

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Feb-18 09:51 PM GMT

Despite quite a few sunny days recently, I have yet to see a butterfly. All the nettles upon which Red Admirals were enthusiastically laying back in November have succumbed to frost – I think there have been more in February than in December and January added together, and the forecast now is for at least a week of very chilly weather.

On my local walks, I have spotted the odd bird, but I rarely get a camera on anything interesting – it's just the usual fare that I manage to get the odd snap of:

Ring-necked Parakeets, which are already setting up home in holes in the trees and becoming very noisy.



Red Kites are increasingly to be seen circling in twos and threes, having comprehensively moved down from the M40 corridor.



Little Egrets – seen every winter and beyond, they have become less timid and more suburbanised, fishing in the stream running through our estate.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Feb-18 10:40 PM GMT

All the usual fare...used to be those three species you got shots of were rarities Dave 🙄 If only butterflies followed suit and we had a few more additions to the British breeding list 😊 Great set of shots BTW 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-Feb-18 01:21 PM GMT

What an array of avian exotica, Dave, although I'm aware those ring-necks can be a pest. I wonder if we'll get any more unusual species turning up with these Siberian winds forecast to sweep in from tomorrow?

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 23-Feb-18 06:54 PM GMT

Hi Dave,

Ring-necked Parakeets have reached my neck of the woods now with a roost of 50+ being observed recently by some local birders in a south Birmingham park, I even had a small flock of half a dozen or so pass through my garden a couple of weeks ago but they were gone before I could grab my camera.

Red Kites are working their way slowly closer along the M40 corridor too so maybe not long before they join the Buzzards that are usually somewhere overhead on my wanders around my local patch. Not seen a Little Egret around here yet but you never know.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 24-Feb-18 03:53 PM GMT

Love the suburban Little Egret Dave. 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Feb-18 07:04 PM GMT

Thanks, all. They are a curious threesome, come to think of it, none of which you'd have seen here 20 years ago. Easy to see all three on the same walk now, and within a minute of leaving the house. How things change. The Kites perch on garden fenceposts, the Parakeets make a thorough mess of garden bird feeders, and the Little Egret, when disturbed, flies off and sits uncomfortably on house roofs doing stork impressions... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Mar-18 04:52 PM GMT

Just spent three days in Yorkshire, heading back down this morning and leaving 4 degrees, fog and pouring rain. Four hours later, back near Heathrow and the sun was shining, the car claimed a healthy 15 degrees and a dash round my local patch turned up the first butterfly of the year - a Peacock over some brambles very close to the M25. No photos, but a definite first sighting for 2018.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 16-Mar-18 05:01 PM GMT

Nice one Dave. 😊 Now we all have to endure the next few days of fun. 🙄

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 16-Mar-18 09:06 PM GMT

Good to see you are off the mark Dave 😊

Still nothing for me although there have been a few sightings from the midlands, just mostly during the week when the better weather has occurred and

I am stuck in work. I am guessing I won't be seeing any butterflies over the next few days either.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Mar-18 07:28 PM GMT

Congrats on getting started on the 2018 Tally Dave 😊 I expect things will accelerate greatly over your way once this, hopefully, final burst of winter passes 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Mar-18 11:18 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

...a dash round my local patch turned up the first butterfly of the year – a Peacock over some brambles very close to the M25. No photos, but a definite first sighting for 2018.

Good stuff, Dave! First of many, I'm sure. We **must** be in for a break from all this wintry weather soon? It's starting to get rather depressing. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Mar-18 02:24 PM GMT

Thank you all for your encouragement – after the long wait, today provided some proper action! 😊

It was properly sunny, and not too cold at around 11 this morning, so after yesterday's warm but mostly cloudy day, I had hopes that one or two things might have woken up. I was right! Immediately outside the front door, fluttering between a hyacinth and the first of the year's dandelions, was a Small Tortoiseshell.



Suitably encouraged and exhilarated, I set off round my usual circuit and quickly encountered a Brimstone, flying energetically along the hedgerow and allowing only the most fleeting and blurred record shots.



Next, a bit further along, was a rather tatty Peacock down on a nettle patch.



The sun then went in for a while, but when it emerged again it drew out another couple of Peacocks (which did not stop for pictures) and along an ivy-covered fence I spotted a splash of orange – a nice Comma, looking barely touched by the ravages of winter and occupying a slot where they are often found just before hibernation.



Another Peacock flew by, and then along the homeward stretch I looked a bit more closely at a pussy-willow coming into flower. There happily nectaring was a brand new freshly emerged male Small White.





This was not something I had really expected to see, but the long spell of cold may well mean everything appears at once.

So – eight butterflies of five species. The season has started! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 26-Mar-18 04:57 PM GMT

That Small White is a very nice find for this time of year, Dave 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by trevor, 26-Mar-18 06:17 PM GMT

A caption for your first image might read ' I'm waiting on your door step where are you '. It's great when they come to you !. The Small White was quite a find, and looks brand new. With the fine weather today we should see more posts on here. Has the season started or was today just a blip.

Great stuff Dave,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 26-Mar-18 06:42 PM GMT

A nice selection there Dave and a Small White too, just goes to show that given the window of opportunity in the weather they will be out 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Mar-18 07:50 PM GMT

A Small White, wasn't expecting one of them so early this year. My first last year was the 21st March but last year was ridiculously early. Hope he found somewhere to hide tonight before the rain arrives!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 27-Mar-18 08:02 AM GMT

That's brilliant, nice one Dave. 😊 Love the Small White. 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Mar-18 12:54 PM GMT

What a cracking start to the season Dave 🙄🍀😊 Hopefully it's a taster of things to come 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Mar-18 05:00 PM GMT

Fantastic Dave, that's encouragement for all who've not got any shots yet 😊 But a White so soon is great news after the Winter we've had 🍵 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Mar-18 09:25 PM GMT

Well, you had to wait a while, Dave, but you pretty much made up for that wait in the space of a few short hours! A Small White was the icing on the cake, and a warning to me that I should look out for them myself on my patch the next time conditions are suitable.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Apr-18 09:18 PM GMT

Thank you all for your comments – it was a great start to the season, but things then ground smartly to a halt! That Small White was a bonus, and it's interesting to see it completely lacked the forewing spot, making it look more like a miniature Large White. Spring Small and GV Whites are often very white – I wonder what the evolutionary reason for this is?

After spending a very soggy and cold Easter in York, things improved on my first day back. Sunshine almost all day today (5th), though not all that warm. Nevertheless, the butterflies responded, and this time there were two Small Tortoiseshells waiting on the grass outside the front door.



By midday, the Tortoiseshells had stopped nectaring and were starting to take more interest in each other, and three sets of courting couples were seen altogether.



I saw nowhere near this number of the species back in the summer – they must hide themselves away very smartly after emergence.

Dave

Re: millerd

by MikeOxon, 05-Apr-18 09:31 PM GMT

Good to see Small Tortoiseshells around already. It'll be interesting to see how the season develops after such a slow start.

Mike

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-Apr-18 09:32 PM GMT

Lovely Small Tortoiseshells, Dave. Hopefully today wasn't another false start to the season. My Brimstone of Feb seems an age ago and we've had another Winter since then !. Holly Blues soon ?.

Here's to Spring (proper !).

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Apr-18 11:35 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, I knew things would perk up when I went back to work. Still, I managed to get my first transects done and recorded a couple of Brimstone. a few of these for those Small Torts though 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-Apr-18 11:41 AM GMT

Great shots Dave, I've yet to see a Tortoiseshell so a few greens from me has well 😊🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 06-Apr-18 03:01 PM GMT

Nice one Dave, those Torts together are great. 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 06-Apr-18 06:23 PM GMT

Nice shots of the Small Torts, Dave 😊 perhaps they'll do better this year?

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-18 12:22 AM GMT

Thank you everyone. It really was a good day for the Tortoiseshells! 😊

Today (6th) was warmer than yesterday, but the sun was hazy and the wind stronger. Following the same route as yesterday, and at about the same time, I saw six Brimstones, six Peacocks, a single Comma, and seven Small Tortoiseshells.



However, I only saw one couple engaged in courtship.



I did see a couple of the Peacocks involved in a territorial dispute, circling each other high into the sky at one point, and as usual, none of the Brimstones (all males) stopped for even a second.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Apr-18 07:36 AM GMT

Your local area seems flushed with Small Tortoiseshells, I have yet to see one this year. Great shots.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 07-Apr-18 11:02 AM GMT

Same here Dave, I've yet to get a Tortoiseshell shot, nearly did once, hope you get your Brimstones next 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Apr-18 08:03 PM GMT

Great set of shots Dave good to see things going on well at your end 😊 I know what you mean about the Brimstones bombing by but to be fair they do have more important things on their minds 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Apr-18 08:39 PM GMT

Thanks Trevor, Goldie and Wurzel. 😊

I nearly managed a Brimstone shot today when a female settled on the other side of a gate. However, leaping over gates is no longer within my repertoire, and after a slow clamber instead she took off again. They are much easier to get close to in August, and much less worn as well – I do wonder why I even try in the spring! 😊

Warmer again today (7th), but the sun was very hazy and disappeared soon after midday. It was quite breezy as well, and there were fewer butterflies. On the same local walk today, I only managed two Brimstones (one of each sex), two Small Tortoiseshells, a Peacock and a Comma.

The Comma was nectaring from the same set of dandelions as the Tortoiseshells have been frequenting.



Though seen in exactly the same spot, the Peacock was not the same one as I photographed yesterday.



Three consecutive butterfly days – things are coming together. Fingers crossed the weather forecast for later in the month is accurate. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 07-Apr-18 09:05 PM GMT

Starting to salivate at all these images coming thick and fast 🍷, I'm praying this warm spell lasts until Monday afternoon...

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 08-Apr-18 02:50 PM GMT

Lovely stuff Dave, love the Torts, 😊 I'm still waiting to see one this year.

Re: millerd

by David M, 10-Apr-18 09:46 PM GMT

Great to see things coming alive for you, Dave. I'm sure it will get better over the next few days too – we have 17–20c forecast for next week! 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 11-Apr-18 09:08 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, it feels good doesn't it just to see them 😊 Weather not too good here for the this week but sounds okay for next ,nearly time for the Lakes. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Apr-18 07:00 PM GMT

Lovely Peacock and Comma shots Dave 😊 I always think that Commas look particularly resplendent when on a yellow flower 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Apr-18 10:18 PM GMT

Thank you again, everyone 😊 – since last week, there has been unremitting gloom and damp round here. Until today, that is!

After yesterday when the temperature struggled to reach 10 degrees, today dawned sunny and stayed that way most of the day, with the thermometer nudging the 21 degree mark mid-afternoon.

My local patch responded, with the first Orange Tip of the year seen only a hundred metres from home. Overall, the tally reached respectable numbers:

Brimstone – 9

Small Tortoiseshell – 8





Peacock - 5



Comma - 4



Small White - 3

Orange Tip - 3





The first Holly Blues, GVW and Speckled Woods can't be far away round here, and with the forecast weather, the other early species will be emerging elsewhere. There may be an excursion or two this week... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 15-Apr-18 12:07 AM GMT

It's been a long time coming,Dave, great to see the Orange-tip 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 15-Apr-18 02:55 PM GMT

The best thing about Spring is when you see the first Orange Tips Dave 😊 great shots of them too 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 15-Apr-18 03:20 PM GMT

Great to see your Orange-tip photos Dave 😊🍷🍷

I see that a few were reported from all around the country yesterday, this week should see them getting into their stride if the forecasts holds good.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Apr-18 05:02 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff Dave 😊🍷🍷 Seeing those OTs I reckon in a week the OTs will be out in force over this when 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 15-Apr-18 06:31 PM GMT

You've just made up my mind what to search for this coming week, Dave, having just seen your mouthwatering Orange Tips. If the weather men have got it right it's bikinis and sun cream from mid-week! 😊 .
Had a quick glimpse of a Holly Blue, in Wiltshire on Saturday.

Things are on the mend !.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Apr-18 08:36 PM GMT

Trust your local spot to be displaying the glorious Orange-tip when mine has barely woken up with adult hibernators! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Apr-18 11:32 PM GMT

Spectacular stuff, Dave! Orange Tips seem to be on the cusp of major emergence, and that will make the coming week so much more enjoyable for all of us.

At last, spring is truly here! 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 16-Apr-18 11:03 AM GMT

What a beautiful and welcome sight those Orange-tips are Dave. 😊 Well done.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Apr-18 05:54 PM GMT

Thank you all once again for your comments about the Orange Tip shots. The first ones of the year were really uplifting after the six straight days with no sunshine. 😊 However, I shall have to look out for the aroma of coconut oil as the sight of Trevor in a bikini is probably best avoided... 😊😞

After another couple of not-really-very-sunny days (even though it was no longer cold), this morning it looked as if there might be a repeat. However, between 11 and 3, the sun appeared and made its presence felt – lifting the temperature noticeably. Out on my local patch, the butterflies responded and I spotted a Small Tortoiseshell and the first of five Peacocks almost immediately.





Finally I passed close to the area's major holly tree, and looking up I spotted what I'd hoped to see – a Holly Blue. No amount of muttering and cajoling could entice it down and in the end the wind took it off out of sight.

Overall, eight species were seen today:

Orange Tip – 7
Brimstone – 7
Peacock – 5
Comma – 5
Small White – 3
GVW – 2
Small Tortoiseshell – 1
Holly Blue – 1

What would they all do without the dandelions! At least no one has tried to mow them down in the name of curing untidiness – yet.

Still no Speckled Woods, but it surely cannot be long before they appear.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 17-Apr-18 06:46 PM GMT

Even without Speckled Woods that was a great haul, both in species and quantity. Just the one OT. for me so far. Unfortunately the Garlic Mustard along the old railway is flailed in late spring every year.

Great images, Dave !.
Trevor.

PS. Sent you a PM.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Apr-18 08:46 PM GMT

A cracking st if shot Dave, what a blinder of a day 🤩🇩🇪🇩🇪🇩🇪 Is it just me or does the fourth OT shot show a very dark leading edge to the fore wing – a possible ab? 🤔🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Apr-18 04:16 AM GMT

Looks like it's kicked off in grand style for you, Dave, with species tallies suddenly rocketing and Orange Tips coming out to play! It'll be interesting to see how Holly Blue numbers hold up after last year's spectacular showing!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Apr-18 07:47 PM GMT

It was a good day, Trevor – with luck one of several considering the forecast. 🤔

Thank you, Wurzel. The Tortoiseshells have been very good this year so far. Yes, that OT has a black leading edge to its wings and the black tips beyond the orange seem quite prominent as well. Probably not quite an ab. as such, but who knows? 😊 Still looking out for the elusive "half-'n'-halfer" after that Silver Spot last year... 🤔😊

Funny you should mention Holly Blues, David. After the first of the year yesterday, the sunshine and warmth today brought out a few more! 😊

Report of the day coming shortly...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Apr-18 09:06 PM GMT

Wednesday 18th April. A day of sunshine from start to finish, and I set off on an initial foray onto my local patch before 1000. I was greeted as usual by a Small Tortoiseshell and a Peacock, and then a series of Brimstones.



The head of this butterfly bore an uncanny resemblance to a bat when viewed close-up! 😊
Further Peacocks followed, including this one posing nicely.





From this point on, there were further sightings of Holly Blues, Peacocks, Small and GV Whites, Brimstones and Orange Tips, but the heat and sun meant none were stopping for long.

In the middle of the day, I popped down to Denbies. There was not much flying beyond Brimstones, Peacocks and a single Small Tortoiseshell. The slope was covered in violets, but things are not very far advanced as yet, with the trees barely coming into leaf and the bluebells in the woodland at the top of the hillside only just beginning to flower. It could be a week before the Grizzlies appear here.

Another local trip late afternoon was notable because of the numbers of Holly Blues, especially in the patch nearest home.



