

There were a few Hairstreaks around but mostly well past their best and in much lower numbers than a few weeks ago.



Hutchinsoni Commas were rather commonplace



but nothing like as numerous as the Skippers. From what I could tell they were mostly Essex Skippers but it was still stupidly hot and they were rather difficult to pin down. One thing I did notice as I stalked them, something I've never noticed before, is just how much more nervous Essex Skippers are compared to Small or Large. In fact it became so obvious I had a 100% success rate of ID'ing them based on this behaviour based on the ones I managed to get close enough to positively ID them in the traditional manner.



Essex



Essex



Essex



Small



Small



I can't remember what this one was and only have this pic of her. There is no sign of orange on the antennae but the overall look does look more Small than Essex ?

Browns were also present in varying numbers. Meadow Browns all looking rather tired now but some Ringlet and Marbled White were worthy of attention





All three species of White put in an appearance, plus some old first gen Holly Blues, but they were all still too active.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-18 11:16 PM GMT

I see what you mean Bugboy 😊😄👍 A cracking array of shots. I reckon your Smessex is an Essex, the antennae lack the 'flicks' on the end and also the ground colour is less in your face orange and more 'sandy' coloured 😊 I'm ready to be corrected though...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 16-Jul-18 12:06 AM GMT

They were a good couple of days down at Bookham, Buggy – hairstreaks galore! 😊 My experience from the WLH spot is that every skipper I could get near enough to identify was an Essex – you did well to find a Small one. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Jul-18 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, still more Little Purple ones to come though 😊 I think I'll end up erring on that skipper and labeling it as a Smessex. Yes they were a good couple of days **Dave**, so good I couldn't keep away 😊

30th June, 2 days till work!

The temptation of those Hairstreaks was just too much and I ended up at Bookham for the third day in a row. Once again the Hairstreaks didn't disappoint, popping up all over the place.



In the same grassy glade as I found the freshly emerged one the previous day I found another clambering up. This one was much friendlier than yesterdays and only flew weakly indicating it was very fresh. I willed it to open up and tried every trick in my armoury (shading, turning my back, putting my camera away, taking out my lunch) but nothing worked so I made do with a shed load of undersides.





Whilst searching other glades for Hairstreaks (to be fair no searching is needed this season), I had a surprise appearance of a different type of Hairstreak. Only one quick snap was achieved before she shot off.



Elsewhere a Comma was doing his best Purple Emperor impression and under the Emperor master tree (I still saw no sign of HIM) a couple of rather nice female Meadow Browns were doing a grand job of dispelling the myth which still regularly pops up on FB groups about the 'one pupal = Meadow Brown, two pupils = Gatekeeper'





Since this was my third day here in a row I decided to leave early and use my afternoon to catch up on more mundane things that we're obligated to do as a grown up, but there were a few things that delayed my departure, mating Ringlets



And a tree full of fledgling Swallows! The parents were flying around, and I managed a few shots as they came in to feed them. It was just a shame the sun was right overhead, making it impossible to get better shots.





Dad taking a well earned break

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-18 10:35 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Bugboy 😊👍 I reckon there was one trick that you missed and that was pour a coffee, generally the butterflies turn up when ou have the flask in one hand, the top under your chin and the flask in your other hand 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Jul-18 07:33 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, I knew I missed something 😊

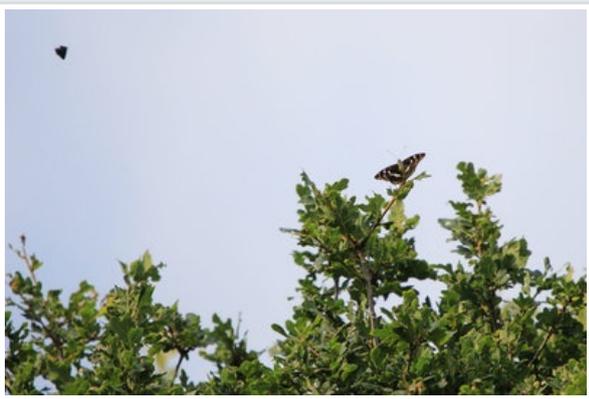
1st July, Just one more purple day 😊.

Back to work the next day but in the interest of wringing every drop of butterfly hunting out of my two weeks off I went back to, yes, you've guessed it, Bookham. This time it was an afternoon/early evening visit to see what the Hairstreaks were doing, perhaps being more willing to sit still and pose open winged for me. Unfortunately, it actually became rather overcast for much of the afternoon so not too much was active. A few orange butterflies did pose though

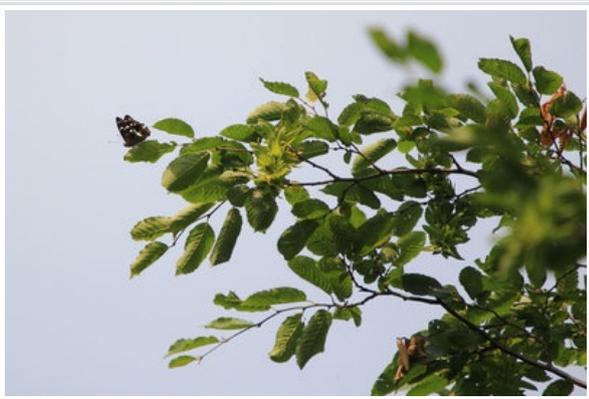


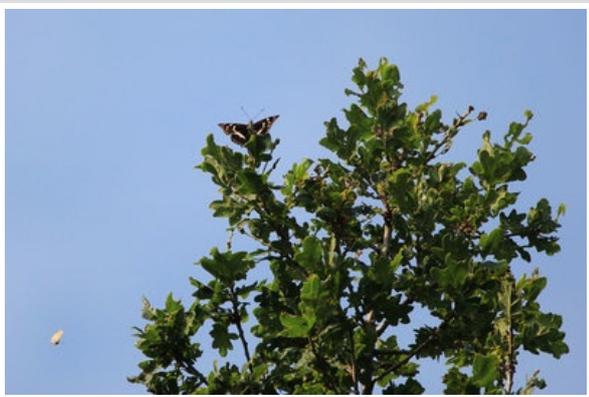
But there was very little in the way of purple in the air. Wandering up to the Emperor master tree I saw a few people looking up into the canopy with bins and scopes. Reaching the spot, I looked up expectedly to find two Emperors engaged in a dogfight. Time to show me what you can do zoom lens 😊.





A purple Hairstreak comes in for the kill!





I stayed there for about an hour snapping away and watching them fight. At one point no less than four Emperors were having a mass brawl 😊.

Bookham had one final present for me as I was leaving, a nice Ringlet ab. *lanceolata* playing hide and seek.





A good finale to my two weeks off 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-18 10:01 PM GMT

A fantastic finale Bugboy, great action shots and a sublime lanceolata 🤔👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Jul-18 10:03 PM GMT

Splendid scrapping Emperors, Buggy! My puny little camera can't manage that sort of stuff and those are great images. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Jul-18 10:22 PM GMT

Fantastic shots of the Emperor Bugboy, i didn't even get to see them when I visited Fermyn 🤔👍 so i'm envious 😊

Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 18-Jul-18 12:03 AM GMT

Delightful stuff, BB. You've done really well with a whole range of species lately, but you seem to 'own' Purple Hairstreaks right now and that is something few people can lay claim to!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Jul-18 07:12 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel** 😊

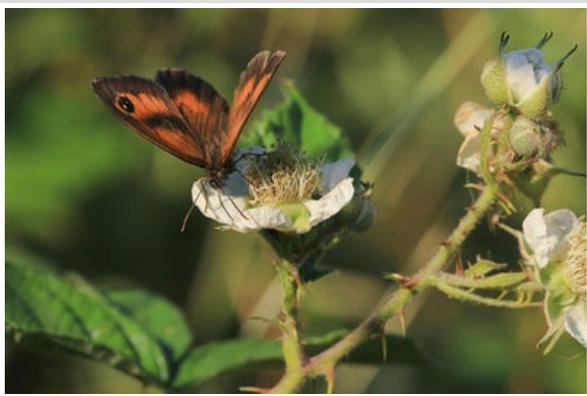
Thanks **Dave**, your camera may be smaller than mine but it still produces some impressive pictures, size isn't always important 😊

Sorry to hear you missed your Emperors **Goldie**, at least there's always next year 😊

I don't think I can say I 'own' PH **David**, they seem to be having an incredible year with unprecedented numbers coming down all over the place!

3rd July, staying local.

Due to how my rota works, I was back to work for just one day then I have my half day followed by my normal weekday day off. Time to have a little jaunt on my much-neglected local patch. As with everywhere else, its suffering from the lack of rain, and can only be Walthamstow Marshes in name at the moment with much of it looking more like mid to late August. I didn't see a great deal to start with, no Skippers or Browns in the first meadow through the entrance I use. It was only when I reached some of the shadier spots that I started to see the occasional butterfly, the odd white would flutter by and Gatekeepers would settle and try to stay cool.



In one of the regular sun traps that usually hosts a resident Comma at various times of year I found a couple, battling it out for prime vantage points. A couple of Red Admirals were also here and refused to move on, much the Comma's chagrin.



Think I was channelling my inner Neil Hulme with this one

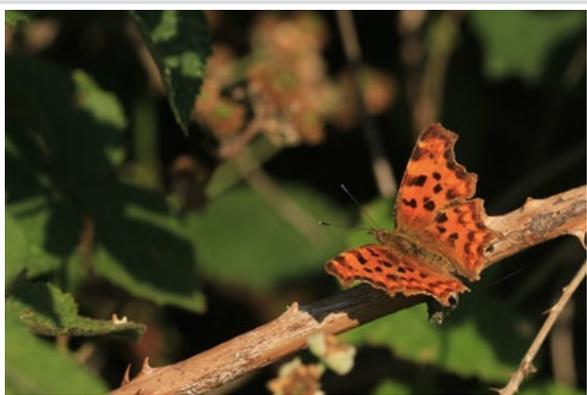


one for Wurzel :)



Further on I checked out the Goats-rue that's so popular with the resident Holly Blues. It too was looking rather withered, but the seed pods still looked green and plump so hopefully the Holly Blues won't be too badly affected. I didn't however see any adults.

Along this stretch are also lots of Buddleja bushes in full flower, but as a sign of just how dire urban butterfly populations are these days there were just a handful of butterflies here. A couple of Small Tortoiseshell, a few Peacock a single Comma plus a few Whites and Meadow Brown's. Only the Comma and Peacocks presented themselves for the camera.





As a kid, I clearly remember the single Buddleja at the bottom of my garden would attract significantly more than this meagre amount.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 10:18 PM GMT

Cheers for my shot Bugboy 😊 Great set of images especially the Hedge Browns. They almost don't have the second pupil – something I've seen a fair bit this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Jul-18 11:46 PM GMT

More great images, BB. Things are 'hot' round your way right now. Keep on pursuing the Purple Hairstreaks. This time next year they'll probably be back to their normal frustrating behaviour.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 20-Jul-18 05:16 PM GMT

I have another very nice Gatekeeper ab. waiting in the wings **Wurzel** which I think you might like 😊

That's the principle I've been working on **David**, my hard drive is going to be creaking under the weight of images of Hairstreaks by the end of the season, especially if the Browns have a good season as well!

4th July, not staying local.

I fancied a trip to the south coast, hopeful to find my first Clouded Yellow of the year. Mill Hill was the end target, but I have got in the habit of stopping off at Trevor's late season hunting ground of Shoreham Harbour at Southwick when I go there. Here Whites abounded, all three species but that was as close to yellow as I got.

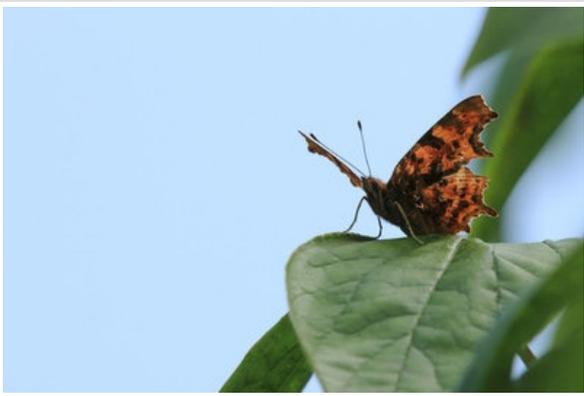


The mercury was already climbing but each Small White was closely studied as best I could just in case there was *mannii* amongst them, there wasn't. Flying with them were also some Skippers. I couldn't pin any down, but my gut was telling me they were Essex.

As usual the birdlife posed well here, and the more eagle eyed amongst you may notice what the Greenfinch is perched on. Wild Fennel, there's a lot here, just waiting for a passing visitor from across the channel 😊.



After an hour or so it was off to Mill Hill. The route I take follows a footpath around the horse field before you cross the bridge. The edges are rich in thistle, nettle, Bramble and Ivy growth and so make good hunting grounds for a variety of species. Last year you couldn't move for Red Admirals, today Small Tortoiseshell were active along with dozens of Gatekeeper, but in the heat, there was little chance for pictures. Further on speckled Woods showed up in the shadier areas and some fresh Peacocks gave me the run around. Looking down on me was a comma so he got snapped, another one for Wurzell!



Across the bridge Marbled White, mostly past their best, started to show up and another Small Tort posed in semi shade. Here I also found a surprisingly tame Silver Y, they're normally a distant blur before you've even thought about raising your camera!



On the slope it was the usual suspects although no Chalkhills, which I was secretly hoping for. It was however blazing hot so nothing much was sitting still.



Here too all three White butterflies were present and some lemon-yellow ones too, but no deep yellow ones were to be found.





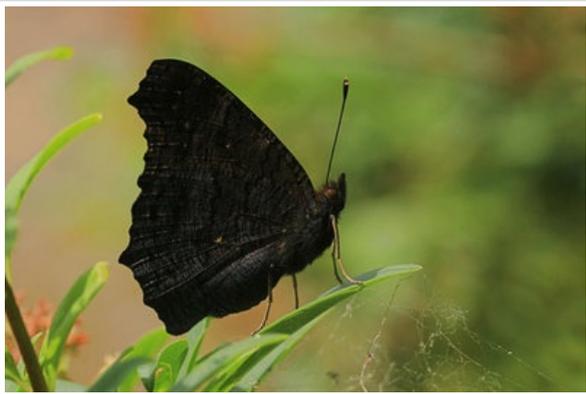
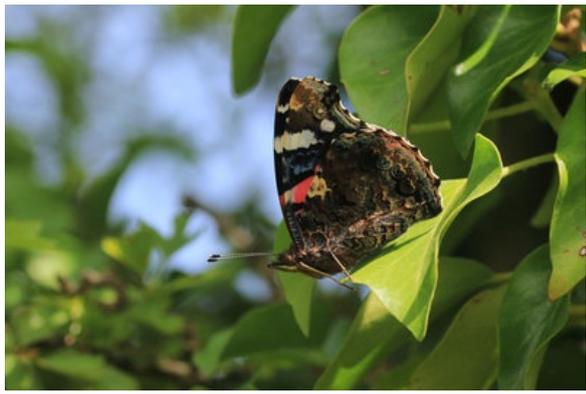
I moved to the top car park to see what was going on here. It was much the same but the stiff breeze that had been a bit of an irritant all day was somewhat stronger here. I'd also hoped some early second gen Walls might be about, but they too were absent. I did chase a Meadow Brown who had some bleaching but in-between getting blown ragged he never sat right for me, this is the best I could manage. another fresh Tort also proved to be a challenge



There is a lot of Greater Knapweed up here, which the butterflies obviously love, and sitting in the middle of all the normal purple flowers was a plant sporting white flowers, it really did stick out like a sore thumb!



On the return trip around the horse field I had better luck with the Vanessids including my best effort yet at capturing the inky blackness of a Peacocks underside 😊.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-18 08:37 PM GMT

Looking forward to the Hedge Brown ab Bugboy, though part of me hopes it's not too MrGreen inducing 😊😄 I know what you mean about the 'blackness of the Peacock' when they're flying sometimes and you catch the underside you can be forgiven for mistaking it to be a bat 🦇🦇 .

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 21-Jul-18 03:31 PM GMT

A fantastic selection Bugboy. Love the fresh Purple Hairstreak, jousting Emperor's and Ringlet ab. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Jul-18 09:04 PM GMT

It's a bit of a wait until I get around to the Gatekeeper **Wurzel**, but as a connoisseur of the species, I think you'll find it worth the wait ;) Thanks **Andrew** 😊

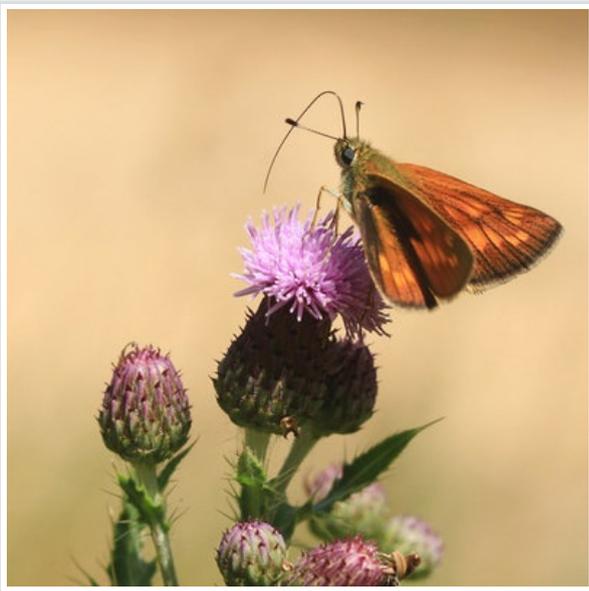
10th July, Graylings.

One of my highlights from last year was capturing egg laying Graylings in the act (for the newbies the pictures are here <http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk>)

[/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=8077&start=1360](#)) and I promised myself to attempt better images this season. With that in mind it was off to my regular Grayling hunting ground, Chobham Common. I'd deliberately waited for a day that wasn't blisteringly hot and with a bit of cloud cover to calm the main targets down. As a habitat that is able to cope with water shortages I hoped it wouldn't look as bad as the meadows I've frequented recently but even here things looked more parched than usual. There was however a lot of life here to capture my attention. The edges of the site are lightly wooded in places and have therefore not been subjected to as much blazing sun as more open areas, and in the gaps where thistle grow, it was a hive of activity, with Whites and Skippers making up the bulk. Large Skippers do well here and regularly hang on into early September. Today's lot all looked very fresh.



Incoming!



All three common Whites were here and although I was here primarily for Grayling, what sort of fool would pass on a backlit male Brimstone!



Overlooking all this was a Comma. These backlit Commas are becoming a bit of a theme recently.

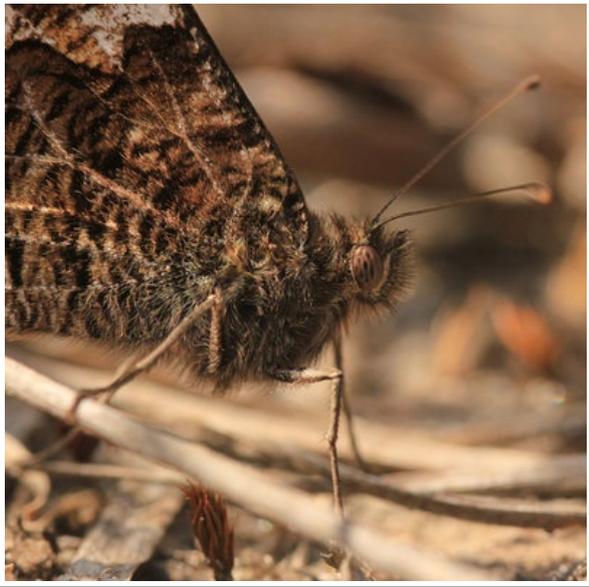


After getting my fill of the support cast I made my way to my favoured hilltopping spot, on the way finding a particularly finely marked Green-veined White.



It didn't take long for me to get buzzed by a male Grayling. As expected there were several here, dotted along the path defending borders against intruding males. Just down the other side is the spot where I find the mated females, an open flat area where nothing much grows bar the LHP. After much searching though I was unable to put up any females, it would seem I'm a little early so I returned to play with the males. I do like Grayling, they really make you work hard but once they relent they let you get right up close to see the intricate underside and those wonderfully alien eyes. An added bonus today was finding a freshly emerged one who had yet to learn how to use his wings properly.







Time for the annual 'spot the Grayling' competition.

Lowland heaths are also good places to find some of the rarer Odonata. I've never really deliberately gone looking for them until today though. The first sighting was a mating pair of Keeled Skimmer. In the past all I've managed is an old faded female.



The smaller pools have all long since dried up but there are some larger ponds which still hold plenty of water. Here various blue Azure Damselflies were joined by Large-red Damselflies... or so I thought until I checked one of the images I'd just taken, she had red legs. Large-reds (a common species) have all black legs, Small-reds (a much rarer and localised species, and one I had never seen before) have red legs.



This required further investigation, in particular the more overgrown far side of the pond which I thought appeared very appealing if I were a Damselfly. I was right, several sat amongst the reeds, including a mating pair.





A very satisfying tick! As an aside you know your verging on a drought in the UK when you start to see butterflies mud puddling!



I couldn't resist a few more Skipper snaps before leaving.





Hopefully the female Graylings will be out on my next visit.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 21-Jul-18 09:15 PM GMT

'Spot the Grayling' had me looking hard for several minutes, Bugboy! 😊 And a very fine capture of the red-legged damselfly.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 21-Jul-18 10:35 PM GMT

Found it! Yes, they can disappear in an instant, those Graylings. Great shots of that new boy, Buggy, and also of the skippers. The two puddling make a cracking photo. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 22-Jul-18 11:29 AM GMT

Well BB, seeing those butterflies 'puddling' must make it a heatwave officially now!

It's quite bizarre how your Large Skippers last so long. Ours here in Wales have already disappeared; even Small & Essex are nearing the end.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-18 10:50 PM GMT

I'm sure I commented this morning Bugboy but as Little L was moaning the heat, having to do an 11+ practice test and how hungry she was I mightn't have clicked the submit button 😊😊 I think that what I wrote was...found it but you'll have to take my word for it so as not to ruin it for anyone else 😊 Also those are really fresh Large Skipper – is that a second brood or just a late emerger? 🤔🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Jul-18 10:14 PM GMT

Thanks **Janet**, Rather chuffed to find those Damselflies 😊

Thanks **Dave**, they were both pretty obsessed with drinking those Skippers!

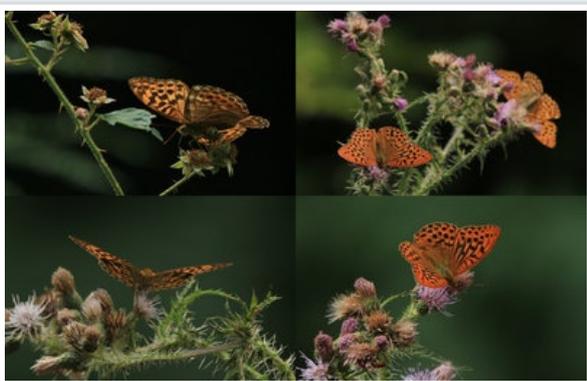
David & Wurzel, with regard to the Large Skippers I think Chobham Common is just a very late site. I never come here until the Silver-studded Blues are out so I don't know when they start emerging but given I can find them here as late as August they must start emerging a good few weeks later than the national average. Also bear in mind I'm a few weeks behind in reports 😊

12th July (part 1), another day, another visit to Bookham.

Another trip to Bookham today and another day in the company of **Millerd**. I started the day walking around all the spots where I'd found Brown Hairstreaks eggs last winter, hoping I might come across a freshly emerged one. None were found but there were the usual false alarms flitting around in the cool overcast weather.



After a bit I bumped into Dave and we joined forces looking for anything Hairstreaky, but still no luck. Moving on into the woods we found plenty of life, mainly Silver Washed Fritillary, the relatively cool conditions making a pleasant change not to have to chase them around. As the morning progressed the cloud thinned and began to break up which increased the activity but they were still on the lazy side, mainly occupied with feeding on the Welled Thistles which seem to have loved this heatwave, although the males did start becoming a little more amorous. Both Dave and I spent ages following a selection around in various clearings, taking hundreds of images between us. It was very difficult to pic my fav images, so I cheated a little bit 😊





The now ubiquitous Purple Hairstreaks put in regular appearances, not as numerous as previous visits but still enough to draw my attention.



Also present were a fair few Large Whites which have started to become increasingly numerous of late, no doubt the second gen numbers have been swelled by migrants from the continent.





Here and there the odd White Admiral would sail through and when a passing Holly Blue showed up he was inevitably drawn down by Dave and allowed some nice close ups



Dave offered to give me a lift over to Denbies since I had yet to find my first Chalkhill of the season, but on the way to the car park he noticed a small Oak that seemed to be alive with Purple Hairstreaks, several egg laying females which would pose nicely in-between laying eggs.



