

Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 02-Jul-18 10:54 PM GMT

OK, here goes. My first diary post. Welcome one and all.

If you have wandered by and were expecting a barrage of brilliant pics of exotic butterflies in perfect focus and compositionally brilliant (as I see from many other diaries on here), then prepare to be.....disappointed 😊

I am fairly newish to this and am learning as i go. I welcome all criticism and will value any feedback and advice that anyone has to offer. Please don't hold back about being negative because if someone can tell me where/how/why I am going wrong then I can look into addressing it and seeing if I can overcome it.

Thanks for stopping by and hopefully there is at least something you may like contained within.

Stay tuned, first entry coming in a few.

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 02-Jul-18 11:31 PM GMT

Date: Weds 27th June

Location: RSPB – The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire

Time: Early Evening.

The weather was too hot to take the dogs out too early, so I had an hour or so spare. A quick ride up the RSPB to see if I could get a pic of anything interesting. My first trip up there looking for butterflies.

The first thing to catch my eye was a Marbled White flitting around in the tall grass. I stopped to see if it would settle for me but it didn't want to play. I noticed it paying particular attention to a small patch and on closer inspection there was another down in the shorter grass. This one was 'battle damaged' and although I know it is nice to see them Pristine, I can't help but love the ones with stories to tell. I had to photograph it and it obliged by very slowly unfurling what was left of its wings for me.



It clearly couldn't fly as I watched it drop lower into the grass and I felt a pang of sympathy for the little fella.

In the bramble patches and track edges there were Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Skippers and Gatekeepers but very flighty because although still very warm, there was quite a breeze.

About the only reasonable-ish pic was a Ringlet.



Further wandering didn't turn up very much more in the way of excitement although I did witness a couple of shrews chasing each other through the fallen leaves. I stopped camera ready but I think they must have heard me because all sound and movement ceased abruptly.

The sun was dropping and it was ime to take the dogs out so time to toodle pip off home.

Re: Old Wolf

by Wurzel, 02-Jul-18 11:33 PM GMT

Welcome Old Wolf 😊 That Marbled White certainly has a story to tell with most of its wing missing 😊 Looking forward to the next post 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 02-Jul-18 11:55 PM GMT

Date: Sat 30th June

Location - Greensands Ridge Walk path, Sandy, Bedfordshire

Time: Afternoon.

On a recent dogwalk here I thought it might be nice to pop back with the camera to see what I could find. The path runs along the edge of fields with plenty of trees and brambles to see what I could find. The path in question is an intersection so I chained my bike to the fence and decided on going right because, well why not?, 😊

There were butterflies everywhere! Countless Meadow Brown, Gatekeepers, Skippers, small whites and green veined whites. Hopefully I might be able to get a few pics here right?

The problem I found with so many buzzing around was that one would settle, I would triangulate my position, creep closer only for the butterfly to get 'buzzed' by another just before I could press the button and they would both go off swirling and spiralling further and further away from me.

I think this pic probably sums up how most of my time was spent.



Anyways, I managed to snap a reasonable pic of a gatekeeper.



For some reason I am eerily drawn to the shadow of this Green Veined White pic.



Small Skipper.



And although not a good picture by any means, I was thrilled to see my first Hairstreak. I spotted a White Letter on the way up the path and on my return saw what I thought was another, but on closer inspection (and confirmation by the kind folks here) it turns out the first was a White Letter and the second a Purple. So I present to you in all it's glory, my pic of an Oak tree with a butterfly in it somewhere.



Very happy I headed back to my bike and just though I would take a quick look up the other path and a little way in I hear rustling in the field to my left so I stop and out saunters a badger who strolls across the path in front of me. I quickly grabbed the camera and hastily refocussed to catch a quick snap of the little blighter before he headed into the trees to my right.



I can't decide whether he was still up from the night before and heading home or up early 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 03-Jul-18 12:14 AM GMT

Last one for the night. 😊

Thanks for the welcome Wurzel. I look forward to speaking with you in the future.

Date: Sun 1st July

Location – Greensands Ridge Walk path, Sandy, Bedfordshire

Time: Afternoon.

After my brief encounter with the Hairstreaks yesterday I felt I had to go back. Surely I could get a better look at one and maybe a pic today?

This time I headed straight back to where I saw the others yesterday and on my way I hear rustling in the field to my right, another badger maybe? I thought. But no, jumping out of the tall grass came a black squirrel or Gothic Squirrel as I have named him.