A rough tally for the day locally:

Brimstone - 15+
Holly Blue - 10+
Small/GV White - 10+
Peacock - 10+
Orange Tip - 7
Comma - 5
Small Tortoiseshell - 1

And still no sign of a Specklie! 😞

Otherwise, a very good day again, and it looks as if all those late Holly Blues last autumn haven't dented the numbers. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Apr-18 06:49 AM GMT

It would seem that your local patch is performing better than the old railway at the moment. We have specklies, but (up to yesterday) no Green veined Whites yet. You continue to hold the title of Mr. Holly Blue. 😊 .

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 19-Apr-18 08:29 AM GMT

More than 10 Holly Blues! And I thought I was doing well with two.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 19-Apr-18 08:37 AM GMT

Fantastic stuff Dave, what a few days you've had! 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-18 01:39 PM GMT

The season has now properly started as Dave is knee deep in Holly Blues 🍷🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 19-Apr-18 04:50 PM GMT

What can I say Dave, 🍷🍷🍷😊 that's a fantastic collection of shots, lovely Orange Tips and Holly Blues, I've yet to even see one or the other yet, I must get moving! Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Apr-18 10:39 PM GMT

Thank you all for the comments. 😊 Yes, it's good to see the Holly Blues back again, and in decent numbers so far.

Today was another scorcher, noticeably warmer than yesterday (possibly pushing 28 or 29 degrees hereabouts) – so much so that it put a dampener on butterfly activity to some extent and very much on attempts to photograph them. I went out a bit too late for one thing – everything was already very active, and as the morning wore on, many things disappeared. In terms of numbers, the Orange Tips and Holly Blues became most numerous, but the Nymphalids hid themselves away.

On the plus side, I saw two new species for the year: a brand new Speckled Wood and a very ragged Red Admiral, neither of which stayed still for a moment. I saw a few egg-laying Commas again, including one laying on elm within an unkempt low hedgerow by a pub car park. I have seen caterpillars on this hedge before. The camera settings were wrong for the shots I took – I may have another go tomorrow if I can relocate the egg.



When trying unsuccessfully to charm some Holly Blues down from the trees where they were whizzing about, I came across another Comma having a siesta.



Another good day really, with not far off fifty butterflies of ten species.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Apr-18 11:48 PM GMT

Almost 50 butterflies – a good day indeed Dave 😊 You'd think that they'd lay their eggs in a more concealed place rather than in plain sight on the tip of a leaf 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Apr-18 10:10 PM GMT

The total exceeded 50 today, Wurzel – mainly down to the sheer numbers of Holly Blues. You can always tell when they are doing well, as people comment about them to you. I bumped into an former colleague of mine today who did exactly that.

On another belter of a sunny and warm day, I went out a bit earlier and found the Holly Blues just starting their day as well. They were flying across from the shaded side of the ivy where they seem to spend the night over to the sunlit hedge on the other side of the narrow bit of field. Here they would sit for a while and maybe show a bit of upperside.



As the temperature rose, so did they, moving further and further up and into the trees. In amongst the army of male butterflies, I spotted a single female, identifiable by the black spots on the little bit of upper hindwing showing, plus some of the black on the forewing tips.



No doubt there will soon be a few more. The overall count of the species across all the various hotspots around my patch was definitely over 20: more than once I had five in a view, darting madly around the trees in the heat.

There were more Speckled Woods around today too, with half a dozen in various places. I went out a second time quite late and managed to actually approach one or two of them. The early evening light gave them a real orange hue, almost like their continental cousins.





The first female Orange Tips were out today as well, distinguishable from the frequent CVW by their smaller size and feeble fluttery flight.



One male Orange Tip had very pronounced and sharply outlined black borders to the orange patches.



I also caught up with the Red Admiral I saw the other day, its battered wings doing nothing to spoil its lovely swooping glides.



Aside from that, all the usual suspects were present, ten species in all. Approximate numbers from this morning, plus the Red Admiral:

Brimstone – 8
Orange Tip – 10 (inc 3f)
Small/GV White – 15+
Small Tortoiseshell – 2
Peacock – 7
Comma – 3
Red Admiral – 1
Speckled Wood – 6
Holly Blue – 20+

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 20-Apr-18 10:33 PM GMT

Dave

Love your Holly Blues. They are picking up around here too but certainly not in the numbers you seem to have near you.

Cheers
Ern

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 20-Apr-18 10:39 PM GMT

Your Holly Blues are gorgeous! I'm amazed at the number you've seen 🍷 – I saw my first today, a singleton!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-Apr-18 07:51 AM GMT

The Specklies have reached you at last, Dave.
It won't be long before they become a nuisance for the photographer, when numbers build.
I can't count how many times I've had a Butterfly lined up in the view finder,
only for it to be sent up by a Specklie.
Great Holly Blues, once again.

Happy days,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Apr-18 04:09 PM GMT

Lovely Holly Blues Dave, I've not seen one yet or a Speckie, but it shouldn't be too long now hope fully 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Apr-18 06:42 PM GMT

Thanks, Ern – Holly Blues are always good round here (as my diary entries from previous years will attest to!). 😊 Lots of rampant ivy everywhere, plus a

sprinkling of holly trees and plenty of other food plants for the summer caterpillars (dogwood for example). Ideal, really.

Thank you, Janet – they are lovely little things, and having them almost literally on the doorstep for eight months of the year is brilliant! 😊

Yes, Trevor, the Specklies won't remain a novelty for long, but they really very attractive when they are as new as they are at the moment. 😊

I hope you won't be waiting long, Goldie. The good weather should be bringing them along nicely. 😊

I didn't spend much time on my local patch today (21st), heading further afield for most of the day. I went out for ten minutes around six pm, and even though it was quite gloomy, it was still warm and humid after earlier showers. Even under the cloud, I still managed to see a Brimstone, a GVW and a Holly Blue flying happily around. The GVW was looking for somewhere to spend the night, and took great pains choosing which bit of cow parsley was the right one.



Reports from the rest of the day to come...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Apr-18 07:10 PM GMT

Saturday 21st April.

PART ONE

After having had a series of several days pretty well confined to my local patch, and probably exhausting its possibilities for the time being, I decided that it was time for an excursion. With interesting reports coming in from Mill Hill near Shoreham, I set off early and reached the site just before nine. It was already hot on the slope, and any hopes of finding sleepy butterflies were dashed. I first encountered a nice new Speckled Wood on the path down from the car park...



However, I was really here to see Grizzled Skippers, and they didn't disappoint. They were very active, and being difficult to follow in flight at the best of times this meant I had to rely on chance encounters. I must have seen half a dozen or so altogether.



There was no sign, however, of the Green Hairstreak seen yesterday.

PART TWO

After a couple of hours, I headed back, deciding that another look at Denbies was obligatory, being right on the route home. Clouds had started to build, and the sunshine (though still very warm) had become hazy and intermittent by the time I reached the hillside. No Grizzlies put in an appearance here, but I was very pleased instead to find that the reliable Green Hairstreak colony was very much in evidence. There were at least four individuals (looking at the photos), but there may have been more.









Also seen were four or five Peacocks, a similar number of Brimstones, and a Red Admiral.

However, the hairstreaks really made my day! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-Apr-18 07:27 PM GMT

Brilliant Green Hairstreak Hairstreak images, Dave.
You've captured the turquoise colouration to perfection.
It's about time I explored further afield.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 22-Apr-18 10:02 AM GMT

Wonderful images Dave, looks like I need to make my first trip of the year to Denbies although predictably Tuesday looks a bit dodgy weatherwise 😞

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-18 08:11 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave 😊 Love the Grizzlie action and the greenstreaks 🍷🍷 The first Greenstreaks in Wiltshire were reported today from the Marshie site, whilst I was on the otherside of the county at my Duke site 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Apr-18 11:08 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – they were wonderfully fresh Green Hairstreaks, and very obliging too. If I disturbed one it just returned to the same spot right under my nose. 😊

Thanks, Buggy – yes, Denbies is now worth a visit, and the first skippers should appear very soon.

Thank you Wurzel – you may have been thwarted on the hairstreak front, but id you find any Dukes? They can't be long now... 😊

Sunday 22nd April

After last night's thunder and pouring rain, I could hardly believe I woke to another brilliantly sunny day. It was a bit fresher, yes, but that suited me and the butterflies too. Holly Blue numbers are still increasing, and there are as yet very few females. They also don't seem to mind the heat, and are also happy to fly under overcast. Adaptable and successful. Today was Holly Blue heaven – sunshine, and overnight rain leaving lots of wet ground to provide those mineral salts to aid reproductive success.





Other highlights included a very new-looking Red Admiral, unlikely to be one that had overwintered.





I came across a particularly small Small White – this is not a huge flowerhead at all. It almost looks like a Wood White.



All eleven species seen here this year were around today – by the time the sun disappeared at around 3, I had seen a lot of butterflies. Another terrific day on my local patch. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-18 11:19 PM GMT

No Duke unfortunately Dave, they're seem to be late at this site as well 😊 As you've now worked out how you attract Holly Blues please can I put in an order of a half a pint of sweat please? 🤔😅😅

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 23-Apr-18 11:37 AM GMT

Wow Dave! Fantastic images from your local patch, and further afield.

The Greenstreak is a beauty, and your Holly Blues are great. Also really like the Large Whites. 🍷 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Apr-18 05:12 PM GMT

Lovely, lovely Butterflies and those Green hair streaks are fantastic 🍷 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Apr-18 10:37 PM GMT

Unfortunately I think I'd probably be prosecuted for selling something like that, Wurzel. Home-made, you see... 😊 😊

Thank you, Andrew and Goldie. I think the Green Hairstreaks are probably my favourites so far this year. 😊

Monday 23rd April. Much cooler, and after a sunny start it was mostly cloudy all day. A bit of weak sunshine meant a few things were about on my local patch, but not a lot of variety. GVW were most numerous, with at least eight seen here and there, mostly sitting out the bits between bursts of stronger sunshine.





Only four Holly Blues came out to play, plus a couple of Small Whites, three Orange Tips, and two Speckled Woods.





The latter two were seen in precisely the same spot half an hour apart – I thought it was the same butterfly, but the photos show two different individuals.

Not such a good day today, and the weather goes downhill for most of the rest of the week 😞

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Apr-18 08:53 AM GMT

"Home-made, you see... 😊😄... 😞😞"

Lovely GV White and OTs' and the obligatory Holly Blue 😊😄🇬🇧

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 24-Apr-18 02:12 PM GMT

You've made me really jealous now 😞🇬🇧🇬🇧 No Speckies, GVW's or Holly Blues seen here yet and weather's grim 😞 still, time Yet, Great shots of them all 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 24-Apr-18 08:08 PM GMT

I've been seeing a lot of GVW this week, probably something to do with the (mostly) wet spring we've had so far.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Apr-18 10:22 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel – yes, even on a rather iffy sort of day a Holly Blue or two will potter along. 😊

Once we get over the next "hump" of bad weather, Goldie, you should start to see them too. 😊

Yes, Buggy, the GVW have been emerging steadily for a week now, including the last two rather dull days. I think they like damp weather as you say.

There were more today (Tuesday 24th). Cloudier than yesterday, but curiously it felt a bit warmer and when I went out in the middle of the day it was bright enough to set a few things in motion again. The same few species (except no Small Whites today): Several new GVW, including a female which rejected the advances of a male.





A handful of Holly Blues in various spots including one very new-looking one in the "grass" just a metre from my front door.





A roosting Orange Tip, plus a couple of others as well..



I also came across a gaggle of three Speckled Woods gyrating around each other until one individual managed to entangle itself in an old spider web. The owner had long since departed, so I succeeded in rescuing the butterfly, but all three disappeared into the greenery.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-Apr-18 11:05 PM GMT

Great Green veined White shots.
Numbers of GVW's are building down my way too.
No action today, too much cloud.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 25-Apr-18 10:58 AM GMT

Love your GVW shots Dave, really nice. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Apr-18 10:35 PM GMT

Thanks, chaps – When there is not much else around it can be good to concentrate on things like the GVW. 😊

25th April. Noticeably chilly this morning, but strong sunshine and building cloud. Somehow my local patch managed to avoid the hefty showers that seemed to be around and when the sun shone the butterflies flew. Or at least some did – Brimstones and the Nymphalids seem to have disappeared and Orange Tip numbers are very low now (I only saw three again today). However, the Holly Blues came into their own again, and I must have found over twenty in various places. The intermittent sun kept grounding them and when it reappeared there was a good deal of open-winged display as they warmed up. As the desired temperature was reached, the wing angle changed – it seems a very efficient and precise regulator. Some were taking salts from the damp ground again...



In one curious incident, a Small White male kept bothering a GVW female, forcing her into the grass while he sat above on a dandelion.



Eventually he chased her high into the air and onto a bit of tree blossom, where I could just make out that he continued to pester her. Unfortunately, I couldn't see whether any more came of this – do the species ever hybridise? I've not read of it.

Overall, it was Blue Heaven today. 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Apr-18 10:46 PM GMT

Sorry Dave somehow I missed your previous posting 😊 Lovely GV Whites – they're one of the great 'fall back' species 😊 Mind you for you (and possibly only you 😊🍷) Holly Blues also seem to be a 'fall back' species 🍷🍷 Next time we meet up you'll need to give me a few tips as I don't have anything like your success 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Art Frames, 26-Apr-18 07:40 AM GMT

Just catching up with other patches. I am stunned by your latest reports. 🍷🍷

A remarkable amount of wonderful butterflies. If I see one or two Green Hairstreaks and Holly Blues on a couple of days in the season locally I will be happy. I would normally have to travel further south. You clearly need help to fight them off 😊

I am encouraged and uplifted when I see that some parts clearly still have butterflies in number. I'll just need to travel more. 20 holly Blues.... 🤩

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 26-Apr-18 08:17 AM GMT

Fabulous series of the Holly Blues! Like Art Frames, this is a species that I rarely see more than a couple of times a year. But what a stunner!

Given that numbers of Holly Blue can fluctuate so wildly from year to year, I'd be interested to know if those kind of numbers are normal at your patch, or does this look like being one of the good years?

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 27-Apr-18 03:22 PM GMT

All those Holly Blues! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 27-Apr-18 03:40 PM GMT

You've got every thing there I've not seen yet 🍷🍷 Lovely!! Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 27-Apr-18 07:09 PM GMT

Not only a great selection of Holly Blue photos from your local patch Dave but I don't think I have ever seen so many poses with wings spread that far open before. Great stuff 🍷😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 27-Apr-18 07:18 PM GMT

Like everyone else, I'm amazed by the numbers of Holly Blues you consistently get down there. You clearly have a bit of a hot spot on your patch. I'm only the other side of London from you, yet I have only seen two so far. One behind my home, and one in Regents Park!

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Apr-18 11:06 AM GMT

CallumMac wrote:

Fabulous series of the Holly Blues! Like Art Frames, this is a species that I rarely see more than a couple of times a year. But what a stunner!

Given that numbers of Holly Blue can fluctuate so wildly from year to year, I'd be interested to know if those kind of numbers are normal at your patch, or does this look like being one of the good years?

It's not for nothing that he's known as the 'Holly Blue Whisperer' in these parts. Like EssexBuzzard I only live the other side of London but never see numbers like Dave. My gut feeling is the heat island effect of being so close to Heathrow Airport has a lot to do with it. So far this year I've seen 3, all at work in central London.

Re: millerd

by David M, 28-Apr-18 05:50 PM GMT

You've done remarkably well to get such great images of skittish species like the Whites and Holly Blues, Dave. Even though the weather has been cool, these butterflies remain hyperactive in my part of the world.

I'm pleased to say that, like you, I'm seeing lots of Holly Blues again. This is two years on the run so enjoy them as the inevitable crash will likely follow soon. 😊

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 01-May-18 02:24 PM GMT

Some beautiful open wing views Dave, Blue Heaven indeed. 🍷 The Speckled's are very nice as well. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-May-18 10:26 PM GMT

Thank you Wurzel - more GVW coming up. One secret is to go out early before the sun has properly energised them all. 😊

Thank you, Art. The GH patch at Denbies is a good one, and as for my local Holly Blues... 20+ is not unusual at peak times. 😊

Thanks to you all as well, Callum, Janet, Goldie, Neil, Essex, Buggy, David and Andrew. These numbers of Holly Blues really are not unusual in the spring, and the summer brood can be equally good. It just seems to be a favourable location. I have yet to experience a poor season for them, but I imagine at some point their parasite will gain the upper hand. Certainly the regular third brood in October/November has no adverse effect on numbers either. 😊

After nearly a week of cold, cloud and rain, either at home or up in Yorkshire (especially yesterday!) the day dawned blue today (1st May). It was pretty chilly to start with, but I set out round my local patch just after 9 and was soon seeing butterflies. Early on, most were keen on nectaring or just basking to warm up, and the GVW were particularly obliging.