Re: Bugboys mission

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

Cracking stuff Bugboy especially the in-flight SWFs- brill 😄😄 Still waiting for this Hedge Brown... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Jul-18 11:11 PM GMT

Great SWF combo shots, Buggy! For the most part a great deal better than mine as well, particularly the in flight ones. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Jul-18 11:31 PM GMT

Gorgeous pics of the SWFs Bugboy - and I'm so envious of your P.Hairstreaks - I can't seem to find any! 🍷🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Jul-18 05:58 PM GMT

Patience **Wurzel**, I'm getting there as fast as I can 😊

I wouldn't say better **Dave**, just different 😊

Thanks **Janet**. You need to come down here for those Hairstreaks, you can't move for the bloody things this year! 😊

12th July, (part 2) Denbies Chalkhills

At Denbies we were in entirely different conditions as to the morning. Blazing hot sun greeting us with most inhabitants in hyperdrive and not opening up much as all. A Chalkhill flew past on the upper slope, always a good sign as far as numbers are concerned, and a pair of Small Copper were too busy knocking hells bells out of each other to worry about sitting for a picture. Near the gate my eyes were drawn to a rather large fly sitting quietly on a dead grass stem. It was an ovipositing horsefly, a proper horsefly as opposed to the Cleg flies that are the bane of us. These ones aren't so keen on human blood apparently. It's those incredible eyes that fascinate me, surreally psychedelic 😊.



My first picture of a Chalkhill was sitting a short way away and turned out to be the ab which seems quite common here, a male with red upperside spotting.



The weather made more poses few and far between but there was some rather nice Brown Argus to keep us entertained. He was actually tiny, more the size of a large Small Blue. He was still perfectly marked though.



The next inhabitant to catch our eyes was a particularly sandy coloured Small Heath. Several seen throughout the afternoon looked similarly sandy coloured, perhaps an adaptation to the parched conditions?



Amongst the Chalkhills which littered the hillside are several Common Blues, equally as active. Occasionally a Chalkhill would settle long enough for a snap, this one perhaps an ab?



We wandered the length of the hillside, praying for just a bit of cloud cover to calm things down a bit. We got it and were rewarded by the sight of a fine example of a Brown Argus.



Of course the weather God's rarely listen and soon the cloud cover had thickened so much it was sending everything to roost. It wasn't until we were halfway back that it thinned enough again to wake things up and we eventually found basking Chalkhills aplenty 😊.





Joining them were some rather nice Commons too.



And finally a few odds and ends that provided a little bit of variety for the afternoon



an unusual pose, caught at the moment of lift off.





I couldn't resist this pretty little thing, a Lace Border.



This is the female that we watched lay the egg which you can see in Millerds account of the afternoon.



*Probably the victor of the earlier skirmish!
Another excellant day*

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 24-Jul-18 09:15 PM GMT

Found the Grayling....eventually 😊

That Brown Argus is a fine specimen and I love the SWF pics. A right haul of great shots. I particularly like the backlit Brimstone, seeing the body through the wings is pretty amazing.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-18 10:54 PM GMT

I agree with Wolfy that is a dandy Brown Argus 😊 And hat is a cracking shot of the Marbled White, brilliant pose 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Jul-18 04:14 PM GMT

Thanks Guys, it was a 'fresh out the box' to use a Wurzelism!

14th July, a day in Dorset.

The time had come to make my now annual pilgrimage to Dorset to see that diminutive south coast speciality, the Lulworth Skipper. As with the previous two years I went to Durlston Country Park near Swanage.

It's a fair old trek for me to get there so everything was shooting around in the blazing heat when I arrived. I quickly found the target species along the coastal path just past the visitor center, I've found other skipper species tend not to drift down here so there's not many problems with getting an ID, it was just that none would sit still.

My main hunting ground is the meadow that looks onto the lighthouse. Last year you couldn't move for Skippers with Lulworths being overwhelmingly the most numerous. As with everywhere this summer I was struck by how parched the place looked and butterfly numbers certainly seemed significantly lower, whether as a direct result of the heat or everything had emerged early and I was just seeing the tail end of things here, I couldn't say. Lulworths were relatively easy to find, common but by no means as numerous as previous years. Mixing in were the other *Thymelicus* and all were reticent to open up which made positive ID a little trickier much of the time.



Essex (I think) & Lulworth



Lulworth



Lulworth



Lulworth



These would have been some fantastic Large White shots if it hadn't of been for frolicking Lulworths gatecrashing in!
Making my way down into the gully, I managed a few more species, common and Small Blues and at least 3 male DGF were here as well as more Skippers and Browns. Still I was disappointed by the general density of numbers.





Lulworth



The climb back up the slope was rather tiring, like the butterflies I was beginning to struggle in the heat and it was with some disappointment that I left earlier than I had planned, finding a female Wall on the return walk along the Coastal path.



Lulworth



Lulworth



Lulworth



Lulworth



Lulworth & Small



Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 25-Jul-18 04:51 PM GMT

Brilliant pictures of the small reds – a species I've never seen.

Keep looking for Padfield's progeny. Where there was one 5th instar cat there will have been lots of 1st instar the year before, and as a rule the same sites are used year after year.

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 26-Jul-18 10:41 PM GMT

Great to see my fave butterfly getting some coverage Bugboy 😊 I got mine from Lulworth itself about a month ago and even then there were some past there best 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 26-Jul-18 11:51 PM GMT

Some fabulous specimens there, BB, but pride of place has to go to that Brown Argus – a simply stunning example. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Jul-18 05:43 PM GMT

Thanks **Guy**, I shall continue to look for the babies, they must be there somewhere!

Thanks **Wurzel** I think their flight period is creeping forward every year. They'll be regarded as a spring species soon at this rate 😊! (ps. not long to wait for that Gatekeeper ab. I've promised you 😊)

Thanks **David**, some more below 😊

16th July, Bookham

Another trip to the Hairstreak infested Surrey woodland. On the off chance there might be an early Brown Hairstreak I made the effort to go to all the spots where eggs had been found over the winter. Unsurprisingly no adults were seen although a few orange butterflies did turn my head.



Other Hairstreaks were yet again commonplace. The first Purple ones dropped down in front of me as I got to Banks Common and I managed several shots of one doing what I'd suspected they'd been doing all along, supping up moisture.



With another stupidly hot day on the cards most of my targets were getting rather active but I did find one Small White behaving oddly, holding his wings bent forward. I've seen this a few times in various species but I'm none the wiser as to why they do it, it's as if they've entered some trance like state? There's enough minor wear and tear in the fringe to show he wasn't fresh out the box. He pose in a normal position for some nice backlit shots before he eventually fluttered off, seemingly none worse for wear.



Walking to the wood, the Hairstreaks continued to turn up along with a various other species.



Silver-washed Fritillary were still active, looking a little tired but still worth a snap when one threw an attractive pose.



A particularly fresh Red Admiral also caught my eye



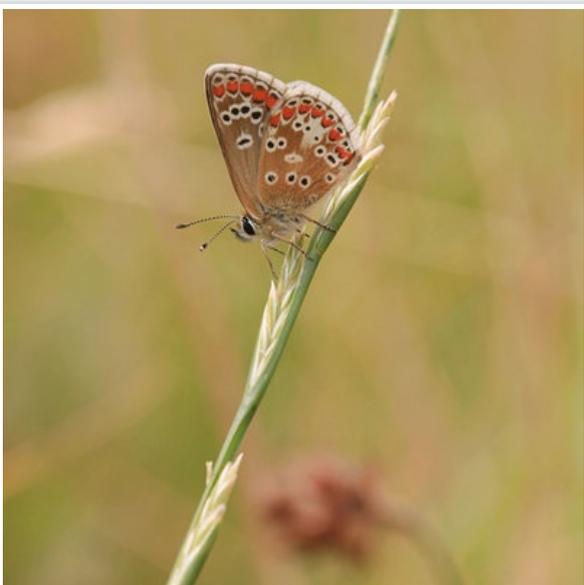
And Hairstreaks were still around in all the sunny glades.



Another uncomfortably warm and muggy day meant I was only going to stay for the morning but on the way back to the station I found a rather strange looking Speckled Wood. In flight it was clearly a Speckled Wood but it's flight pattern and shape just seemed a little odd, rather small and elongated. It was only when he landed that I realised I was looking at just half a Speckled Wood! His lack of wings didn't hinder him in holding a territory though. Even a passing Harvestman looked on in wonder 😊 .



I couldn't resist a few Brown Argus before leaving, they seem to be spreading here this year, I don't remember seeing them here in previous years



Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 28-Jul-18 06:45 PM GMT

Great pictures as always Bugboy.

I am very envious of all the PHS action you seem to be getting. I am still drawing a blank in this regard 🤔

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-18 09:22 AM GMT

Cracking set of images Bugboy 😊 How did that Speckle manage to stay airborne 🤔 I too have seen butterflies in that unusual posture, seemingly in a trance, the best of which was a male Brimstone. On that occasion it was because the sun went in and the temp suddenly dropped so perhaps it was because the butterfly was too hot in this case?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Jul-18 07:45 PM GMT

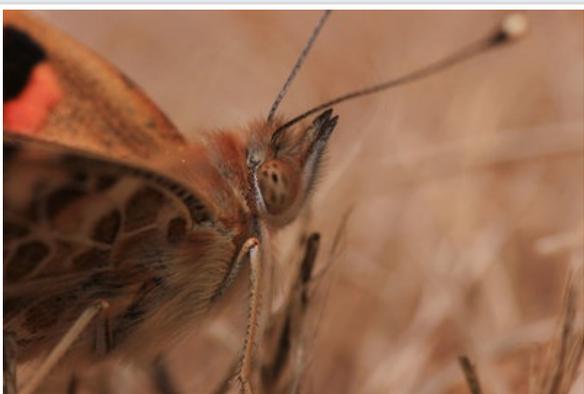
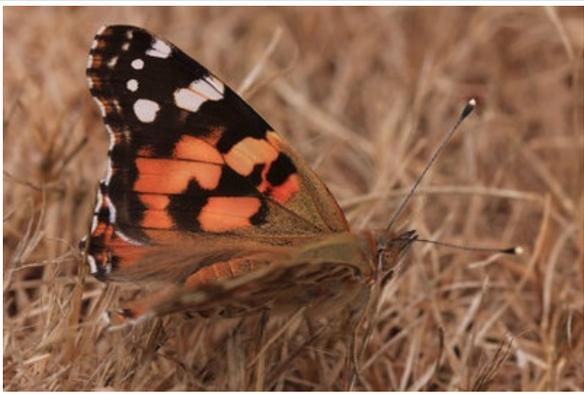
Thanks **Old Wolf**, Those Purple Hairstreaks are still on the wing at Bookham, albeit now looking decidedly worn and in much reduced numbers. Thanks **Wurzel**, its definitely a head scratcher, I've still not come up with a reason why they adopt that position sometimes 🤔

17th July

I went back down into Sussex for another attempt at finding some Clouded Yellows again. Stopping off at Shoreham Harbour again on the way. All three common species of White were again common here, along with a surprise visit from a Marbled White, presumably a wanderer from inland. I also managed to pin down some of the Skippers which all turned out to be Essex. Meanwhile, littering the bramble were loads of Brown-tailed Moths, busy laying eggs. I also disturbed a handful of Common Blues here, both sexes, the first I've seen here this year.



After an hour it was time to head of to Mill Hill again. This visits wander round the horse field en-route threw up a rather nice Painted Lady who sat well for me.



There was more activity to catch my attention near the bottom car park with several Common Blues and a rather nice female Speckled Wood jostling for my attention.



Moving onto the slope, heading towards the bottom corner, Chalkhill Blues started to appear in low numbers and it was here I found a surprise, a second gen Dingy Skipper.





A few past it Marbled White mixed with similarly conditioned Meadow Browns, various Whites and some rather attractive fresh Peacocks kept me entertained here.



There was as yet no sign of any Cloudies so I moved up the slope towards the top car park. Like my previous visit here it was somewhat breezy but in a few sheltered spots I found plenty more activity,





And it was up here that I found something that a certain west country chap has been waiting patiently to see for some time 😊 . I spent a fair amount of time grabbing shots, battling against the wind.





One more circuit on the lower slope failed to turn up any Cloudies but I did find a second Dingy



Despite not seeing the target it was still a very enjoyable day with plenty to see and a particularly fine ab. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-18 08:52 PM GMT

That ab was well worth the wait, what an absolute cracker!! 🍷🍷🍷😄 Is that a 'multiocellata'? 🤔🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Allan.W., 29-Jul-18 09:42 PM GMT

That's A Glorious Common Blue female Bugboy ,and the (Excessa ?) Gatekeeper,s an excellent find also.
Regards Allan.W.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Jul-18 10:37 PM GMT

I have to agree, and what is more your Gatekeeper is well worth a mrgreen 🍷 .

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 30-Jul-18 08:17 PM GMT

I'm glad she was worth the wait Wurzel 😊, looks good for multiocellata to me 😊
Thanks Allan, I find most Common Blue females irresistible these days! 😊
Thanks Trevor 😊

18th July part 1, Bookham.... briefly

I had plans for the day but these were changed when I heard from Millerd that second gen Wood Whites were out at Chiddingfold. Dave offered to give me a lift there so we agreed to meet at Bookham and head off mid-morning. We bumped into each other at the usual spot, near Banks Common and agreed to meet up again in an hour at the car park. I went looking for an early Brown Hairstreak again, finding a gorgeous dark Comma on the way.



A rather unusual occurrence happened for the next 40 minutes or so, a large dark cloud drifted overhead, threatening rain, something I'd almost forgotten what feels like. It did actually try and rain, but in the most pathetic, useless way possible, just a few drops made it to the ground 😞. Unsurprisingly there wasn't a lot about but I did find a rubbish attempt at camouflage, back to camouflage school my little spidery friend 😂



At the car park I killed a bit of time looking for Purple Hairstreak eggs, finding three, one of which I had to take home with me due to me accidentally snapping of the twig whilst fiddling with camera settings 😊.



I also disturbed an irresistible female Green-veined White



I thought this visit to Bookham was going to be the first for some time not to have a Hairstreak sighting but the cloud cover thinned just enough and Dave found me crouched down near the car park as I tried (and failed), to capture the sheen on a male as he crawled through the grass, looking for moisture.



Time to head off, next stop Chiddingfold and my first second gen Wood Whites 😊 .

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Jul-18 10:02 PM GMT

That is a ridiculously yellow Green-veined White Bugboy 🤩 A real beaut that one is 😊👍 Looking forward to the Wood Whites 🌱

Have a godun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 30-Jul-18 10:41 PM GMT

We found a similar white spider in my daughter's garden, Paul. She was guarding an egg ball. We put her in a red plastic container to see what would happen and she spun a web, suspending the ball in the centre. Later we introduced a second spider with an egg sac. As a social experiment it was a bit of a disaster as one spider ate the other and stole her eggs!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-Jul-18 11:54 PM GMT

Just catching up, Buggy – that was a profitable trip down to Mill Hill! The Gatekeeper is a stunner, and second brood Dingies are a good find as well. Looking forward to your selection from that excellent trip to Chiddingfold, including something I didn't get a shot of! 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 01-Aug-18 08:20 PM GMT

Isn't she just **Wurzel**, and that's toned down a tad, my camera exaggerated the colour in the overcast conditions, she looked positively psychedelic according to my camera!

That spider is a Crab Spider **Janet**. They come in a variety of colours, normally blending in with their chosen flower, normally... 😊

Thanks **Dave**, it's always worth a trip down south 😊. It was tough picking the shots from Chiddingfold, I did get rather snap happy, especially with so much courtship going on!

18th July, part 2 Wood White city

At Chiddingfold it was rather cloudy. Despite this it was warm enough for the Wood Whites to be active, indeed almost too active. Thankfully there has been a good survival rate from the spring brood and as we walked towards the main hotspot Dave commented he had never seen so many of them here so there was still enough willing to sit still.





Other Whites and Brimstones were active here but Wood Whites were overwhelmingly the most numerous butterfly. They mostly seemed very fresh and this was displayed when I found one still drying its wings, sitting just above its empty pupal case. Both of us spent some time with this individual, it's not often you see this in the wild!





Continuing to the meadow more Wood Whites were joined by a fair number of Silver-washed Fritillary and a single Purple Hairstreak.





I wanted to go and find the Oaken Wood entrance since Google maps showed there was a bus stop nearby, giving me a possible route I could get there under my own steam.

This turned out to be a fortuitous decision as along with more Wood Whites, Brimstones and other odds and ends a rather large black & white butterfly gracefully swooped down from the trees and landed at the edge of the path in front of us. There was momentary confusion as we debated what it was. We quickly concluded it was an Emperor, far too big for a White Admiral, but it was huge and further discussion concluded it was in fact an Empress, my first ever sighting of one 😊. Frustratingly I hadn't bothered to take my zoom lens from my bag, not really necessary for Wood Whites after all, so I was torn between getting a few distant record shots with my macro or faffing around changing lenses. I did manage a run of record shots (which all look rather similar) before she took off and soared around, landing once again at the edge of the path, this time in long grass but not long enough for us to get a decent look. By now I had my zoom lens out but we had to just watch as she glided up and down the path a few times before vanishing over the tree tops with barely a flap of her huge wings.



When we got to the Oaken Wood entrance there seemed to be no sign of any bus stops. Hmmmm, back to the drawing board with that one then 🤔.

On the return walk we decided to a head count of Wood Whites, there's not many butterflies you can out walk at a leisurely stroll so double counting was unlikely, managing to reach the dizzy heights of over 120. Bearing in mind this was mostly in overcast conditions (and when things did occasionally brighten up more materialized from almost nowhere), the real total could easily have got closer to 200. Safe to say they've had a good season.

There was plenty of courtship going on all afternoon, and the occasional mating, females getting a good tongue lashing here, there and everywhere it seemed 😊😄. One female in particular seemed to be very popular...





It wasn't all good though, the lack of rain was having a negative impact here, large cracks had appeared along many of the main paths (in places it actually looked like an earthquake) and much of the foodplants looked to be struggling, so unless it rained soon we may be looking at a significant collapse next spring. Fingers crossed the recent storms arrived in time 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-18 09:02 PM GMT

Fantastic set of images Bugboy 🤔👍👍 I reckon you have a cracking ab in there as well. In your second shot the butterfly in the middle of the shot doesn't appear to have the black tips to the wings, and again later with the in the 3rd and 4th shots from the final sequence 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 02-Aug-18 09:12 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, I'm not sure if those females are abs. I know the second brood is normally very weakly marked in the female (contrasting with the male who tends to be more heavily marked in the second brood), but if memory serves me right I think every female that flashed us uppers was similarly very plain, perhaps a symptom of the heat?

19th July, more Graylings

I spent a few hours a Chobham again, searching for female Graylings again. As usual there's plenty to distract me on the way to the Grayling hotspot. Today's first spot was an egg laying Small Skipper. Although the antennae were clearly visible, the choice of food plant would have been enough to ID the species, Yorkshire Fog.



When she flew off I had a look to see the result of her labours. You have to be extremely careful if you try this since the eggs aren't glued in place like most species, just wedged inside the grass sheath.



Elsewhere Large Skippers are still on the wing in numbers here, and still emerging judging by some individuals



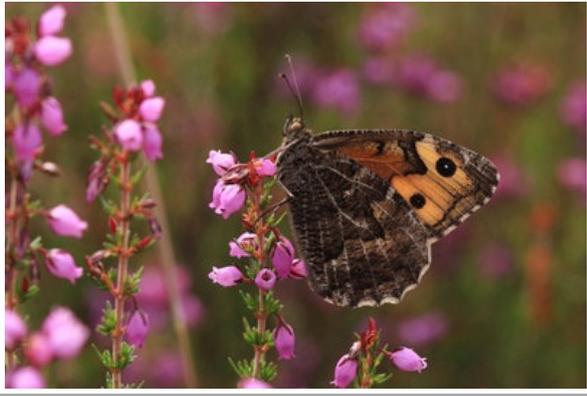
Also feeding here was a nice fresh *hutchinsoni* Comma



The Graylings have started to spread out since my last visit, popping up along the paths at regular intervals, meaning laying flat on the ground to get anything decent was the only thing to do.



At the hotspot I found a nice dark individual amongst several other males but no sign of any females as yet.



Oh well still time to get my shots 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 02-Aug-18 09:31 PM GMT

Love your Grayling on Bell Heather, just the sort of shot I'm after.
Unfortunately Heather does not grow on chalk !.

Great shot,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-18 10:11 PM GMT

Cracking set of Grayling shots Bugboy especially the one on Bracken 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 02-Aug-18 10:20 PM GMT

Excellent shots of the Small Skipper laying, and the resultant eggs. 😊 Getting a Grayling to sit on the heather long enough for a photo was pretty good as well! They always prefer to sit on me...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-18 10:33 AM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, catching up on my posts, love the Wood Whites they look like flower petals, so delicate , great shots 🍷👍 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 03-Aug-18 08:24 PM GMT

Great sequence of Grayling photos Bugboy 🍷😊

Seeing your shots has made me realise that I rarely see Graylings on heathland, my sightings are usually on limestone rock/scree (Arnside) or Chalk grassland (Lulworth/Durdle Door in Dorset).

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Aug-18 09:44 PM GMT

Thanks **Trevor**. Whenever I see Grayling on sites without Heather they just seem out of place to me. You'll have to take a trip north into Surrey to find them on the heathlands there, they're just about peaking now 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, makes a change from Heather or sand and gravel 😊

Thanks **Dave** 😊 The Graylings sometimes threaten to sit on me but they don't seem keen on my hairy legs 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, they are very delicate little things 😊

Thanks **Neil**, I'm so used to seeing them on heathland that they don't look right on any other habitat 😊

20th July, Box Hill

The next species on my 2018 hit list was the Silver-spotted Skipper. With the first sightings cropping up for a week or so, it was an early start to catch them warming up at my closest site, Box Hill. It wasn't another sunny day for a change, the day starting off rather overcast but still a little muggy.

It was cooler than recent days, just borderline conditions to find a few butterflies active this early in the morning. A few Ringlet, Marbled White and Meadow Brown's were readily disturbed. The former two now looking somewhat jaded, that latter now starting the second wave of emergent's which mysteriously happen on chalk downland sites.

Roosting blues were also easy to find here and there and readily took flight if I invaded their personal space too much.



I also discovered the closet I've come to getting a Cloudie so far this season. I was unlikely to find the occupant unless I disturbed it though...



There were allegations of breaks in the cloud cover mid-morning so I headed over to zigzag road, where on the lower slope the SSS generally reign supreme at this time of year, but a slow wander along only gave a couple of very brief dark orange blurs as they vanished up the slope.

I moved on up to the upper slope where Chalkhill Blues are usually the dominant at this time of year. They were certainly not put off by the overcast conditions and the slope was littered with males soaking up the warmth, positively glowing in the soft light.



Another butterfly sitting with wings bent backwards.



A couple of females lurked here and there, keeping a low profile from the hordes of males and a few Common Blue and Brown Argus completed the Lycid mix.



SSS don't often come up this high but it was here I got my first proper audience with one.



The promised sun never really appeared, the cloud cover did thin at times though and moving back down to the Skipper territory again this seemed enough for a bit more activity, managing half a dozen or so more sightings with enough sitters to keep me happy 😊.



I had planned to spend the afternoon Hairstreak hunting at Bookham, but that was a rather short-lived plan. There were a few Common Blues around but I left when it started to drizzle.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-18 10:37 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Bugboy 😊 Very reminiscent of what I saw today, a fortnight later 😊 No Cloudy for me either 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Aug-18 10:40 PM GMT

Good to see the SSSkippers out at Box Hill, Buggy - I haven't caught up with them there yet. And that Clouded Yellow pupal case - a great find, though strangely frustrating not to see its original occupant! 😊😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 06-Aug-18 11:07 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy

Just catching up with your diary. Those Wood White shots are great as are your Graylings 😊😊

Just a thought, could your empty pupal case be Brimstone rather than Clouded Yellow? I have not seen either so I am no expert and I am ready to be shot down if necessary 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 07-Aug-18 03:00 PM GMT

Love the shots from Mill Hill Bugboy, some lovely examples and a cracking ab. 😊

Your Wood Whites and Graylings are great also. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 07-Aug-18 07:08 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, still a few months yet for a cloudie, hell if this weather doesn't cool down soon we might get some at the winter social! 😊

Thanks **Dave**, frustrating indeed, if only to confirm the species! 😊

Thanks **Paul**, When I found it my instinctive reaction was that it was a Brimstone. What made me conclude it was a Clouded Yellow was that it was in the middle of the meadow, a good distance from any shrubs and as far as I'm aware Brimstone's stick to their Buckthorns to pupate. Now looking at the images of both on here it does bear more of a resemblance to a Brimstone 😊

Thanks **Andrew** 😊

25th July, Bookham

It was time for the first proper hunt for Brown Hairstreaks of the year at Bookham, where they've apparently already been out for a week or two. I'm putting the previous visits all down as pre-season friendlies 😊. Unfortunately it didn't take long for the warm weather to turn me into another unpleasant sweaty mess for the day 😊.

I made a point of meandering past all the spots where I'd found eggs and larvae, but no freshly emerged insects presented themselves to me. Every Ash was carefully studied for a few minutes but no activity here either 😊.

In between all this I did get distracted, as is usual for me, but it was already far too hot for anything to open its wings.





Eventually I got my first Brown Hairstreak sighting of the year, the unmistakable flight of a large dark lycid flew past me and over the hedge. Oh well at least I can tick it off as being seen 😊!