He scuttled up the telegraph pole and stopped to look at me. As I inched closer to get a pic, he scuttled further up then turned around and scampered down head first, off of the pole and into the trees. He was making a mighty racket and I thought he had come to help by disturbing anything on the tops of the leaves higher up but no luck.

After a while of scanning the trees and looking up it was becoming clear that no one was coming to see me today, so I thought I would head down the other way to see if there was anything different.

I did find a few tree that had Hairstreaks buzzing around in them but waiting to see if any would come close enough was not working. They did not want to come down. I think binoculars are in order next time.

Anyways much like the day before there were countless Meadow Brown, Gatekeepers, Skippers, Small Whites, Large Whites and the addition of many Marbled Whites.

The Marbled Whites stuck to the edge of the field behind a wall of impenetrable brambles and thistles ensuring I could get nowhere near them.

I was buzzed by a few angry Commas on a couple of occasions and I did happen across a few Painted Ladies, one of which I managed to snap.



A Small Skippy.



And finally a Large Skippy.



A brief side quest into the edge of a farmers field turned up a few Small Heath and more Hairstreaks in the trees but no luck there. It was time to turn around and head home but not before stopping at the intersection where I had seen the Hairstreaks earlier, but they were just not playing ball!

Re: Old Wolf

by Pauline, 03-Jul-18 05:42 AM GMT

Welcome Old Wolf – I don't think you'll get much criticism on this site if you keep posting shots like that! Great photo of the badger – unusual to see them out during the day so I'm wondering if it's the heat. A few years back I made a trip to photograph black squirrels but as you say they're not easy subjects so well done with that. Looking forward to more 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 03-Jul-18 07:03 PM GMT

Thanks for the welcome Pauline.

It was the first black squirrel I had ever seen so I was pretty pleased to have camera in hand at the time. I know there are some in towns further south of Sandy (Letchworth/Badock I think) but I was unaware that they were travelling northwards.

Re: Old Wolf

by Wurzel, 03-Jul-18 10:18 PM GMT

Interesting to see the Black Squirrel Old Wolf, I've not seen one myself but I've read that they're even more aggressive than the non-melanistic greys 🤩 I enjoyed the game of find the butterfly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by Janet Turnbull, 04-Jul-18 12:07 AM GMT

Welcome from me too, Old Wolf! You certainly struck lucky with the badger and black squirrel. Looking forward to seeing more of your posts – happy butterflying!

Re: Old Wolf

by ernie f, 04-Jul-18 07:18 AM GMT

What a fantastic start to your diary, Old Wolf. I look forward to seeing and reading more. The Black Squirrel is amazing – it has a velvety-like fur. I know Red Squirrels have a melanistic variety but I never knew greys did – but of course now it becomes obvious.

Love the badger, too. Not an easy shot to make.

I thought your pic of the Oak tree with the Hairstreak in it was great. Its just as you actually see them. It took me some while to find it on zoom setting but there it is, right in the centre of the shot. Brilliant.

Plus you report seeing a few Painted Ladies. That is something in itself. I have only seen two this year on separate occasions.

Re: Old Wolf

by Goldie M, 04-Jul-18 09:48 AM GMT

Welcome from me too Old Wolf, Badgers in the Day time and a Black Squirrel your posts will be very interesting 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Andrew555, 04-Jul-18 09:58 AM GMT

Hi Old Wolf and welcome. A nice selection in your first few posts. 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Neil Freeman, 04-Jul-18 06:54 PM GMT

Hi and welcome from me too Old Wolf. A great start to your diary and looking forward to seeing more 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: Old Wolf

by David M, 08-Jul-18 10:27 PM GMT

A warm welcome from me too.

I look forward to reading more especially if there's 'quirky' stuff to go with the butterfly reports. 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 13-Jul-18 10:42 PM GMT

Thanks for the warm welcome everyone. I look forward to talking with you soon.

There are sooooo many diaries that I get lost looking at all the beautiful pictures. I plan on commenting on as many as possible but so many pictures to look at, and not enough time 😊

I typed my latest entry the other night but the forum timed out and I lost the whole thing. Very frustrating. Anyways, I managed to get out a few times and here are my latest entries.

Date: Saturday 7th July
Location: Dunstable Downs
Time: Late morning to afternoon.

My fathers day treat this year was a picnic on Dunstable Downs with butterfly hunting and I was very excited because on previous visits I had seen hundreds of butterflies with many Blues that I couldn't identify so this time, with camera I would hopefully be able get some pics and identify later.