However, most numerous again were the Holly Blues, with over 20 seen in various spots all along the walk. Today, the many patrolling and perching males included a few females. It also appears the weather has battered a few of them, but there were still some fresh ones.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-May-18 10:47 PM GMT

Unfortunately some of us are in work whilst the butterflies are warming up Dave 🍷 More great shots especially that really smoky first Green-veined White, lush 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 01-May-18 11:01 PM GMT

I can only echo what Wurzel says. I was off yesterday, when it was wet and freezing cold. I'm off again tomorrow and, guess what? It's going to rain again. Maybe someone upstairs doesn't like me...

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-May-18 11:25 PM GMT

Well done Dave, 7ou're two ahead of me.
As yet no female Holly Blues, or Orange Tip females, still searching !.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 02-May-18 10:03 AM GMT

Fantastic Holly Blues Dave 🍷🍷 They're late coming out here has are the Speckies, may be next week if the forecast for then is right. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-18 01:02 PM GMT

Oops, sorry Wurzel and Essex for unconsciously rubbing in the retirement thing... 😞😞 . I've lost count of the days in the past when lovely sunny mornings have given way to cloud by lunchtime and I had to give up the idea of seeing anything much. Being out there before nine now is such a bonus. Still, it doesn't help on days like today with heavy rain all day so far. Never mind, it all gets better tomorrow and the next ten days or so seem really promising. 25 degrees forecast here on Bank Holiday Monday... unlikely as it may seem.

The HB females on my patch are particularly behind the males this year, Trevor – I would hope there are quite a few left to emerge. And OT females have been very thin on the ground too. A couple of years ago I'd seen three before seeing a male.

Thank you again, Goldie. Next week, you should be seeing lots more Holly Blues and Specklies – and who knows what else? 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-May-18 09:58 PM GMT

Love those Holly Blues again, Dave. You seem to live in a prime spot for them. I'm also interested to know you're still seeing Commas. They disappeared from my neck of the woods nearly a fortnight ago yet Peacocks have been increasing in numbers! 😊

Who can ever get into the logic behind butterflies' lives?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-May-18 11:03 PM GMT

Cheers, David. I hadn't actually seen a Comma for a while, so they were very welcome. Last year the last of the hibernators overlapped with the first of the new *hutchinsoni* individuals in June so the old guard should be around for a little while yet. I think it takes a while for all to come out of hibernation. Definitely a prime spot for those Holly Blues – judging by numbers, you seem to have a hotspot near you too! 😊

Wednesday 2nd May: The sun didn't properly appear until after four, and even then there were interruptions for heavy showers. I only got as far as the nearest part of my local patch, pretty well within sight of home, but the sunshine had sparked several white butterflies into life, including a couple of Orange Tips. Nectaring, basking and roosting seemed to be on the agenda, and consequently there was some good posing and accessible subjects.



A couple of Holly Blues had also sprung into action, and one was found nectaring on the inevitable dandelion.



I also saw a couple of Speckled Woods, but that was it – five species only. I wasn't out for long though and didn't venture far. However, the stars of the day were the Orange Tips.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 02-May-18 11:32 PM GMT

Beautiful orange-tip photos. 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-May-18 06:06 AM GMT

Yes, superb Orange Tip images, Dave.
The second soaking this week did not clear here quite so early.
But on Tuesday morning with a temperature of 8 to 12c, the Orange Tips were warm enough to fly, but not warm enough to patrol non-stop.
This provided, by OT standards, some easy basking shots.

Hope to find something interesting today !,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-May-18 02:07 PM GMT

No worries Dave 😊 My time will come...eventually 😊😊 I can only echo what others have said - those are fabulous Orange-tips shots 😊🇮🇪 Your first Small White is cracking as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 03-May-18 02:22 PM GMT

Great shots all round Dave, but fantastic open wing GVW's.
I'm still in awe of your local patch. 😊😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

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

Many thanks, all. 😊 The conditions were perfect for approaching basking Orange Tips - constant hot sunshine is really not for them, so a late afternoon burst after a generally cloudy day worked beautifully. I see there is more hot sun in the forecast for the weekend, with 25 - 27 degrees expected round here again on Sunday/Monday... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 04-May-18 05:27 PM GMT

A lovely selection of Holly Blue images there Dave. I don't think I've ever seen more than about a dozen in one outing and that was at Shipton Bellinger a few years back now. You've captured the colours and sheen perfectly.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-May-18 10:08 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline. 😊 There are just so many to choose from, it's actually not difficult to get close. Such an attractive little butterfly.

Thursday 3rd May:

Something different was called for today on another promising sunny day. After the obligatory walk round my local circuit (more on that in a bit), I headed off to Bedfont Lakes Country Park. I started with the northern part, which is more artificial and manicured in places (they cut the grass and path edges...), though there are some wild bits. One leafy path is designated as a "nature area" and this did host the highest number of species, including over a dozen Brimstones (which have been largely absent lately on my local patch), plus Orange Tips, all three Whites and Speckled Woods. I checked another area for Green Hairstreaks, but saw none this time. Notably absent were Holly Blues, Commas and Peacocks.

I then drove round to the southern part of the Country Park; there is no connection and the main line to Windsor and Reading cuts through the middle. Right at the initial entrance gate, a Holly Blue was engrossed in sucking up salts from the damp ground – always a good sign.



In the end I had to leave one of the most amenable subjects I have ever come across, but it was a very satisfying encounter. 😊

More from my local patch shortly – female Holly Blues are on the rise! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-May-18 07:51 AM GMT

I'm not surprised you were reluctant to leave, Dave. It's not everyday you witness this behaviour and even better that she's in such good condition. I will look forward to the female Holly Blues.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 09:14 AM GMT

Fantastic Greenstreak shots Dave 😊 – a great sequence from adult to egg 🐛🥚 And of course the Holly Blue, I've still not seen one mud-puddling 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-May-18 08:48 PM GMT

You can have a load of these for those Hairstreaks 🐛🐛🐛

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 05-May-18 09:18 PM GMT

Yes 🐛🐛 from me too great photos

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-May-18 09:25 PM GMT

It was one of those almost perfect butterfly moments, David. It's not often your subject sticks around quite so persistently as that, and doing something interesting to boot! 😊

Thank you Wurzel – I was needless to say pleased with the photos. 😊 Mud-puddling Holly Blues are quite common in these parts where partly shaded damp patches remain on paths in sunny weather. They are almost invariably newly emerged males.

Very kind, Buggy 😊😊 Now you know I I feel when I see your White Admiral caterpillars and other early stages. You have great patience – not my strong suit. 😊

Thank you too, Katrina! 😊

May 3rd – some more. Before (and after) the trip to Bedfont Lakes, I had the obligatory look at my local patch. I would say that GVW and Holly Blues were running neck and neck today, with a couple of dozen of each at least. The weather must have suited Orange Tips as well, as there were more today than on any day so far this year – approaching 20 I'd say. A few Brimstones were back too, but nowhere near as many as at Bedfont.

One difference today was that perhaps a third of the Holly Blues were females. The first of these I spotted on the hedgerow a minute or two from home, very early on before the sun was too strong.





Star of the day here, though:



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-May-18 10:29 PM GMT

You couldn't get a fresher looking female HB than that last one. I'm gonna have to have a browse of your patch sometime I think to experience the wonder of your Holly Blues in person!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-May-18 10:59 PM GMT

What can one say, other than great stuff !.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-May-18 11:14 PM GMT

There's got to be more to this than just whispering or cologne Dave, I swear that you went down to the crossroads at midnight and made a deal with a red, goatee bearded individual in order to get Holly Blue shots like that 🤪😏 I count myself lucky to get one or two reasonable shots of this species a season and you seem to do it day in and day out during their flight 🤪🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

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

We bemoan the lack of butterfly species in the UK, Dave, but with a bit of patience you can observe some wonderful things with those we've got, and you have done precisely that. I'd kill for such intimate encounters such as your Holly Blues. I see them regularly near me but it's a rare treat to witness

them at such close quarters as you seem to do by default!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-18 08:15 PM GMT

You'd be welcome, Buggy – that will be the day they all hide away of course... 😊

Thanks, Trevor! 😊

You've sussed it, Wurzel... and you really don't want to know what the rest of the bargain was. 😊😊

Part of the equation is the sheer number of Holly Blues I'm seeing, David. By far the majority of them, especially after about 10 on a warm sunny day, are flying higher up and don't settle anywhere close. However, early in the morning and especially on cool sunny mornings after overnight rain, they start the day by coming down and basking on low shrubs and even on the grass. They can also be seen sucking up dew from the leaves, and fresh males frequently take salts from damp patches along the paths. When females are laying, they behave a bit like Brown Hairstreaks and can be found quite far into shaded bits of the chosen plant, and after achieving their aim they come out into the sun for a rest and a warm-up. This can be low down, and if you spot one you can almost guarantee it will open up at least a bit at some point. Both sexes will also bask before they roost in the evening, though not so much on a hot day. The spring brood seem to roost round here in the ivy-covered trees where they fed as larvae in the autumn.

Friday 4th May: the day turned out sunnier than expected and I made a last minute decision to go down to Noar Hill before the bank holiday weekend traffic made things difficult. Several other folk had the same idea, including Neil Hulme crossing the county line from West Sussex.

It wasn't too long before I encountered my first Duke – which turned out to be a Duchess.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-May-18 10:10 PM GMT

Saturday 5th May required me to be at home, so I went out early and late on my local patch, and at least in the morning it was relatively cool! As usual, Holly Blues were everywhere, with increasing numbers of females. With so many, I could concentrate on certain aspects of behaviour. I've noticed before that it's not unusual for two butterflies to sit close together – almost uncomfortably so. I'm not sure why this is.



The sun was very strong and any basking individuals didn't open up far.





I tried shading one, and sure enough she opened wider – I had to do quite a bit of fiddling with the photo to produce this image!



There was interest on the GVW front as well. A very small white butterfly fluttered up from the grass, and at first I thought it was an aberrant Holly Blue as it was the same size. However, once perched, it turned out to be the tiniest female GVW I've ever seen. The first shot doesn't show this at all, but as luck would have it, the butterfly moved onto a spray of cow parsley and was immediately accosted by a male of the same species. He seemed huge in comparison – the male is only very slightly nearer the camera than the female. You can see she wasn't having any truck with this as her abdomen is characteristically raised.



Finally of note was a female Speckled Wood I encountered late on. She was so new that from certain angles to the light, there was an almost purple iridescence on the wings.





Aside from these standout snippets, there were still plenty of Orange Tips, Whites and Brimstones flying.



There is still more variety at home than at the specialist species locations. It's always worth going out.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-May-18 11:03 PM GMT

Cracking Dukes from Friday Dave 😊 I was there today but it was so hot they kept their wings tightly shut to prevent themselves getting too hot 🍷 And even more envy inducing Holly Blues 😊

Have a goodun

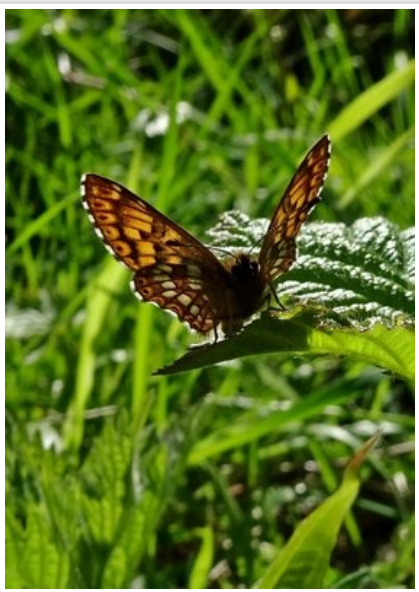
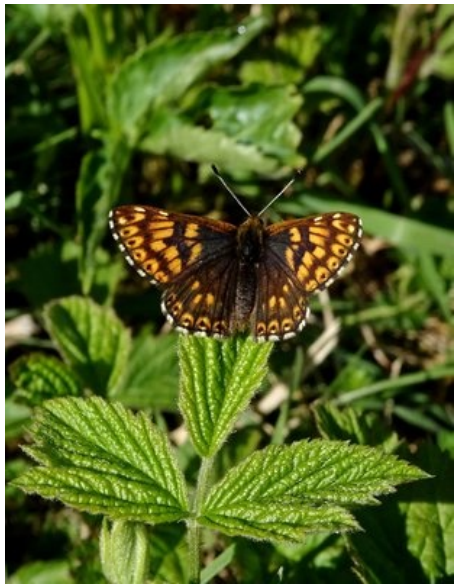
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-May-18 11:08 PM GMT

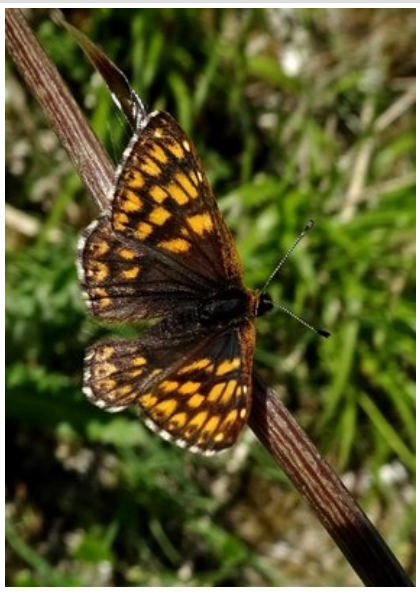
That was beginning to happen a bit with the Dukes when I left on Friday too, Wurzel, and on Sunday when I saw them elsewhere, it was very prevalent. Not easy being a spring butterfly when the season oscillates back and forth between winter and summer with barely a day or two in between.

Sunday 6th May. A glorious summer's day, and a look at the M25 at around half eight reinforced my plan to head north today, rather than south. It only took 40 minutes to get to the visitor centre up on Dunstable Downs. Kites were already being flown as I headed straight down to the bottom of the hill, then along to the Whipsnade end and back along the diagonal (far less steep!) path to the top.



There were no Skippers (which I had hoped to find) and only a modest selection of commoner species.

After a refill of the water bottle courtesy of the NT, I drove on the short distance to Totternhoe for what turned out to be more of the same – At least half a dozen Dukes in two distinct areas, and three Green Hairstreaks very widely spread out.



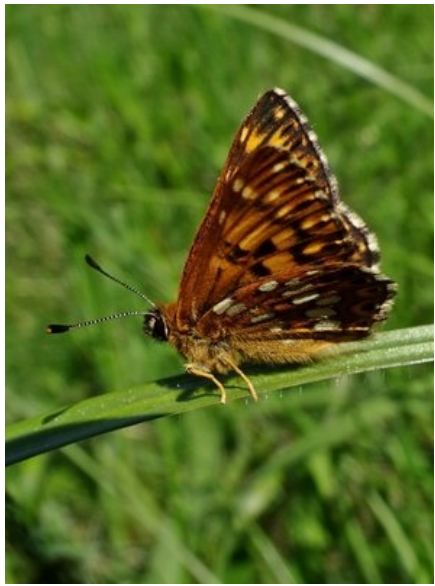


Brimstones were in good numbers here, with a fair number of Orange Tips too, but again no Skippers. As at Noar Hill, not seeing a Dinky or two along with the Dukes seemed very strange. A somewhat ragged Small Tortoiseshell put in a surprise appearance near the car park – I haven't seen any at home for a few weeks now – and I did see the outing's only Holly Blue.