It wasn't until I got to the Ash Master tree at banks common that I managed something more than a fleeting glance, although not much more! Four or five males could be seen flitting around the canopy. I managed a couple of shabby record shots, merely to prove what I'd seen.



I could have stayed for the afternoon to see what came down but to be honest there's precious little to attract the males down here this year. Practically all the umbellifores that were so attractive to them last year have either flowered early and died or completely failed and most of the thistles have also gone over. The Fleabane does seem to be coping reasonably well, but although the books say it's a favoured nectar source I've yet to see a Brown Hairstreak feeding on it. I suspect it's more a case of use what's around and since Fleabane and Brown Hairstreak peak around the same time it stands to reason they would use it as a nectar source... except when I'm around.

It was also unpleasantly hot so I left to find somewhere to cool down, again with the odd distraction on the way to the station.





Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 07-Aug-18 07:17 PM GMT

A very frustrating time looking for those Hairstreaks, Buggy – I didn't find any at all a week later in the same spot. I see Neil H reckons they will appear at the usual time this year, despite the weather, so any time now... 😊

(PS – I've never seen one on fleabane either... 😊)

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-18 08:24 PM GMT

It seems that the Brostreaks aren't playing by the rules this year! The males don't seem to be showing elsewhere though at Shipton Bellinger the reverse seems to be the case, it has been pretty reliable for males but the females are playing much harder to get 😊😊 Yo'll get there in the end I'm sure 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Aug-18 09:51 PM GMT

Your patience is admirable, BB. I find it intriguing that in spite of 2018 being an abnormally hot year, Brown Hairstreaks aren't following the pattern of several other species by emerging early and appearing in numbers.

The *status quo* appears to have been retained, with females resisting the temptation to go on egg-laying sorties until mid-August is near.

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 08-Aug-18 07:23 AM GMT

Bugboy – After some initial success this year with Brown Hairstreaks I am finding them difficult now too. But that Teasel shot of yours is very fine – there is always something at this time of year to point the camera at!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Aug-18 08:17 PM GMT

Thanks guys, I think the only things that works with Brown Hairstreaks is perseverance and patience 😊

28th July, Local patch

I've not spent much time at all here this year, mostly because the hot weather brings out picnickers and the like, making the Marshes uncomfortably busy for a lone bloke wandering around with a big camera. Today though I could only spare a few hours so I went out early before the hoards descended. Even so it was already uncomfortably hot and much of what I saw was already closing up shop for the day. Truth be told there wasn't actually a great deal about anyway but here's a few highlights:

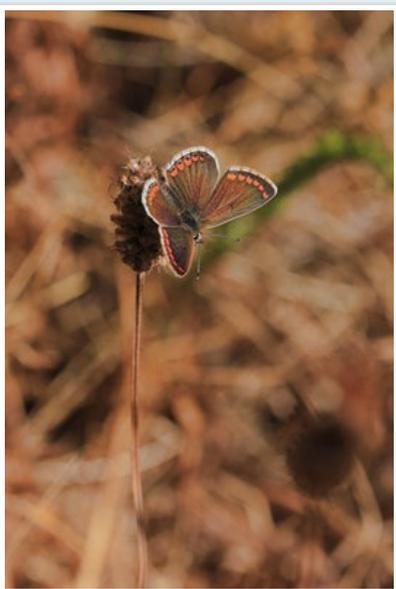


A game of patience, who's gonna move first?





A shy Painted Lady





Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-18 10:25 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy 😊 That Speckle one is a real cracker, it really shows their camo under wings to full effect 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-Aug-18 11:14 PM GMT

It's never a bad thing to catch a Holly Blue or two, BB. They seem to have been pretty scarce this summer following on from a strong first brood.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 08-Aug-18 11:26 PM GMT

That's a very lovely Brown Argus shot in your previous post, BB! I actually had one in the garden the other day but of course it vanished by the time I'd gone inside for the camera 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 09-Aug-18 08:58 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel** 😊 their vanishing act is almost Grayling-like sometimes!

Thanks **David**, I think the way this season has flown by I'll be happy to see anything fresh out the box from now til the first frosts! Unless there's a sudden downturn though I suspect we'll see a few extra broods squeezed in before the close of play this year.

Thanks **Janet**, your lucky to get one of those in your garden, not generally considered a 'garden butterfly'!

30th July, Back to Bookham

This was one of those days when I should have probably gone with my gut and stayed at home catching up on other stuff. The forecast was decidedly iffy at best and then I had to contend with cancelled trains meaning I arrived over an hour later than planned, to find the forecast was spot on 😊.

The plan was obviously for Brown Hairstreak hunting but that was a complete failure. It was just warm and bright enough for a bit of activity here and there, just the usual suspects, so at least it wasn't a completely wasted day though 😊.





Some SWF aren't looking to shabby



the same can't be said for all though





and a couple of other inhabitants that caught my eye



A migratory Hoverfly, Scaeva pyrastris.



Emerald Damselfly Lestes sponsa. The first time I've seen one of these at Bookham

My ongoing battle with Brown Hairstreaks doesn't look too good this year after last year's trouncing win by me. My last visit went down as a score draw, a sighting and long-distance record shot, this visit is a win by them so I'm currently standing at 2:1 down. I need to pick my days with more care I think. Last year was like taking candy from a child, I don't think this year is going to be as easy!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 09-Aug-18 10:18 PM GMT

You're telling me, Buggy - I'm 3-1 to them now... A nice set of familiar Bookhamish photos though. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Aug-18 10:38 PM GMT

That Silver-washed is doing well to still be hanging on after the early start and the heat Bugboy 😊 Lovely set of shots even though you missed your target, I don't know what the Brostreaks are playing at this year 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 09-Aug-18 11:18 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

..The plan was obviously for Brown Hairstreak hunting but that was a complete failure...

I'm becoming increasingly intrigued by this. Just about every other butterfly species has emerged and been visible in good numbers due to the warm weather.

Strangely, Brown Hairstreaks are remaining quite scarce and are, if anything, behind what you would expect at this time of year.

Perhaps they'll rally over the next fortnight or so?

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 10-Aug-18 01:55 PM GMT

Love the Brown Argus shot Bugboy, they're so tiny but lovely when a good shot is taken of them. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Aug-18 02:46 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**. Things have improved now a tad though haven't they 😊

I think they've changed the rules and forgot to send us the memo **Wurzel** 😞 😞

Fingers crossed **David**, their larvae shouldn't have been effected by the heat as much as some other species due to poor plant growth, so numbers shouldn't be hit too badly, they're just hiding better this year than normal! Like Neil H has stated, there's less to bring them down to nectar this year.

31st July, Deepest Sussex (part 1)

Although the weather was better today for Brown Hairstreaks, I fancied a change and had the whole day at my disposal. I plumped for another day with Silver-spotted Skippers so I hopped on a train down to Lewes and Malling Down. It was quite breezy and with the clouds being whisked along it meant one of those days with perpetually changing light levels, making for challenging photography. Chalkhills Blues were numerous, particularly in the patches of Marjoram where they were joined by Commons and various Brown's. The Skippers were also around but not in the numbers I was hoping for, at least not yet. It was still early though which did mean my targets had yet to reach optimum energy levels (which in itself is a bit of a novelty this year!)



Many of the Chalkhills were in tip top condition and one of these was another one holding his wings in that odd fashion, bent forwards. He seemed fine

after he snapped them back and went about feeding quite normally.



Amongst all these I found my first 2nd gen Adonis of the year, looking quite stunning when the sun caught him at the right angle. I don't think I've ever captured one looking so sparkly 🤩👀.





Moving on the old chalk pits Brown Argus joined the throngs of Lycids, the Skippers in this more sheltered spot were significantly more active and I was buzzed by a couple of male Walls. I switched to my long lens when I focused on the Walls so I didn't have to try and get so close to them, obtaining a few passable shots.



I wandered these chalk pits for a while, mostly as a spectator but occasionally getting close enough for a shot or two, everything now fully charged.





Over the top of the hill and down the steep slope to the allotments it was pretty much the same, just a damn sight windier! Skippers here were numerous again, in the end I probably had 50+ for the day but that's far from covering the whole site.



It was relatively early so rather than going straight home I decided on a slight detour to Newhaven Tidemills, hoping to get my first cloudy of the year. What struck me first was, like much of the South East, just how parched the place was. I've only ever visited this site at the back end of the season so I'm used to it looking a bit tired but it too was suffering severely from lack of rain.

Small Heath and Common Blues appeared here and there and a few fresh Red Admiral were occupied on the Buddleja around the junk yard but what caught my eye were a few Walls. I'd never seen them here before, even though admittedly it's always seemed like good habitat for them to my eyes. At least one male was busy holding a territory at the far end near the ruins and after a bit a female joined him. She was in egg laying mode and made short shrift of his advances.



Another female was found at the other end as I was making to leave and allowed a few half decent shots.



No Cloudies but Walls now seen on four different sites this year!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 12-Aug-18 03:08 PM GMT

31st July, Deepest Sussex (part 2)

During my walk around Malling Down there seemed to be an over riding theme for the day. Obviously anyone who watched butterflies for more than a few minutes knows there really is only one thing on their minds, at least the males at any rate, but today I just seemed to witness a non spot barrage of failed courtship attempts 🙄😄



Here we have a female Wall I followed until she settled halfway up a bank. I wasn't the only one peering at her though the grass like a peeping tom though. It only took a twitch of her wings for her suitor to pounce. There ensued much antennae and head butting which was all but ignored and after a minute or so the male went along his way to find another female to pester



Here a male Argus sidled up to the female who very clearly told him to get lost. This message was not fully received by the male and he was left on the leaf a little confused by the rebuffe.



Just get lost!



This chap started of very casual, walking up behind his potential conquest but quickly over egged the advance and was left alone and confused!



Lets face it, this female was an unwilling participant in this encounter!



At least someone played it right on the day :)

Just as I was leaving Tidemills I noticed a Hummingbird Hawk feeding on the Buddleja. I was forced to photograph facing into the sun so the pictures weren't particularly good but they seem to work ok as a Gif



Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 12-Aug-18 03:25 PM GMT

I love the way you record the little scenarios as they are played out, Bugboy 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 12-Aug-18 05:15 PM GMT

Great pics of the SSSkips and Adonis Blues but the real gem is the Gif of the Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Wow.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-18 05:55 PM GMT

Great set of shots and reportage Bugboy 😊 It's interesting to witness the different courtship behaviours – the Silver-studs I saw refusing to mate flapped around like no-ones business yet the whites just do a simple abdomen flick, a bit like 'giving 'the bird' 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 13-Aug-18 08:28 PM GMT

Thanks **Janet**, there was an awful lot going on that day!

Thanks **Ernie**, if you like Hummingbird Hawkmoths keep an eye on my PD... I shall say no more 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, it is fascinating watching their behaviour 😊

1st August, Bookham again

This was the last chance for a while to find a Brown Hairstreak, I was back to work the next day and then a long weekend back up north was planned. The weather didn't seem too bad today, cooler than of recent days and with a bit of cloud cover to help slow things down a bit so I was tentatively hopeful.

I only had the morning so I kept fingers and toes crossed that a freshly emerged one would be awaiting me. This years score currently stood at 2.1 to them and word across other sites seemed to indicate this year they weren't playing fair. For the newbies the scoring system I use is as follows: No sightings on a trip = 1 point to them. Flybys and distant record shots = a score draw and every low down one photographed is a point for me. This clearly weighs heavily in my favour since I can amass more than one point on each visit but then it's my game so my rules!

Orange and brown butterflies were indeed waiting for me, the third generation of Small Coppers were now in full swing. Gatekeepers on the other hand were now rapidly decreasing in numbers. Being the latest of the 'southern' Browns to emerge I suspect their larvae were hit quite hard by the drought. This time last year you could easily get into 3 figures without much effort at all. Now I was struggling to get into double figures. Still, every cloud and all that, in this case perhaps the Brown Hairstreaks would be easier to pick out.... that is if they do start coming down.





Well it only took half an hour before perched on top of the undergrowth I spied a distinctive bright orange triangle of a freshly emerged female. I had to try and pick my way through bramble, Blackthorn and Bracken without disturbing here to get close enough for some shots. Frustratingly a particularly dark cloud had appeared so my pictures were further hampered by low light and then as the cloud was about to pass some clumsy oaf (😬) tried to move one twig too many causing her to flutter further back into the bracken where she all too briefly angled herself into the returning sun before fluttering off down the path and out of sight. Still it did mean a win for me 😊.





Up in the Master tree there were several Hairstreaks fluttering around but they were mostly of the Purple variety. The occasional, noticeably larger, Brown would flutter through but never settled in view.



That was it on the hairstreak front, despite much more careful searching, but there was still other stuff around. More Small Coppers, some nice fresh Common Blues a brief encounter with a fresh Painted Lady and a female hutchinsoni Comma all posing nicely for me.





Hopefully this will be a sign that things will start picking up on the Hairstreak front from now on, this years score now sitting at 2 all 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 13-Aug-18 09:29 PM GMT

That was rather a good female Hairstreak, Buggy. A definite win I'd say! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 14-Aug-18 09:54 PM GMT

She was a beauty Dave, just a shame I didn't get her with the sun on her!

4th August, Back up north

Scotch Argus weren't on my 2018 hit list until quite recently. But my friend who came to the rescue to get me up to see the Mountain Ringlets had loved that expedition so much that when I broached the subject of another small trip she almost bit my hand off! The bookings were made, two nights at Arnside's Hostel, this time with the added 'entertainment' of my friends crazy Staffy who seems to run on an endless supply of Duracell!

Like before we left early and made good time, arrived several hours before checking in time so it was straight up to the now familiar Knott. I'd read Neil Freemans post the day before and was prepared for a rather lack lustre experience but even so I was shocked by the lack of butterfly activity. An hour was spent searching for the Scotchies and I came away with a grand total of 3. There were also a handful of Specklies one or two Grayling and singletons of Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Wall and Small Skipper. I was actually struggling to reach double figures combining all species 😊!





Of the Scotchies I did find I managed photos of two. All were females and one was egg laying.



Perhaps they were hiding from the heat, it was rather warm again, so we decided to wander down in town and grab a bite to eat, wait until we could check in, and then return early evening.

3 hours later it was much the same though, I was probably seeing the same butterflies except for the addition three Painted Ladies and a lone ringlet.





Although I'd managed to tick off another species for the year it was a rather disappointing afternoon considering this I'd supposed to be a butterfly hotspot 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 14-Aug-18 10:03 PM GMT

Two Scotch Argus are better than none. At least they would be for me, as I have never seen one. The heat did make searching and photography that much more difficult. Back to normal now . 😊

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 16-Aug-18 07:28 AM GMT

Glad you got to see them, BB, but I agree, three is a dismal total in what should be the middle of their flight period.

Perhaps the hot spell dessicated the grasses causing many of the late instar larvae to perish?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Aug-18 09:27 PM GMT

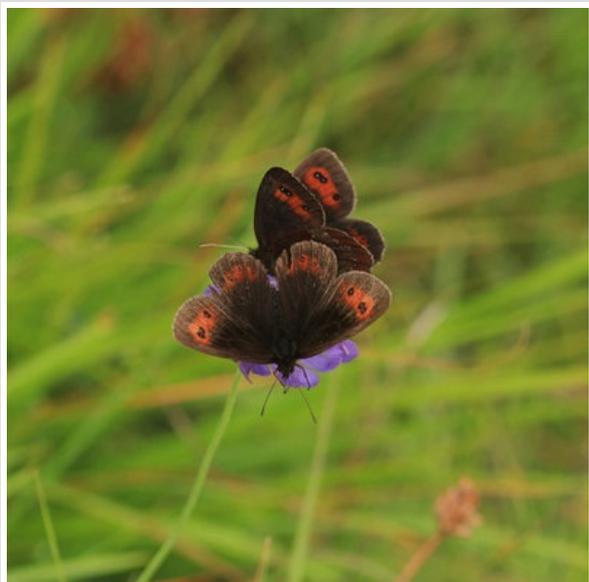
It would be worth making the trip up there one day **Trevor**, it's a beautiful part of the country with or without the butterflies 😊 Thanks **David**. I agree though, a dismal effort. Two years ago I was there a week earlier and found dozens as well as oodles of Skippers, Gatekeepers and all sorts, literally hundreds of butterflies! Almost certainly the drought is largely to blame. Having only visited twice I can't really comment on habitat degradation, but regular visitor Neil Freeman's assessment would indicate this is also to blame for the lack of Scotch Argus 😊

5th August, English Scotchie heaven (part 1)

Day two looked set to be a tad cooler with more cloud cover but I didn't think it was worth spending it up on the Knott given what I'd found the previous day. To make the most of the only full day though I hatched a plan which meant a significant amount of driving around, luckily my friend loves driving so that wasn't an issue, the fly in the ointment was the warning light letting us know one of the rear tires had pressure issues.

We left early, stopping off to put some air in the tire and then drove to the first stop off, the hours trip to Smardale Gill where rumour had it the Scotchies were doing ok this season.

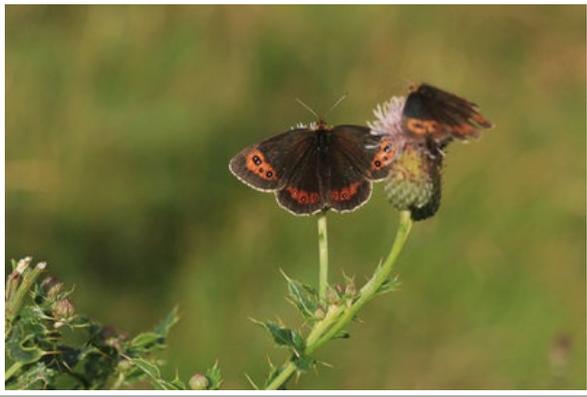
It was relatively cool and mostly cloudy but warm enough and bright enough for some resident Specklies to be active as we walked along the old railway track. It didn't take too long to find the target, once one was seen several others popped up, flying in overcast conditions. I don't know what the air temperature was but it was far from sunny.





3 females and not a male in sight to take advantage of the situation!

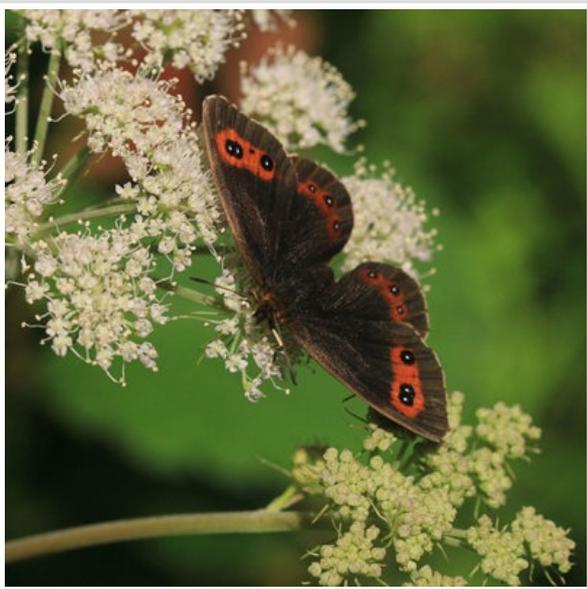
We carried on, regularly encountering more until we came to the viaduct just in time for the cloud to begin to break. Here we took the left path, across the grassy slope and was welcomed by dozens if not hundreds of Scotchies. I freely admit to getting rather snap happy but here's a tiny selection of what I saw 😊.



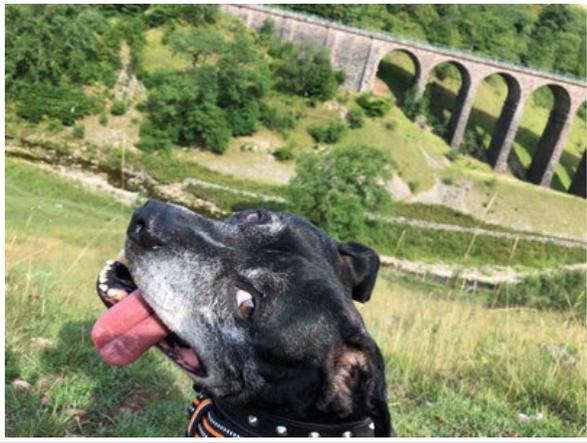


Friendly little souls :)





oh and here's my friends pooch, accurately displaying his intelligence level, bless him 😊!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Aug-18 12:08 AM GMT

Excellent stuff, Buggy. I shall definitely add this spot to next year's itinerary! 😊 I imagine this area has been less affected by the hot weather than Arnside. Great photos of multiple butterflies. 🐛

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 17-Aug-18 06:04 AM GMT

Now that's what I call a haul, the persistent shall be rewarded.
And just the sort of images I'd like to come home with. 🐛 x 1,000
I think David m. said something about a disused railway heaving with Scotch Argus.

Great stuff, Paul,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 17-Aug-18 09:36 AM GMT

That is a lush looking Brostroke from Bookham Bugboy. 😊 Lovely Scotchies and Painted Lady. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Aug-18 08:37 PM GMT

Definitely worth a visit **Dave** and yes, it did seem significantly more 'lush' than Arnside 😊
It's a site that would be right up your alley **Trevor**, Railway history and oodles of Butterflies 😊, the Scotchies being just the tip of the Iceberg !
Thanks Andrew, but I'd have traded her for one of your Valesina's 😊🐛

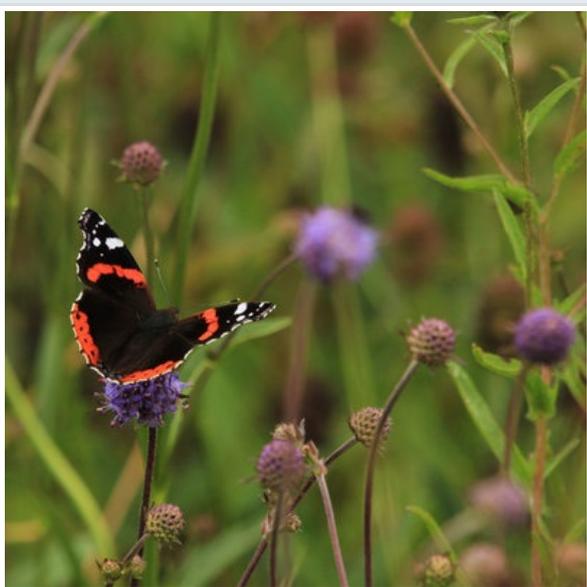
5th August, English Scotchie heaven (part 2)

The morning may have been primarily for the Scotch Argus but there were other species around besides the already mentioned Specklies. On the slope facing the viaduct I found a few aged Common Blue, and singletons of Meadow Brown, Small Skipper and a nice Peacock.



We decided to do a circular walk, well we hoped that was where we were heading anyway. It had clouded over again but a few Small whites added to the species list and near the quaint little stone bridge I found a nice fresh Painted Lady.
Making our way up to the top path which heads back to the viaduct we found the verges thick with Knapweed and Devil's-bit Scabious in full bloom.

Although the sun had yet to return it was still active with butterflies, a dozen or so fresh Peacock with a smattering of similarly conditioned Red Admiral and Painted Lady.



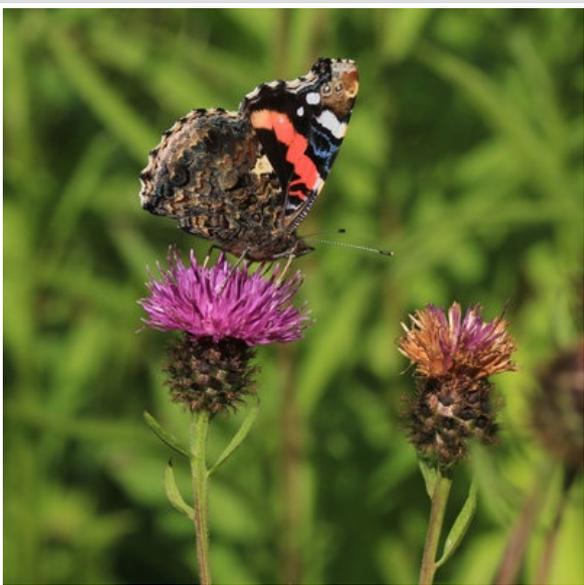
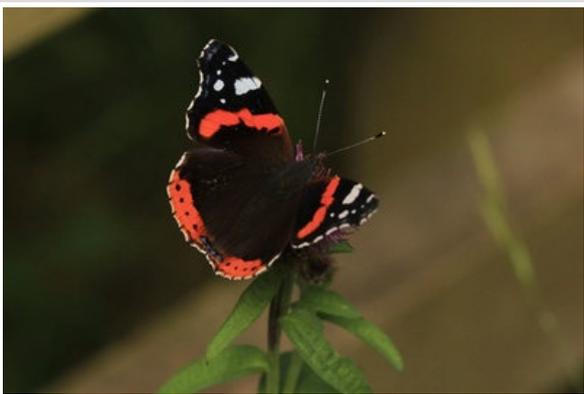


We hadn't seen a Scotchie for about half an hour but as we got closer to the viaduct they started to appear again but what really caught my eyes were the now endless stream of Peacocks. Each one gorging itself silly so double counting was unlikely, perhaps 30 or 40 by the time we got to the viaduct as well as a dozen or so RA and a few more PL. Mixed in were several Large, Small & GV Whites and one other creature that deserves a post of it's own 😊.