Whilst waiting to leave I was in the garden and a Holly Blue came to visit. The first pic I have managed to get of one, albeit a little dark as I hadn't taken the correction off from a previous trip out. Still it was a good omen I thought.



We arrived and ate but I was chomping at the bit to get going, so as soon as I had wolfed down some lunch I was off 😊

I headed down the first chalk path and there were a large amount of Marbled Whites, Skippers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns, a few Commas and Brimstone but not a Blue to be seen anywhere. I tried to get some pics but I was having absolutely no luck. I am positive the butterflies could hear the whine of the focus because as soon as I touched the button they scarpered.

I carried on down the path for about an hour and a half admiring the view, the butterflies and the sunshine but I couldn't get a picture for love nor money. I was getting thirsty so it was time to head back to basecamp for a drink and a change of area to hunt. From basecamp I spotted an area I had never been, so I headed across the ridge and planned on descending down the slope to see what I could find there.

It looked like an easy descent from the top but it was far steeper than I had realised so a lot of very careful sidestepping until I got near the bottom to see there was a wall of impenetrable brambles preventing me from reaching my destination. So, it was back up the slope to find another way down and as luck would have it I found another chalky path a little further along that looked do-able. It wasn't as steep as the the previous path but it was chalky so caution would be needed.

I sarded the descent and startled a Brimstone from beside the path who flitted a little further down until I caught him up again, so off he would go until I caught him up again. This little game continued a few times until some loose chalk gave way from underneath me and I came down hard on my right hand, skidding down the slope with my loaned camera held aloft in my left hand. I managed to stop myself from sliding and got up, covered in chalk and decided more caution was needed. The Brimstone was still with me.

I very, very cautiously carried on.....for about 10 seconds until the loose chalk gave way again and came down even harder this time onto my left elbow because I had the camera in my left hand and couldn't use the hand to break the fall. That really hurt. I slid down the slope for a few metres but

managed to stop myself and get up. I was really covered in chalk now, bloodied, sore and deciding how best to continue. To go back up would be even more dangerous I thought, so I carried on. The Brimstone agreed that this was the right decision.

Using as much caution as I could, I continued on and got to the bottom without any further incident. And with me at the bottom was the Brimstone. It had accompanied me from the very top of the downs to the very bottom and now it had landed and allowed me to finally get a picture at Dunstable Downs.



I went to the area I was intending to reach and there were many of the previously mentioned butterflies but they did not want me to photograph them. I did manage to get my first pic (and subsequently identify) of an Essex Skipper.



After some more wandering I finally found a Blue. I managed to get a few pics and was unsure as to which type but posted it here and it was confirmed to be a Chalk Hill Blue (Thanks for the help Guy). My third new butterfly sighting this year 😊😊😊



See if you can spot the photobomber in this one 😊



I wandered the area trying to get close but I was having no luck so it was time to head back to base camp, pack up and head home.

If you have got this far then I thank you for reading about my adventure and apologise for the lack of pics but my lack of skill and/or luck prevented me from posting more for you to look at. I at least hope you have been entertained 😊

Stay Hydrated.

Old Wolf.

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 13-Jul-18 11:14 PM GMT

Date: Thursday 12th July

Location: Triangle Field

Time: Early Evening.

A spare hour in the evening and I jumped on my bike and headed to local place I call Triangle Field. Any chance I get to practice with the camera, I am taking it 😊

Triangle field is not triangular. It is a meadow with a path diagonally across the middle so you can walk it in two triangles which is why I named it thus. It is a place I like to take the dogs and is next to the old railway embankment of the old Bedford train line that closed years ago.

It has been a while since I had last visited and the grass has been left to grow and it stood a good 4 feet tall. I could see meadow brown, small white, large white, green veined white and ringlet all flitting across the tops of the grass in the evening sun, but the most numerous were the gatekeepers.

Slowly walking through the field and I could hear all sorts of rustling and footsteps in the dry, long grass and it wasn't long until right in front of me a Weasel burst through the grass, spotted me and turned and dived back in. It was gone in the blink of an eye and far too fast for me to even get my hands on the camera.

The problem with the grass so long is that I didn't want to go into it for fear of disturbing anything on, in or underneath it so I was limited to the path only.

I managed to a reasonable pic of a female common blue (I think. Please feel free to correct me if wrong).



And the only Marbled White I saw.