As usually happens I took the scenic route back along the bottom of the Chilterns, and the prominent mass of Ivinghoe Beacon beckoned along with visions of the ice cream van in the car park. By now, things were unsurprisingly busy, and it was only by dint of inventing a car park space that I managed to stop. Many of the folk up there in their (in my humble opinion only you understand) vastly oversized cars would never have made it. Suitably refreshed and renewed, I headed for the gully to the left before the final climb to the top, and quickly found another couple of Dukes. The first I saw had suffered some kind of congenital deformity, giving it a very curious appearance. It could fly perfectly well and had many a squabble with the other one.





Once again – no Skippers, and once again a Green Hairstreak.



Back home, much later on, I ambled round my local patch, hoping for a few roosting butterflies. However, even at 6pm it remained hot and all I found asleep was a single female Orange Tip. the males, the usual contingent of Holly Blues and even a few Brimstones were all still rushing madly about. Time to put *my* feet up at least...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-May-18 12:05 AM GMT

Flippin hell Dave you're making retirement sounds exhausting 😳😓 Fabulous Dukes and Greenstreaks, too many great shots to nominate a fave 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 08-May-18 06:20 AM GMT

Well I shall nominate mine which is that fabulous image of the Green Hairstreak egg-laying 🍷

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-May-18 07:14 AM GMT

I want to be retired 😊😓

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-May-18 08:55 AM GMT

Just catching up on your shots Dave, fantastic 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-May-18 12:02 PM GMT

That's quite some Bank Holiday weekend you had there, Dave. You saw more than I have all year by the looks of things.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-May-18 10:55 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel and Bugboy – yes, retirement is exhausting, especially in the hot weather. To be recommended, however... 😊😓

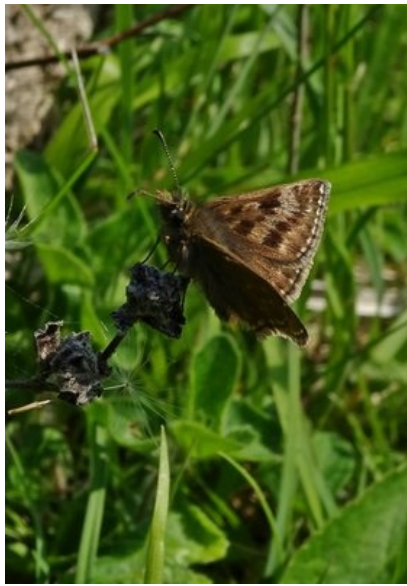
Thank you Pauline – she was rather splendid, wasn't she! 😊

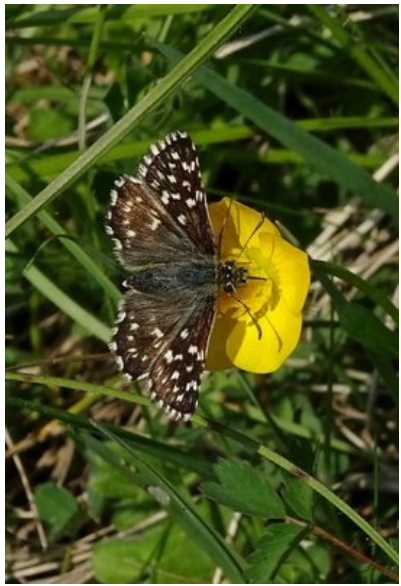
Thanks, Goldie – the weather's been just brilliant, which does help! 😊

Not a bad few days, David, though it's been a bit too warm again here in the southeast.

Tuesday 8th May. Another sunny and hot day, so an early start was called for again. South to Denbies this time, and the curse of the M25 meant it took far longer than it should have done. However, by complete serendipity this also meant I arrived at exactly the same moment as Susie, who was on her first major butterfly outing of the year. Good to see you as always, Susie!

Green Hairstreaks were in their usual spot by the steps, with around half a dozen in the area and another couple at the top of the slope in the grass.





On the far side of the hill, there were two new Small Heaths, my first of the year.



I had just enough time for a fleeting look at the Small Copper hotspot at Bookham, but there were none around, little of anything in fact apart from this very small, but attractive, moth.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 09-May-18 06:57 AM GMT

Dave

Fantastic shots. I particularly like the second shot of the Small Heath. I have yet to see one of these this year.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-May-18 11:30 AM GMT

A lovely sequence of shots Dave 😊👍 Those Grizzlies really do stand out with those lovely chequered margins 😊 Hopefully Bentley will 'wake up' this weekend and the Pearls will be out 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 09-May-18 04:26 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, great Hair Streak shots, I've not met up with the Dingy yet, hope fully the weather will have some more Sunshine in the coming weeks to find them and other Butterflies, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-May-18 09:50 PM GMT

Must admit, Dave, I thought your moth in the final image was doing a plausible impression of a Dingy Skipper given what had transpired before!

You have an enviable range of species within easy access of where you live and yes, well done with the Small Heaths, a butterfly I get greater delight in seeing again with every passing year.

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 10-May-18 06:56 AM GMT

Some great shots Dave ,I reckon your last (moth) image ,is the scarsish (?) Small Yellow Underwing ,pretty notable down here in Kent. nice find !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 10-May-18 08:46 AM GMT

Wow Dave you have been busy!

A fantastic selection, I particularly like your female Holly Blues. And like Ernie I think your 2nd Small Heath shot is a cracker!
Good to see your Noar Hill Dukes, I had a visit there at the weekend as well. You also have some more great Green Hairstreak shots. 🍷

I'm very interested in your Denbies trip. I've walked through and around that area quite a few times, but never yet as a butterfly enthusiast.
I've got the next couple of weeks off, split between the south east and Dorset, I may have to pay a visit. 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-May-18 07:16 PM GMT

Thank you all for the appreciative comments – it has been a busy time recently (and there's more to come!). 😊

Denbies Hillside can be a great site, Andrew. It's only just getting started at the moment, but in a week or two the variety should increase much more. 😊

On **Wednesday 9th May**, after collecting Bugboy from a train, we headed down to see Trevor in Sussex. He had promised us a look at his local patch (the Old Railway through Hailsham) and then Abbots Wood and possibly High & Over.

It took rather longer than expected to get down there, but we were out on the old railway by half ten or so. The change in the weather to cooler conditions seemed to have subdued the butterflies here, as we saw only a smattering of Holly Blues, Orange Tips and Speckled Woods.





On to Abbots Wood, which is a complete maze to the uninitiated. Trevor however led us unerringly to two areas where Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries were flying. And flying was the word, as the midday sunshine kept them almost constantly airborne. Distant shots of briefly settled butterflies only!



High & Over is not far at all from here, so we carried on the next spot, hopeful for Wall Browns. Unfortunately, the main hotspot was very windy, perched high up above the Cuckmere River, and we only managed a glimpse of a single Wall; there were a couple of Small Tortoiseshells enjoying the breeze though, and a pale Nymphalid which could only have been a Painted Lady. The more sheltered wooded areas had Holly Blues and Orange Tips.



So, not a terribly successful day at this point. However, much better was to come... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-May-18 07:41 PM GMT

You did mighty well with the Pearls even if they were very active...though having read Trevor's PD I'm more up to speed (spoiler alert 😊) so have an inkling of what's coming next...still something to look forward too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 10-May-18 08:32 PM GMT

They all look like rather familiar butterflies Dave, can't wait to see how the second half of the day turned out 😊. Not sure when I'll be able to get round to reporting my version of events though, I'm so far behind now 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-May-18 08:46 PM GMT

That's cheating, Wurzel! 😊😊

After High & Over, the three of us headed back to Abbots Wood. The sun was lower, and hazy with it, but initially the Pearls were still in active mode. Then briefly they started to sit and nectar or bask in the fading sunshine.







Another ended up in roosting position near the ground.



An unusual and very attractive view normally only available by dint of extreme contortionism! We all managed a series of normal underside shots, and the now docile butterfly eventually found itself photogenically perched on one of the many bluebells.





A highly successful end to the afternoon. But was it all over? Trevor elected to walk home, and after reassuring ourselves that we knew the way out of the maze and back to the car, Buggy and I set off too. With plenty of daylight still, weak sunshine even, we headed west along the A27, failed to take the A23 and ended up at Mill Hill. I think that should form a separate post...

A big thank you to Trevor for hosting our visit and taking us to the Pearls in Abbots Wood.



Well worth the drive down there. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-May-18 08:55 PM GMT

There was still a great reveal Dave 😊 Cracking set of shots but that double spread is a corker 🤔🤔🤔 Looking forward to Mill Hill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-May-18 09:04 PM GMT

Well done Dave, I'm pleased you and Paul found the day worthwhile.
As usual the day passed by too quickly!
Surprisingly it only took half an hour to walk home, the route being far more direct on foot.
Might do it again to keep fit!

A pleasure to meet you both again,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-May-18 09:33 PM GMT

I was particularly pleased with that full-spread underside, Wurzel. 😊 One of those split-second poses and I was luckily in exactly the right position to catch it. 😊

Yes, a very good day out Trevor. We thoroughly enjoyed it and your company. After you left us, there was a brief moment of worry until we remembered which way we'd come into the wood... 😊

But, as mentioned earlier, there was more to come. The great advantage of the long (and still-lengthening) evenings is that you can still be seeing butterflies after seven in the evening. Buggy and I reached the slopes of Mill Hill just before seven, in fact and headed for the path along the bottom. The hill is turning yellow as the horseshoe vetch starts to bloom and in the gradually fading light it almost glows. Before long, we spotted two Grizzled Skippers roosting on the same small piece of hawthorn scrub, and along the bottom of the slope, once we got our eye in, we found another ten. All were on similar plants. Often these were in pairs, and in one case there were four on one plant, three of them in a group.



In the process, he also spotted a slumbering Small Heath.



By the time we left, the sun was behind thicker cloud and quite low and the light was quite dim. I'm surprised we managed any photos at all...

A splendid finale to a really cracking day!



those eyelashes!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 10-May-18 10:16 PM GMT

Great report Dave, I've still not gone through my pics properly. Thanks for being my chauffeur for the day 😊. It was probably my longest day ever for butterflying, didn't get home til 10.30 😲😓

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-May-18 11:50 AM GMT

Dave, your posts should come with a health warning to those with a weak heart! What a time you've had with those PBFs and Grizzlies! It's still early in the season so I dread to think what you'll be sharing with us next!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 11-May-18 02:02 PM GMT

Now that's an epic day Dave, love the full spread Pearl. 🍷
And fantastic Mill Hill action. 🍷

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 11-May-18 02:32 PM GMT

Beautiful Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Dave, well worth staying late for 😊 Not bad Grizzlies either 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 11-May-18 07:24 PM GMT

Great selection of PBF shots Dave...I really like the one on the wood 😊

and the roosting Grizzled and Dingy Skippers 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-May-18 10:44 PM GMT

It was a very good day, Buggy. I really didn't think we'd still be seeing butterflies in the relative gloom at half past seven... 😊

Thank you David! A short period of relative rest is called for I think before the next big outing. 😊

Thank you, Andrew. It wasn't so much action as inaction at Mill Hill – they were very sleepy butterflies after a hard day whizzing about like lunatics no doubt. 😊

Thanks, Mike. Definitely worth prolonging the day for on both counts. 😊

Thank you Neil – yes, when the PBF calmed down they provided some great opportunities. 😊

Thursday 10th May. Back home today, and back to the land of Holly Blues. They are still out in good numbers and seem to have forgiven me for my absence over the last few days.



Yes, you can never have too many Orange Tips...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-May-18 08:42 AM GMT

MAGIC!! Dave, 🍷🍷 I can't add any thing else, it's all there in your great shots of the Pearl's and Grizzlies, Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – a great day out. 😊

Friday 11th May. No opportunity to go further than my local patch again. The sun was in and out, which suited catching a few more Orange Tips open in all their splendour.



The lengthier time they were spending on flowers allowed shots from less usual angles as well, demonstrating just how long their proboscis is.



There were more Small Whites around now than recently – another emergence it would appear, as they looked new. One male was seen resting on a leaf. After opening up in a burst of sun he started sucking from the surface, then hopped down and did the same, taking minerals from the ground.



Also seen were the customary Holly Blues, GVW, Large Whites, Brimstones and Speckled Woods, plus a single Red Admiral.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 13-May-18 07:54 AM GMT

David, I love the shot of the OT from underneath showing both wings open. You've got the underside markings and the orange of the upperside of the tips at the same time. Fantastic.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-May-18 10:30 PM GMT

Those OTs are still looking good Dave 😊🍃 Really like the final OT shot, interesting to see it from a slightly different angle and the double underside it pretty 'mint' too 😊🍃

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-May-18 11:02 PM GMT

Thanks, Ernie and Wurzel. It seemed a good idea to make the most of the Orange Tips while they are still with us... 😊

Indeed, the next generation are on the way. On Saturday 12th May, sunshine was very limited, though it was a bright morning and not cold. I sought out one of the few patches of cuckoo flower on my patch and there was a very small Orange Tip larva somewhere in the transition to green from its initial orange. About half a cm long I'd say.



That was it for the day – light rain set in at lunchtime and persisted until after dark.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-May-18 11:17 PM GMT

Great sequence of Orange Tip images, Dave, and nicely aligned with the odd photo of other Pierids too. Your Orange Tip from 12th May looks a little unusual – a more heavily pronounced forewing spot and maybe a bit darker than normal?

Re: millerd

by Susie, 14-May-18 08:36 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

Tuesday 8th May. Another sunny and hot day, so an early start was called for again. South to Denbies this time, and the curse of the M25 meant it took far longer than it should have done. However, by complete serendipity this also meant I arrived at exactly the same moment as Susie, who was on her first major butterfly outing of the year. Good to see you as always, Susie!

Dave

It was great to see you too! Really kicked my butterfly season off to a flying start to see a friend. Sorry I had to go without saying goodbye, I had a very hot tired dog on my hands (who got two ticks from that wretched place).

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-18 09:26 PM GMT

I think you're right about that Orange Tip, David – a pity it wasn't in better condition. A few more Pierids from the following day coming up in a mo. 😊

No problem, Susie – could see he was getting a bit hot even early on. The curse of black fur on a hot and sunny day. 😞 Hope to see you again at some point in the season. 😊

Sunday 13th May: A much sunnier day, but I was still limited to my local patch. I think that Holly Blue numbers may actually be dropping, as I only saw ten or so today.



I also saw Orange Tips, including a nice female.



Dave

PS. That's the same male Orange Tip as yesterday... 😊 They don't go far. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-May-18 09:53 PM GMT

Monday 14th May (Part One):

A lovely sunny day and not too hot either. Another outing was called for, so I headed down to Chiddingfold for the first visit of the year. I was there soon after nine, but it was nearly ten before the butterflies appeared. Suddenly, the little fluttery shapes of Wood Whites could be seen all along the edges of the rides, and over the next couple of hours I must have seen at least fifteen. More importantly I came across a couple of ladies who were also taking an interest in the butterflies, one of whom was in a ditch at the side of the path. This turned out to be Pauline, who I have managed to miss on countless occasions in the past. It was great to meet finally, and it was a most enjoyable couple of hours.

There were one or two female Wood Whites among the males, and I did find one example of their famous courtship ritual, affording those tantalising glimpses of the uppersides...



Today's moth was a rather attractive muslin moth...



...and today's caterpillar was found on a willow... but it was this one, not what we might have hoped for.



It reached midday, and Pauline had to leave and I had plans to move on elsewhere too. Coming up in Part Two! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-May-18 10:21 PM GMT

Lovely Wood Whites Dave and I found lots of those caterpillars yesterday whilst searching for more Emperors, I think it's a Mottled Umber.

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 14-May-18 10:25 PM GMT

David, fantastic Wood Whites. You got a great sequence of sharp pics of the courting behaviour. Mine were only video quality snapshots. But did you see the way the male extends his proboscis to touch the female? I could not believe how long it is when stretched out fully...
...or that he did this at all. How weird is that?

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 14-May-18 11:32 PM GMT

Nice selection of Wood White Dave, and I also like the sequence of Orange Tips a couple of posts back. Make the most of these, for they will only last another week or two. 😞

Re: millerd

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

Lovely Wood Whites Dave 🍷 can't even find the Dukes here 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

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

Great Wood White photos Dave 😊

Your attractive Yellow moth from the other day is a Brimstone Moth.

Your Ermine Moth is a female Muslin Moth, a good find. Unlike the males which are often seen in moth traps, the females are active by day and rarely come to light. <https://ukmoths.org.uk/species/diaphora-mendica>

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-May-18 10:49 PM GMT

Cracking Wood Whites with the Holly Blue as well which is de rigueur 😊😊 I was going to help out with the moth ID but Neil got there already 😊 Also sent you a PM about the Hill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-May-18 11:20 AM GMT

Thanks, Buggy – caterpillar ID noted. Quite a colourful little beastie... 😊

Thanks Ernie! The "burst" mode on the camera does the trick nicely for capturing this characteristic bit of behaviour. Fascinating to watch. 😊

Orange Tips are definitely fading at the moment, Essex, sad to say. I think the last of them have emerged round here now. 😞 I shall make the most of any I see.

Thank you, Goldie – they are lovely delicate little butterfly. 😊

Thank you for the moth IDs, Neil. Did you see the moth I posted (seen at Bookham) on 8th May? No one has ventured an opinion on that one, but I'm sure you'll know what it is! 😊😊

Thanks, Wurzel, and thanks for the info. More travels will soon be in order... 😊

14th May (Part Two):

After the delights of Chiddingfold and beautiful woodland, I headed over to Denbies along the bottom of the North Downs. In such glorious weather, with the fresh green of the countryside, such drives are a pleasure in themselves.

In the bright warm sunshine, everything here was very active, but there were plenty of Dingy Skippers, good numbers of Grizzled, and some fairly worn Green Hairstreaks.



Whilst chatting to some fellow enthusiasts, there was a flash of something much brighter – an Adonis Blue rushed by and over the fence at the bottom of the slope. They do often follow the path on the other side of the fence down here, as it is sheltered from the wind that blows so often on this hillside. Unfortunately it was the only one seen (and it didn't pause for a photo) but there should be more very soon.

On my way back along the top path, I encountered a spiralling pair of Brimstones. The female was doing her best to shake off the very persistent male, and eventually succeeded, but not before I had managed a few shots of the tussling couple.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-May-18 11:47 AM GMT

Just love those Brimstone shots Dave. 😊 Not something I've ever managed to achieve 😞🇩🇪

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 16-May-18 06:35 PM GMT

Great shots of the Wood Whites Dave. And you've caught those Brimstones brilliantly. 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 01:51 PM GMT

Cracking Brimstones in flight Dave ad that Holly Blue is cracking – it's almost like a female Purple Hairstreak in reverse 🤩😊🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

Thanks, Pauline – now seems to be a good time to catch the Brimstones as the males are regularly accosting previously mated females who want nothing to do with them. They end up in tight spirals and often finish on the ground where both spread their wings, the female especially.

Thanks Andrew – Wood Whites do make an excellent subject. 😊

That Holly Blue did look a bit strange, Wurzel. Blue butterflies do sometimes become darker in shade as they wear, but this was extreme. 😊

I'm slipping a bit behind with this – you'll be catching me up soon, Wurzel! 😊😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-May-18 11:00 PM GMT

No fear Dave I'm still in April 😊 Plus I'm still experiencing the problem that I spoke about at the Social 😊

On a brighter note – maybe see you at the Hill on Saturday? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-18 09:23 AM GMT

Hmmm – I'll set the alarm clock now, Wurzel! 😊

Tuesday 15th May: Down to Mill Hill again to meet up with Bugboy and see things in full sunshine this time. What a splendid place – 17 species seen on the day, and that didn't even have Comma, Speckled Wood or Orange Tip on the list...

The first butterfly seen was an Adonis Blue, and over the course of the morning fresh ones were emerging so that they were everywhere by lunchtime...



...along with lesser numbers of their Common cousins.



Dingy Skippers abounded, and there were also good numbers of Grizzled as well. I spotted a two of the latter together on a hawthorn with the male making advances on the female, but nothing seemed to come of it.





A Small Copper (my first this year) set up a territory in the most sheltered part of the slope and set about anything else that moved, notably the Green Hairstreaks sharing this corner. Somewhat inconveniently, one prominent perch for both species was one of the large Deadly Nightshade bushes – though not this time:



As things warmed up (despite the sun it was quite chilly and windy early on), I headed for the more wooded bits towards the top of the hill, where it was sheltered in the lee of the hedgerows. There is masses of Dogwood up here, and both Holly Blues and Green Hairstreaks were on and around it, doubtless laying eggs.





However, the real object of looking around up here then appeared - the Wall Brown. In various spots, patrolling in regular set routes, were perhaps half a dozen fresh males. In the strong sun, not one fully opened up to bask, and they were characteristically very hard to approach.



After returning to the main slopes (and just after Bugboy left to investigate the harbour area), I found the Small Copper had encountered a new protagonist - a lovely fresh male Brown Argus (another first for the year for me).



The two insects really did not get on and their tussles were quite intense and prolonged.

The species seen here today were:

Small White
Large White
GVW
Brimstone
Dingy Skipper
Grizzled Skipper
Red Admiral
Small Tortoiseshell
Peacock
Small Heath
Wall
Holly Blue
Common Blue
Adonis Blue
Brown Argus
Small Copper
Green Hairstreak

A very worthwhile trip indeed. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-May-18 12:29 PM GMT

It really was a wonderful few hours, it was difficult to know what to point your camera at at times. You did well with those pesky Walls. I can add Speckled Wood to that list, just one flitting around in the copse at the top. Gutted I missed the Argus though, but I'll get plenty more chances 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 18-May-18 03:34 PM GMT

It's got to be 10 points for that lot, Dave !.
That number of species in one day must be nearing a record.
I am going to wait until my next Wilts. visit for the Blues etc. it's a nice flat site (Tilshead).

Keep up the sterling work !.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 18-May-18 06:10 PM GMT

17 species in one day at this time of year...that's some going. Sounds like a great day 🍷 😊

I reckon your moth from Bookham on May 8th is a Small Yellow Underwing <https://www.ukmoths.org.uk/species/panemeria-tenebrata>

Cheers,
Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-18 08:36 PM GMT

Another really good day it was, Buggy, Neil and Trevor. 18 species (with your Specklie, Buggy) flying does take a bit of beating, and I bet there was a Comma and an Orange Tip up there somewhere... 😊 😊

Wednesday 16th May was a bit of a disappointment, with just a bit of weak sun first thing. A very short trip out locally produced only three butterflies: a GVW, a Small White and a Holly Blue. This was a new-looking male so it seems there is still a trickle of emerging butterflies.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-18 08:57 PM GMT

Thursday 17th May was much better, though I hadn't reckoned with how chilly it would be first thing. I was on the hunt for some Small Blues, and headed first for Totternhoe where on arrival at nine it was only 9 degrees and quite breezy with it. The strong sun soon got to work, and in one of the sheltered gullies a couple of Dukes were already slugging it out. Moving on to another bigger gully, there were half-a-dozen more Dukes, and the first of several Dingy Skippers seen here today.



This was in fact a lovely new Duchess and after a while basking she set off into the air and disappeared.





I imagine she was very quickly found by one or other of the waiting males...

Aside from the Dukes and the Dingies (which with their well-documented mutual antipathy always makes me think of *The Jocks and the Geordies* from one of those old DC Thomson comics, possibly the *Dandy*), a handful of Orange Tips and a Green Hairstreak were all that appeared. However, I did bump into Wolfson and have heard since that later on some Small Blues did make an appearance. Good to meet you, James. 😊

Next stop would be an entirely new site for me, and it was well worth finding.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 18-May-18 09:09 PM GMT

Whenever I am out at a Duke reserve and people pass by asking me what I am doing but know nothing about butterflies they are often astonished at how small a Duke is when I show them. Most of the pictures on this forum are of close-up shots (mine included) and this always exaggerates their size. Your picture of one sitting on your finger puts it all into perspective.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-May-18 09:30 PM GMT

17th May (Part Two) My next stop on the quest for Small Blues was not far away at an old chalk working near the village of Pitstone at the foot of the Chilterns. There are a lot of chalk workings old and new in this area, and this one at Pitstone Church End is an old one now grassed over. It is a large expanse of relatively flat greenness, with chalk banks bounding it to the north and east. The "grass" is not just that, but contains many wildflowers, including quantities of kidney vetch.



After a short walk through trees from the car (there is little parking space, but there were no other visitors), I emerged into sunshine and was soon seeing Small Blues. I only covered a relatively small area, but must have seen more than 20 of this tiny butterfly. Almost all were males, but oddly the very first one I saw was a female. Almost all were very new.



I have never visited this site before, and I shall definitely be going again to what was a very rewarding and (I believe) reliable Small Blue location.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 18-May-18 09:43 PM GMT

I was at Mill Hill that same day Dave! Popped in mid-late afternoon, didn't stay long but seeing the Adonis persuaded me to come back the next day. 😊

A fantastic selection. Great shots of the two Grizzled's, and I always love the Wall's.
What a beauty that Duchess is. 🍷

edit : Stunning Small Blue! 🍷

Cheers

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-May-18 09:50 PM GMT

Hmmm, looking on Google maps it looks like Pitstone is relatively easy for me to get to, I've looked over to it many a time on my way to Ivinghoe Beacon from the ridgeway walk 😊

Re: millerd

by kevlng, 19-May-18 08:16 AM GMT

Dave,

Enjoyed reading your posts this week. That was quite a haul of species at Mill Hill. I love the photo of the Duchess at Totterhoe, she's beautiful. I visited Pitstone a couple of years ago for the Small Blue, it's a great place.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 19-May-18 08:22 AM GMT

Neil Freeman wrote:

I reckon your moth from Bookham on May 8th is a Small Yellow Underwing <https://www.ukmoths.org.uk/species/panemeria-tenebrata>

Not sure how I missed this at the time, but Neil is spot on with SYU. I found the same species yesterday and have posted some pics in my PD, for comparison.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-May-18 07:55 PM GMT

Thank you all – there have been a fine mix of species over the last few outings. 😊 If I had to single anything out, that Duchess at Totternhoe might well be the one!

I forgot to add that at the end of the day on 17th, I found that the first Small Heaths were out on my local patch. I saw five altogether in the late afternoon sunshine.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-May-18 09:04 PM GMT

Friday 18th May: Yet another glorious morning, though once again it was a pretty chilly start. I decided to stay local, and walked north to Harmondsworth Moor. It was still quite early and none too warm, but the bright sunshine had only brought a few things out: a few Orange Tips and Whites were all I saw across a wide area. No Common Blues or Brown Argus out yet it would seem.



As I walked back and onto my local patch, things began to liven up a bit. I saw three Small Tortoiseshells, all in various stages of decrepitude, the first for a while. Considering the wear, they flew amazingly well.



The remainder of the walk here was predictable – a dozen Holly Blues, plus Whites, Orange Tips, a Peacock and a few Speckled Woods. Most of the latter looked worn, but there was one much fresher individual.



Lastly, I had another look at the north part of Bedfont Lakes Country Park. Brimstones were once again notable here, plus a few Orange Tips. I had hoped for Brown Argus and Common Blues here too, and thought I had found one or two of the latter... However, the blue butterflies flying around and settling on the vetches and trefoil plants were all female Holly Blues. I counted six of these going through the motions of egg-laying, if not actually doing so (quick glances revealed no eggs).





There is no holly to speak of in the park, and little dogwood, so this ever-resourceful species makes other arrangements.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 19-May-18 10:12 PM GMT

What a coincidence. Both of us found our first Small Copper of the season on the same day!

Great open-wing Holly Blue shots by the way.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-May-18 11:03 PM GMT

Those Small Blues and that Duchess Dave 🍷🍷😄 It was great catching up with yourself and Lee today a really cracking outing – here's to the next one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 19-May-18 11:48 PM GMT

That's a lovely Duchess you found at Totternhoe, Dave, and gorgeous Small Blues at Pitstone 🍷😄

Mike

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 20-May-18 05:27 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, especially the Small Coppers, and the HB's. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-May-18 08:14 PM GMT

Thanks, Ernie – yes a nice little Copper to be the first one on my local patch this year. 😊

A great day, Wurzel, with those Dukes and then the Small Blues – and then an even better one on Saturday! 😊

Thank you Mike – she was most obliging and then the Small Blues were almost queuing up to have their picture taken! 😊

Cheers, Andrew – it's good to see what's around locally after all the long-distance excursions... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-May-18 10:31 PM GMT

Saturday 19th May: I'd arranged to meet up with Wurzel and Philzoid down at a certain Wiltshire hillside.

In view of the sheer number and variety on offer here, I'm going to have to break this posts into sections or it will become unwieldy! 😊

I woke early anyway with the sunshine and was down on the site absurdly early (at half eight) having driven through thick fog at one point, which was rather worrying. It was only 9 degrees on arrival, so a brisk walk up the hill was called for. Even at these temperatures the sun was strong and one or two things were already flying – a few Green Hairstreaks and Grizzled Skippers.



By the end of the visit, I would say that these latter two species were probably the most numerous of all those seen. At around 10 o'clock, the first

Marsh Fritillary appeared – but I shall reserve the majority of these for the next part of the post!



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-May-18 07:32 AM GMT

What a difference a few days can make.
I was at 'the hill' on the 15th, for several hours, no sign of a Marshie.
Going back ASAP.
Really looking forward to your results.

Brilliant stuff, Dave.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 21-May-18 08:02 AM GMT

Oooòoooh Marshies 😊 can't wait for the next post!

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-May-18 08:46 AM GMT

Hi! Dave , Wow! I'm catching up on the Butterflies you've posted , lovely shots, keep them coming, 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-May-18 08:52 PM GMT

Glad the Hill paid up Dave 😊 Sorry we got there a bit late, we're still playing catch-up having only just gotten our first Pearls 😊 It was great catching up and meeting Lee out in the field – looking forward to the next posting 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-May-18 10:16 PM GMT

Thanks all, sorry about the wait for the next installment of The Day on the Hill... 😊

After seeing the first Marsh Fritillary soon after ten, more and more appeared, along with others of the many species the site has to offer. There were lots of Small Heaths, constantly tangling with the Marshies which they resembled somewhat in size and colour – at least from a distance.



I spotted a handful of Small Blues here and there, quite different to Pitstone where they were everywhere.



I also found a female Adonis, slightly deformed and of a fairly subdued mostly brown colour.



At around this point, I bumped into Lee Hurrell – someone I see every year at least once somewhere or other in Southern England. As we caught up and generally chewed the fat, I spied two more figures approaching in the distance. Applying maximum zoom and then enlarging the image it was possible to recognise Wurzel and Phizoid wielding cameras as they made their way along the path.



Then followed a great deal more chat, as the Fritillaries danced around us. We did collectively find a male Adonis, which kept coming back to our general area, but rarely stopped for long.



We also noted the largest Orange Tip any of us had ever seen, and several Walls glided past, a deeper orange than the Marshies in flight, and somewhat larger too.

Eventually, it was time to leave this wonderful place (I was running out of water for one thing), and I walked slowly back to the car. Naturally enough I was distracted several times, not least of all by a couple of Grizzlies...



It had been a glorious and memorable day, with many lovely butterflies and excellent company as well. It was great to see you all! 😊

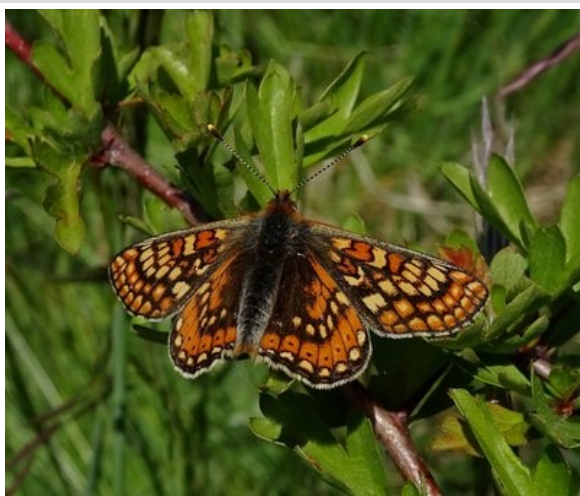
The Marsh Fritillaries deserve their own separate post... Coming right up! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

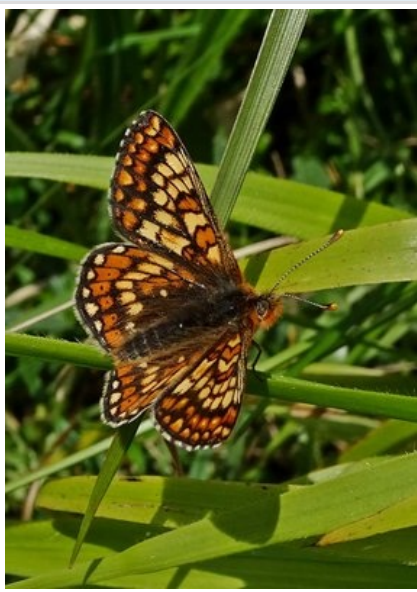
by millerd, 21-May-18 10:31 PM GMT

The final installment of the serial... Marshies!









What a wonderfully colourful and variable butterfly! 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 21-May-18 10:56 PM GMT

lovely Marshies, although I'm getting withdrawal symptoms, its been 3 years since I've had a Marshie fix! 🍷🍷🍷

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 21-May-18 11:03 PM GMT

Wow! Nuff said.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-May-18 07:57 AM GMT

I'm like Bugboy, I've not seen Marshies for years, lovely shots Dave 🍷🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-May-18 02:15 PM GMT

A fantastic array of Marshies Dave 😊🍷 Getting there early certainly was the way to go as by the time we arrived they were acting pretty manic 😲

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Lee Hurrell, 22-May-18 03:15 PM GMT

Lovely to see you again, Dave! It's uncanny how we always bump into each other. This site can now be added to (by my reckoning): Fairmile Common, Denbies, Chiddingfold Forest, Aston Rowant... are there any more?

Cracking set of photos too.

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 22-May-18 09:32 PM GMT

Beautiful stuff from the Hill Dave. 🍷😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-May-18 10:18 PM GMT

Thank you all – a most enjoyable way to spend a summer's day. Strange that – this month now feels completely like summer, even though we aren't into June yet and the Orange Tips are still flying (just!). Let's hope autumn doesn't arrive on the 1st July... 😊

How to follow a day like that? Well, you can't really, so **Sunday 20th May** was a bit of a mark-time sort of day. First off was a trip down to Denbies to see how the Adonis were doing, after only one seen there last week. After negotiating endless cyclists, and re-routing because of the long queue of folk who like to spend their sunny Sundays dumping stuff at the local tip, I finally arrived at the car park only to find that the whole of Steers Field had been taken over by a couple of dozen assorted large vehicles and their occupants. National Trust officials seemed to be taking a keen interest, but as of today (Tuesday), I believe the situation remains unchanged. 😞 I made my way to the main hillside and back later via the woodland along to the west.

Adonis Blues were now out in good numbers, but the sun was strong and it was breezy (as usual) so photo opportunities were hard to come by.



There were also lots of Dingy Skippers and quite a few Brown Argus, plus Common Blues and even some elderly Green Hairstreaks.



For the second part of the day I decided to investigate Juniper Bottom, a small piece of downland which is part of the large Box Hill complex of woods and open hillsides.



Brimstones wandered through at intervals, and sure enough, buzzing around the scrubby dogwood was a Holly Blue.



The Common Blues were quite lovely – when brand new like this they nearly give the Adonis a run for their money.





A different kind of day, but the Blues at the end made it worthwhile. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Lee Hurrell, 22-May-18 10:33 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

I found the slope (at left of the picture)

Give it a month and that slope will be good for Dark Green Fritillary too 😊

Best wishes,

Lee

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-May-18 08:09 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, I think when Common Blues are fresh their colour is a gorgeous Blue, I haven't seen Adonis for ages, another species I'd really like to see again 🍷 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-18 10:38 PM GMT

It will, Lee, and there'll probably be Silver-washed as well. I've seen both fly there confusingly at the same time. 😊

Thank you Goldie, and I quite agree. Some of the Common Blues I've been seeing have been beautiful creatures. 😊

Monday 21st May - more sunshine and a different destination: Aston Rowant. Breaking with habit, I had a look on the south side of the M40 to start with, but drew a complete blank here. Maybe I just go down the wrong path... Anyway, it took little time to get back to the more familiar north side of the reserve. Walking along the bottom path, I soon saw Green Hairstreaks (including one with a full set of white spots), Dingy Skippers and Brown Argus, but it wasn't until I reached the Beacon Hill area that Common Blues appeared - dozens of them - plus more of the other species too.







On the way back, I also came across a belligerent Small Copper, chasing anything and everything including a small bird that flew low and unexpectedly out of the scrub.



A scattering of Brimstones completed the picture. I saw no Adonis, but this site is always behind those further south, so in a day or two...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-May-18 10:40 PM GMT

Great set of shots Dave clearly showing the changing of the guard – out with the spring Skippers in with the Blues 🤔👍

Have a goodun

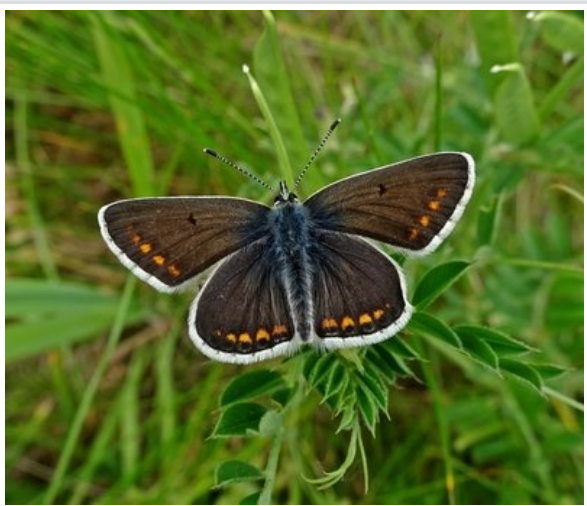
Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-May-18 11:27 PM GMT

Very much so, Wurzel – there has been a bit of a blue explosion over the last week. At the rate they are going they'll all be over in a fortnight! 😊

Towards the end of the afternoon on 21st, I had a look at the larger open grassy area near me between the motorway and the M25. This is Heathrow's land, and earmarked for some kind of "development" regardless of which expansion option the airport elects to go for. Ominously, there were a lot of heavy vehicles churning up the ground over the winter, and they made a right mess. I fully expect certain species to be affected, possibly badly. 😞 However, I saw several Small Heaths this evening, and in one small area with a variety of flowers amongst the grass, I found first a Brown Argus and then a Common Blue. They were preparing to roost, but both opened up a bit and posed nicely even though the sun was a bit hazy.





When I reached home, I could see impressive thunderclouds building to the south west.



Nothing came my way, however.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 24-May-18 06:14 PM GMT

You're doing a great job of ticking off the species as they emerge.
Great images from the hill. including the dodgy character in the hat ! 😄
Also that storm cloud is well captured, fortunately I had two fine days in Wilts.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-May-18 08:50 PM GMT

The colours on that open wing Common Blue Dave 😲 – gurt lush 😄🍷 I reckon that the Common Blue suffers a bit from the same syndrome as Small Torts and Peacocks – because it's common we don't give it enough credit in the 'wow' stakes 😄 Cracking looking butterfly 😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

p.s. Trevor – that's no way to speak about Philzoid 😄😄

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-May-18 10:48 PM GMT

Thank you, Trevor – you're right, you never know the kind of folk you're going to bump into out there in the western hills... 😄😄

Spot on, Wurzel, they can be a stunning butterfly (especially when you think about the variety there is in the female of the species too). 😄

Tuesday 22nd May: Another sunny and warm day, so another excursion, but not too far – down to Bookham. With no hope of following in Bugboy's footsteps and tracking down various exciting larvae, I stuck to the easier option of seeing what was flying in Banks Meadow where Small Coppers and Brown Hairstreaks are the order of the day in August.

The first surprise was to discover that the same strip of hedgerow and grass was home to Dingy Skippers. Perhaps it shouldn't have been so surprising as the field is full of birds-foot trefoil, but I'd not heard reports of them being here. I saw four or five, maybe more.



Where territories overlapped, multi-species battles frequently ensued as all three smaller species are distinctly belligerent little creatures. The Coppers were particularly fresh, and some had a distinctly burnished appearance – brassy rather than coppery.







Also seen along the hedgerow, disdainfully ignoring the meeles below, was a Comma, the first I've seen anywhere for quite a while.



Today's moth (there's always one) was a Silver-Y.



After Bookham, there was time to have a look at Box Hill – but that will have to be a separate post...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-May-18 11:05 PM GMT

More great stuff Dave, great Coppers 🤔🍷 and a Comma – where has that one been hiding? 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 25-May-18 02:08 PM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, 🍷 some I've yet to see .Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

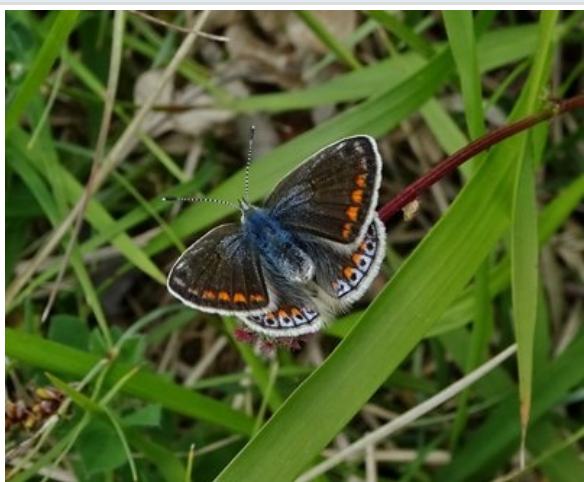
by millerd, 26-May-18 08:59 PM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and Goldie – at least it's not the full trek to Dungeness for a variety of coppers (though that place is something else...!). 😊

I went on from Bookham to Box Hill, and a look at two separate areas of the hillsides there. First up was Burford Spur, quite an exposed chalky ridge, which had a sprinkling of both Dingy Skippers and Common Blues. The latter were newly out, as this example shows.



I then moved over to Dukes, the area of hillside to the east of the main viewpoint slopes.



Various Adonis of both sexes, the males showing wear already:







Clouds built in the distance (over Kent, possibly as far away as Northern France...), but again no showers came my way today. 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-18 04:46 PM GMT

Back to home turf on **Wednesday 23rd May**. A wander round my local patch started and ended with Holly Blues...





Orange Tips have clearly finished here for the year. Shame! 😞
However, there does seem to be new round of Speckled Woods and Small Whites appearing at the moment.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-18 08:02 PM GMT

Thursday 24th May was mostly cloudy for a change, and I stayed local again and sought out a few roosting butterflies. I started on my local patch and found Common Blues, Brown Argus and Small Heaths. There was enough warmth in the sun through the clouds to cause one of the blues to open up a bit.



I then moved on to have a look at Bedfont Lakes CP again, where there were more of the same.





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-May-18 08:26 PM GMT

Friday 25th May was another grey one, but the forecast seemed to indicate that the cloud might clear from the south later. When things brightened at home, I took the risk and drove down to Bentley Wood. The sun did appear sporadically, including for a few minutes as soon as I arrived – which was enough to energise this Marsh Fritillary, the first I have ever seen at this location.



In the brief spells of sunshine, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries magically popped up from the vegetation.



As far as I could tell there were no Small Pearls out yet, but considering the lack of sun there was a good showing of PBF.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-May-18 11:24 PM GMT

Great stuff recently Dave, it's hard to keep up 😊😊 Interesting to see a proper 'brown' Common Blue female and a lovely set of Pearls 😊 They were in an even worse state of repair today – they seem to have come and gone in the blink of an eye 😊 It was odd to see Marsh Frit – where have they been hiding then? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 27-May-18 11:37 PM GMT

Lovely PB pics, Dave – it's still my ambition to see one for myself!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-May-18 07:56 AM GMT

Great reports of your recent wanderings, particularly Bentley Wood, a site I've yet to visit. As for Boxhill it's many years since my last visit, and I once worked in Dorking.

Must catch up !.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-May-18 08:20 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, I tried to see some this weekend but didn't catch the Dukes or the Frits so I've enjoyed yours 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by peterc, 28-May-18 09:00 AM GMT

Dave,

Well done on finding the Marsh Fritillary at Bentley Wood – I thought they had disappeared from the site 😊 . As Wurzel said, they might have been there all along.

ATB

Peter

Re: millerd

by David M, 28-May-18 04:14 PM GMT

Fabulous set of reports lately, Dave, and I'm particularly encouraged to hear about your Marsh Fritillary find.

The male Common Blue in your Thursday 24th May report looks fresh out of the pupa. Absolutely stunning.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-18 09:45 PM GMT

Thank you everyone. 😊 The Marsh Frit at Bentley was a real surprise and within a few minutes of arrival too. An interesting reappearance (if it ever went away of course). Some of the Common Blues I've been seeing have been quite lovely, but like everything else, in the constant good weather we've been having they are active for 12 hours a day and become worn very quickly. I think they all emerge and couple over a shorter spell of time too and then get to work laying! With reasonably decent weather between now and August we could be in for bumper second broods. Fingers crossed...

Saturday 26th May. Another excursion today, but I put myself in the care of TfL for the day and went down to Hutchinsons Bank by public transport. As ever, Mr SpOck was at hand to provide a commentary on the site, and said that no 100% confirmed sightings of Glanvilles had been made this year yet, though he had confidence in a small handful of "flyby" sightings. We had another of these while I was there, but it was really inconclusive (a rapidly moving orange-coloured butterfly of the right sort of size). To me it could have been a new Comma, or possibly a Painted Lady – a three-way split of equal likelihood in my book.

Never mind the Glanvilles though – this is a terrific place to visit. Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Green Hairstreaks, Common Blues, Brown Argus, Holly Blues, Small Heaths, Brimstones, GVW, Speckled Woods, a Peacock, a Red Admiral and even a couple of Orange Tips. Add to this my first Large Skipper of the year and hundreds of Small Blues... and you get the picture. 😊 Which of course is what I did – lots of them, and it has taken a while to whittle them down.

Where to start? Well, here is the sign at the main way in, at the end of Farleigh Dean Crescent.



Immediately on from this is a sheltered and sunny gully where many of the above-listed species can be found, and where Glanvilles have been seen in the past. The rest of the site is chalk hillside vaguely divided into compartments with interlinking paths. Near the bottom of the hillside along to the east is a large area that has been "scraped", removing most of the topsoil and exposing the chalk. The area is full of kidney vetch and also home to many Small Blues. I saw dozens of females laying on the flower buds.





Finally, to round off, one of the many Dingy Skippers from across the site...



...a rather nice Small Heath...



All in all, another great day out! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by MrSpOck, 28-May-18 10:24 PM GMT

We had a glanville from 5pm to 6pm on Saturday, it flew in to feed on the Horseshoe Vetch not far from the flyby we had earlier, it was then on the

path, since the downpour 10pm Saturday night there have been no other sightings so far.



Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-May-18 10:27 PM GMT

That could well be the insect we saw earlier, then – it's had a bit of wear, hasn't it! It's a bit pale, which is what made the idea of Painted Lady go through my head later.

Dave

Re: millerd

by MrSpOck, 28-May-18 10:38 PM GMT

There was a fresh male as well, but didnt get a picture of it, i think this was a female, last seen flying up the bank of the cutting.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 29-May-18 02:36 PM GMT

Love your Coppers Dave, and the Blues. You have found some really lovely examples. 😊
The Holly and Small Blue together is great. 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-May-18 02:52 PM GMT

A very worthwhile visit to Hutchinsons Bank, Dave. I arrived by tram when I last went !
Those Small Blue images are great. It was also interesting to read of your Marsh Frit. find.
According to Ernie f. they were found on the Hampshire side of the site as well.
It would seem that Marsh Frits. are having one of their bumper years.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 29-May-18 09:46 PM GMT

That was a very satisfying visit, Dave, and nice shots of the Skippers. I didn't know Glanvilles turned up in Surrey – I thought they were confined to the IoW.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-May-18 11:02 PM GMT

A great report Dave and great to see you manage to squeeze in a Holly Blue 😊 I recall the one time I went there that it was Small Blue heaven and it looks to have continued 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-May-18 11:14 PM GMT

Thank you everyone once again. 😊

Definitely Small Blue heaven, Wurzel... 😊

The Glanvilles here are an introduction that took place a few years ago, Janet, and it hangs on – just. Mr Sp0ck can tell you more about them.

That Small/Holly Blue combination was complete luck, Andrew – The Holly joined the others while I was there. 😊

I took the tram from Croydon too, Trevor. After that accident in 2016 they certainly take it easier on the sharp curves now... 😊

Sunday 27th May brought me back to my local haunts. Another hot and humid day, and it was good to find increasing numbers of Brown Argus and Common Blues, including some of the latter in a different area along a footpath next to the River Colne.



...and there were several others.



There is also a new generation of Speckled Woods appearing, probably the outcome of those that wintered as caterpillars rather than chrysalids.



One other item of interest is the discovery of a relatively healthy patch of quite tall hedgerow elms. This deserves some close attention in a few weeks time...



Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-May-18 11:40 PM GMT

With a bit of time in the afternoon on **27th May**, I set off down a local path towards Staines Moor. It was really too hot and sticky, so I returned before reaching the target area, but I did find a side path into some untended damp grassland and had a brief explore here. More Brown Argus and Common Blues appeared (they really are ubiquitous species at the moment)...



...and a very flighty Red Admiral that appeared to be looking for nettles to lay on but kept well ahead of me – not like the "tame" ones of late summer. 😊 Best of all though were a couple of Small Coppers – a slightly worn male and a newish female.



Further exploration is required on a less hot day I think, especially as I discovered some more elms in the hedges down here as well.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-May-18 08:02 PM GMT

That female Common Blue really is striking Dave, some of the blue on the upperside is almost white 😊 I haven't seen that many Brown Argus yet apart from at the Hill where we were tripping over them 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-May-18 09:48 PM GMT

Lovely Common Blues, Dave, and your female Brown Argus is beautifully marked – rather like the ones I see in France with the bold, orange lunules extending all the way to the apex of the forewing.

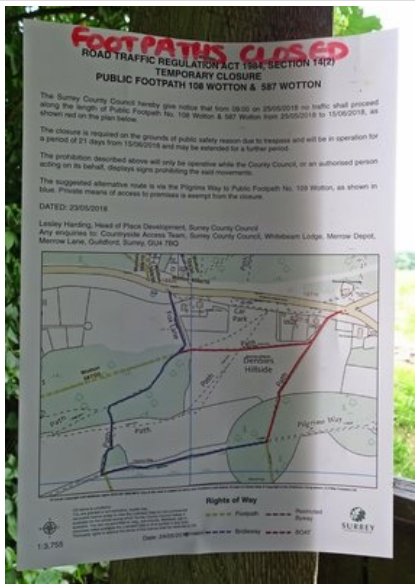
Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-May-18 10:20 PM GMT

She was rather a stunner, Wurzel! 😊 I found another couple of gems today, but they'll get posted in another day or two. The variation appears almost infinite, all the way from Brown Argus mimics to bright blue with a few red marginal spots... 😊

Thank you, David – yes the orange spots nearly become a band on that female BA, and the Common Blues have been a joy recently. 😊

Monday 28th May: Hot and sunny once again, but it was time to go out a little further. I was delighted to find the unwelcome visitors to Steers Field at the top of Denbies Hillside had departed. Celebrating with a cup of tea from the van, I saw that this field and the footpaths within it are currently shut to enable reparation to be carried out. There are, however, alternative paths to the main slopes. Here is the notice posted by the NT:



On the hillside it was indeed hot, and typically breezy. There were lots of Adonis Blues around now, but very few stopped for any time, and if they did they shut their wings immediately. One individual I could approach was a diminutive female, which had aberrant markings. However, they were not symmetrical and I judged it to be a bit deformed rather than a true ab.



In the usual spot, there were still Green Hairstreaks sparring and spiralling, and I followed a few to their resting points (much higher up than usual).



I zoomed in on one contender only to find that it was a confused Holly Blue, not a Hairstreak at all.



After about half an hour I noticed that the cloud that had been brewing to the south had come a great deal closer and looked set to reach Denbies before long.



Not wishing to get caught on an exposed hillside in a major thunderstorm, I returned to the car. To the east, it appeared to be clear and much less threatened, so I headed over to the other side of the Mole Valley and Box Hill.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Jun-18 12:10 AM GMT

28th May (continued...) Over at Box Hill, it was clear that any threat from the weather would pass by. It started cloudy, but gradually the sun came

through the high level cirrus outflow from the storm to the west and it became very warm. However, it was also somewhat later, and the butterflies were less active than I expected. I chose to look at Dukes again, where there were good numbers of Adonis and Common Blues flying – in fact I don't think I've found so many first brood Adonis here before. They had spread across the bottom of the viewpoint slopes and into adjacent meadows as well.





I spotted a mating pair of Common Blues, and noticed that the female was an ab., resembling the ab. *krodeli* form of the Adonis.



The pair were content to sit there until the sun came out: however, once it did, both individuals tried simultaneously to open up and bask, which resulted in them spiralling around the plant stem until inevitably they broke apart.



A normal female CB for comparison.



Also seen, mostly along the bottom of the slope, were Dingy Skippers, Brown Argus, Small Heaths, plus at least one Grizzled Skipper.



Finally, but not staying still long enough for a photo, was a single Small Blue. I have seen one or two at Box Hill in the past and there is a colony somewhere on the Hill. Before leaving for home, I walked along the bottom of the viewpoint slope and further along to the west, looking south over other flowery meadows. Here were a number of Brimstones indulging in courtship behaviour (there are a pair in this shot of the view).



Box Hill this year is rivalling Denbies – and it hasn't come into its own yet with the DGF and Marbled Whites... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 01-Jun-18 07:33 AM GMT

Well done for spotting the ab!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Jun-18 01:02 PM GMT

Indeed as Katrina says a great set of abs – Adonis and Common, that CB must be a named aberrant? 🤔👍 I see you've taken Holly Blue Whispering to even greater heights getting Green Hairstreaks to morph into them now! 🤔👍

Have a goodun 🤔

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-18 11:46 AM GMT

Thank you, Katrina – no credit due, really, as the mating pair were perched up and out in the open! 😊

It probably does have a name, Wurzel, but I suspect there are many CB abs on the lists... 😊 A task for a dark cold winter evening, perhaps... 😊 Yes, that Holly Blue was one very mixed-up butterfly! As the first brood gradually disappears, their habits are changing, but pretending to be a Green Hairstreak is new to me! 😊

29th May was still warm, but it rained all day, sometimes quite hard and with thunder rumbling almost constantly. It turned out to be the only day this month that I didn't see a butterfly.

Wednesday 30th May was cloudy, bright, warm and above all dry. I went out locally and didn't expect to see much, but was pleasantly surprised. First up was, of course, a Holly Blue. The fading first brood are starting to nectar on the recently opened bramble flowers.



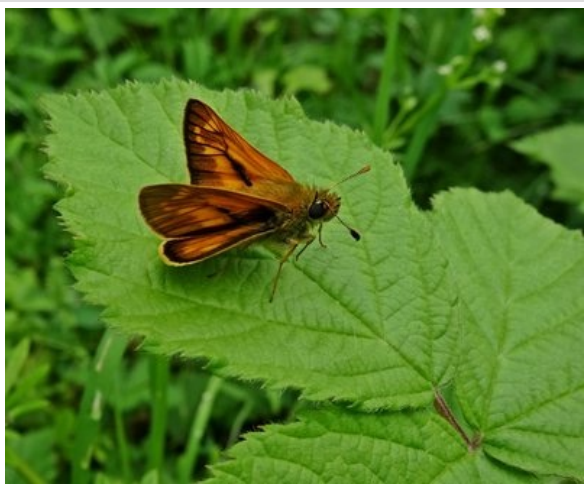


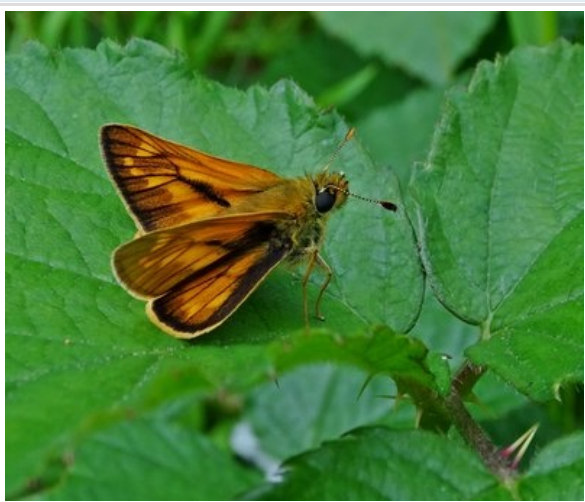


There were a couple of lovely blue female Common Blues, quite similar but not the same individual.



Common Blues numbered over 25, Brown Argus at least 15. The sun was still not out – however, the heat of bright midday at this time of year was good enough. It meant the butterflies weren't too active, but they basked regularly. On my return I came across the Large Skipper again, but this time it was very amenable to photographs.





Not bad for what was actually a completely cloudy day. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Jun-18 10:12 PM GMT

Thursday 31st May: More sunshine today, so I headed out a bit further – to Harmondsworth Moor. Usually the first Meadow Browns would be

appearing here by now, but I didn't turn any up at all. In fact it was very quiet really, with just a handful of Brown Argus, Common Blues and a couple of Small Heaths. However, a nice new female Brown Argus was egg-laying on the tiny cranesbill plants on one of the cut paths.



I always understood that this species laid on the underside of leaves and its northern cousin the NBA laid on the top surface... Today's female hadn't read that bit of text, clearly. There was also a pretty fresh male of the same species.



Re: millerd

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

"Today's female hadn't read that bit of text, clearly." That's Brown Argus for you, they do whatever they want and if you don't like it they'll be all up in yer grill 😊😊 Lovely set of shots and interesting to see the variation even on the topside of the Brown Argus with some with really clear black spots on the fore wings and the difference in lunules etc 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 03-Jun-18 08:48 PM GMT

Some lovely, vivid images on this page, Dave. I particularly enjoyed the Brown Arguses, a species I've yet to see in the UK this year. They may be dull in ground colour, but they are beautiful little butterflies and one hopes the recent warm spell will see them have a good year.

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 03-Jun-18 09:02 PM GMT

There are so many folk upping their game now both in terms of photography, observation and field craft it is difficult to find different yet appropriate words to describe the results so I'll just say that those Brown Argus shots are stunning Dave 😊👍

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 03-Jun-18 09:08 PM GMT

Some cracking images there Dave ! particularly the Common Blues and Brown Argus. I found an aberrant Common Blue similar to yours the day after ,maybe AB; Obsoleta (or close to.)..... once again great images !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by Allan.W., 03-Jun-18 09:08 PM GMT

Some cracking images there Dave ! particularly the Common Blues and Brown Argus. I found an aberrant Common Blue similar to yours the day after ,maybe AB; Obsoleta (or close to.)..... once again great images !
Regards Allan.W.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Jun-18 10:39 PM GMT

Thank you for the kind comments everybody. 😊 Fresh Brown Argus really are little jewels, the silvery undersides contrasting with deep shiny brown uppersides set with bright red studs. Great to watch as well – lots of character for such a small butterfly – and that's when interesting behaviour appears.

On the way to and from Harmondsworth Moor, I passed through some of my local patch, and was surprised to see not one but two elderly Orange Tips.



However there were several blue butterflies along the margins of the meadow area, which turned out to be female Holly Blues egg-laying.



Always good value, those Holly Blues! 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Jun-18 06:19 AM GMT

I see they're laying on Goats-rue like they do on my local patch 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 04-Jun-18 07:28 AM GMT

Your last couple of reports really do show the transition from Spring species, to those of Summer. You certainly caught that female Brown Argus, depositing her eggs, just right. Great underside shots.

More excitement to come !.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 04-Jun-18 09:08 AM GMT

Some fantastic stuff in your recent reports Dave. The female Common Blues, Brown Argus and Large Skipper stand out particularly for me. 🍷 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Jun-18 02:19 PM GMT

It's interesting seeing how the Holly Blue choice of food plant changes as the year progresses, Buggy. Certainly right at the start of their season they lay on holly, but holly flower buds opened weeks ago, and they progressed to dogwood. These buds have largely opened now, and the butterflies have moved on to various legumes, including BFT, vetches and goat's rue. Once these have all flowered, the first brood will have finally disappeared; by the time their descendants are on the scene, the first ivy flower buds will be available.

Thanks, Trevor – there was a fair bit of grovelling on the ground to get those BA shots, but the butterfly was undisturbable so great was the concentration on the task in hand. 😊

Cheers, Andrew – I have some more attractive female Common Blues to come from yesterday, once I get through all the photos... Yes, brand new Large Skippers are a very attractive butterfly, truly golden underneath. Given some hot sunshine and they are unbelievably quick through the air as well! 😊

Friday 1st June: the prospect of horrendous traffic on the M25 kept me local again today, and I popped over to Bedfont Lakes CP again. I only found a handful of Common Blues today, one of which was a standard largely brown female.



There were a couple each of Small Heath, Brown Argus and Speckled Wood...



One sunny bit of path was the territory of the only Large Skipper I saw on the visit.



Later on, I paid a short visit to my local patch. I turned up another couple of Orange Tip caterpillars, and it was only when I looked at the photos later that noticed something puzzling. The first one appeared green on top and white underneath, but the second one seemed to be white on top and green underneath.





A couple of Small Heaths posed nicely, and the second of the two had (in common with others posted on the forum) a very clear series of white/silver ocelli on the under hindwing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 04-Jun-18 02:49 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

It's interesting seeing how the Holly Blue choice of food plant changes as the year progresses, Buggy. Certainly right at the start of their season they lay on holly, but holly flower buds opened weeks ago, and they progressed to dogwood. These buds have largely opened now, and the butterflies have moved on to various legumes, including BFT, vetches and goat's rue. Once these have all flowered, the first brood will have finally disappeared; by the time their descendants are on the scene, the first ivy flower buds will be available.

Dave

Thanks for this information. I have five books on butterflies, one of which is specific to Holly Blues and none of them mention anything other than Holly and Ivy as food plants.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Jun-18 07:09 PM GMT

ernie f wrote:

millerd wrote:

It's interesting seeing how the Holly Blue choice of food plant changes as the year progresses, Buggy. Certainly right at the start of their season they lay on holly, but holly flower buds opened weeks ago, and they progressed to dogwood. These buds have largely opened now, and the butterflies have moved on to various legumes, including BFT, vetches and goat's rue. Once these have all flowered, the first brood will have finally disappeared; by the time their descendants are on the scene, the first ivy flower buds will be available.

Dave

Thanks for this information. I have five books on butterflies, one of which is specific to Holly Blues and none of them mention anything other than Holly and Ivy as food plants.

You can add to that list Buckthorns, Heather, Bramble as well as many alien garden plants like *Pyrocantha* and *Cotoneaster* **Ernie**. Amongst our butterflies I think only the Green Hairstreak rivals it in the range of larval foodplants chosen.

Re: millerd

by kevlings, 04-Jun-18 08:05 PM GMT

Dave,

A couple of cracking shots of the Small Heath. I find these particularly hard to capture close up. They are either quite nervy or I'm just clumsy 😊 I did manage one last week that was the exception to the norm though. I like the detail and composition of your photos.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Jun-18 11:05 PM GMT

That 'standard largely brown' female Common Blue is starting to become the rarity with the 'blue' Blues becoming the standard Dave 😊 I agree with Kev, great shots of the Small Heaths with great ocelli 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

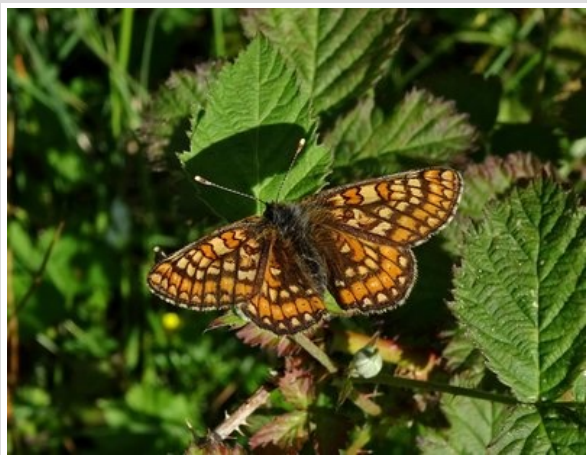
by millerd, 05-Jun-18 01:36 PM GMT

Buggy is quite right, Ernie – Holly Blues lay on an amazing variety of plants at this time of year. 😊 The ones local to me seemed to have gradually changed their choices as the season has progressed. Certainly the idea that Holly is the main option at this time of year appears far from accurate these days.

Cheers, Kev – Small Heaths are more cooperative (like many others, truth be told) first thing in the morning when they nectar and late in the afternoon when they think about settling down for the night. If you adopt a suitable grovelling posture it is possible to crawl quite close to them. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – there seems to be a crop of well-spotted Small Heaths this year, and as for the female Common Blues, I promise a few more in forthcoming posts! 😊

Saturday 2nd June: Another sunny day – well, the afternoon certainly. I set off down to Bentley Wood hoping that there would still be some cloud as well as sunshine so that anything I saw wouldn't just fly madly around. I was partly successful, but if anything the skies were much clearer than they were at home. As with my previous visit a couple of weeks ago, the first butterfly to cross my path was a Marsh Fritillary. This was one of three seen altogether, and I think both the two I photographed are female.





The SPBF proved difficult to approach – there are very few flowers out to tempt them down to nectar and those flowers that are there are hidden low in the vegetation, leading to shots like this.







This butterfly appeared small, even by SPBF standards – no more than 3cm wingtip to wingtip.

Also seen in the Eastern Clearing today were two elderly Commas, an even more battered looking Grizzled Skipper, and a new Large Skipper.



The last of these had adopted a piece of the clearing as its territory and persistently chased any Fritillaries that strayed anywhere near.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 05-Jun-18 10:50 PM GMT

I have shots of a very similar Small Pearl Dave and I know exactly where that Large Skipper set up it's territory – missed you by a couple of hours again 😊 Great set of shots BTW 😊 especially the last Marshie 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Jun-18 06:02 PM GMT

A good selection of both the old and the new, Dave. It's not easy to see both PBF and SPBF simultaneously, so extra points for that! 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jun-18 09:17 PM GMT

Cheers, David – yes, three Fritillaries at the same time is not to be sneezed at. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – that really was the Smallest of Small Pearls... 😊 Shame to have have missed you – not by all that much either. 😊

Sunday 3rd June: Another warm and sunny one, so I ventured up to Aston Rowant again to see if the Adonis were out up here. They certainly were, and in good numbers, concentrated mainly at the far end of the hillside at the foot of the slope and in particular in the gullies that are all that's left of an old trackway across the hill. Many were still beautifully new.





There were also a couple of curiosities: a very shiny and mutilated individual that looked from a distance like a piece of blue foil blowing in the wind...



...and a deep blue one that a closer look showed to have an aberrant underside.



The were still plenty of Common Blues too, with some interesting females.





The last of these was fresh and a subtly marked smoky stunner.



The most numerous species today was the Brown Argus. Many were getting worn now, but there were one or two beautiful shining new females.





Also seen today: The first few Meadow Browns, plus Small Heaths, Small Coppers, Speckled Woods, and a very delapidated Green Hairstreak.



It appears I just missed Lee Hurrell, who arrived for the late afternoon/evening shift just after I left – sorry to have missed you, Lee. 😞

Another very good day out with probably the best Adonis I've seen so far this year.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 07-Jun-18 09:29 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Adonis Blues at Aston, Dave 😊 but those female Brown Argus are simply stunning 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Jun-18 10:24 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 🤔👍 That smoky female is a lovely looking Blue 😊 Also one or two of the Brown Argus have the white marks round the black spot on the fore wing, don;t know if it's enough to be a 'snelleni'? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jun-18 11:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Mike – those Brown Argus are lovely, aren't they? 😊

There are always quite a few BA with that feature up at Aston Rowant, Wurzel. It doesn't look quite enough to be an ab., but there's something in the gene pool on that hillside... 😊😊

Late afternoon on 3rd, I had a quick look locally for roosting Common Blues. However, the first thing I came across was a very active Comma, still one of the old guard.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 09-Jun-18 06:10 AM GMT

Just catching up Dave - your 'smokey stunner' is exactly that. Gorgeous - gotta be something a bit special surely?

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 09-Jun-18 11:47 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave , love the shots of the Brown Argus 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jun-18 11:31 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline - she was a beauty, certainly. 😊 I think I shall put together a digest of CB females from this year, as there has certainly been some real variety.

Thank you too, Goldie - there are some great Brown Argus around at the moment. 😊

After a rare "blank" day on Monday 4th, on **Tuesday 5th June** it came out sunny again in the afternoon, so I went out locally to see if there was anything new around, like a Meadow Brown or two. There wasn't, but the walk was topped and tailed by two different Red Admirals. The first was a well-worn individual, possibly an immigrant, but the second was much newer-looking and could perhaps have been home-grown.



Both were flying low over and amongst the nettles, so I think they were both females on egg-laying missions. Once again, in the same general area as before, there were Common Blues and Brown Argus, with standout examples of females of both species.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Jun-18 12:05 AM GMT

That really is a stand out Blue Dave 🤩😄 Great shots, that Brown Argus is in mint condish (as the kids say 😊) and I love the head on Large Skipper, reminds me of an X-Wing 😄😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-Jun-18 06:15 AM GMT

Great shots, Dave, Your Large Skipper looks like the head on view of a Biplane. You've had particular success with the Brown Argus this year !.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Jun-18 09:05 AM GMT

Again lovely shot of the Brown Argus Dave, I hope to get a shot of one when I visit Kent this year but I'll have to go a long way to be your last shot of one 🍀 😊 Goldie 😊

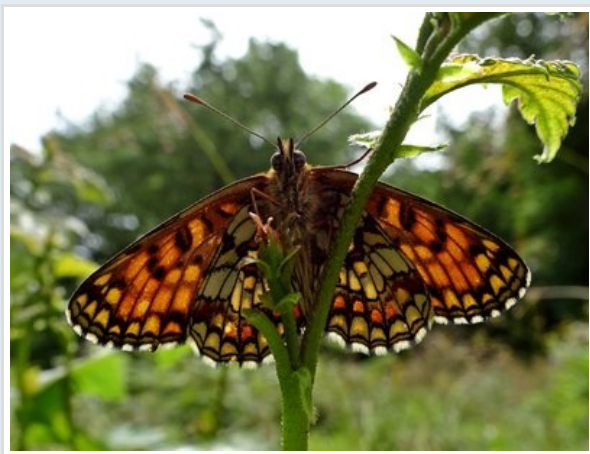
Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jun-18 10:01 PM GMT

Thank you all for the comments – I love the descriptions of the skipper, but I have to edge towards the X-wing, bearing in mind how the little golden rockets fly (I think Bugboy called them that 😊).

Wednesday 6th June started cloudy, but it soon dissipated and I set off on the longish trip to North Kent and Heath Fritillary territory in East Blean Wood. As I got past Maidstone, I caught up with the edge of the cloud sheet as it burnt back to the North Sea, and by Canterbury it was completely overcast. However, within half an hour or so, the sun was breaking through again, and I had had a chance to wander through the wood and discover where the butterflies were. I was standing still, surveying the scene when I looked down and suddenly could see two Heath Fritillaries right next to me. The first was a brand spanking new female, with a drop of meconium from the chrysalis clearly visible on the leaf below her.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 11-Jun-18 10:35 PM GMT

You timed your visit to East Blean just right, Dave. Lovely fresh Heaths, and images. We left it too late last year.

Can I guess where one of your next destinations might be ?.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Jun-18 11:02 PM GMT

Lovely Heaths there Dave. I think we're both suffering a mild case of Wurzelitas, both of us nearly a week behind in reports 😊 Mind you I've been at work since then so I've only got a few work place snaps, whereas I suspect you have a good few days left to catch up on!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 12-Jun-18 10:36 AM GMT

bugboy wrote:

both of us nearly a week behind in reports

I wish I was only a week behind.. 😊

More marvelous blue's Dave, and lovely Brown Argus. 😊
I love your Heath's, great shots. 🍷 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-18 10:54 AM GMT

I couldn't possibly imagine, Trevor – but it will have to wait until tomorrow now... 😊

Yes, a week behind now Buggy. Still lots of photos to sort. (I feel like a Cyberman – Delete Delete Delete!)

Cheers, Andrew – I was very pleased with the Heath Fritillary shots, with brand new butterflies and ideal conditions.

Coming back from East Blean on 6th I looped around Kent and stopped briefly at Samphire Hoe. It was by now brilliant sunshine, but down on the Channel coast it was blowing a gale and the only two species I saw (Common Blues and Small Heaths) were being bowled along almost too fast to see. There were, however, dozens of both flying (or attempting to!). I continued via Sussex, and there is unfortunately no quick way from Folkestone to the back of Eastbourne...

Eventually I arrived at Park Corner Heath and Rowlands Wood, and promptly became temporarily lost in the latter without seeing a single butterfly. By luck I found myself back at the entrance and tried PCH instead. In an area much more friendly to the orientationally-challenged, I wandered around in the late afternoon sunshine and had a few fleeting flybys of a Large Skipper and perhaps three Small Pearls before one somewhat worn female SPBF obliged with a stop or two to nectar.



Dave

Re: millerd

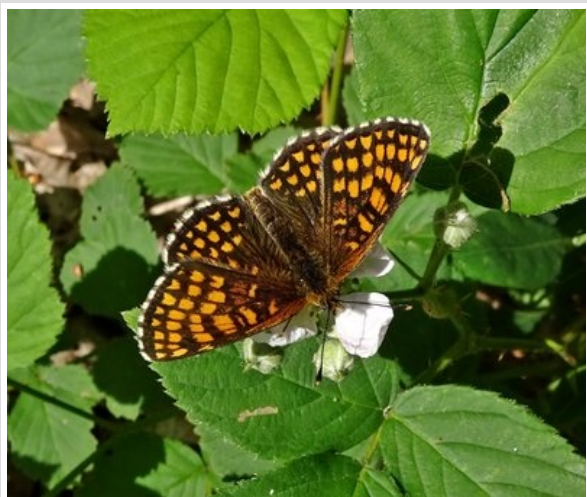
by Goldie M, 12-Jun-18 02:39 PM GMT

Lovely to see see the Heath's Dave, I really miss seeing them, 😊 when the Grand Children were at school we were always down in Kent this time of year, now we don't come until July or August which as it's advantages but I miss the Heath's, so really enjoyed your shot's of them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jun-18 10:29 PM GMT

I'm really pleased you enjoyed seeing the photos, Goldie. I lived for years in Dover totally unaware that they existed at all so close by. It's a real trek over to see them now, but well worth the effort especially as they were so fresh. Here's one more of them for luck! 😊



Thursday 7th June: Quite a contrast of a day and it remained stubbornly cloudy, but with brightness and sufficient warmth coming through to make a

trip somewhere wothwhile. I chose Whitecross Green Wood in Oxfordshire, home of a very reliable Black Hairstreak population that was doing well this year according to reports. Under the cloud, there were indeed several dozens of butterflies flying between the higher branches of the blackthorn thickets, some of which would occasionally drift down to head height or so. From what could be seen of those that came closer, they were mostly males. A few photos were possible, but mostly with the light behind, or from a distance. Those that were lower down sat with their wings angled flat against the leaves to gain heat from the concealed sun – it does make you wonder why they have evolved to do this rather than open their wings to gather warmth like the majority of species. Not good for photos, as trying to attain the right angle shaded and disturbed the butterfly. The Hairstreaks far outnumbered every other species flying – these comprised numbers of Speckled Woods, which were also happy under the clouds, a few Large Skippers and Common Blues, plus a single Red Admiral. Anyway, here are a few shots from one of the *traditional* Black Hairstreak sites... 😊





Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Jun-18 10:51 PM GMT

Seems almost everybody is going Black Hairstreak crazy!! I'd be tempted to venture east but unfortunately this prolonged spell of good weather is set to end on Thursday! 😞

I have fond memories of one particularly hot, late June day at Whitecross Green Wood (I think it was back in 2013). That was before I learned of the M40 compensation area which is home to much greater numbers of *pruni*. Sadly, I think this area has been off-limits for a couple of years now. 😞

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Jun-18 10:53 PM GMT

Is there anyone NOT seeing Black Hairstreaks at the moment, you wouldn't know it's one of our rarer species 🤔🌿

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Jun-18 11:10 PM GMT

Cricky Dave, I have a night off UKB and all hell breaks loose! Heaths and then Black Hairstreaks! 🤪 Lush shots 🤗🌿🌿, Large Blue next? You're on for a 50+ year at this rate Dave 🤗🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 12-Jun-18 11:19 PM GMT

Great shots of the Heath Fritillaries, Dave 😊 and they are so fresh. Terrific Black Hairstreaks too, yes it's hard to believe that they are one of our rarer species 🤔

Mike

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 13-Jun-18 07:48 AM GMT

Dave – fantastic shots of Heaths and Black Hairstreaks, both butterflies I have never seen.

Re the Black Hairstreaks. Given no-one knew about the Sussex ones but they seem to be quite prevalent there. Maybe I should start looking for them in my own back yard. They might be there and no-one knows. 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Jun-18 10:11 AM GMT

Thanks for that extra Heath photo Dave 😊 great shots of the Black hair Streaks, it's one I've yet to see 🤔😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jun-18 10:17 PM GMT

No problem, Goldie – I may even have a few more Heath shots as well – they were a very easy target. 😊

Thanks, Ernie – now's the time to go hunting for the Hairstreaks. 😊 They are having an exceptional year in their usual haunts and have now popped up in Sussex – they are so unobtrusive and out for such a short period each year, they could be overlooked on suitable habitat anywhere. Of course they would have to have been there all along and/or have been introduced at some point.

Thanks Mike – the Heaths were really lovely insects. When you see numbers of these, and of the Black Hairstreaks too as we are at the moment, it is indeed hard to realise just how uncommon they are. 😊

Well Wurzel, you know you can't have a night off... 😊😊 You Crystal Ball is nearly right – there are a few more posts before the prediction comes off (I was at Collard on Monday). 😊

I believe you had a good crack at the Hairstreaks today yourself Buggy – it's been an amazing year for them it seems. 😊

Despite the cloud last Thursday, David, there were a lot of Hairstreaks flying at Whitecross Green: apparently the warden said it was the best year for a long time. I think the weather will stay reasonably conducive down here – a bit windy tomorrow and not terrific on Saturday, but otherwise there's a fair bit of sunshine in the forecast. 😊

Friday 8th June: Keeping a bit of balance, I stayed local today and made the most of yet another sunny morning.

A good call – on the first bank of newly-flowering bramble was a voraciously nectaring Painted Lady, the first here this year. It dashed madly around but kept coming back, and two-and-a-half hours later when I returned home it was still there.



However, the main feature was the almost overnight appearance of Meadow Browns. I made an attempt to count them (and in the process counted the Small Heaths and blues too), and the final tally was Meadow Brown 19 (and every one a male), Common Blue 17, and Small Heath 13.



Another excursion was to come on Saturday: not far but very productive. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Jun-18 11:02 PM GMT

Great to see you still getting the Holly Blues in Dave 😊 Oh to be retired 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Jun-18 09:49 AM GMT

Great to meet you again yesterday, Dave, and will probably do so again in the next week or so !
I remember the first time we met, you looked down at my tin of Tesco Tuna, and said ' you must be Trevor '.

Looking forward to your images from yesterday.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 14-Jun-18 10:34 AM GMT

It was great to meet up with you again yesterday Dave 😊 and brilliant to find so many obliging Black Hairstreaks 🦋

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-18 01:09 PM GMT

There can't be many Holly Blues of the first brood left, