

Esther2444

by Esther2444, 15-Jul-18 05:58 PM GMT

I've always loved butterflies, and have a keen interest in nature photography, although am very much an amateur. I don't particularly go hunting for wildlife to take photos of, but I do like to snap the visitors to my garden in Bristol and the things I see whilst on holiday with my children. I wanted to start this diary as a way to record the butterflies I have photographed. We recently renovated our house and as part of this we redeveloped the back garden and created a wildlife garden in front of our house, with a focus on pollinators. The increased activity, particularly the butterflies, has been impressive, and I'm so pleased about this. I can't wait to take part in this year's butterfly count! I use a variety of cameras, including my iPhone, a Panasonic DMC-LX100 and a Sony DSLR with Macro lens. I find I use the DSLR less and less, mostly due to the size of it, but am hoping to get back to using it more at some point.

Today I took some snaps with my Panasonic, and managed to capture a small tortoiseshell and a comma that were feeding on the buddleia this morning. There were also a healthy bee contingent tucking in.





Looking forward to sharing my pics, and looking through everyone else's diaries too.

Re: Esther2444

by Pauline, 15-Jul-18 06:31 PM GMT

Welcome Esther and well done on creating the butterfly garden. Looking forward to seeing more shots 😊

Re: Esther2444

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-18 08:18 PM GMT

Welcome Esther 😊 A great way to start your PD, looking forward to the next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Esther2444

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

Hi Esther. A warm welcome to UKB where you will find many with a similar outlook as yours.

Feel free to keep the images coming!

Re: Esther2444

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jul-18 11:02 PM GMT

A warm welcome from me too. We are a friendly bunch, so feel free to ask any questions or for advice if you want to. There is usually someone on here who can help!

Re: Esther2444

by ernie f, 16-Jul-18 07:12 AM GMT

Hi, Esther. Let me add my welcome too.
You've made a great start with that nice angle on the Comma.

Re: Esther2444

by bugboy, 16-Jul-18 07:39 AM GMT

Cripes, another newbie! There's been quite a few join up this season. Welcome to the friendliest bunch of people on the interweb 😊

Re: Esther2444

by Andrew555, 16-Jul-18 08:04 PM GMT

Welcome Ester, your garden sounds great, well done. 😊

Cloudy day

by Esther2444, 17-Jul-18 01:10 PM GMT

It was a much cloudier and changeable day in Bristol yesterday and threatened rain for most of the day, which eventually realised about 4pm. There are so many whites about at the moment, although not many are coming to rest in my garden, although I did manage to just about snap one on the breezy buddleia.



Taken with my compact.

Unfortunately someone walked past as I tried to get a picture of the meadow brown that I spotted in my front garden, and it flitted off somewhere. I did spot a plume moth when taking a tent down in the garden so used my iPhone to capture it. The quality of the picture is not great but it's a sweet little feathery moth.



Re: Esther2444

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-18 02:30 PM GMT

Nice Moff Esther - is it a White or Spotted White Plume Moth? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 17-Jul-18 06:09 PM GMT

I think it's a white plume, but not 100% sure as my field guide is macro moths only, so this micro moth is only described very briefly in a small subsection.

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 18-Jul-18 12:47 PM GMT

The wildlife garden that I have created at the front of my house is really starting to become established now. Yesterday my mum made a flippant comment about the nasturtiums I've grown from seed. "You need to be careful with those, they'll be crawling with caterpillars if you don't cover them." she said. I had to laugh because of course that is kind of the point! So this morning, whilst the sun was directly on the plants I went to have a look. I was so pleased to see that there were eggs and caterpillars over quite a few of the leaves. I'll admit that I don't know much about this part of the life cycle of the white butterflies that I've seen frequenting these plants, so I quickly looked this up. In conclusion the eggs in groups are the large white and the single eggs the small. I snapped both with my Sony DSLR and macro lens. It was a bit breezy but finally managed to get a steady picture of the things I observed.



Re: Esther2444

by trevor, 18-Jul-18 03:42 PM GMT

And a warm welcome from me Esther
It will be good to receive reports from the Bristol area,
we don't seem to get many from around there.

Good hunting,
Trevor.

Re: Esther2444

by Old Wolf, 18-Jul-18 07:58 PM GMT

Welcome Esther from one newbie to another 😊

I look forward to seeing what visitors you get. I always think it is exiting when a new vistor arrives.

Re: Esther2444

by David M, 19-Jul-18 10:46 PM GMT

I absolutely agree regarding your nasturtiums, Esther. They will be highly attractive to Large White females and as such you will likely find them overrun with caterpillars.

If that is the point of you planting them then so much the better!

Re: Esther2444

by trevor, 20-Jul-18 04:41 PM GMT

Yes, your lovely nasturtiums will soon look like lace curtains.

Re: Esther2444

by Neil Freeman, 20-Jul-18 07:21 PM GMT

Hi Esther and welcome from me too.

Looking forward to seeing what you get in your garden.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 20-Jul-18 07:52 PM GMT

David M wrote:

I absolutely agree regarding your nasturtiums, Esther. They will be highly attractive to Large White females and as such you will likely find them overrun with caterpillars.

If that is the point of you planting them then so much the better!

Hi David, yes it was the point. As much as possible I've put plants in for pollinators, particularly butterflies, and have also installed a small wildlife pond. I'm so chuffed that it's already providing habitat for wildlife 😊

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 20-Jul-18 08:28 PM GMT

Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me here, and taken the time to comment! Very nice of you all. Lots of the posts on here have fantastic shots of such a variety of butterflies. I'm sure my humble little Bristol patch will soon becoming a little repetitive in comparison!

This morning I intended to do a little weeding but the sun was glorious and I got totally distracted by butterflies, so only thought it was fitting that I do my first 15 minute butterfly count, on launch day.

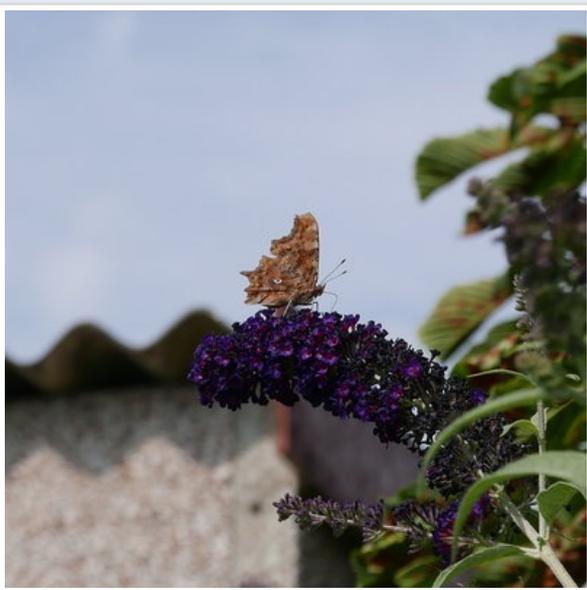
I initially thought it was going to be a full house of whites, but suddenly next to me a speckled wood landed on the ground. It flew off as I grabbed my camera and I thought I had missed it, but then spotted it basking on the grape vine. Snapped a couple with my compact and then tried to get a good macro but unfortunately one wing was swinging in and out of focus.

These are the best shots. The first with my DSLR and the second with my compact.



I took a really good look at the massive white buddleia that we have, and just as I was considering chopping it down, because we never get any butterflies on it, a comma came to say hello. He was a bit worse for wear, but took some time to feed on the white flowers, then flit over to the more popular dark purple bush, and back again. I snapped a few pics with my compact.





I'm also pretty sure I saw a silver washed fritillary swooping about – but never really got my eyes fully on it so didn't include it in my count.

Re: Esther2444

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-18 08:44 PM GMT

"I took a really good look at the massive white buddleia that we have, and just as I was considering chopping it down, because we never get any butterflies on it," that's a sure fire way to get butterflies to appear Esther 😊😂 Love the last shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Esther2444

by David M, 20-Jul-18 10:16 PM GMT

Attractive though white buddleia is to human eyes, I believe butterflies strongly prefer the purple ones...whether that's because they see UV light I don't know, but on those occasions when I've seen different colours of buddleia side by side, the mid-shade purple blooms have generally been the most frequented.

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 20-Jul-18 10:28 PM GMT

Wurzel wrote:

"I took a really good look at the massive white buddleia that we have, and just as I was considering chopping it down, because we never get any butterflies on it," that's a sure fire way to get butterflies to appear Esther 😊😂 Love the last shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Ha ha ha yes, I see how that seems counter intuitive! This Buddleia is massive, like huuuuge, way above head height now. I thought if I harshly chopped it right back, it would be easier to maintain, and perhaps give room to plant something else as well/instead. I've been holding off because it's in flower, but got impatient today and thought about just doing it. If I had a big step ladder, didn't have a broken ankle, and hadn't seen the comma, I may have started "trimming"!

Re: Esther2444

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-18 10:17 AM GMT

I swear that butterflies know when to appear to gs most awkward 😊 Just poured a coffee? Yep there's one. Only got 5 minutes before you need to leave a site? Just taken a bite of your extra hot Lime chilli pickle sandwich? Just planning to cut back the bush? Boom there are the butterflies 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 21-Jul-18 10:34 AM GMT

Exactly! And this morning I spotted a painted lady on it, although I was hanging washing out at the time so, as expected, it was gone by the time I had my camera in my hand.
I guess the bush is staying....for now!

Re: Esther2444

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-18 11:15 AM GMT

Hi! Esther and welcome, 😊 I'm still on holiday in the South so can't catch up on everybody 😊 Just to say I love the shot of the Comma on your White(Budd) it stands out nicely with the (Budd) being White, I've got three at home two Purple and one that's nearly Navy Blue it's so dark and the Butterflies seem to like that one best. Goldie 😊

Re: Esther2444

by Esther2444, 22-Jul-18 10:47 PM GMT

Wow, what a fantastic weekend. It's been great weather in Bristol, although a little overcast at times, balmy warm, just how I like it. I have had lots of time to take part in the big butterfly count and I have to say it feels so decadent to just pass the time butterfly watching. There have been soooooo many whites everywhere, I seriously don't think I've ever known a summer when there have been so many. On Saturday I spent some time in the front "wildlife" garden and spotted lots of the usual small and large whites, but also a holly blue was flitting around the pond, but being elusive, so I didn't manage to snap a pic in time. I did get a good few shots of some mating small whites who were at it for ages in the quince bush. Their camouflage was impressive and I never would have spotted them if I hadn't seen them land there first.



I also popped out the front this morning to put the recycling out, and got dive bombed by a moth. I managed to find him after he bounced off me into the bushes and was pleased to see he was on the butterfly count list – a Silver Y moth.



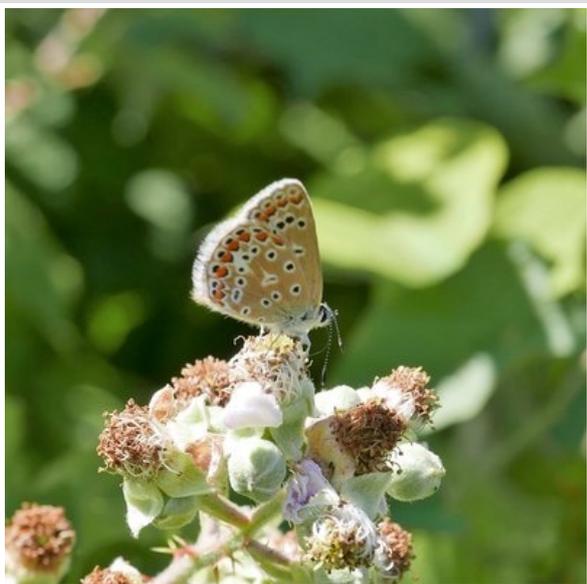
As a family we had a few trips into the rear access lane behind our house over the last two days. It's pretty overgrown and not used by cars past a certain point, so obviously nature is reclaiming it, which makes me very happy to be honest. On Saturday I took my 8 year old to look for butterflies and he helped me spot a wealth of whites and there were also a couple of speckled woods flickering about. One in particular was very gracious and let me photograph him in multiple poses.



While we out there we spotted so many huge juicy blackberries that we planned a revisit for Sunday so we could pick them. So, just after lunch on Sunday all four of us went blackberry picking in the lane, and whilst the kids were busy getting stained purple all over, I spotted butterflies. It was so sunny, and there were lots to see, and we tallied them up for the count.

After the tubs were suitably filled with blackberries everyone except me returned to the garden. I found a nice shady spot to stand and watch, and eventually the surroundings recovered from trampling noisy children and out came the wildlife. Butterflies, ladybirds, grasshoppers, birds etc. I was happily totting up the butterflies when I spotted a Comma looking for somewhere to perch. As I watched it swooping around a tiny fluttering acught my eye. I thought it was a grey day moth and it landed in the middle of some brambles so I didn't take much notice, but then as I stepped forward to try to

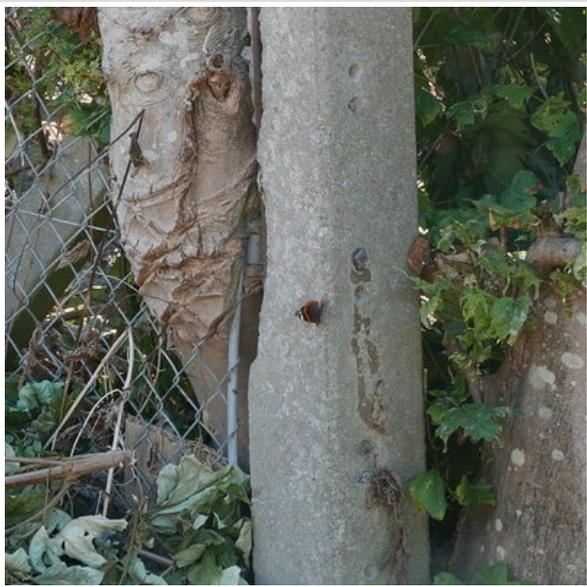
get a better look at the comma, it landed on some brambles right in front of me. It was a blue! Now, I immediately thought common blue, but I'm not an expert at all and the angle I've managed to snap is not the best, so please advise me if I am incorrect, I would love to have this confirmed!



I also finally got a nice pic of the comma.



And then to top it all off I saw my first Red Admiral of the year. I didn't get close enough to get a good picture of it, but enough to confirm it and to show my other half.



Back in the garden later there were a few Holly Blues passing through, in and out of the patches of sunshine, and then eventually I spotted a Gatekeeper. It kept me on my toes for a bit and then suddenly took up an excellent spot on the white buddleia!

I love this picture!



I felt so happy after the sunshiney, butterflying day we'd had, and after we'd had a barbecue and the shadows were getting longer I snapped a tiny colourful Mint Moth. It was very pretty and a nice way to end the weekend's photography activities.



Re: Esther2444

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-18 10:59 PM GMT

Great stuff Esther, I can see why you love that picture in particular, it's a cracker 😊 Your Blue is a Common but it's an interesting looking one as the left hand wings seem to be lacking some of the orange pigmentation 😊 Sweet things are always a good way to get children into butterflies, when I take my girls out it's always handy to know that there's a park nearby too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: Esther2444

by bugboy, 23-Jul-18 06:53 PM GMT

Yep that's a female Common Blue. Also your Gatekeeper on the Buddleja is actually a female Meadow Brown 😊

Re: Esther2444

by David M, 23-Jul-18 10:30 PM GMT

Esther2444 wrote:

There have been soooooo many whites everywhere, I seriously don't think I've ever known a summer when there have been so many.

Agreed. They are ubiquitous right now. However, I expect them (and other species) to crash next year if this dry spell continues.

Whilst it's good for the adults it's decidedly grim for the larvae.

A collective rain dance might be a good idea.