After a while of wandering in the triangle field I decided to go through the tunnel under the embankment to another field that sometimes has horses. Guess what I call it? Horse Field. Clever right 😊😊😊

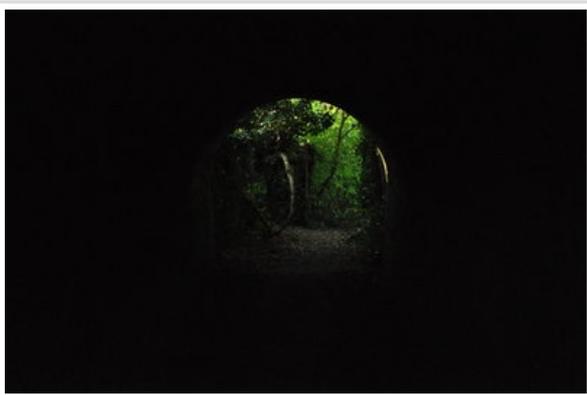
My entrance startled a pair of Oystercatchers who took flight. One flew off and one circled back to land again. I started testing my creeping skills but before I could get close enough for a pic it took off and didn't return this time.

To be honest, Horse Field was a bit empty other than rabbits. No horses and no butterflies I could see. I wandered for a bit and caught sight of a comma on some nettles.



The sun was beginning to dip too low to continue so it was time to head home. At least I managed this trip without hurting myself 😊

Finally a pic from the tunnel.



Stay Hydrated.

Old Wolf.

Re: Old Wolf

by bugboy, 13-Jul-18 11:23 PM GMT

Well that sounds like an eventful day out. Hope your wounds heal and you're not sore for long. People just don't understand the perils we put ourselves through!

There's actually few things worth commenting about on this post. Firstly don't worry about not having time to comment, this is the busiest season I've known on here, I haven't been able to keep up for the last few months. Also I (and I think several other regulars on here) find writing our reports out in a word document and then copy/paste it over to here works. You're not the first person to have lost their carefully crafted report into the mists of the interweb 😊

Your first image, the Holly Blue, is clearly a female and from the position of her abdomen is looking to lay, whats interesting is that she's toying with the

idea of laying on *Buddleja*. They do have a very wide range of food plants but that's a new one on me!

You also mentioned about the butterflies hearing your camera which you may have said in jest, but many are spooked by this sound, particularly in the heat of recent weeks, and if you think the ones you saw today were a pain, just wait until you go for the Wall Brown, you'll be tearing your hair out in frustration after the first couple of hours 😞! When I get close up (closer than a foot) I usually switch to manual focus which I find gives me better results anyway.

Keep up the good work and look forward to your next post, hopefully it will be a less painful one to make!

Edit: You're busy posting tonight! My comments are in reference to your 7th July adventures 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 13-Jul-18 11:35 PM GMT

Date: Friday 13th July

Location: The Sand Hills. Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Time: Evening.

I was blessed with another spare hour this evening so I headed to a local place called the Sand Hills which is a hilly woodland with very sandy soil that has plenty of Oak trees. Now I know where to look, I wonder if there are any hairstreak up in them?

I headed to the meadow at the bottom called the Pinnacle to have a look and sure enough, I look up into the Oak trees and there are hairstreak everywhere! I counted at least fifty of them over seven or eight Oak trees around the edge of the meadow. I waited to see if any would come low enough for me to be able to see what type or if I could be lucky and get a pic but they were far too busy chasing each other and a comma around the canopy. They looked silvery in the sunlight so I am thinking probably Purple but don't know for sure.

To think I have been here hundreds of times and had I known to look up 😊 I spent a while watching them but the sun was beginning to dip so I walked a circuit of the meadow. There were a few large and small whites, meadow brown and gatekeepers and then a blue flitted past me catching my eye. I tracked it with my action man 'Eagle Eyes' and it landed on some tall grass where I managed to take the first butterfly picture that I am truly happy with.

I hope you all like it 😊

I am not 100% on which type (even trying to use your process of elimination technique Guy) but am thinking female common blue. Please correct me if I am wrong.



Stay Hydrated.

Old Wolf.

Re: Old Wolf

by bugboy, 14-Jul-18 06:50 AM GMT

That's a wonderfully evocative final pic. It tells of a long hot summer, perhaps nearing the end and creeping into autumn 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-18 08:14 AM GMT

I can see why you're so happy with that shot Old Wolf, it's a corker 😊👍😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by MikeOxon, 14-Jul-18 10:49 AM GMT

I must agree – that last pic of the Common Blue is a delight. On a good specimen like that one, you can see the double fringe, with the inner one crossed by dark lines while the outer is plain white – that defines Common Blue to me. Unfortunately, when the outer fringe wears, it can start to look a bit like the chequered fringes of other species 😊 I've seen your other posts, about difficulties with ID, and I often make mistakes in the field, too. We

are fortunate, in UK, of having so few species, relative to continental Europe – I have no idea how Guy manages to identify all those blues in Switzerland 😊

Regarding lost posts, I have learned by experience that it's a good idea to write the text of a long post in 'Notepad' (or similar) and then copy and paste it into your post. It can save a lot of frustration.

Your diary brings back many memories of my own butterflying experiences – yes, I have slipped down chalk banks too and often picked up more scrapes and bruises as the result of trying to protect my camera! I like your photo style, where you show the butterflies within an overall context, rather than almost looking like set specimens.

Mike

Re: Old Wolf

by trevor, 14-Jul-18 11:18 AM GMT

And a rather late welcome from me Old Wolf.
Especially as you seem to live in an area where half of me comes from !
When I was a Tot, we used to change trains at Sandy, for Gamlingay.

If you are after Purple Hairstreaks down low, try early morning.
Even better if there is some low foliage near their favourite Oak,
for them to bask on.

Best wishes,
Trevor.

Re: Old Wolf

by Steve L, 15-Jul-18 10:19 AM GMT

What an entertaining Diary

Thanks for your comment and I too welcome you (as a fellow newbie)

Your Common Blue photo on your last post is wonderful 📷

Look forward to reading more

cheers

Steve Lane

Re: Old Wolf

by Pauline, 15-Jul-18 07:04 PM GMT

I can only re-iterate what everyone else has said about that CB shot – lovely composition and one I would certainly be pleased to have taken. Looking forward to more 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by David M, 16-Jul-18 11:25 PM GMT

Entertaining stuff, Old Wolf. Mishaps are an integral part of the butterflying regimen but then again so are delightful stills such as the one you took of the roosting Common Blue.

The positives hugely outweigh the negatives!

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 17-Jul-18 08:15 PM GMT

Thanks for all the positive comments everyone 😊

Bugboy: It was very eventful but I still enjoyed myself which is what it is all about I suppose. I now have the Word document handy at all times 😊

Wurzel: Thanks for the kind words. I look forward to seeing more of your wonderful pictures too.

Mike: Thanks for the kind words. I think that if I had more zooming capabilities then it may be a different story!

Trevor: Thanks for the welcome. I look forward to speaking with you soon. It is a small world 😊 I plan on an early morning trip this weekend, weather permitting. If I succeed then I will post here.

Steve: Glad you enjoyed it. Thanks for the kind words. I look forward to seeing more of your wonderful pictures too.

Pauline: Thanks for the kind words. I look forward to seeing more of your wonderful pictures too.

David: Agreed. I still had fun and after all, where is the adventure with out the risk of danger? 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 23-Jul-18 10:29 PM GMT

Date: Saturday 21st July

Location: The Pinnacle at the Sand Hills.

Time: Morning.

On the advice of other forum members I decided to take an early morning trip to The Pinnacle in the Sand Hills to see if I could get close to the Purple Hairstreaks when/if they they came down from the trees. I knew they were up there and perhaps my early morning sneak attack would yield more than a fleeting glimpse.

I arrived at about 9am because the Pinnacle is at the bottom of a hill and the sun would have to be high enough to clear it. I walked around the perimeter where the Oak trees are, looking high and looking low. Nothing! Not a single Hairstreak anywhere.

I decided to look into the meadow to see what was warming up and was please to see a good number of Small Copper who were very accomodating.

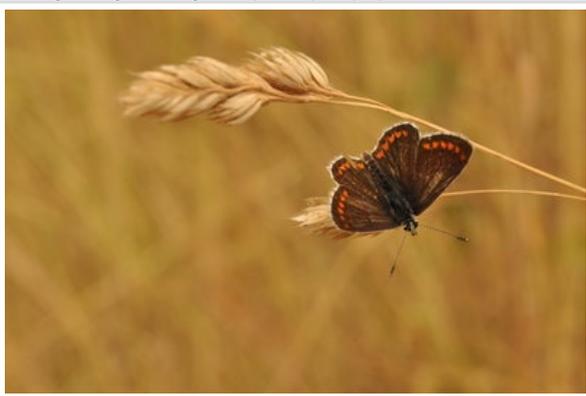




It was time for another scan around the Oaks but there wasn't anything to be seen. Nothing moving above and nothing had come down.

I decided to set off to the RSPB just up the road to see what I could find there. I locked the bike at the bottom of the hill and walked up the path towards the lodge and found a lovely little ride where the sun was beaming. There were a good number of Brown Argus, Common Blue and skippers in the long grass on one side of the path and the other side had Gatekeepers and all of the whites flitting above the brambles. I stayed there a while to see if I could get some open wing shots of the Argus or Blue.

I managed to get an Argus very nearly fully open.



A common Blue settled so I waited with camera ready.....



And it very nearly happened.



I carried on towards the lodge and thought I would try my luck at the exit as I knew there were a lot of Oak trees down there so that is where I headed. I arrived and sure enough, I could see the Hairstreak up high darting from one oak to another. I waited. And waited. And waited but none of them wanted to come down. I stayed quite a while in the hope that one may visit but there wasn't any luck today.

I leave you with one last pic. My favorite from the Pinnacle 😊



Re: Old Wolf

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

Lovely set of shots Wolfy especially the Small Coppers and especially the final one, I can see why it's your fave 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by bugboy, 23-Jul-18 10:39 PM GMT

Great shots Old Wolf, they really show the parched grasslands. Bad luck with the Hairstreaks though, keep trying though, near the end of the flight season the last stragglers tend to be more inclined to come down 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by David M, 23-Jul-18 11:44 PM GMT

Nice, almost sepia, scenes, Old Wolf. One gets a real impression of how dry and arid the grassland is right now.

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 28-Jul-18 07:05 PM GMT

Thanks guys.

It really is very dry there as it is pretty much everywhere I have been visiting lately.

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 28-Jul-18 08:15 PM GMT

I have been a bit busy this week so a little late, but.....

Date: 22nd July

Location: Chicksands Woods

Time: Morning.

On Sunday morning I embarked on my first Butterfly Conservation Walk which was at Chicksands woods, a place I thought I had visited many times but as I found out, had never been before. I thought I had been taking my dogs to Chicksands woods for years as it was a wood in Chicksands but it turns out I had been visiting a wood called Rowney Warren which is in Chicksands as well. You learn something new every day they say, I am just glad I thought to check the grid references the night before 😊

I arrived just before 9:30 to a group of about 15 people who were all very friendly. There was a nice mix of enthusiasts of all levels, from big butterfly counters to battle hardened veterans. Talk soon turned to butterflies in the wood and names were being thrown out there: White Admiral, Silver Washed Fritillaries, Hairstreaks, Purple Emperor! I was very excited 😊

The weather wasn't the best as it was overcast and the sun would peek through very briefly only every so often but at least it was warm.

We headed in and up the central (and only I think) gravel path and were greeted by Ringlet, Gatekeepers, Speckled Wood and the three, ever present Whites. Brown Argus flitted around the tall grass at the edge of the track and the group splintered as people found thing of interest to look at and pursue. People would flit from one group to another as butterfly names were called out, but I had yet to hear any of the big names mentioned.



We carried on for a bit until one of the groups called out 'Hairstreak' and everyone headed to the spot to have a look. It was a rather faded and worn White Letter but still a very new butterfly for me, so I was happy.

As we continued, another was spotted on the path right by my feet.



It was not the best condition and was more than happy for everyone to come and have a look and get pictures and in the end we left it where it was and continued on and it wasn't long until a big flash of Orange flew over our heads and glided into the Nettles slightly in front of us and the call went out 'Fritillary'. I headed over and sure enough, there it was my first Silver Washed Fritillary 😊😊😊 My fourth new Butterfly sighting this year 😊 I managed to get a pic before it headed off again and I was a very happy Wolf 😊



I fell in with a friendly chap who recounted his previous encounters in Chicksands Woods including a PE (see, I am getting down with the abbreviations people 😊 although SSS took me a while!) sighting earlier in the week. He showed me where he had marked the spot in the path with two crossed sticks and three stones. No luck today though. We passed a needle like monument at an intersection where he told me he knew a couple who would bring their deck chairs and sit there all day because everything you could see in the woods could be seen there.

Our continued adventures up the path yielded many more of the previously mentioned butterflies with a few Common Blue coming into the mix. We encountered a few more SWF but the pics were too far away for my zooming capabilities so instead I offer a Speckled Wood who looks like someone or something had taken a bite out of his hind wings.



When we reached the needle like monument at the end of the path, the group turned to return on the same path but a few of us took a side path detour as someone had mentioned it was Hairstreak Hotspot. There was a single WLH and another Fritillary 'fly by' but that was about all. We rejoined the group and carried on back down the path.

On the way back I spotted something on the track and it was another WLH who appeared to be struggling as the breeze was making him fall to one side. I stopped to observe and put my finger in front of him and he took up my offer 😊



I placed him back down and continued walking when a group of two people in front of me spotted a Purple Hairstreak on the ground but it flew away as they only spotted it at the last minute.

We reached the carpark at the end so I decided to head back in and eat my lunch before heading off. I said my thank you's and goodbye's and headed back in thinking the spot that the chap had mentioned earlier would be a good place to sit down and eat and you never know what may visit. I sat and ate my lunch and watched the trees, the bushes, the nettles, the brambles and the path. Nothing new turned up so I packed up and thought I would have one last close up look at the patch opposite where I was sitting when out of nowhere a silver shape dropped down in front of me and landed quite literally at my feet!



I was thrilled as it seemed like he came to give me a real good look before I headed off home. There were no White Admirals, Purple Hairstreaks today but I was still very happy with my Fritillaries 😊



Re: Old Wolf

by MikeOxon, 28-Jul-18 10:09 PM GMT

It's quite a good idea to choose a spot and stick to it. My wife often does that, while I wander around looking for my target species. Almost inevitably, when I return, she says something like "there was one just next to me for 5 minutes but you were too far away to call" 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Janet Turnbull, 29-Jul-18 08:55 AM GMT

Hi Old Wolf, it has been far too hot lately for me to go out butterflying and now it's raining! But I've been catching up on your diary and whilst sympathetic, I was hugely entertained by your account of trying to get the Brimstone 😊 I hope you've recovered from the cuts and bruises. I noticed you'd had a timed-out experience with the website; that happened to me in the past and a tip from Mike Oxon (I think) was to write it up in Notepad or similar first, which gives you plenty of time to think about it.

Re: Old Wolf

by Wurzel, 29-Jul-18 09:43 AM GMT

Brill stuff Old Wolf 😊 Any Whitter is a good Whitter regardless of how tatty it looks 😊🍷 To get one on your finger is mighty fine, I need that one in my 'butterflies in the hand collection' 😊🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by Pauline, 30-Jul-18 08:33 PM GMT

Hi Wolf

I don't think you're old and I'm pretty sure you're not a wolf but I'm loving reading about your adventures. Your last report was entertaining and I could certainly relate to your excitement – not just from my earlier butterfly experience but from each and every time I go out, just not knowing what will be found; that sense of anticipation. Great reports and photos 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 02-Aug-18 03:36 PM GMT

Thanks everyone.

Mike: Even though it is probably the best way to go about it, my feet get far too itchy to stay in one place too long. The thrill of the hunt calls 😊

Janet: I am all recovered now thanks. Thanks for the tip and now I do now have word open just in case.

Wurzel: Just when I get SSS down, you go and throw another one in there. I shall have to remember Whitter for the future 😊

Pauline: I am glad you are liking my PD. It is all very exciting but I fear I have been too spoiled with four new butterflies this year 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by David M, 06-Aug-18 12:30 AM GMT

Love the shot of the WLH on your finger, Old Wolf. I'd be grateful merely to see them at head height!! 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 15-Aug-18 09:56 PM GMT

Date: 4th August

Location: Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve

Time: Morning.

To plan my next trip I had a look at the sites area of this site to see if there were any local areas for me to find something new. I found Ashwell Quarry Nature Reserve which is only about 12 miles from me and was listed as being a site for Chalkhill Blue. Although the CB was one of my new sightings this year as anyone who has read my diary may remember, I hardly felt I could count it proper as, a) I wasn't even sure what type it was and b) my pictures of it were horrendous. The CB and I had unfinished business. Ashwell Quarry it was.

I arrived early and was excited at the prospect of seeing a CB properly and that I could identify it positively this time around. The sun was intermittently popping out from behind clouds so I hoped I could get some chances before the butterflies were fully warmed up.

I entered the site and immediately began seeing the little flags on the ends of the tall grasses. Common Blues and Brown Argus everywhere.



After a while of checking that there were not any Chalkhills in with the bunch, I headed further into the reserve to continue the hunt. I arrived at a fork in the path and decided to stay with the tall grasses rather than taking the other path into the bushes and it seemed like I was chasing blues for ages as there were so many. I would spot one on the wing follow it until it landed, check it to see what type and repeat. There weren't any Chalkhills about.



The grassy path had many Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Whites and the odd Meadow Brown. I was even 'buzzed' by a lone Red Admiral who looked really worse for wear.



And I did spy a Dusky Sallow on one of the flowers.



This path ended in what I can only imagine was the bottom of the pit because it was a chalky and muddy (very dried) circular-ish depression with plants that were more weed like than everywhere else. This area was filled with Whites and Gatekeepers and the lone Admiral spiraling above me higher than the rest. The path did look like it could have carried on back up and around to meet the bushy path I saw earlier but it was so overgrown it looked impassable. I decided to head back the way I had come and take the other path to see if I could get through that way.

The other path was slightly less overgrown but still very narrow so I headed through and it went in a loop to some chalky steps that I had to descend with a chalk face cut into the hill. At the bottom it was like a miniature valley with a path through the centre and it was there that I spotted a Chalkhill. It was really very tattered I had to look very closely as the spots on the upper hindwings were very nearly gone. I followed it along the path but it stayed very close to the ground. When it landed, I tried to get close but it was spooked and took flight again. I hoped there would be more.

At the end of the valley there was a hill which once I climbed would take me back to the grassy path and very close to the entrance of the site. I still hadn't seen a decent Chalkhill and planned on another circuit to try again. I walked to the top of there they were at the top 😊😊😊 There were between ten and fifteen of them all in an area of about ten metres squared, all settled or flying low and I could see the spots and at last postively identify that they were Chalkhills 😊



My personal favorite.



After taking some snaps I decided to just sit there a while and enjoy them flitting around me as they seemed very unconcerned with my presence. I felt that I had accomplished my mission and was much happier with the shots I got so it was time to head home.

A quick stop on the way home yielded a nice surprise. A small Buddjela growing through a crack in the pavement in the street had a visitor so I grabbed the camera from the boot and snapped a nice underwing shot of this Painted Lady.



Definitely one of my favorite butterflies 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by ernie f, 15-Aug-18 10:31 PM GMT

I love that shot of the two Chalkhills beside one another on the Carline Thistles, neither bothering to chase off the other.

Re: Old Wolf

by millerd, 15-Aug-18 10:56 PM GMT

Those Chalkhills are great, Wolf. They are especially fond of Carline thistle as your photos show. That's a splendid Painted Lady too.

Cheers,

Dave

Re: Old Wolf

by Katrina, 15-Aug-18 11:08 PM GMT

Totally agree, love the Chalkhill esp the double, but my favourite is the Painted Lady 😊😊😊

Re: Old Wolf

by David M, 17-Aug-18 09:27 PM GMT

The male in your mating pair of Chalkhills is very unusual and probably an aberrant, Old Wolf.

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 21-Aug-18 01:50 PM GMT

David M wrote:

The male in your mating pair of Chalkhills is very unusual and probably an aberrant, Old Wolf.

I didn't really think of that even though I did notice that his markings were very feint on the upper and lower underwings. Unfortunately I didn't get a look at them open as he was, shall we say busy at the time.

I am even more chuffed now 😊😊😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Andrew555, 22-Aug-18 01:39 PM GMT

Lovely Small Coppers in the morning sunlight Wolf. I like your Chalkhills and Painted Lady as well. 😊

Re: Old Wolf

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-18 07:07 PM GMT

Great stuff Wolfy 😊 I'm glad that you finished your business with the Chalkhills 😊 As David spotted you've managed to capture an ab. 🇮🇪 obscura in the mating pair 😊 Lovely Lady too 😊🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Old Wolf

by Janet Turnbull, 23-Aug-18 11:39 PM GMT

That was a very happy time with the Chalkhills, Old Wolf – I do like the double on the carlines. Looking back a couple of posts I think my favourites so far are of the Small Coppers – so evocative!

Re: Old Wolf

by Old Wolf, 25-Aug-18 08:47 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

I love that shot of the two Chalkhills beside one another on the Carline Thistles, neither bothering to chase off the other.

Thanks Ernie. To be honest I think it was my movement that eventually made one decide to take flight.

millerd wrote:

Those Chalkhills are great, Wolf. They are especially fond of Carline thistle as your photos show.

Thanks millerd and thanks for the plant name. Plants are an area I really need to look into as I had no idea what the plants were. I need to research the plants that different species like to help me in narrowing down where I should be looking. I have ordered a book that should hopefully help me with this.

Thanks for the kind words Katrina, David, Andrew and Wurzel.

Janet Turnbull wrote:

That was a very happy time with the Chalkhills

Thanks Janet. Yes it seemed very surreal but really good to be among them.

Re: Old Wolf

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-18 09:59 AM GMT

Catching up Old Wolf, Love the side shot of the Painted Lady, what a nice surprise for you she was, 😊😊 Goldie 😊