With the sun out again things had really livened up along the path back to the car park. Scotchies kept distracting me and yet more Peacock and Red Admiral. By the time we reached the car I reckon I'd seen 60+ Peacock, quite an astonishing total in anyones book, and perhaps 20+ Admirals!



So back at the car with most of the afternoon still to play with, we discovered the tire pressure had dropped again, bugger, a slow puncture..... 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Aug-18 07:53 PM GMT

5th August, English Scotchie heaven (part 3)

It was whilst being astonished by the sheer numbers of Peacock that we had yet another memorable encounter. This one ended up being responsible for around 50% of the photos I took that day! We came across a Hummingbird Hawkmoth who was going nowhere very fast. He stayed in the same spot, zooming around us from flower to flower for a good five minutes. I just pointed my camera at him and kept my finger on the shutter release until he moved to the next flower, placing my faith in the auto focus. I was surprised and very pleased to discover a very high percentage actually turned out pretty well, giving me the best in flight shots I've taken of them 😊.





There were plenty of sequences to make Gifs from as well 😊





All this and we still had the afternoon to go..... well if we can get the dodgy tire sorted that is 😊😁.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 19-Aug-18 07:27 PM GMT

5th August, onwards and eastwards.

So as I mentioned the day involved a fair bit of driving which meant the leaky tire was now our top priority. It was however a slow leak so we didn't think we needed a completely new tire, at least not at this stage. We found the closest petrol and bought some of that spray stuff that goes inside the tire. The instructions recommend driving 8 miles before re-inflating it. All very frustrating but unavoidable.

Finally though, we were on our way to the next destination, Burnmouth. I was here last year with Iain Crowe who helped me find my first Northern Brown Argus. I was hoping to find some late season stragglers but time was now against us as it looked like we wouldn't arrive until gone 4 and the blue sky looked to be a thing of the past for the day. Nevertheless it's a nice place and it would be silly to turn back and waste the rest of the afternoon driving around.

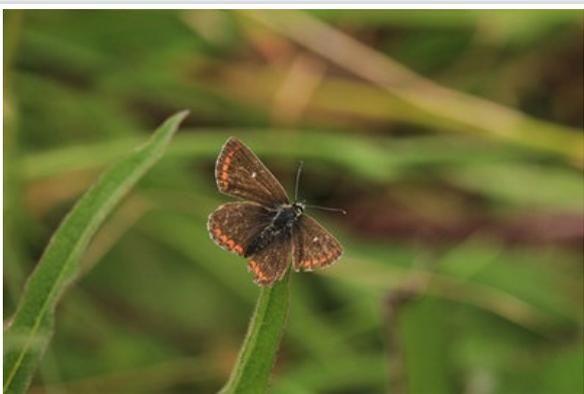
We got there at around 4.30 with the sun struggling against the cloud cover and also vanishing over the top of the east facing cliff top, so I wasn't too hopeful of finding much. I did locate some hatched eggs on the first bit of rock rose I inspected, which I think is the same patch Iain pointed some out to me last year.



Singletons of Wall and Grayling escaped my camera but a relaxed looking Small Copper did pose. At least I wasn't going to go home empty handed 😊.



A bit further along the 'beach' I clambered up the steep bank, not really expecting to find anything, but I hadn't reckoned for just how tough these little northern blighters are. Just casually fluttering towards me came a small brown butterfly who proceeded to perch right there in front of me. He was a worn little thing and had hopefully lead a productive life but still proceeded to bask in the gloomy light



5 minutes later I found a second one, a female and in slightly better nick. Again she was a good poser despite the poor light



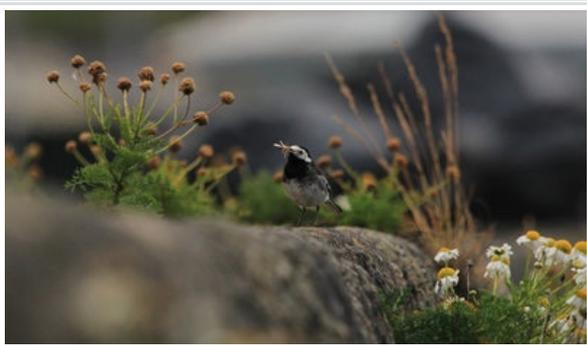
Not too shabby a result given the circumstances 😊.

There was other life as well, we were watched by a small gang of Oystercatcher during the entire time, a few Heron were standing like sentinels and some Redshank stopped by to do some rock pooling.





Over by the harbour I found a solitary Curlew loitering and a family of Pied Wagtail were flitting around, one of whom had captured a rather sizable moth



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 19-Aug-18 09:45 PM GMT

I'm afraid it's another mrgreen for the Northern Brown Argus. 🍄
I've carried out a little research on Smardale Gill, so maybe next year.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 19-Aug-18 09:58 PM GMT

That NBA was well worth the effort, Buggy. Those HBHM shots are pretty good as well – I know how tricky it is to try and freeze them or capture the way they move in still shots. The GIFs work really well. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 20-Aug-18 10:13 AM GMT

I just caught those pics and gifs of the Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Fantastic, especially the last shot and all the gifs.

Re: Bugboys mission

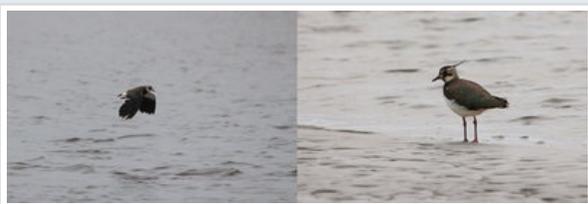
by bugboy, 20-Aug-18 09:32 PM GMT

As long as you get the weather I think you'll have a memorable day at Smardale Trevor 😊
Thanks **Dave & Ernie** 😊 I did go a bit Gif mad 😊

6th August, Onwards and southwards.

After the previous days epicness, the last day (well morning, we had to get back to London by the end of the day) was a bit more relaxed. It was an overcast, drab day so little point trying for butterflies (but I still managed some before the morning was out 😊).

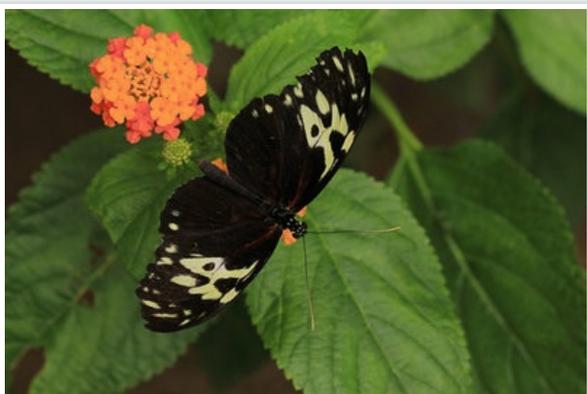
A wander on the beach, giving pooch a run, gave me the chance to have a look for local birdlife. A Little Egret was seen lurking with a small flock of Black-headed Gulls and a skein of Greylag Geese flew over whilst I was watching the Lapwings



Whilst on the shore a Collared Dove looked oddly out of place but very well camouflaged and the local Ravens were also once again loitering with intent.



We still had a few hours to kill before having to leave so we decided to visit a place I'd noted on our way to Smardale Gill the day before, Lakelands Wildlife Oasis, a small Zoo. A quick look on the website told me they had free flying butterflies amongst other things. There were a few but not many, mostly the perennial butterfly house staple, Heliconids. It was rather gloomy so I imagine there were more hiding away, there were some Caligo eggs were on a banana.





We finished our second stay of the year in Arnside with a pub lunch before setting off on the long journey back to reality.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 21-Aug-18 02:05 PM GMT

That is an awesome selection of wilflife you have captured, I especially like your friends hound 😊

The Hummingbird HM Gifs are brilliant. What is it about Gifs that keeps you staring at them longer than is necessary? Sometimes I just can't pull myself away from them. They are wildly addictive 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 21-Aug-18 07:23 PM GMT

Thanks **Old Wolf**, I know what you mean about Gifs 😊

7th August, Normality resumes... **Bookham**

I still had two days left before having to be back at work so I made the time to go and get back to chase some Brown Hairstreaks again. It looked set to be another overly warm day so I didn't plan to be out the whole day, just the morning and hope I'd find some breakfasting. Sadly it wasn't to be, not a sign was seen, and what was around was mostly hiding from the heat or regulating with closed wings poses. Nevertheless I did get some images I'm quite pleased with. Brown Argus continued to populate the site in increasing numbers and I found another very sandy coloured Small Heath.





You can't really tell from the photo but this Small Copper was tiny, about the size of a Small Blue.



A Green-veined White was skulking in the shadows but what I thought was just going to be a a record shot turned out rather well 😊 .



To get a bit of respite from the heat I spent a bit of time in the shade myself, searching for early stages. On the Oak by the car park where I'd found two Purple Hairstreak eggs a third had now been added.



I also had a look for White Admirals but much of the Honeysuckle seems to have been a victim of the drought. I found several remains of White Admiral feeding damage but I only discovered one larvae.



I left not long after noon, I could feel myself withering in the heat leaving the score at Hairstreaks 3, me 2. One of the Argus's bidding me farewell, unusually perched up high.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 22-Aug-18 10:49 AM GMT

Great reports from your trip Bugboy. Those are some superb shots of the HBHM, well done. 🍷 Like the gifs as well. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Aug-18 07:42 PM GMT

Thanks Andrew 😊

8th August, Graylings

Just the one day left before returning to work and it looked set to be decidedly cooler than the previous days, making it ideal for a warm open site like Chobham Common and another attempt at finding an egg laying female.

I may have been a little early again though since all I saw were attempts at making babies rather than the production of them. There was an awful lot of chasing going on, females running the gauntlet as they tried and failed to avoid males territories. I did however finally manage something that has escaped me for some time, some half decent upperside shots as one persistent male pestered a rather nice female. It is rather comical watching a male slowly circling a female whilst she makes sure she is always facing him 😊





and some more standard shots...



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-18 08:18 PM GMT

Fantastic Scotchies Bugboy, I have to echo Trevor's 🇧🇪 quota as this is a species I'd love to see 😊 And then you go and add in NBA as well 😊🇧🇪🇧🇪🇧🇪🇧🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 22-Aug-18 09:06 PM GMT

Well done with the Graylings, especially the first five images. Great to see them with forewing up, and a glimpse of open wing. Would like to see one of those images cropped a little closer?.

Yet another mrgreen 🇧🇪 ,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 23-Aug-18 06:28 PM GMT

Your diary moves along at a speedy pace, Bugboy. Great reports from your adventures up north. Nice shots of the 'English' Scotch Argus from Smardale. Good job they're doing well there as reading the reports on this site they appear to be struggling at Arnside. Then you made the long drive further north hoping to find the proper Northern Brown Argus (ssp. Artaxerxes) without even knowing if they were still about, great stuff and great shots 😊
Just seen your open wing Grayling shots 😊

Mike

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Aug-18 07:12 PM GMT

I'm glad you managed another trip up north, Bugboy. Those Scotchies are worth the journey! And I love the hummingbird hawk moth gifs - watched them for ages 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Aug-18 07:51 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, I suspect when you get round to posting your recent overseas pictures (around xmas one presumes 😊) I'll be equally as 🇧🇪 😊
Thanks **Trevor** but those images are already rather well cropped (40 - 50%). Any more and they'll start to pixilate quite badly. I couldn't get closer without disturbing them and didn't think I'd have time to swap lenses, maybe next time 😊.
Thanks **Maximus**, I'm still playing catchup (Wurzel style) with my diary so it may look busier than in reality, but I think I've still managed to cram a lot in once again 😊😊
Thanks **Janet**, yes they are definitely worth the trip and my chauffeur also thought so 😊

11th August, Brown Hairstreaks, take 5

My weekend off arrived with just one free morning spare and Brown Hairstreaks were top of my agenda. Sightings seemed to be coming thick and fast in the more southerly sites now so I hoped things would be similar at Bookham and I would gain some ground in my annual battle with them. I only had the morning to play with so it was an early start to make the most of things.

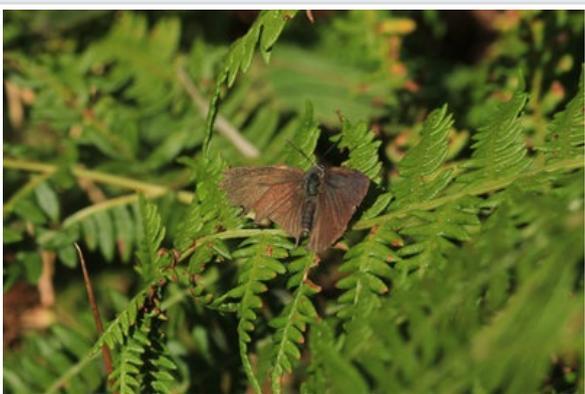
A warm, and relatively fresh morning greeted me, thankfully lacking the resent muggyness. I found the usual suspects in varying numbers, Speckled Woods seem to be enjoying the recent rain and have had what seems to be a mass emergence with many fresh insects flying around.



Gatekeepers on the other hand seem to have virtually vanished, but I did find a tiny male, not much bigger than your average Small Copper.



A few Meadow Browns were still hanging on and Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Coppers were once again present but Brown Hairstreak were obvious in their absence despite much careful searching and close examining of every dead, orange leaf. I did however find a rather decrepit female Purple Hairstreak, quite remarkable that they are still going when most other single brooded species seem to have vanished in a blink of an eye!



At the master tree I saw some Hairstreaks, a mixture of smaller silvery Purples and the occasional larger darker one. I managed a record shot of one of these so at least it wasn't going to end with another win for them!

About an hour and half after arriving. whilst checking out the Purple Hairstreak eggs on the Oak near the car park, I heard a familiar voice call out to me, Millerd who had slept in to late to go to Shipton Bellinger had plumped for the closer site of Bookham. We joined forces to go hunting again.

Now things had warmed up there was significantly more about, particularly the Blues and Argus's. One female blue was particularly attractive. After several years of increasing numbers of blue females, this year they really do seem to be in the minority. Indeed several of the Common Blue females today could easily be taken for a Brown Argus.



Common Blues above, Brown Argus below

Also around were a few Small Heath and I found another one of the sandy ones which seem to be popping up here and there. Here I've put it alongside a more normal coloured one also taken today.



It was fast approaching noon and time for me to make a move. I was just on the verge of bidding Dave farewell when he noticed something in the

undergrowth, BINGO a lovely pristine female 😊! I'd walked right past her. She fluttered out and sat in the sun for a bit, making things difficult for us by not sitting conveniently at the edge of the undergrowth. Dave fought his way through whilst I stood back and cracked out the long lens.



She stayed for a few minutes before vanishing over the hedge. Well, mission accomplished so I made to move off when again Dave noticed something I'd walked past, another one, this time gorging itself on Blackberries.



Whilst watching her the first one reappeared and sat high up on the hedge to bask as a cloud blocked out the sun.



With this sudden flurry of activity I 'forced' myself to stay a little longer, finding a Purple Hairstreak also indulging in the Blackberries and re-finding the tailless one again, lurking under a leaf.



Finally though it was time to get going, stopping only to get a shot of a particularly lush female Specklie.



Hairstreaks 3, Bugboy 4 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Aug-18 10:46 PM GMT

It's great seeing the same butterflies from a completely different angle, Buggy. Great shots 😊 And so far, that is still the best day I've had with them this year despite visits to other renowned hotspots! 😊

I also like the comparison between the sandy heatwave Small Heath and the "normal" version. I haven't been imagining it... 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 23-Aug-18 11:54 PM GMT

That's something I've never seen before, BB. Brown Hairstreaks taking fluids from blackberries.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 24-Aug-18 07:24 PM GMT

Just caught up with your trip up North Bugboy, Glad to see you saw good numbers of Scotch Argus at Smardale Gill. I have checked the local sightings a few times for Arnside since I returned from there to see if numbers had improved but they have seemed consistently low this year.

I have driven past the Lakeland Wildlife Oasis quite a few times over the years but never yet stopped off for a look.

A great way to round of your trip with that 'proper' 😊 NBA as well.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Aug-18 09:06 PM GMT

I have a feeling that's no longer the case Dave 😊 bloody sods law!

I suspect it's simply the lack of choice that's lead them to Blackberry supping. It seems the Bookham lot turn their cute little noses up at Fleabane, of which there are masses!

Thanks Neil . It's a shame Arnside has deteriorated so much recently, hopefully its not too late to improve things before they vanish from yet another English site! Hopefully next year I'll get to see an *Artaxerxes* in mint condition 😊

11th August, Bookham... for a change

So yes, buoyed by the weekend visit of two females, I hoped things would be a little bit easier from now on, the females now plenty old enough to be in egg laying mode. It would seem though I scored an own goal, it was warm but the sun just didn't appear much at all 😊 . I left later than normal since the forecast had promised the sun would appear around lunchtime, giving me a nice lay in. But it stayed resolutely cloudy for much of the afternoon and only really brightened up as 3pm was approaching.

Butterfly wise it was the usual suspects, lots of fresh Speckled Woods not caring about the lack of sun,



Small Coppers trying to absorb some sun in the few tiny breaks in the cloud cover



Plus a smattering of Brown Argus and Common Blues.



I may not have seen any adults but they have been busy, here's the first couple of eggs of the season 😊



A few other inhabitants caught my eye as I wandered around, a nice fat female Speckled Bush Cricket, a particularly well camouflaged crab spider lurking on the Fleabane and a small gang of Tachnid flies, I think *Tachina fera*, a species that is a parasitoid on caterpillars.



It's a tight match this season, Hairstreaks 4, Bugboy 4 🤔

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Aug-18 10:22 PM GMT

Great set of Brostreak shots from the previous report Bugboy 😊 I reckon you could get the win so long as you adopt Fergie Time 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 25-Aug-18 08:29 AM GMT

Gorgeous, fresh-looking Brown Argus, BB. I reckon I've seen fewer than a dozen all year so it's nice to know they're still about elsewhere.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-18 11:13 AM GMT

Just catching up with your posts Bugboy, some fantastic shots in your posts, I particularly like the Grayling with the open wings, they're really hard to get shots of like that. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Aug-18 10:00 PM GMT

I reckon an injury time flurry of decrepit females in mid September might just get the win for me **Wurzel** 😊

Thanks **David**, they're doing really well down here this year, turning up in new places too 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, I've waited several years to find a courting couple to get the chance for some upper side Grayling shots 😊

22nd August, Steyning for a change

Still in Brown Hairstreak hunting mode, I'd been eyeing up the reports from Steyning with growing envy. But with only normal rostered days off from work and it being a bit of a pain for me to get to, I try and avoid buses as much as possible, I thought I was going to miss out on the Brown Hairstreak bonanza going on there this year, until Millerd offered a lift. Wednesday was forecast to be the last warm day before unsettled weather took over and all week it had been promised to have a sunny afternoon.

I awoke to a rather overcast, almost leaden skied morning, but the cheerful weather lady on the breakfast news was adamant it would break and provide the promised bright, Hairstreak friendly weather..... hmm 😊.

I met Dave at Dorking station, both of us wondering on the likelihood of forecast coming to fruition, it still looked unlikely. It was however still early so there was plenty of time for things to improve, in the meantime we decided to go to mill hill and see if the Adonis were up and about.

Indeed they were and it only took a barely noticeable increase in light levels for them to become surprisingly active. Although not good for Hairstreaks this light was perfect for capturing the electric blue of an Adonis, even aged ones look like they've been plugged into the mains.





Among them were the occasional Common Blue and Small Heath and some larger relatives of the well-known Mint Moth, *Pyrausta nivalis*.



Meadow Browns were also relatively numerous, mostly very fresh and mostly on the small side. You'd be forgiven for mistaking them for Gatekeepers based on their size alone, the larvae of these later emerging insects clearly being affected by the drought and resulting poor plant growth.



Amongst all these normal looking ones though, Dave found a rather eye-catching individual with a fair amount of bleaching on all wings, giving it a very distinctive look. After a bit of chasing he settled and posed well for us.



We stayed here for some time, noting how the Adonis reacted to even the slightest brightening in light levels. By midday their pale cousin also began to appear in small numbers, some of them still looking in reasonable nick.



We dragged ourselves away after a couple of hours, the sky having barely changed from first thing. My weather app on my phone was convinced that cloudless skies were just around the corner, perhaps an hour away.... hmmm 😊😅. On the way back to the bottom car park we were surprised to find significant numbers of Adonis in the long grass near the road.



To kill a bit more time while we waited for the promised sun we decided to visit Anchor Bottom just down the road, a site neither of us had visited before. We found a very picturesque hillside, but much more exposed and consequently somewhat cooler and breezier. At the top I found some nice chalk downland flora, but little in the way of butterflies.



Through a mixture of educated guesswork and luck though we stumbled on a hotspot that was teeming with them, all activated during brighter spells of cloud cover just like at Mill Hill.





The magic hours of early afternoon were now upon us, but sadly the promised blue sky wasn't. My phone app was still insisting it was just an hour away though ... hmmm 😞😞😞.

Under thick cloud we arrived at our final destination, still hoping for a glimpse of blue sky. As we walked along the path to the main site, just past the bowling green, Dave noticed what was almost certainly our target fluttering around a bramble bush in a horse field. It never settled in sight though so we continued onto the main site. Here we spent an hour ambling around in distinctly un-hairstreak friendly weather with my phone app still stubbornly insisting things were just about to improve 😞. Dave did briefly spot another Hairstreak flutter up into an Ash but only a few Hairstreak eggs, Speckled Woods and a lone Great Spotted Woodpecker were photographed.





Despite all this, that one distant sighting made this my most successful Brown Hairstreak hunting trip to Steyning, my previous two a couple of years ago both drawing blanks!

I got home at about 7, my phone app still insisting I'd see the sun before it set, needless to say the sun remained hidden behind thick cloud.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-18 09:00 AM GMT

Those Adonis fairly leap out of the screen Bugboy 🤩🤩🤩 Nice Meadow Browns too – they are smaller this side of the season aren't they? Yet in France they were the usual size but the Hedge Browns were huge 🤩 You describe perfectly the wonder of weather apps, I still don't get how they can be so wrong still even an hour ahead 🤩

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-18 09:51 AM GMT

Love the colour of the Adonis Bugboy, like Wurzel says they jump out at you 🤩
Glad you got the Bros Streaks, I was the same this year at Gait Barrow, I went up there and saw nothing so hope fully like you maybe I'll get them another year 🤩 Goldie 🤩

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 26-Aug-18 10:06 AM GMT

Beautiful Adonis Blues Bugboy, the light certainly brought out the best of their electric blue colour.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Aug-18 10:06 PM GMT

Thanks guys, I always feel the need to point out Adonis Blue images haven't been 'enhanced' in post processing when I capture them in that light, they're just stupidly bright 🤩🤩. These Meadow Browns were abnormally small Wurzel, the drought must have stunted their food when they were young.

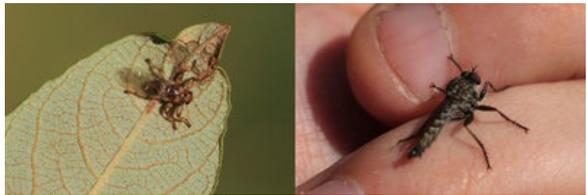
25th August, back to Bookham part 1

After the failure of Steyning a few days previously it was back to more familiar territory for possibly my last Brown Hairstreak hunt of the season for me, (The following day was set to be a washout and my next day off wasn't looking too good either, if you were to believe the forecast 🤩🤩🤩 haha). Today's forecast seemed pretty accurate though, a cloudless sky greeting me as I got off the train which was supposed to disappear shortly after noon. Despite the welcome sun, and the warmth in the sheltered areas, things took a fair old time to get going. More fresh Specklies littered the place and I found a particularly dark Small Heath but other than the occasional worn Meadow Brown I saw nothing else.



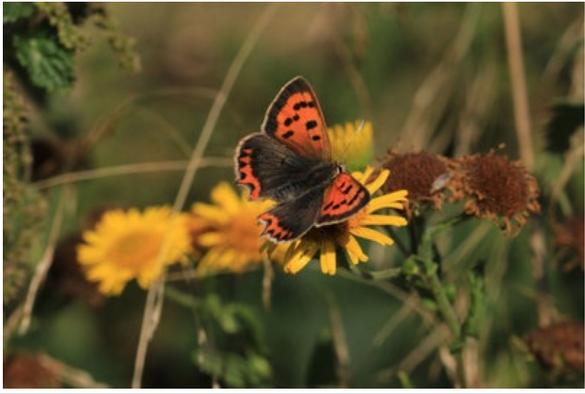
I made a point again of spending a bit of time carefully patrolling all the spots where eggs and larvae had been observed, always hoping I'd be lucky enough to spot a freshly emerged Hairstreak, not today though.

Whilst walking around I did feel a bit like a bug airport at times with several species stopping off just to rest/sunbath on me! Here we have a Forest fly *Hippobosca equina*, whome I removed just incase it felt like a change from its preferred equine/bovine/cervid blood, and a less bitey Robber fly.



At Banks Common the occasional aged Meadow Brown were joined by a single Brown Argus and a few Small Copper, including one very fresh female.

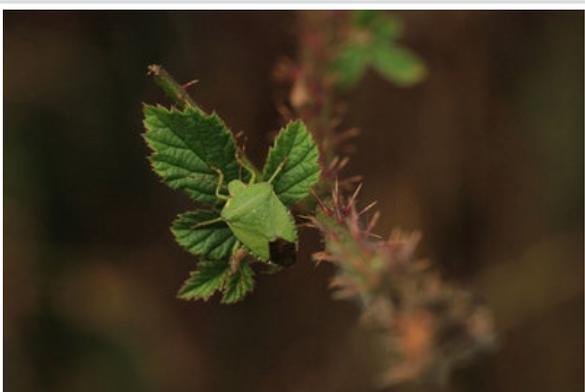




The familiar figure of Millerd joined me mid-morning as I was taking pictures of a rather handsome Wasp Spider.



A few Common Blue were now starting to become active, too active for pictures but the Hairstreaks remained absent so we split up to improve our chances of finding some. Clouds were starting to bubble up now but it certainly felt warm enough on the south east facing side of the hedge, completely sheltered from the brisk northerly breeze. Still by noon none had been seen and it was looking like another win for them 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Aug-18 10:53 PM GMT

25th August, back to Bookham part 2

It was Dave who once again saved the day, spotting a female basking in dappled sunlight not long after noon 😊 .



She fluttered here and there, did a bit of egg laying from time to time before vanishing across the meadow in the direction of one of the lone Oaks. I searched out one of the eggs layed whilst Dave kept an eye on her, and found it was next to an older one, proving not all doubles are laid by the same female at the same time.



We wandered around a bit more, noting the darkening sky to the north that looked to threaten rain, both of us concluding it was probably not worth staying any longer. It was as Dave was saying his farewells that another female flew out from the hedge next to us and landed a bit further along on a Hazel, quite high up.

We both spent a bit of time trying to find the best angle to take pictures from and actually achieved some rather interesting images, particularly with the dark clouds as a backdrop.





Some small breaks in the cloud tempted her to bask and a more prolonged sunny spell encouraged her to flutter over the hedge where we located her again basking flat out on some bracken. Sadly she flew off before I had time to switch lenses but Dave got a few shots 📷. For a third time we located her, again sat in a Hazel before she finally flew out of sight into a nearby Oak. We compared images of the two Hairstreaks and concluded they were indeed two separate individuals meaning a two nil win for me 😊.



Now it really was time to go home but I left happy, Hairstreaks 4 bugboy 6 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 27-Aug-18 11:11 PM GMT

That turned into a very good day in the end, Buggy. Give it a day or two and I'll post my shots from slightly different angles... 😊 Yours give a real feel for what the day was like and the character of the butterfly. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Janet Turnbull, 28-Aug-18 12:25 PM GMT

Well done with the Brostreaks, Bugboy – a lovely set of shots. –Janet

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Great that the Brostreaks turned up in the end – looks like Fergie time paid off 😊😊

Have a goodun

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Aug-18 07:00 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, Its always interesting to compare photo's from the same outing 😊

Thanks **Janet** 😊, persistence payed off 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, yup just a little bit of extended extra time did the trick! Depending on the weather there still might be the chance for one more hunt, perhaps for some decrepit females getting rid of the last of their eggs!

28th August

Just an hours wander around my local patch today after work, since the sun decided to break through the clouds. Not a great deal was about, indeed there were far more people than butterflies. Small And Green-veined Whites were relatively numerous but they and a couple of Specklies avoided my camera. There were a couple of Comma's, one of whom did pose for me, quite a pale late summer individual.



On the return I took a wander out in the meadow where a handful of Meadow Browns flitted around in the evening sun and I disturbed a single Small Copper.





Not much but still a nice way to end a day

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Aug-18 07:18 PM GMT

Fabulous, BB. Your images of the wider panorama give a good impression of what it's like when you actually see a Brown Hairstreak.

I never tire of them and I honestly don't know how I'd fill late August into September if they weren't around. Such a fascinating species.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 28-Aug-18 07:49 PM GMT

Great Bros Streak shot's Bugboy, 🍷🍷 I really envy them 😊 You've certainly more Butterflies there than we have up here Buggy. Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-18 06:38 PM GMT

Looking out of the window at the autumnal scene that H.Comma seems wildly out of place even if we are still technically in summer 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 31-Aug-18 10:19 AM GMT

Love the Graylings with the glimpse of open wing. And you got some lovely Adonis and Brostreak shots. 🍷🍷

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 01-Sep-18 08:16 AM GMT

I've just been going back through your Brostreak pics. Its amazing how different such pictures can look on a cloudy day and yet you have still managed to keep them sharp. I love it.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 06-Sep-18 07:38 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments guys 😊. **Ernie**, those clouds were in the distance, above us and the Hairstreak was relatively bright. Had it been that cloudy there's no way I'd have been able to get anything sharp!

5th September, back out at last

It feels like an age since I last had the chance to get out, indeed a whole new season has descended since I was last chasing butterflies! Anyway it was a tossup between Box Hill and/or Denbies or Bookham. I had a few things to do in the morning so I couldn't get going until quite late on so I plumped for Bookham, figuring I'd get there in time for the golden hours of Hairstreak activity. On arrival there was a lot of activity from the local Specklies, mostly now ghostly versions of their former selves.



I found a few Coppers as I wandered the hedgerows, all males as far as I could tell and mostly fresh indicating a new brood is just starting to emerge. I watched a couple of these fresh ones have a minor scuffle before one settled, closely followed by the second close by, whereupon the second one sidled up close. Perhaps he practicing his moves for when the females appear?



In amongst the ghostly Specklies, the occasional fresh specimen stuck out like a sore thumb, looking especially dark.





A few more circuits of the Hairstreak hotspots threw up much the same collection of butterflies, but no Hairstreaks.

I decided to have a wander into the wood to see if anything was around there, perhaps a second gen White Admiral? Nothing except more Specklies and hordes of Darter Dragonflies. Close inspection found both Common and Ruddy Darters, distinguishable by the pale longitudinal stripes on the legs of the Common Darters compared to the solid black of the Ruddy Darters.



On the return I checked on the trio of Purple Hairstreak eggs near the car park, finding the first two healthy but the third one had clearly been parasitized at some point and is now just an empty shell with a hole in it.



Another couple of circuits of the hedgerow still came up blank on the Hairstreak front but I come across an unusual fly I have never seen before. can't find anything like it on the interweb either



More Coppers and a few Fresh Small Heath started to appear mid-afternoon, the Heaths looking more normal than the sandy coloured ones that were appearing during the height of the summers dry spell.



I ended the afternoon looking round a patch of Blackthorn where both Pauline and I had found several larvae earlier in the season but to no avail. I did find a Common Blue posing, a couple of flies having a standoff and a rather nice dusky *caeruleopunctata* to finish the day off.





No target species but certainly not a write off 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 06-Sep-18 10:25 PM GMT

Very nice Coppers, Buggy! 😊 I wondered when the third brood would kick off properly down at Bookham. Sounds like the Hairstreaks have pretty well called it a day now, sadly. 😞 I did wonder if you see a White Admiral though...

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-18 10:41 PM GMT

Some very nice Coppers indeed Bugboy, the gif made me smile which was much needed as I'm back at work now 😊 That Speckle does look very dark could that be something to do with the temperature during pupation?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

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

Beautiful array of colours there, BB. Love the moving image of the Small Copper. Looks like a blind side manoeuvre to me! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-18 11:08 AM GMT

Lovely Copper shots Bugboy, I particularly like the moving couple with one moving up the stalk 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Sep-18 08:23 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments 😊. Looks like there may be another strong third brood down at Bookham again. For me it's the best place to guarantee a good supply of Small Coppers 😊, possibly one of the best places outside of Dungeness!

9th September, Shoreham

Trevor's recent reports from Shoreham Harbour (plus one from Dave Cook who also stumbled across a Brown Hairstreak there) are what sealed Sunday's destination. A chance to tick off species number 54, and barring any vagrants, the final species for the year.

It was impossible to get there early enough to catch the Clouded Yellows warming up, a Sunday 'service' on southern railways isn't something you can really plan for. It was already warm and sunny when I arrived at 10 and it didn't take long for the first male to zoom past me, great now just to find one settled and I started to pray for a nice fat cloud to drift over, just a small one for a minute or two. It didn't happen, there was just patches of thin high cloud here today, but that is the law of the sod for you 😊.

As the morning progressed a few more started appearing and I probably ended up seeing around half a dozen, all males. There was a bit of activity at the eastern end where some Buddleja seemed rather popular.



A cheeky glimpse of uppers

I happened to be following another, rather tatty one, when the high cloud thickened enough for him to decide he should take a break. Rather inconsiderately he decided the best place was in amongst the grass stems but I eventually managed to get the right angle.



Meanwhile the activity was increasing on and around the Buddleja and it was here that I found the majority of the other butterfly life too, perhaps searching for some shelter from the persistent stiff westerly that was being most unhelpful. The most numerous butterfly of the morning was the Common Blue with perhaps a dozen flying around, mostly in tip top condition. All three common Whites were as usual, present but there was no sign of Dave Cooks Hairstreak.





I watched this one searching for a suitable place to deposit her eggs



She found some Medick



So, target achieved 😊 next stop Mill Hill for the afternoon 😊 .



Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 10-Sep-18 09:23 PM GMT

How Cloudie behaviour can vary !. On both my visits they just flew past the Buddleia, I waited up by the fuel tanks, where the Buddleia is hoping for one to land. Your shots are just what I was hoping for.

Still the season is young at Shoreham, it will probably get better over the next few weeks, providing the weather doesn't spoil things.

Pleased you had a fruitful trip,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 10-Sep-18 09:46 PM GMT

As Trevor says, different days, different behaviour! 😊 The buddleia was ignored today (around midday), with incessant patrolling by the only two Cloudies I saw down there – unless the sun went in when they dropped like stones to the path and tried to disappear.

I particularly like the teaser shot of a bit of upperside... 😊 The Blues are good too – bright and new. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-18 11:00 PM GMT

Wow Bugboy that first Cloudy is a cracker I don't think I've seen one that yellow before 😲 😊 🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wutzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 11-Sep-18 09:53 AM GMT

Nice shots of the Cloudies, Bugboy, the last shot in particular. Fifty four is a great tally for the year, you've worked hard for it though 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Sep-18 07:08 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys, I think the sun was catching them at the perfect angle, perhaps being lower in the sky it helps to bring out the rich colour? 3rd year in a row now I've managed to break the 50 species in a year barrier 😊

9th September, Shoreham part 2

My route to Mill Hill is slightly different to most others, being on foot. Last year I found a footpath that avoids the pavementless direct route and takes me around a horse field whose edges are generally left to go a bit wild. There's always something to find here, this time last year the path was chock full of fresh Red Admirals. Today there was just a single RA who gave me the slip but a stonking Comma made this detour more than worth it.



At Mill Hill, just a few of miles inland from where I was an hour previously, it was distinctly cloudier with very little sun to speak off. Nevertheless it was plenty warm enough with good numbers of little Brown jobs flitting around. A few male Adonis were still here, looking somewhat more past it than my last visit in the company of Millerd. Of the little Brown jobs that did settle it would seem the majority were female Adonis but I'm sure Brown Argus and Common Blues were mixed in with them too.





My attention was however elsewhere, a Cloudie was busy quartering the ground. Rather annoyingly staying inside a taped off area that was cordoned off due to the on-going herbicide treatment.

After watching him land several times far out of reach I moved on to the far lower corner where most activity seems to happen here. Today was no different and despite the overcast conditions it was a hive of activity of little Brown jobs (and the occasional blue job of both Adonis and Common Blues). Meadow Browns were also rather numerous, mostly females and nearly all busy laying eggs as if it were going out of fashion.





Also spotted was the distinctive playful flight of a Wall. A fresh female 3rd gen who made photography very difficult.



She was being typically Wall like and I soon lost her. A few minutes later I thought I'd relocated her only to find I was now following a fresh male.



Whilst all this was going on Cloudie numbers had increased with at least three, possibly four, quite literally flying rings around me, again all males. I managed to get up close to one who settled long enough but for the most part I was a spectator to their activities. Not that I was complaining, these little rays of sunshine are a joy to watch this late in the season. Occasionally two would meet and would spiral up into the air or pester each other down in the turf but I'm pretty sure no females were present.



At one point a male seemed to take a dislike to a Hawkweed flower and proceeded to dive bomb the innocent and defenseless flower several times.



All this plus a visitation from a Peregrine 😊



Had the wind not been so strong I probably would have explored higher up around the top car park but having managed the target for the day I decided to leave early and try and get home at a decent time 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Sep-18 07:21 PM GMT

Good to see you found a couple of Walls there, Buggy, something I failed to do the following day – and there was only one Clouded Yellow as well. That sheltered corner you mention is a real hotspot of activity! 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Sep-18 11:00 PM GMT

Cracking fresh Walls Bugboy 🍷🍷 You did really well to get an in-flight shot of a Peregrine normally by the time you've got the lens on where they were they've long gone 😊😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 11-Sep-18 11:24 PM GMT

That is indeed a 'stonking Comma', BB, and the supporting cast is none too shabby either. Wall Browns & Clouded Yellows in the same post are

indicative of a very productive day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-18 09:51 AM GMT

Glad your still finding lots of Butterflies Bugboy, I particularly like the Cloudy who dislikes the Hawk Weed 😊 But your Wall's do it for me 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 14-Sep-18 03:13 PM GMT

Hello Bugboy, I am catching up on diaries and when I reached yours, I realised it is more like a full time job! You have been busy 😊 You have managed to snap too many great shots to comment on but I have to say, some deserve a particular shout out:

The electric blue Adonis pictures are well, electrifying 😊 I haven't seen one so didn't realise just how blue they were. Hopefully I will get to see one next year.

I also am fond of the BHS and Wall shots as once again, I haven't seen either of those. Do you see a trend here 😊 And finally the Clouded Yellows, now I have seen one, once but haven't seen one since so it was great to see your pictures.

Re: Bugboys mission

by ernie f, 17-Sep-18 11:07 AM GMT

Butterfly pics – lovely, but the Peregrine in flight – now that is not something you get to photograph every day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 19-Sep-18 02:45 PM GMT

Very nice Clouded Yellows Bugboy. Hope I can get some closer sightings. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Sep-18 07:24 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments and ummm sorry Old Wolf 😊😊. I've not been able to get out much recently but there's still a bit of life in the season yet, at least down here in the south anyway 😊

25th September, Bookham

It feels like an age since I've been able to get out and about (work and inclement weather combining to keep me away from the butterflies) but my half day this week coincided with a lovely afternoon so it was off to Bookham for a relaxing few hours. Despite the warmth, very little was about at first. A slightly worn Small Heath finally breaking my duck but he was quickly overshadowed by a surprise appearance from a male Brimstone. He was busy looking for somewhere to roost for the night but I'm not sure why he wasn't already tucked up for the winter?



A White fluttered past and another Heath appeared but these were also overshadowed, this time by a beautiful female Common Blue.



I had another White encounter, possibly the same individual, who turned out to be a male Small but he went on his merry way before I could get close enough.

Next up was the closest thing I had for a target for the afternoon, a female Small Copper. She found a solitary Sorrel leaf and my eyes were immediately drawn to the eggs already on it. She didn't add to the collection so I got up close for a few closeups of these microscopic golf balls when she fluttered off.



As I was getting up a couple approached asking what I'd found so I pointed out the eggs and showed them my images. They were suitably amazed at the tiny works of art 😊. As I left they mentioned that a Hobby was about. Apparently, it had flown directly over me as I was taking the pictures of the eggs, which was a shame since it's been a few years since I've seen a Hobby!

Since my last visit a fair bit of work has been done to the open scrubland, much more than in previous years with large areas 'leveled'. These areas are where I find a lot of copper and blue action at this time of year, not to mention where I find much of my Brown Hairstreak eggs, so it was with some disappointment that I wandered through the now seemingly barren landscape. I know it's all for the greater good and come next year it will again be teeming with life and some patches have been left.



an untouched patch



Seemingly lifeless...

I've kept a close eye on my little Small Copper nursery over the summer, and watched it mostly wither and die back. Today however it was back to it's lush self and had a smattering of eggs on it. There's six (one hatched) visible in the picture below.



Banks common was the obvious next place to investigate but here I found just three or four Coppers and a few Speckled Wood.





A wander into the wood produced nothing else but stopping off to check on my purple Hairstreak eggs near the car park I did find this marvelous looking weevil. It's most likely *Curculio glandium*, the Acorn Weevil, and judging by the length of the 'nose' a female. The two remaining Hairstreak eggs were still in place and looked healthy.



During the slow wander back to the station, through the wastelands, I managed to find some Devil's-bit Scabious that had escaped the destruction, complete with three Coppers happily gorging themselves.



It was good to get back out in the field but I suspect the majority of my trips final trips may well be further south now until the season finally ends.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 26-Sep-18 07:33 PM GMT

Love the Copper shots Bugboy, they've certainly had a very good season they seem to be everywhere 😊 Your Common Blue Female is lovely too ;:D Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 11:03 PM GMT

Cracking set of images Bugboy, great Brimstone, lush Coppers but the star of the show has to be the female Common Blue, what a beaut! 🌈🌈🌈

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 27-Sep-18 06:12 PM GMT

Nice report, BB. You were clearly on a 'mission' after your enforced absence from butterfly pursuit!

That's a beautiful Common Blue, but I agree, the notable feature was the appearance of a Brimstone. They're far commoner in March than September!

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Sep-18 08:10 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments again guys. Unfortunately I'm not sure when I'll be able to post again since my laptop seems to have had an unexplained death 😞 Very frustrating 😞

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Sep-18 06:40 PM GMT

Like a Phoenix my laptop seems to have arisen from it's premature death last night and is now working just fine 😊 so here's what I got up to on Wednesday.

26th September part 1, chasing the sun

A whole day off with a clear blue sky and temperatures predicted to reach low 20s in the second half of September, it could only mean a trip into

Sussex. A stop off at Shoreham harbour before a wander around Mill Hill where I was expecting to find a few familiar faces.

It didn't take long for the action to get started, my first Cloudie, a fresh looking male, scooted past as I set up a shot of a female Common Blue. There was little wind to speak off today so unlike my previous visit the butterflies were more spread out along the strip of green. Common Blues were relatively numerous although mostly past their best but my focus was primarily on the golden yellow things shooting about. Definitely two, probably three and from the look of things in pretty good nick. Most of the action was at the eastern end, where the main nectar source from last time, the buddleja, had mostly gone over. There was however plenty of Ox-tongue to replace it and it was on this that a couple of Cloudies were breakfasting on. Now began the usual chase, stalk, focus, click and repeat that will be so familiar to all of us. They were actually being quite well behaved and I focused my attention on trying to get that all illusive open wing shot. The end result being that after an hour or so I had over 300 very similar shots in the bag.

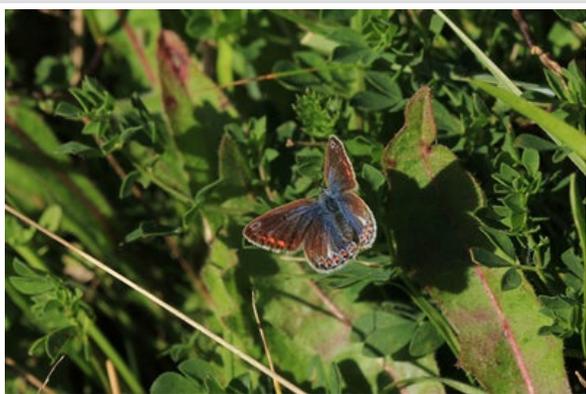


My technique, which is probably fairly standard, was to ramp up the shutter up to warp speed, keep my finger glued to the shutter button until the butterfly had moved on and don't be too close so it stayed in frame when it did. Even so all I can say is thank God for digital photography, I'd have shed genuine tears with the number of images that fell foul of the delete button if I was still using slide film. Anyway, after sifting through them I found I did manage a small handful of uppers, still room for improvement though.





The morning was book ended by a couple of nice Common Blues.



Other species seen today were singletons of Small Heath and Red Admiral plus the usual collection of Whites with Large and Small being positively ID'd. Now off to see who was up at Mill Hill 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 28-Sep-18 07:14 PM GMT

Great effort with your attempts to get some Cloudie upper side shots. It is strange that they have evolved to always keep their wings tight shut when at rest, given their beautiful colour/markings. But then they would be rather conspicuous, even from a distance with that bright yellow upper side.

Frustrating for us though !.
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 28-Sep-18 07:31 PM GMT

Great series of cloudy shots Bugboy 🇧🇪 😊 I have attempted that in the past but my FZ200 (or me perhaps) is just not quick enough.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 28-Sep-18 08:04 PM GMT

More Cloudies and some uppers too! I am very jealous indeed 😊

Glad to hear your laptop has resurrected itself.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 29-Sep-18 06:01 PM GMT

Yes, it's great fun experimenting with the camera and trying to grab the open winged shots of this species, BB. I often do likewise with Cleopatras when in France but my results aren't as good as yours.

Doesn't look like any have got to south Wales this year, sadly. Normally I get to see one or two.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 29-Sep-18 10:13 PM GMT

Thanks Guys, it's always good to give yourself a challenge 😊

26th September, part 2, chasing the rainbows

I made good time getting to Mill Hill, catching a train as it pulled into Southwick, and just half an hour after taking my last picture at the Harbour I was pointing my camera at a huge Red Admiral on the path around the horse field on the south side of the bypass. She was a flighty lady and wouldn't sit for me but then my attention was taken by the distinctive flight of a couple of Walls. One of these returned and very politely sat down on the path in front of me.



This is the ninth place I've seen Walls this year and I've not even been to what was my usual spot between Eastbourne and Beachy Head!

Ten minutes later I was on Mill Hill and watching a small gaggle of dodgy looking figures loitering around a patch of scrub halfway up the slope 😊 😊 . Regulars will already know who they were, having already seen their posts. I duly joined the group and took some pictures of the countries most famous pupae, making the Peacock the second species I have wild pictures of every stage (the first being the Comma). I won't worry about posting my effort since it's nearly identical to everyone else's 😊

Dave Cook and Katrina bid us farewell but Millerd, Trevor and I made our way to a large clump of Hemp Agrimony which was in full flower and rumoured to be covered in butterflies. The rumours were indeed true, a kaleidoscope of Red Admirals, Peacocks and Painted Ladies all gorging themselves to get ready for the long flight south or the big sleep kept us all entertained.





We spent nearly half an hour here and even then it was difficult to pull ourselves away but in the end Dave and I wandered off to see what was going on down on the lower slope. On the way down we came across another couple of adult hibernators enjoying the Indian summer, a Brimstone and a Comma.



Down on the Bottom slope we found an assortment of species, Lycids, Browns and a handful of very active Clouded Yellows. Most of them were somewhat past their best and some I struggled to identify but a few were picture worthy.



For the final portion of the day we decided to have a look around Broadwater Lagoon, following on from Vince's report from the previous day. I didn't take any pictures here and we only saw one (or possibly two) Cloudies, but Common Blues seemed to be quite numerous and I saw what was almost certainly a Wall... site number 10! All this and I still managed to leave early enough to miss the London rush hour, a bloody marvelous day 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 29-Sep-18 11:07 PM GMT

I'm glad to hear your laptop came out of its sulk, Buggy. Those brilliant Cloudie shots from Southwick were worth waiting for! 😊 Those were an excellent couple of hours at Mill Hill too. You got some of the ones I didn't - it's always good seeing someone else's take on the day. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-18 09:28 AM GMT

Those Cloudy shots were a bit epic Bugboy, especially the last one – a right royal cracker 😊👍👍👍 Part 2 produced a mighty fine haul of butterflies, cracking Walls 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

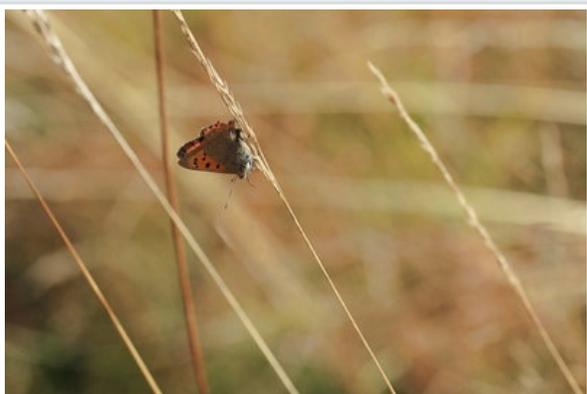
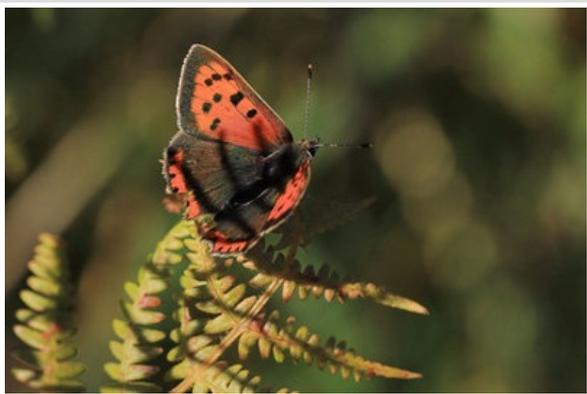
by bugboy, 30-Sep-18 10:14 PM GMT

Thanks Dave & Wurzel, I'm still going to keep trying to get better shots though, the weather looks pretty good for the upcoming week, fingers crossed 😊

27th September, Bookham again.

By an unexpected turn of events I ended up with a bonus afternoon out butterflying, although the circumstances that resulted in this could have been better. The evening before (after returning from Mill Hill) I discovered a lump in the nether regions so I phoned my boss to say I wouldn't be in first thing the next day. I breathed a huge sigh of relief the following morning when the Doctor informed me I have a hernia. Not the best thing to hear but in the circumstances, by far the better of the two evils! My boss said to take the rest of the day off and since it was going to be another glorious autumnal day what better way to calm my shaken nerves than another trip to Bookham.

Coppers were the theme of the day, with around a dozen seen in the end, spread out over quite a range.





I stopped off at the regular Copper nursery where two days previously I'd found 6 eggs. Today I counted 25 and disturbed a female adding to the tally. I followed her for a bit and disturbed a second female a few feet away, also in the act of laying, in her case on a tiny sprig of Sorrel. Closer inspection found eggs on both sides of the leaf and a tiny larvae (arrowed in the pic).





An arrowed larvae making a quick getaway.

I also had another go at looking for Purple Emperor youngsters, again coming up empty handed. There was an awful lot of feeding damage but by what I have no idea. This picture shows what I think may be Emperor feeding damage but I can't be sure. Guy would you be able to say with any certainty?



Purple Emperor feeding damage?

Anyway, safe to say I ended the day feeling a lot better than I started the day!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-18 10:53 PM GMT

Glad things turned out not as bad as they could have been Bugboy 😊 A great set of Coppers to remove the stress hormones 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 30-Sep-18 10:54 PM GMT

Very glad to hear it was nothing too serious, Buggy. It's probably all the yomping up and down the Downs that you do. 😊

There must be thousands of Copper eggs all over that site at the moment. It would be nice to see that transformed into clouds of shining butterflies in the spring! 😊 Great shots of both adults and offspring there too.

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 01-Oct-18 08:29 PM GMT

Not often you get a Small Copper framed against a clear blue sky, BB. Did you have to get on your knees for that or was the insect perched unusually high up?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 04-Oct-18 08:21 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, yes getting out definitely helped!

Thanks **Dave**, I'm sticking to delicate strolling rather than yomping for the time being 😊😊

Thanks **David**, that particular chap was sat up high, It was taken at arms reach 😊

3rd October, part 1, a change of scenery

I fancied a bit of change of scenery today so I went down to what had become my default Wall site, the start of the South Downs Way between Eastbourne and Beachy Head. This year though this was my first visit here and being so late in the season I wasn't expecting too much.

Walking along the seafront Small Whites were numerous and the only butterfly seen, probably well into double figures.

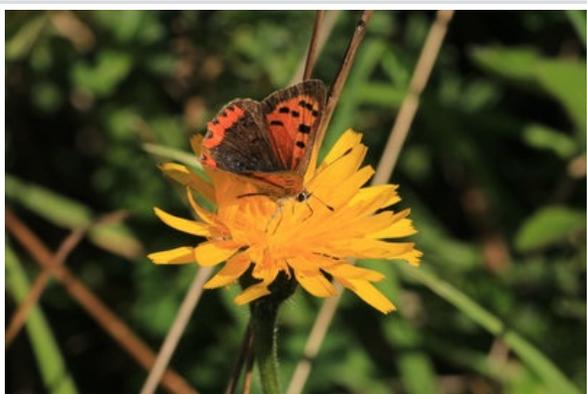


Once onto the green slopes though butterflies became far more sparse. The area is larger and more spread out than a place like Mill Hill so you do have to work a bit to find your quarry but my next target didn't take too long to appear, a female Small Copper fluttering nonchalantly along the path next to me, shimmering in the morning sun when she landed. The poor little thing was getting somewhat battered in the stiff sea breeze that was blowing and she did well not to lose her footing as she fed.



Next up was a male Cloudie doing the rounds. I watched him as he flew off into the distance, not even bothering to contemplate following, not least because I'm supposed to be taking things easy with my hernia!

Next up were some more Coppers and a couple of male Common Blues who posed well.





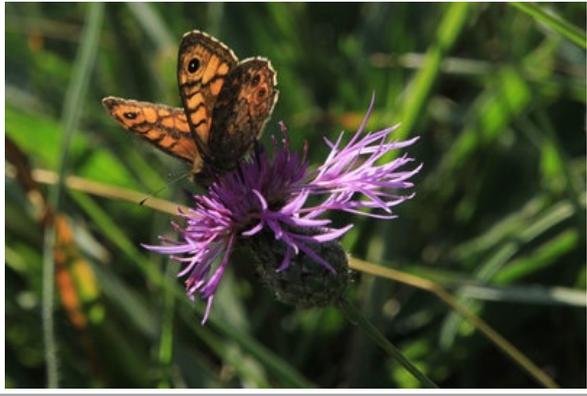
After a brief encounter with a fresh Red Admiral it was off to Wall Brown Alley with just the occasional Small White for company.

Almost immediately upon arriving I put up a male holding fort over quite a large expanse of chalk path. After him it was a while before anymore showed up and these were at the other end. In between though some more female Small Coppers kept me entertained and I found another Copper nursery.



Despite it being close to midday and it being on the warm side with very little in the way of cloud cover, the Walls were relatively well behaved and with my long lens I was able to get plenty of decent shots... or so I thought. When I checked the images later on the train, I discovered I'd managed to knock the optical stabilizer button to off on my zoom lens and the vast majority of my pictures were way beyond rescuing 🙄😓. I managed to pick through the carnage and found a few which are passable though.





Not really in focus but I love this pose. You can imagine how intimidating and distracting it would be to a passing bird looking for a quick snack if faced with those eye's looking back at it!

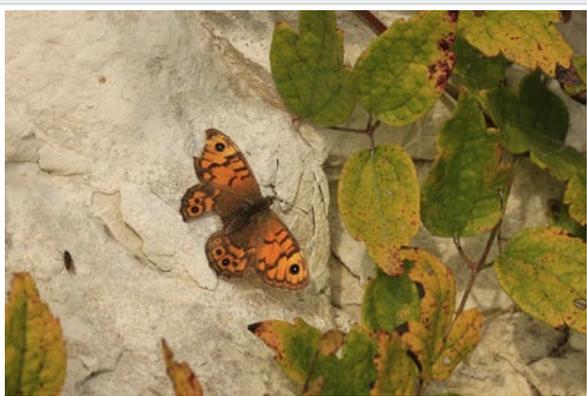


I stayed with the Walls for about an hour (taking shedloads of worthless shots...) before making my way back, nearly getting my head knocked off by a passing Painted Lady who seemed late for something! Normally I would check out the steep slope under the path where the females usually hang out, but not today, hernia and all!

In the shadier parts of the path I found a couple of the Walls more well-behaved cousin and when I returned to the spot where the Blues had been in the morning I found just a single Brown Argus



One final surprise before I was back on the promenade was a female Wall in egg laying mode. I did try and grab a shot of her in the act but they are very quick, faster than my autofocus! Here's a first glimpse of one of next year's first gen though.





A passing Large White on the promenade brought the days tally to 10 species, not too shabby for the first week of October! And it was still early in the day so I decided another site was worth a punt before setting off home 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-18 08:27 PM GMT

That is a great return for the days work – with more to come too 😊🍷 Good to see 'resting' didn't stop you getting the butterflies and sometimes slowing down a bit means you get much more from the trip 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-18 07:20 PM GMT

A nice selection of late season butterflies Bugboy 😊

Glad to hear your lump turned out not too bad and you are getting about ok 😊 Gentle strolling is my default mode these days anyway 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 05-Oct-18 09:46 PM GMT

This species really is "Wall to Wall" along the Sussex coast at the moment, Buggy. Great shots – that egg has been so carefully placed at the end of that scraggy bit of dead foliage. 😊 Amazing precision, but why there I wonder? The poor caterpillar will have some work to do before finding a grass stem. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 05-Oct-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel & Neil, to be honest a gently amble is my default when I'm out, unless I spot a rare ab. or a vagrant that is...

3rd October, part 2,

Newhaven Tidemills was the second destination of the day, surely the Cloudies have turned up here by now.

The tide was out and there was a fair bit of bird activity on the channel that partly separates the site from the 'mainland'. A flock of Redshank were taking things easy in the distance but closer were some Little Egrets doing a spot of fishing, or perhaps crabbing, I couldn't be sure.



Pretty sure that's an unlucky crab.

Moving on I continued my search for some butterflies, for once spotting a basking Cloudie before it saw me, but he only staying still long enough for one record shot before he was off, never to be seen again, oh well.



Next up was species number 11 for the day, a Small Heath which was followed by a single aged Common Blue and shortly after that I caught site of a Wall settling on a Bramble thicket, a very fresh female. She played hard to get, but I managed to sneak up on her for a few head on shots.



Surprisingly there were no Whites here this afternoon and it was a while before the next sighting happened, but it was most definitely worth the wait and went a long way to make up for the mess I'd made of the Walls that morning. They sat patiently and gave me plenty of time to get the shots I was after.



After this the sun decided to go into hiding so I switched my attention to the ample birdlife the site offers, in particular a noisy charm of Goldfinch. As I watched them I did start to question the validity of their chosen collective noun, feeling a 'squabble' seemed more apt...



A very pleasant end to another nice day out 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-18 10:38 AM GMT

Great shot of the Walls in cop Bugboy 🤔📷 The Goldfinches coming into land is a beaut of a shot – well worthy of a professional calendar 😊📷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-18 01:50 PM GMT

You've certainly had better weather down your way Bugboy, love the Bird shots especially that Little Egret, Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Oct-18 05:36 PM GMT

There's certainly some interesting stuff round your way, BB. Yet another mating pair of Wall browns on the forum! I'm beginning to wonder whether this developmental trap is no longer a trap in the warmer parts of southern England. They seem to be quite numerous right now.

Love the images of the Goldfinches too, especially the first with the hovering individual at the top. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Oct-18 04:51 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, the Goldfinch shots are some of my hit and hope shots, 9 times out of 10 they're deleted before they make it on my computer but occasionally some pass my judgement unscathed 😊

Thanks **Goldie**, yup the sun is still shining on us down here and this week looks like some places are going to be mid twenties again 😊

Thanks **David**. The recent run of warm autumns and late winters seem to have encouraged strong third broods of Walls along the south coast but it will only take a blip one year with a cold autumn to knock them for six. At the end of the day they can only respond to what the weather hands them, and the current weather pattern seems to encourage a successful third brood, but who knows what will happen over the next few years 🤔

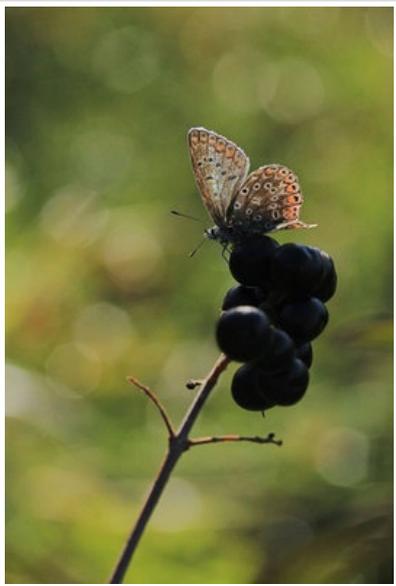
7th October, Sussex yet again part 1

After the biblical rains on Saturday (possibly a slight over exaggeration) I was once again tempted down into Sussex to see what had survived. Transport options were limited with a combination of Sunday service and works taking place and the only option left was a 9am arrival at Shoreham, somewhat early for most species but a few reasonably fresh Specklies were making an early start to the day's activities.



Once on the hillside of Mill Hill I made a beeline for the sheltered bottom corner which would hopefully offer plenty of protecting from the chilly northerly that was blowing today. Indeed it did and it helped significantly with the local temperature. It would seem I arrived just in time to catch the first few butterflies waking up. Small Copper and Common Blue numbers slowly picking up as the morning progressed.





Next to wake up were the Brown's with Meadow and Wall both giving me the slip. The Wall in particular lead me a merry dance, a nice fresh female too. With 5 species already seen I moved up to the top to see if anything was breakfasting on the now famous clump of Hemp Agrimony. It was clearly too early up here though, not being as sheltered as lower down, the patch of flowers were falling victim to the chilly breeze. Still I had plenty of time to kill so I wandered the shrubby, sheltered paths, noting the occasional Common Blue and Small Heath.

Eventually I disturbed a sleepy Red Admiral which floated around and settled frequently, clearly still not fully charged. One thing that struck me with this relaxed pose in the grass is just how well the pattern works at distracting the eye. The red bands form a circle, drawing your eyes away from the vulnerable body which vanishes within the uniform central brownness and towards the bright white spots at the wing tips, so clever.



Looking for basking Cloudies along the top path I found a particularly striking female Common Blue, even in flight she looked unusual with an almost white rim to her hind wing.



She eventually gave me the slip but almost immediately my eye's caught sight of a yellow shark fin poking out of the short turf up ahead. It turned out to be another male (I've still not seen a female Cloudie this year). He was still warming up and settled frequently, never perfectly but a few more snaps to add to the years collection.



Back in the bottom corner Blues ruled the roost, some of them still looking quite fresh.

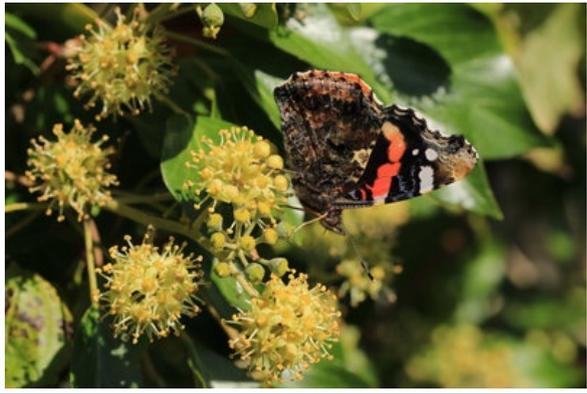


One final wander back up the top found the Hemp Agrimony still bereft of butterflies, just a single Red Admiral who scarped quickly at my approach. Presumably its compatriots had left for warmer climes, and who can blame them after the previous days effort weather-wise! Across the site Small Heath had now become rather numerous and there reasonable numbers of Meadow Browns, all females as far as I could tell.

I suspected there was still time for things to liven up more before the day ended, but I wanted to see if I could find any of the Cloudies Trevor had seen on Friday down at Southwick, so I attempted to leave Mill Hill. I say attempted because I kept getting distracted. Firstly I found a lovely Painted Lady, who simply demanded my attention, closely followed by a Small White and then a Comma buzzed me behind the bottom car park. If my maths is correct that makes 11 species (not ten as I stated in Katrina's PD last night).



My usual route around the horse field on the south side of the bypass also held distractions in the form of several fresh Red Admirals enjoying the masses of Ivy found here.



Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Oct-18 05:33 PM GMT

7th October, Sussex yet again part 2

I deliberately didn't mention the Wall much in the first part since it does seem to be the butterfly of the moment so like Millerd, I'm giving it a post of its own. I did spend a fair amount of time chasing them once things started going although oddly, I only came across females. I had about half a dozen encounters and managed to photograph three of them, it's impossible to say whether the ones that got away were different to the ones captured though.

The first one was a rather worn individual taking breakfast in the lower corner.

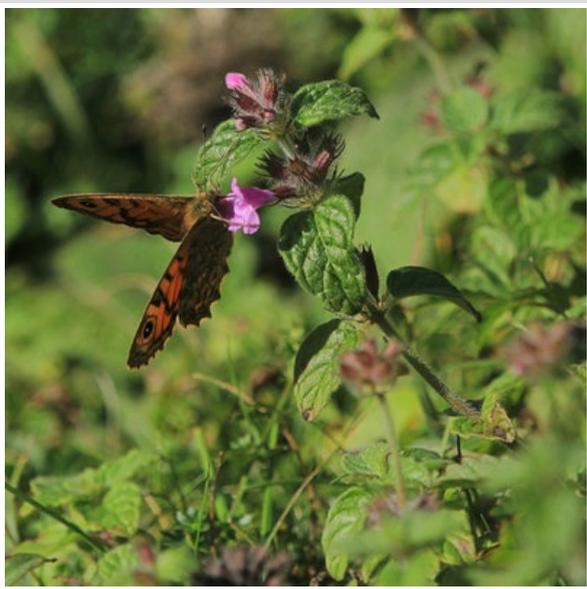




Next up was a fresher one whom I met halfway along the lower path.



The final and best looking one was up the top and was one of the distractions that delayed my departure. She was a good poser, although she did cause me to tentatively descend the slope near the steps a bit.





Based on the last ones condition it looks like the they are still emerging here.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-Oct-18 06:52 PM GMT

Mill Hill continues to support a great range of species – you saw a Comma too, which I missed on Friday. 😊 There do still seem to be Walls emerging, and one or two others as well like the second Copper. You also got closer to the Cloudies... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 08-Oct-18 07:43 PM GMT

Nice selection of Wall Brown photos Bugboy and that is a beautiful female Small Copper with the reduced spots in the previous report 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 08-Oct-18 07:57 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave** and **Neil**, it's amazing we can still see such a range of species so late. When I was a kid it was pretty much all over by September bar the occasional adult hibernator 😊

7th October, Sussex yet again part 3

For the final part of the day I went down to the aforementioned Southwick looking for more Clouded Yellows, hoping Trevor's *helice* was still around, but in the hour or so I was there I didn't see any sign of that particular species, perhaps the Torrential rain the previous day scared them all south. Indeed there was very little going on. For much of the time I just had a single Small White and a handful of Common Blues keeping me company. A couple of Red Admirals showed up, one of whom settled and I saw my first Small Coppers for this site, one old and one rather fresh. No target species but I did make the best out of what was around and given we are approaching the second week of October, still a pretty good showing 😊!







Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 08-Oct-18 08:04 PM GMT

A very nice female Common Blue there, and the Small Copper looks fresh too. 😊 Those Red Admirals were probably just pausing and brushing up their French before setting off south... 😊😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 09-Oct-18 10:45 PM GMT

"it's amazing we can still see such a range of species so late. When I was a kid it was pretty much all over by September" I know what you mean Bugboy, I remember when I was a kid I went birding to Brownsea Island and the whole party were surprised to see a Red Admiral in October 😊 A great array, that Common Blue is lush but the one that stood out most was the Wall from a post back – the 'fresher one half way along the path' – it's fore wings look huge in comparison to its hind wings 😊😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 10-Oct-18 12:00 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

..The recent run of warm autumns and late winters seem to have encouraged strong third broods of Walls along the south coast but it will only take a blip one year with a cold autumn to knock them for six. At the end of the day they can only respond to what the weather hands them, and the current weather pattern seems to encourage a successful third brood, but who knows what will happen over the next few year..

Absolutely, BB. The weather pattern has become SO consistent at this time of year you wonder whether this is the reason why the instinct kicked in to begin with.

You're right, an awful year would do great damage, but somehow I struggle to imagine that happening.

When I was a kid we expected temperatures of 12 or 13 degrees in mid-October. For quite some years now they have been in the range of 15 to 20 degrees and this has regularly persisted into the first week of November.

I guess it'll take another decade or so before we can judge whether it has had a long term positive effect.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 10-Oct-18 06:00 PM GMT

Thanks guys, and there's still butterflies to be seen out there!

9th October, Essex Cloudies

For a change of scenery on my half day I hopped on a train down to Hadleigh Country Park and Two Tree Island for the afternoon. Since it's a mere stones throw from Canvey Island where Essexbuzzard had recently found some Clouded Yellows, I hoped I'd come across some here too. Two Tree Island was more birds than butterflies. To be fair I don't think there's much management to the land (it would certainly benefit from some cutting or grazing), it looks like most of the management goes into encouraging the waders.

The tide was in when I arrived but the large winter flocks of waders have yet to arrive. Nevertheless there were reasonable numbers of Redshank, Ringed Plover, Lapwing and Dunlin along with a sprinkling of Grey Plovers with various others voicing their presence out of sight.



A snipe making a run for cover



Ringed Plover

Butterfly wise I had just one probable Red Admiral flying south across the estuary, a Small White flyby, a Specklie and a distant sighting of a white which may have been a *helice* Cloudie.

On the way back to have a look around the country park I stopped to watch some Black-headed Gulls enjoying an afternoon bath, and they really were enjoying themselves!



At the Country park I quickly located a frisky Cloudie, or rather he located me and promptly vanished without so much a bye-you-leave. A common Blue also made a brief appearance but he was as equally as uncooperative.

A wander along the main path which faces due south ended up giving me several Cloudie flybys. How many I was seeing I have no idea, I only saw two at any one time but it was a Migrant Hawker Dragonfly which gave me the first chance for a snap, looking very photogenic and autumnal in amongst all the red berries and aging leaves.



It was shortly after him that a Cloudie finally decided to refuel and gave me the chance to get close. He wasn't in the best condition, looking like he'd picked a fight with a bramble thicket.





As time wore on others became hungry or began looking for roosting spots, paying particular attention to trees with yellowing leaves, mostly still teasing me but one fresher male allowed for some nice backlit shots.



The final species for the day was a single tatty Small Copper who payed me a brief visit, a bit too frisky for a photo, but leaving me with a total of 6 species for the afternoon 😊.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 10-Oct-18 09:18 PM GMT

Some decent Clouded Yellows, Buggy. That area is another one that traditionally seems to "trap" incoming migrants that then go on to breed. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 10-Oct-18 10:53 PM GMT

I'm glad Essex was successful for you, buggy. If it's warm, I always find early and late in the day most profitable for taking Photos of Clouded Yellows, which are not always the cooperative of butterflies, especially the males.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 11-Oct-18 01:50 PM GMT

Great efforts with the Clouded upper wing shots Buggy. And some lush lookers from Shoreham. 😊
I like the birds as well, particularly the Gold Finches. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-18 08:29 PM GMT

Cracking Cloudy shots Bugboy – the back-lit ones in particular 😊👍 The running Snipe looks a bit comical with it's over-sized bill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 11-Oct-18 09:52 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments guys 😊. I've always thought Snipes to be very comical looking birds no matter what they are doing **Wurzel**, but I do think they would suit a Benny Hill tune when running 😊

10th October, and still the butterflies keep coming.

Deep into October and the best day of the week weather wise, for once, fell on my day off. Rather than going to Mill Hill or Southwick again I decided to browse Newhaven Tidemills and also do a recce of a nearby nature reserve I've never been on.

As befits a day in the middle of October, things started off rather slowly and I spent the first hour birdwatching until butterfly life began to appear. A small White got me off the mark and then very fresh examples of Wall and Cloudie gave me the slip. They appeared in front of me out of nowhere, had a brief skirmish and proceeded to fly off in opposite directions, leaving me dithering as to which one to follow and losing sight of both. It was a Common Blue I stumbled across who gave me my first butterfly shots of the day.



The Wall, a male and as predictable as the tide, turned up in the same spot after a short circuit of the area. I only managed some long range shots though, flighty as ever and my long autumn shadow made it impossible to sneak up on him, but still close enough to conclude they are still emerging here



Doing a couple of circuits of the site I had a few Red Admiral flybys, and the occasional Cloudie patrolling. I suspected there were no more than two today.

The next species willing to sit was a fresh out the box Red Admiral, no more than a few hours old and clearly still practicing this new flying malarkey it had suddenly developed.



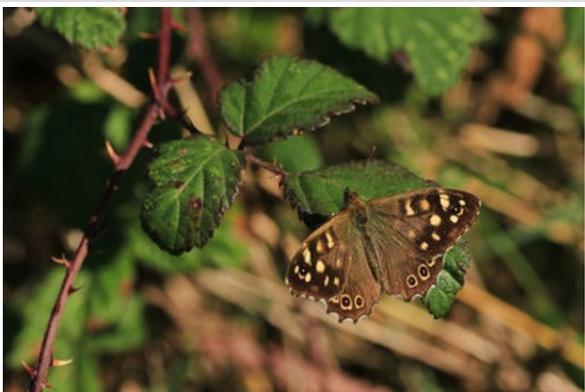
Late morning and I was preparing to leave when I got distracted by another Common Blue. He wouldn't sit still but then the biggest surprise of the day appeared in the form of a reasonably well conditioned Brown Argus, taking me to six species. He was the first of this species I've seen here, although to be fair I only really come here late in the season.



After a few snaps he got in a scuff with a tatty old Small Copper who seemed to appear simply to have a quick fight and then vanish, little thug! Who'd have thought I'd be seeing a Small Copper/Brown Argus fight in the middle of October! Species eight turned up shortly after in the form of a decrepit Small Heath, just about clinging on to life.



then, just as I was leaving, species number nine dropped by to bid me farewell.



The next site was Castle Hill Nature Reserve near the fort on the other side of Newhaven Harbour. I'd been browsing the south coast on Google maps a few nights previously, looking for little pockets of green along the south coast within easy reach that might be worth investigating, and this one seemed like an obvious choice. With its rather exposed aspect with a southerly breeze blowing there was precious little for me to train my camera on as I wandered around the scrubby grassland and hedgerows. Nevertheless I did wrack up five species, Red Admiral, Small Copper, Speckled Wood, a Wall and the most numerous species, Small White. The views wasn't too bad though



I still had a bit of time on my hands so I returned to Tidemills for another hour, locating what was probably the same Wall as in the morning as well as fleeting glances of 2 or 3 others. The Argus was still in the same spot, keeping the Common Blue company and I saw 2 Cloudies at the same time, confirming what I'd suspected that morning.



And just to prove it's always worth giving a White a second glance, when this one settled it turned out to be a Green-veined, giving me a double figure tally for the day. Like the earlier Red Admiral she looked very fresh indeed.



The birds were also rather well behaved today!



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 11-Oct-18 10:08 PM GMT

That fort area looks as if it might be worth another visit at different time of year, Buggy. All these uncultivated coastal spots seem to have something interesting. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-18 10:20 PM GMT

Funnily enough Bugboy when I saw it that was the tune that went through my head 😊 That's a great haul for October 🤗🍷 - strange to still be seeing Small Heath even if it does look on it's last tarsi 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 14-Oct-18 11:38 PM GMT

Fantastic couple of trips out you've had lately, BB. The Clouded Yellows and Wall Browns are nice, as is the scenery, but that Brown Argus is the pick, especially given the time of year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 15-Oct-18 05:54 AM GMT

Those Wall Browns look nice and fresh, I found a brand new male last week. At this rate we'll be into a fourth brood. Good to see you getting value from your 'Southern' tickets.

Keep well,
Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 17-Oct-18 09:20 PM GMT

Definitely worth a visit during peak flight times Dave, I think I only explored a small corner of it too 😊

It's kinda weird seeing any butterfly so late in the year Wurzel 😊, I'm still in shorts and t-shirt when out and about and it's fast approaching November!

Thanks David but he wasn't as fresh as the one seen at Mill Hill on the same day 😊!

Lets hope they don't try and fit in a 4th brood Trevor, that will kick start the developmental trap all over again! Either that or we'll be chasing Walls at Christmas 😊

17th October, more Cloudies

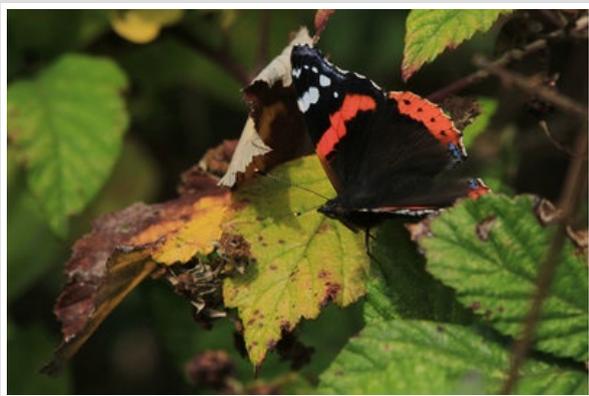
Wednesday had been looking good since the weekend and I'd pencilled in a trip down south to further extend my season. Seeing Dave Cook's report on the Sussex BC website the night before buoyed me even, and checking the forecast once more as I left the London flat as the sun was rising things looked good, warm with sunny spells, perfect conditions. So it was with much dismay and annoyance that I arrived at Southwick under grey sky and an updated forecast with predicted cloud all day 😊!

It looked like I was in for a hard slog to make the trip worth while and in the first hour all I found was a very fresh Common Blue and a Trevor who was similarly disappointed by the conditions.



The pair of us mooched along the waterfront, looking despondently at the bright sky just a mile or two offshore. You know you're clutching at straws when you get excited about a Small White, no offence to any Small Whites out there of course. At one point we found a very active Painted Lady, tearing around the place like a mad thing. It did settle briefly on some Privet blossom but not long enough and it was last seen shooting south across to the power station and presumably onwards to France.

Gradually things looked to be improving though, and by 11 the cloud front had retreated enough to allow hazy sun to warm the ground. The butterflies responded in kind as it retreated even further until we were at last bathed in warm sun. A very fresh Red Admiral posed well and the snoozing Common Blue was now very active.







Whites fluttered here and there but the day really belonged to the Cloudies, at least five and yet again all males. In my attempt to get some more open winged shots I ended the session with over 900 images, mostly all very similar to each other and with a good selection of empty flower heads in amongst them. I still need to practice a bit more with this upper side malarkey but it looks like there is at least a weeks' worth of decent weather left to play with... that is if the forecasts are to be believed.





Providing a bit of comedic relief was this Little egret looking a little perturbed & annoyed by the presence of a Cormorant who really didn't seem to care he was getting evils from his perch mate.



I left shortly after 1 when the cloud returned and the butterflies all but vanished. It's kind of ironic that a butterfly called a Clouded Yellow seems to vanish at the first sign of cloud 😞😞.

Good to bump into you again Trevor and I'm glad your brought the sun with you! 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 17-Oct-18 10:16 PM GMT

On arrival we both thought we had wasted our time. But as it turned out the day was one of the better ones in recent weeks. At least you managed a partial Cloudy upperside, which is nice and sharp.

Good to meet you again, on what turned out to be a great day.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Oct-18 11:04 PM GMT

That's a pretty good haul Bugboy and cracking open wing Cloudy shots 😊🌤️ I share your frustration with the weather forecasting as it invariably changes at the last minute and generally to the worse case scenario 😞😞 You'd think by now with all this A.I. they should have this sorted 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 17-Oct-18 11:05 PM GMT

Brilliant day by the look of it, Buggy – great Cloudy shots. 😊 I'd have joined you if I hadn't been discouraged by the grey, very wet and dismal conditions here that persisted for most of the day... 😞

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 17-Oct-18 11:56 PM GMT

I was also considering it, could have been a UKB reunion! But I too was discouraged by the weather. And the weather forecast.

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 18-Oct-18 09:19 AM GMT

Patience pays off, BB! Living by the coast, I know full well the frustration experienced when bathed in cloud with blue sky less than a mile offshore!

I'm delighted you got your Cloudies and well done with the egret/cormorant images – made me chuckle. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

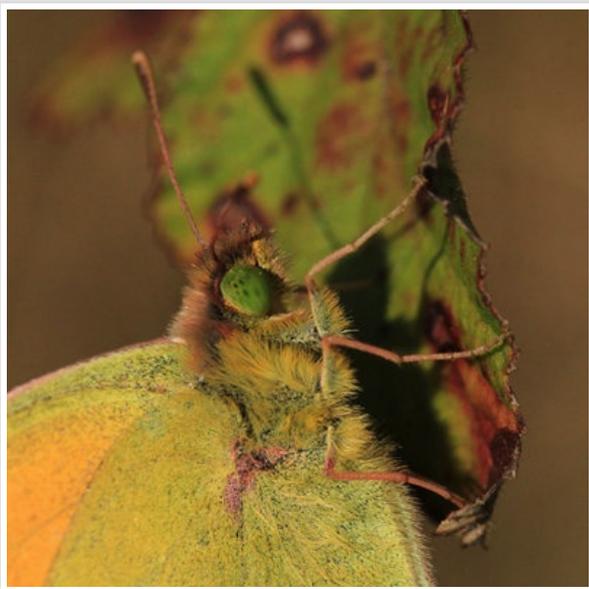
by bugboy, 21-Oct-18 08:01 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments, from the looks of it Southwick was the only place with some sun last Wednesday!

19th October, the Cloudie odyssey continues (Part 1)

What was originally meant to be just a few hours in the morning chasing Cloudies until they warmed up down in Essex again, ended up being an all-day event, I think this chasing Clouded Yellows may have become a bit of an obsession this year... 😊

A bright sunny morning with a distinct nip to the air greeted me and it wasn't long before I found the first of my targets for the day. As has become the norm for me this year, it was a male, and still being rather cool he allowed much photography, indeed he could possibly become the single most photographed subject of the year as I tried again and again to capture the upperside. He never flew very far and I followed him for over half an hour along the entire length of the path and halfway back again. When I finally left him I checked my camera to find nearly 400 images..... whoever invented digital photography deserves a knighthood! 99% of these images were consigned to the bin on account of being identical or off empty leaves and patches of bare path etc but managed enough to be content with.... 😊





After him I went for a wander in patches of grassland and hedgerow that in season would be alive with butterflies. Today I found a single Speckled Wood, quite a fresh Common Blue and a fungi that perhaps someone can ID for me?



Next up was a Red Admiral who spent most its time taking up moisture from the damp ground where the sun had yet to clear the hedge.



Returning to the path, things had warmed up considerably and there was now more than one Cloudie around and looking far more active than earlier. I focused on one who looked very fresh. It stayed too far ahead to obtain anything more than a distant shot but when it doubled back and flew close past me I noticed blotches on the wing margin, Hallelujah! a female at last. Through dogged persistence I managed to obtain evidence too!



Rather than going home straight away as I had planned though, I decided to have a wander over on Two Tree Island instead, stopping to photograph a saucy Cloudie who was flashing me some upperside as he basked, another Common Blue and a ridiculously fresh female Small White.



Unbeknownst at the time, I had a nice surprise waiting in my camera from the earlier session with the first Cloudie.



Think I cracked it 😊😄!

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 21-Oct-18 08:18 PM GMT

You definitely cracked it with that last shot.
It's a great shame that they never display their beautiful upper side when at rest or nectaring. That's nature, but very frustrating.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 21-Oct-18 08:39 PM GMT

That's a great final shot, Buggy - well worth the patience and the effort of going through the myriads of near-identical photos. The exact moment before take-off. 😊 As Trevor says, why can't they open up and bask that way like sensible species? 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by essexbuzzard, 21-Oct-18 10:55 PM GMT

I think you have cracked it! I'm glad your visit to Essex, along with pure determination, paid off. Certainly better than any open wing CY I've ever taken!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 21-Oct-18 10:57 PM GMT

That is a cracking last shot - kudos to you Bugboy 🍷🍷😊 That's the thing about butterflying is an underrated sport, I think we should push for Cloudy Chasing to be recognised in time for Tokoyo 2020 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 21-Oct-18 11:31 PM GMT

Great series of images, BB, and as others have said, that last shot is something we've all practiced but have yet to achieve the clarity you have managed. Well done.

Oddly enough, I like the part open wing image of the female just as much.

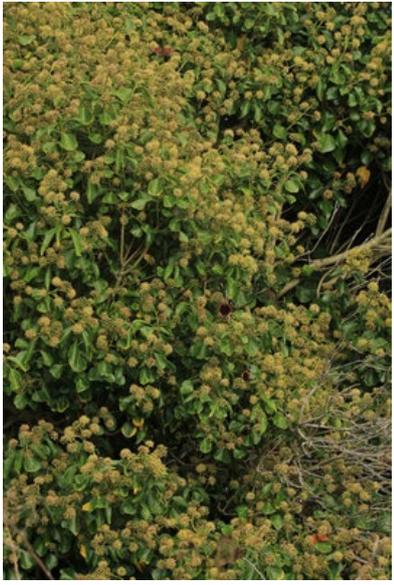
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 22-Oct-18 10:07 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments 😊. Needless to say I'm pretty chuffed with that image even if it was almost all down to pure luck!

19th October, the Cloudie odyssey continues (Part 2)

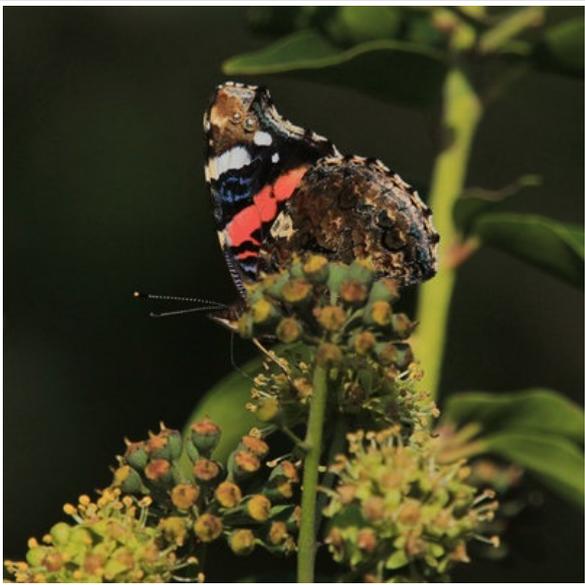
Two Tree Island is split in two halves by a road running down the center. The western half is mostly rough grassland with patchy scrub and at the far end has a saline lagoon where lots of waders sit out high tide. Today though, high tide was at 7am and 9pm so there was little point going there. Instead I wandered around the eastern half which is mostly covered in dense scrub and small trees. Amongst all the scrub is a significant amount of Ivy and on one sunlit patch I found bit of a feeding frenzy consisting of three Red Admiral, two Comma and a rather worn looking Peacock.



Spot the butterflies!



Mostly they stayed up high but occasionally one would descend to allow closer images. I spent nearly an hour with these guys, well you have to make the most of these last days of the butterfly season!





Whilst watching them I was briefly distracted when a small flock of Little Egret literally tumbled from the sky, quite a sight!



On the way back to the mainland and a final wander along Hadleigh Country Park I found another female Cloudie, this one in egg laying mode. She was very flighty so no closeups of her but here's one of her eggs, not a brilliant image since it was on a steep slope of one of the sea defences but another tick for my 'egg list'.



An egg being laid



Back in the Country Park the Cloudies were still active and so was the final species for the day, a rather tatty looking Brown Argus.





With the sun started to descend I followed one of the Cloudies as it seemed to be looking for a roosting spot, investigating any patch of foliage that had yellowing leaves until it found a spot he liked the look of. It was here that the colour scheme came into it's own from both sides and answers the question of why they have such a brightly coloured upperside, it's so they can look like a dead leaf from both sides... well that's what I'm concluding from these images anyway!

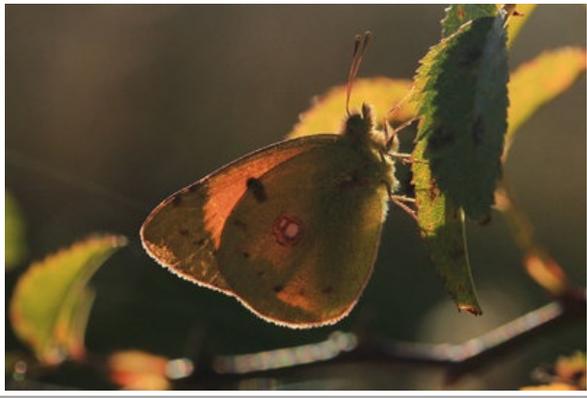


Where's Cloudie?



Where's Cloudie again?





An excellent day out once again 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 23-Oct-18 08:11 AM GMT

Excellent Cloudie shots Bugboy, well done. 🍷 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 23-Oct-18 08:01 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Bugboy 😊 Great shots of the Cloudy – really does show the wonderful camouflage that they possess 😊 Hopefully the butterflies will make it through the arctic blast due this weekend 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 23-Oct-18 08:57 PM GMT

Thanks, **Andrew** and **Wurzel**. I'm making the absolute most of these last days of 'summer'. They can't last much longer surely, the sun is barely in the sky long enough now!

20th October, More from Sussex (part 1)

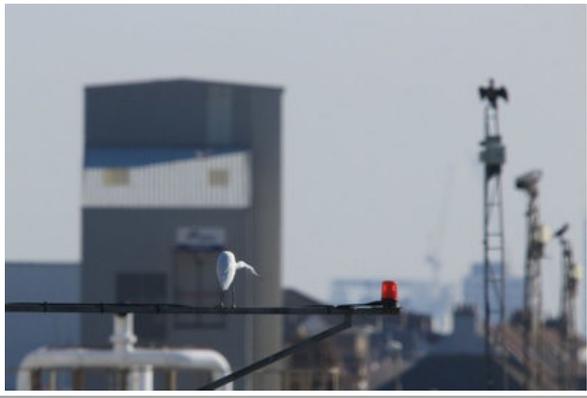
Saturday came and another unseasonably warm day took me back to the south coast once more. I would say my last long day out butterflying of the year but I always say that and it never is!

Reading Millerds report the night before about another fresh emergence of Cloudies down Southwick way I stopped of there first in the hope of getting some more females but his females had already moved on. I suspect they move on so quickly to avoid inbreeding since every wave of emergent's are likely to be siblings. I wouldn't be surprised if female Cloudies reject males for the first 24 hours? Anyway just four males were present this morning and a smattering of other species, singletons of Small White and Red Admiral plus three or four male Common Blues, one still in pretty good nick.

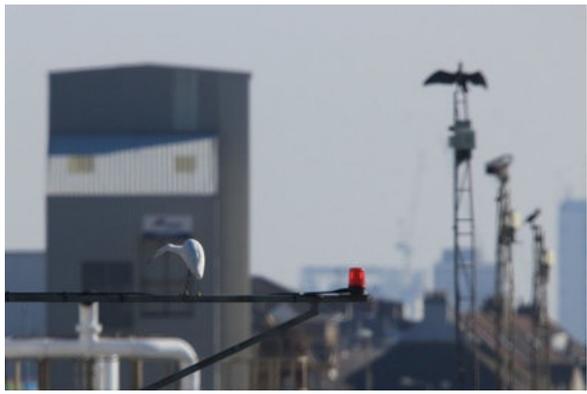




Like my last visit, the resident Little Egret was on call to once more provide some comedy relief. I watched him fly up onto his perch where he checked to make sure he had the place to himself, first to the right,

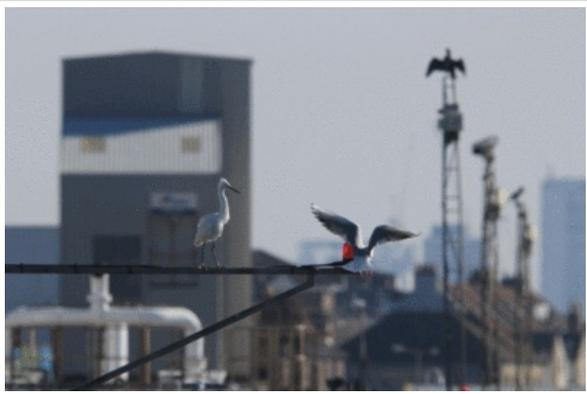


then the left.

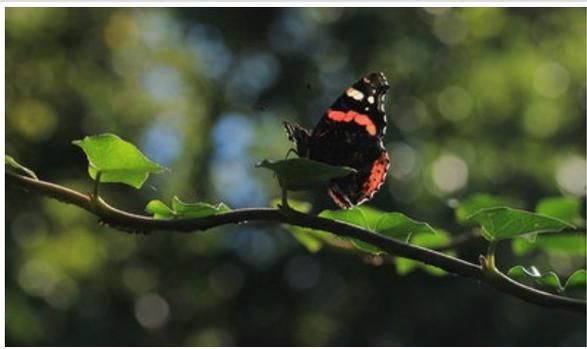


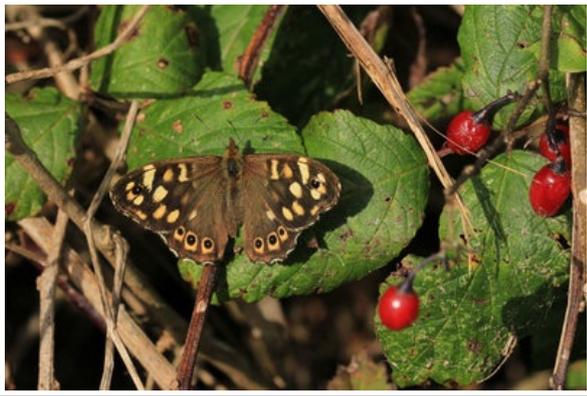
I don't think he was aware of his nemesis the Cormorant overlooking him like a prehistoric Pteradactyl.

Then a Black-headed Gull flew up to share the perch but very quickly thought better of it. Mr Egret, or Bob as he is now called, was not impressed! The Cormorant took notes from onfar!



Next off up to Mill Hill again. My usual detour around the horse fields proving rather fruitful, giving me some Speckled Wood, Red Admiral and one of the second brood Peacocks who all struck some good poses. I was particularly taken by the tatty old Specklie who seemed to refract the light like a rainbow through his faded wings!







More to come...

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 23-Oct-18 09:49 PM GMT

Another great set of shots, Buggy. I may have to have another trip to Bob the Egret's patch soon. That is a very fresh-looking Speckled Wood - I've not seen one for a while. Looking forward to what the "more" is as well... 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 23-Oct-18 11:56 PM GMT

A fine selection of stunning butterflies in your recent posts, Bugboy 😊 not bad for late October 😊😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 24-Oct-18 07:56 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave & Max**. That Specklie wasn't the only surprisingly fresh butterfly as you can see below 😊

20th October, More from Sussex (part 2)

A female Cloudie greeted me on the lower slope of Mill Hill and proceeded to taunt me as I walked along the lower path. Males as usual were also present.



At least I got her butt in focus!



The bottom corner was still acting as a butterfly magnet for what was still flying. A handful of Common Blues and Male Cloudies jostled for my attention, but that was taken by others this time. A very fresh female Brown Argus and some Meadow Browns who couldn't be more than a few days old, including a mating pair. I wonder if these are just very late developing insects that would normally have perished in the first frosts or genuine second brood?



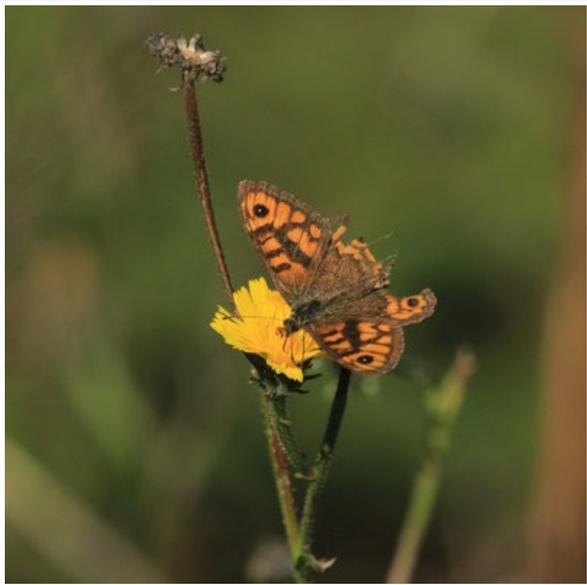


I kept this record shot on account it shows the male having a double pupiled eye spot. Something I've only seen in females before.
Next it was time to see if the Hemp Agrimony had any activity. Just one occupant but far from a disappointment. She looked so vibrant in the autumn sun I nearly put my sunglasses on just to look at her! Nearby a nice female Common Blue soaked up some of the unseasonably warm rays and then a Peacock replaced the Comma on the Agrimony.





Male Walls were loitering around the hedges and scrub near the top car park, mostly in various states of disrepair, although there was one very fresh one who gave me the slip. In total probably half a dozen were present along the top and lower ridge along with more Common Blues.





One final species was waiting for me back in the bottom corner, a single Small Heath gave me 11 species for the day. I wonder when this season will actually end 🤔

I finished the day chasing more Cloudies and capturing a hunting Kestrel, yet another wonderful escape from London 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 24-Oct-18 08:38 PM GMT

More splendid Cloudy shots, Buggy – and a smashing new Brown Argus as well. 😊 As you know I have often pondered the length of the Meadow Brown season and how it can only be one extended brood. After all, the first ones emerged five months ago now... 😊 Assuming the eggs laid by that mated female survive, will the caterpillars really take the entire summer to mature and pupate?

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-18 08:50 PM GMT

More cracking open wing Cloudy shots Bugboy 🤔👍 And that fresh Brown Argus is a very nice late find 🤔👍 I wonder if that really is a mating pair or whether the male is transferring nutrients as Essex suggested with his late MBs in cop? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 25-Oct-18 09:08 PM GMT

Thanks **Dave**, It's definitely a puzzle though 😊

Thanks **Wurzel**, given the age of both Meadow Browns I think we can be pretty sure it was a genuine mating going on 😊

21st October, Bookham

I ended my 3 day weekend with an afternoon wander around somewhere I hadn't been for a while. After the major cutting back I'd seen at my last visit I wasn't expecting much but I just about came away with three species. First off, a female Brimstone wandered past without stopping but not long after her I caught sight of the familiar coppery glint I was hoping to find.



There were a few around of both sexes, centred around the last remaining patch of Devi's-bit Scabious that had escaped the mowing. They were all showing their age but good to find them still active. Some of the females had noticeably reduced spotting.





At the Copper nursery all was quiet and many of the eggs had hatched. I couldn't find any larvae although the signs of feeding activity were clear and very obvious.



The woodland was rather barren, not even an old Speckle but I did have a Red Admiral flyby. A quick check of Banks Common also found it to be similarly barren but with the addition of a shiny new fence line, perhaps with a plan to graze, something which could immensely improve this habitat if done properly.



Of course no visit at this time of year is complete with a quick Hairstreak egg hunt, I do love these tiny marvels of nature 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 25-Oct-18 09:55 PM GMT

Fabulous stuff, BB. You're ekeing out every moment of this productive year. Those egrets are wonderful and right now, I'd pay money to see half a dozen vanessids nectaring on ivy flowers - this group has practically disappeared from my area!

PS - love the moving image of the cormorant/egret/gull as well as the Cloudie.

Surprised your grass is still brown. Ours in south Wales reverted to a lush green in early September!!

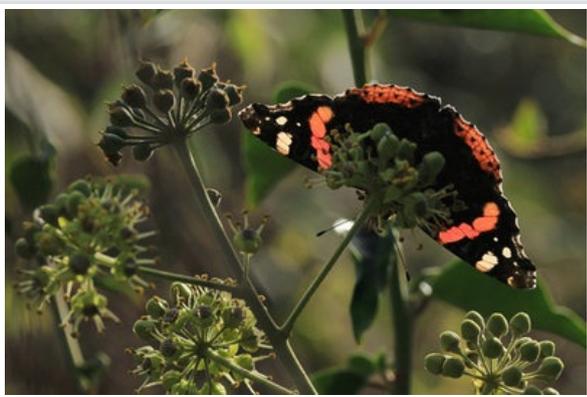
Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 26-Oct-18 06:45 PM GMT

Thanks **David**, yes I'm doing my best 😊. I think that field is all brown as it hasn't been grazed or cut in any way (other than by the resident Roe Deer) until they cut that strip along the edge to put the new fence in. There's probably green shoots low down but all out of site. Most my other sites are much greener now.

23rd October, Essex

After the results from my last Essex trip I thought I'd pop down there again for a few hours on my half day. Unfortunately cloud cover scuppered any chance of a double figure tally. Nevertheless when the sun did shine on the Ivy the Red Admirals came out to play again. Only one came low enough but she was a beauty!





As I was leaving a Comma wooshed past, blown by the stiff breeze, and attempted to land on the bramble hedge. This attempt failed and it instead ended up within the undergrowth. I last saw it fluttering around in there, presumably thinking "Well I'm here now, I might as well go to bed!"

The sun did appear for a longer session later on but it was far too late to wake anything up so I ended the day with just four butterflies of two species..... Sussex is spoiling me!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-18 03:07 PM GMT

She is a cracking looking Admiral Bugboy 😊 Will this be it for the season or will some sun still tempt the butterflies out next week? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 27-Oct-18 10:25 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, she was a well behaved beaut! This cold spell doesn't look like it will last too long, back to double figure highs next week down there although a fair bit of rain is predicted. I reckon if there's enough sun though there will be a chance of some more sightings if anyones out and about.

24th October Part 1, the Cloudie upper side mothership!

Once more down to the regular Sussex hotspot to eek out the season for one more day, and what a glorious day it was. It started off a little grey but once it cleared up the temperatures soared.

I thought the early cloud was going to scupper the day with just singletons of Small White, Clouded Yellow and Common Blue found, all down at the far end of the site. The White did look quite nice halfheartedly basking on some Old Mans Beard/Travellers Joy/whatever common name you know our native Wild Clematis by.



As the Cloud began to break the Cloudie awoke and a second one appeared along with Katrina.



It was still a while before things really began to kick off though. My first *helice* of the season was seen by us being harassed by one of the patrolling males. He'd moved on by the time we got close enough for any images and found she had lead an eventful life, certainly closer to the end of her life than the start 😊.



With the sun now fully out we made our way back to the grassy slope at the centre of the site where we found several more Cloudies and after a while a Trevor. My attention was drawn to one of a couple of fresh females but I failed to get the upper side I was after, just the usual couple of hundred identical closed winged ones!

Katrina had wandered off a couple of times to where the Everlasting Pea grows in the hope of finding a long-tailed Blue a few times (coming up blank) so thought I'd give it a go. No luck on that front but I did disturb another, noticeably smaller, female Cloudie and so ensued yet more failed attempts at a nice sharp female upper side. She lead me a merry dance and seemed to be looking to lay, eventually ending up back at the slope and Katrina & Trevor, where she finally found some suitable foodplants, and after a few eggs, an eager male found her.



This was what I was hoping for and it was time to glue my finger to the shutter button once again. It was interesting to watch the courtship, which wasn't the one sided affair I'd expected. The female made no effort to escape, indeed she was harassing the male as much as he harassed her and it was only upon landing after several minutes of flight that the classic rejection pose was adopted. Anyway, I was very happy with what I found on my camera later in the day.







More surprises yet to come... 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-18 11:41 PM GMT

An even more cracking set of upper side images Bugboy but the Mr Green has to go to the Helice, something I've still not managed to see 🤔👀👀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 28-Oct-18 06:24 PM GMT

Some great in flight photos. Was lovely to see you and Trevor. Looking forward to part 2

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 28-Oct-18 07:29 PM GMT

You're certainly perfecting those in-flight shots, BB. What are you going to do with yourself now that the weather has turned cold, I wonder?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 28-Oct-18 08:09 PM GMT

Thanks **Wurzel**, she was very much past her best. You'll find one soon, especially if you keep having nice summer holidays on the continent like this years effort in France 😊

Thanks **Katrina**, and thanks again for the lift. Here's part 2 😊

Thanks **David**. These last posts could very well be it for the season now winter has arrived right on queue with the clocks changing! It had to happen at some point 😊 Fingers crossed for a good few months of cold weather to set 2019 of to a good start 😊. I'm sure I'll find something to point my camera at in the meantime 😊

24th October Part 2, the last butterflies of the year?

Finally Katrina and I got our fill of various Clouded Yellow stages, and with no sign of 'Bob' the antisocial comedy Egret for further entertainment, we decided to move on to Mill Hill. Trevor had wandered off but we tried to get his attention, waving wildly in his direction until he appeared behind us 🤪. We don't know who we were inadvertently waving at but they were walking away from us, so any awkward moments were thankfully avoided 😊.

Katrina drove us to the top car park. On the way to the Hemp Agrimony we found a nice female Common Blue who, after a period of basking, started looking for somewhere to lay.



The Agrimony had mostly gone over now but still enough to tempt any passing nymphalid should it need a quick pit stop. Today though, there were no such butterflies so we moved onto the ever reliable bottom corner. Here we found the usual selection of suspects we have come to expect in this tiny corner of Sussex. Cloudies patrolled, only stopping very briefly to feed here and there, but attention was immediately drawn to a glittering Copper, flitting around.



There were quite a few other butterflies flitting around making it seem a lot earlier in the season than the end of October. You could be forgiven for presuming the next few photo's were taken in mid June!





A single Brown Argus added to the slowly growing species list for the day.



A few Walls were also active but unapproachable in the bright sun and the odd Speckled Wood was seen Lurking in the shadier paths. Katrina had left earlier so I wandered around the Horse fields on my return to the train station, finding a few Red Admirals, one of whom had had a very close call with something rather unfriendly!



I ended the day with nine species and if these were the last butterflies I was going to see this year, then I couldn't have asked for a better send off from a fantastic season 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 28-Oct-18 09:14 PM GMT

A very good way to close off the season (if it turns out to be the end of course... 😊). A shame I didn't get down there again.

That Red Admiral with the missing chunk of its wing is amazing – it still manages to hold what's left in perfect symmetry with the other wing.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 28-Oct-18 09:51 PM GMT

An excellent way to finish the season, with some really fresh looking butterflies 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 29-Oct-18 10:24 AM GMT

Bob the Egret did make an appearance on Thursday, but played hard to get. Not a bad haul from Mill Hill !.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-18 05:18 PM GMT

A great haul from the last trip Bugboy 😊🇬🇧 I'm amazed that that Red Admirals was able to hold it's wing in such a fashion – you'd think that with that much missing the trailing edge would be a bit floppy but it looks as rigid as always 🤔😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 31-Oct-18 12:17 AM GMT

Amazed that the Red Admiral could still fly, BB.

Things are going to get tricky now, what with this cooler weather descending upon us.

I reckon birds will outnumber butterflies on the 'sightings' pages from now on.

Hopefully you and a handful of others will be able to buck the trend?

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Oct-18 08:20 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments 😊. I never witnessed the Red Admiral actually fly but given it was above head height it would seem it's flight wasn't badly effected. The saving grace I think was the stiff leading edge of the wing was narrowly missed by whatever attacked it.

Good to see Bob still looking as miserable and unapproachable as ever Trevor 😊

Of course I never actually said that last report would be my last of the year 😊 ...

31st October, Halloween Butterflies

I didn't really have any specific plans today, and hadn't really been keeping an eye on the forecast, but the blue sky and relative warmth tempted me out to Essex for a few hours in the afternoon. In 3 hours of wandering I came across four butterflies of three species in total. First was a male Cloudie, flying weekly but persistently along the usual path into a stiff easterly. No upper sides were achieved from him today.



Whilst following him I disturbed a Small Copper. No pictures though and the last I saw of it was the glinting wings as it vanished down the path.

Next up was a female Cloudie on the way to Two Tree Island. She was also battling with the breeze but did look like a very fresh emergent.



On Two Tree Island I headed for the flowering Ivy that had been so fruitful on my previous visits, finding it empty, but nearby another fresh emergent was busy looking for moisture on the path.



I would have hung around a bit longer but high cloud put an early end to play. Still, not bad for the last day of October 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 31-Oct-18 08:45 PM GMT

I knew the Cloudies would still be around somewhere... 😊 I'm waiting for a bulletin from Trevor on the situation down in Sussex! 😊😊

Good to see them still, Buggy. 😊

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 31-Oct-18 11:11 PM GMT

That Cloudy is certainly well coloured Bugboy, not just the brightness of the yellow but also the pink fluffy head, I knew a girl in Camden that used to rock that shade 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Paul Harfield, 01-Nov-18 03:29 PM GMT

Hi Bugboy

Like you, I love finding butterflies at this time of year. As the chances of seeing a butterfly diminish by the day each one seems to mean so much more than those seen in the summer. You seem to be have been doing better than most especially with those Clouded Yellows 😊. You have certainly been doing a better job than me at capturing those 'Yellow' moments 📷

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 03-Nov-18 02:37 PM GMT

That's excellent for the last day of October, BB, especially that female Cloudie, who does indeed look very fresh.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Nov-18 10:19 PM GMT

Still flying **Dave**, still flying 😊

Maybe I'm missing a trick then **Wurzel**, all the Cloudies in north London are blending in with the locals 😊

I'm being very persistant with the Cloudies this year **Paul** 😊. Seems to be paying off!

Thanks **David**, off course, 2018 being what it is, it ain't finished yet!

3rd November, Once more unto Sussex!

Another day out on the south coast for another 'final' butterfly trip of the season. A warm sunny day was promised but so was a strong southerly breeze. Both predictions came true so I decided to give Southwick a miss this time, figuring the wind would make a mockery of any photo attempts, and instead made my way to Lancing beach front and a search for **Vince's** Large Whites. First I walked along the edge of the lagoon, hoping it's steep bank would provide a little shelter from the wind. It didn't really and there was no sign of butterfly life, so I crossed the road to look for caterpillars and pupa. 2 fully grown larvae were discovered looking for somewhere to Pupate but I couldn't recognize the wooden pillar where Vince found his pupae. As luck would have it I found my own though!





That's another species where I now have the full set of eggs, larvae, pupae and adult 😊

Satisfied with that result it was off to Mill Hill see if any of Vince's findings from yesterday were still active. On the way a Red Admiral whizzed past me, late for something!

As is often the way at this time of year here, it was a Clouded Yellow who welcomed me to the site, flying low and hunting for what every male butterfly is always after. In the distance I could see a huddle of figures down in the bottom corner which gave me confidence it wasn't a wasted trip. It was Katrina with family and friends and a few Common Blues. Four or five Blues were active here, a couple of the males being freshly minted. I found a single female who did look rather weak, either exhausted from egg laying or nearing the end of her life, I suspect a combination of both.





Along with them at least two Cloudies were active, patrolling males, and a single fresh Meadow Brown. Neither Katrina or I could find any sign of Vince's Brown Argus. The place was alive with Common Darter Dragonflies though, perhaps they've succumbed to their hungry jaws?





A wander up to the top car park and the Agrimony proved fruitless, probably far too exposed and windy today, and upon returning to the bottom corner at around 2 I found that was too now empty, the low sun presumably sending everything to roost early. I did manage to catch up with a couple of Cloudies as I was leaving, soaking up the weakening rays and looking for roosting spots, I don't think it's coincidence they gravitate towards yellowing leaves. Looking at my pictures, neither of these two were the one who welcomed me so there were at least three here today.



Spot the butterfly



Five species (if I include Large White) and only 8 weeks from the winter solstice 🤪 😊!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-18 09:37 AM GMT

That is a fantastic November Haul 🤪 🍃 Minted Common Blues seem very unseasonal but not so much as the Meadow Brown to my mind 🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Katrina, 04-Nov-18 09:49 AM GMT

Fantastic Cloudie photos and lovely to see you again yesterday.

Re: Bugboys mission

by millerd, 04-Nov-18 11:00 AM GMT

That Meadow Brown does look fresh – the fringes are quite prominent. Most unusual. The last Cloudie looks really yellow – they are definitely designed to blend in with autumn leaves. And a nice new Common Blue too. 😊

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 08-Nov-18 09:49 PM GMT

We seem to have become desensitised to these kind of returns this year, BB, but I have to say, for early November, that's quite a collection, and one that would have probably been unthinkable even 15 years ago!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 09-Nov-18 07:42 PM GMT

A great selection of species and photos for the time of year Bugboy 🍃 😊
Those must be some really sheltered spots down there, it almost seems like a different country to me compared with my area here in the midlands.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Nov-18 08:18 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments 😊 , It's been a long season but I sense it may finally be over 😊

14th November

I went back to Essex and Two Tree Island for the day, for the first time since the spring more for birds rather than butterflies. That didn't stop me having a quick wander along the main path at Hadleigh Country Park first, where I found the bulk of the clouded Yellows in this part of the world this year, and was rewarded within 5 mins of another male feeding and basking. He was the first of the one butterfly I was to see today, perhaps the last one of 2018 but I'm certainly not going to put any money on that!



On all my previous trips here this autumn high tide has been at unsociable early morning and/or late at night times so wader watching hasn't been possible. Today was a little earlier although not as early as I had initially thought, I'd misread the times. I thought it was at 3pm but it was at 4.30, just at sunset so in the end I missed the bulk of the wader murmuration action. Nevertheless there was still enough stuff going on to keep me occupied. Curlew seemed to be relatively common although not as common as they should be, holding as they do the unenviable label of Britain's fastest declining wader 😞.



Wigeon have arrived in decent flocks



And the Avocet were also present in good numbers, around 30 or so.



No idea what this Wigeon found so scary about the Avocet!
The ever present Redshank were around and Black-tailed Godwits were being the usual antisocial sods to each other whilst a few other odds and ends avoided all the kafuffle.





As the sun was setting I could make out large flocks of Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Ringed Plover amongst others being forced up the channel but only distant shots could be grabbed before the light was lost. It was a wonderful sunset though.



Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-18 01:07 PM GMT

Hi! Bugboy, I love your shots of the Sun sets and especially the birds in flight , Great! Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 17-Nov-18 03:36 PM GMT

Great set of shots Bugboy especially the Blackwits and the Lapwing coming into land is sublime 😊😄👍 This time next week we should be well into the fat chewing - bought my ticket the other night, good old Great Western 😊 much better than South Western 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Padfield, 17-Nov-18 03:46 PM GMT

Amazing shots, Buggy!

Guy

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 18-Nov-18 07:20 PM GMT

Thanks for the comments **Goldie**, **Wurzel** and **Guy**, much appreciated 😊

Well this year seems to finally be over, bar the odd Red Admiral that may wander past on a sunny day, so time for the annual roundup. It was another hectic year and the third year in a row I've broken through the 50 mark.

The year started off rather cold with a couple of icy blasts, a first hint that 2018 might be an above average year and with increasing temperatures I was into double figures by the end of April. The star of the show during this period was coming across a courting pair of Peacocks, watching them complete the act and achieving the very rare sight of mating Peacocks 😊. The following week I came very close to getting a double whammy after watching a courting pair of Small Tortoiseshell for over half an hour. Unfortunately the male lost the female and in his flustered state blundered into a spider web 😞.



One month later and with the above average warm spring well underway the species total was sitting at 25 with good numbers of many of the spring species responding very well to the near perfect weather conditions so far. The star of the show here was undoubtedly the finding of Padfield, my first ever Purple Emperor larvae 😊.





June arrived, along with a continuation of some ridiculously hot weather, and so did my first long distance trip of the year, the trip to finally complete the mission. Looking back it's odd how we talk about a 'June gap' when I had 23 season debuts during those 30 days.



For nearly every butterfly who was in the southern half of the country during the middle of the month, the Black Hairstreak was probably the standout butterfly, combining what was probably the best emergence in living memory with a discovery of a healthy population in the middle of Sussex. For me

though, even though I had by far and away my best experience with them, another butterfly won by a nose during June. My one remaining resident species left to tick off in my 'mission' who I found fluttering around in the Cumbrian hills, the Mountain Ringlet. I also managed to tick off the *salmacis* race of the Northern Brown Argus, the *scotica* race of the Large Heath plus plenty of Fritillary action.



By July and August the hot weather was starting to have a negative impact with many of my regular sites now suffering from a distinct lack of rain. Later emerging grass feeders didn't do so well as their earlier emerging cousins, most notably the Gatekeeper, and based on my single trip looking for Lulworth Skippers, they seemed to have a poor latter half of their season too. The incessant heat did however cause another Hairstreak explosion with purple Hairstreaks coming down to ground level in their droves looking for moisture. Purple Emperors had another good season with groundings at Bookham for the second year in a row. As ever, Bookham remained a regular destination and proved good hunting grounds for me. Brown Hairstreak season was soon upon us but unlike the Sussex populations, the Bookham population seemed to struggle, at least struggle to come down low at any rate. Nevertheless determination and teaming up with Millerd won the day!





A day in Chiddingfold with Millerd was also memorable on two instances, the sheer number of second brood Wood Whites (linear count of over 100 in mostly cloudy weather 😊) and the surprise visitation of an Empress, my first ever sighting of the Emperors consort 😊. Then a second trip up north found me at Smarsdale Gill and a field covered in Scotch Argus.



The end of the season was mostly spent in Sussex and Essex on a mildly obsessive Clouded Yellow hunt (species 54 for the year), attempting upperside shots, and wondering if the butterfly season was ever going to end with some remarkably late emergent's of several other species.





So, Mission officially complete. I'm not quite sure where leaves this diary, I shall still continue making entries but I think 2019 will see a reduction in posts. Like other users I am conscious of my diary becoming somewhat repetitive so I'll use the winter months to have a ponder and see if I can think up a different angle to continue posting in 😊.



See some of you next week 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 18-Nov-18 07:41 PM GMT

A great 'round up' of your year, illustrated with some lovely photos, Bugboy 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 18-Nov-18 11:16 PM GMT

A cracking round up of the year Bugboy - I think that I've had a great year with 49 species 🤩🌍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 19-Nov-18 12:38 AM GMT

Perhaps the different angle you're looking for Bugboy, is Europe, lots new to see and to post about 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Goldie M, 19-Nov-18 06:23 PM GMT

Well done Bugboy, 🌍🌍 I'm lucky if I get near forty, not made it yet 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 20-Nov-18 11:00 PM GMT

Lovely to see your year presented in such a way, BB. You've cleaned up in 2018 and you may now find (like I did several years ago) that you can only satisfy your continued hunger with a trip overseas!

I still think those mating Peacocks are the highlight. I doubt many people have ever seen that!

Re: Bugboys mission

by Old Wolf, 21-Nov-18 11:53 AM GMT

What an absolutely brilliant year you have had Bugboy 😊

I love the presentation of your summary. So many brilliant photos you have captured this year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 03-Dec-18 06:48 PM GMT

Thanks for all the comments. Europe is on my radar Max, although I have my usual issue of getting around 😊 I'm sure I'll work something out though 😊

I've not been able to get out much recently since the wintery weather has finally arrived. Just two afternoons on some local patches. On the 18th November I spent a few hours wandering around Epping Forest. It was a Sunday so it was always going to be a bit busy but the usual array of dog walkers, joggers and families were today joined by some sort of orienteering thing going on. I'm not entirely sure if many of them had ever done it before since I don't think I saw any two going in the same direction. All this running around in the undergrowth meant most of the birdlife stayed in the treetops and rather quiet. The lake near the southern end, Conought Water, provided some of the few photographic opportunities. Mostly just Black-headed Gulls.



Falling of his perch!



Having a spruce up

Then yesterday, 2nd of December, I spent a couple of hours on Walthamstow Marshes. I was in two minds whether to go out, it was one of those days where one minute it was sunny then 5 minutes later the sky was darkened by a huge rain cloud but in the end I decided to pop out. Just as I was leaving I received a message from Millerd telling me of his local patch finds, giving me a tiny glimmer that perhaps I might get lucky. These hopes were dashed as soon as I arrived on site and was forced to wave goodbye to the last of the blue sky for the day 😊 A few birds were about but in the poor light I didn't take many pictures except for the Pied/White Wagtails which were frolicking in the horse paddocks.



one of whom threw possibly the campest pose I've ever seen a bird pull 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 03-Dec-18 11:09 PM GMT

That is a classic comic pose Bugboy! 😊 If you're thinking about Foreign butterflying then perhaps a Continental City break would be favourable somewhere like Prague – as there are plenty of good butterfly sites around the Old Castle accessible by bus or tram plus plenty of species a shirt train ride away...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by Andrew555, 04-Dec-18 01:59 PM GMT

Fantastic roundup Bugboy, excellent work. 😊 Great Wagtail shots. 😊

Cheers

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 07-Dec-18 12:13 PM GMT

Those are amusing shots of the gulls/wagtail, BB. Keep 'em coming as I suspect butterflies will be off the menu for a little while. 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by Neil Freeman, 07-Dec-18 07:17 PM GMT

Great roundup Bugboy 😊

You could always go continental to continue your mission as others have suggested but there are still some regional sub-species and forms in the uk that you can track down.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 16-Dec-18 09:43 PM GMT

Thanks once again for the comments 😊

16th December, birding south of the river.

A dry day tempted me out to do a bit of birding down at the London Wetland Centre. The early sun dissipated by the time I'd got there, squandering the already slim chance of a fleeting Red Admiral sighting but the birds were a welcome consolation. Of the non-native enclosures I always stop by the North American one, I do love Hooded Mergansers and the Buffleheads.



Out on the main lakes Gulls and Ducks predictably dominated.





Cormorants were hanging out here and there, drying out.



Wigeon grazed on the grassy banks, sometimes close enough to hear the camera 😊.



One of the hides was particularly busy with a gaggle of twitchers all pointing very large lenses in one direction. At this time of year here that could only mean one thing, Bittern! He was showing quite well but in typical bittern style, doing very little. Occasionally he'd blink which would cause a flurry of photographic action from his watchers. I left to wander off and came back on three occasions to find him still in the same place. On my third return though I actually managed to get a seat though.



Whilst watching the Bittern a Sparrowhawk settled in the trees to one side of the hide, from where he eventually launched himself and made an attempt at a kill, flushing two snipe but failing to capture either one. According to local knowledge he's been hunting the Snipe here for a couple of weeks now. Sadly my camera was focused on the Bittern at the time and it was all over very quickly, fantastic to watch though 😊



Couldn't resist a Robin, well it is the season for them 😊



Re: Bugboys mission

by Wurzel, 19-Dec-18 06:16 PM GMT

Love the balletic pose being thrown by the Mallard Bugboy 😊 But the first gull shot looks like the start of something that could be on 'You've Been Framed' – face plant! 😂 Did really well with the Bittern as well 😊🇧🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Bugboys mission

by David M, 19-Dec-18 07:38 PM GMT

Sounds like a fabulous day out, BB. Who needs butterflies? 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by bugboy, 31-Dec-18 10:14 PM GMT

Getting out and about at the moment is proving very difficult with just grey gloom on any free days off. Yesterday however I did decide to go for a little local wander despite the greyness. Not a great deal was about, in fact I didn't see any winter visiting thrushes or ducks which is very unusual on my local patch at this time of year. I can normally guarantee seeing around 40 species of bird at any given point in the year but I was struggling to hit 20 this time. I did manage to point my camera at a few odds and ends. The horse paddocks of the local riding school often make good hunting grounds for winter birdwatching (they're usually covered in Thrushes, finches, starlings with various other odds and ends mixed in during the winter). Today I had mixed flocks of Linnet and Chaffinch (a careful scan for Brambling came up fruitless) and a scattering of Pied/White Wagtails.





A Robin also posed nicely 😊



Well this will obviously be my last post for the year, but my last post for several weeks as far as new photo's are concerned since I shall be welcoming the new year with a hernia operation (this Thursday). Still better to be immobile now rather mid butterfly season eh 😊. Fingers crossed I should be healed and ready for the first hibernators in a few months time 😊. Happy New Year everybody and I hope to bump into some familiar faces again in 2019 😊

Re: Bugboys mission

by trevor, 31-Dec-18 10:21 PM GMT

Hope to see you, post op, next season. Hope all goes well.
2018 is nearly done, so Happy New Year.

Trevor.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Buchan Boy, 31-Dec-18 10:51 PM GMT

Take care bugboy and a happy new year.

Re: Bugboys mission

by Maximus, 01-Jan-19 12:27 AM GMT

Hope all goes well and that you're back fighting fit for the new year 😊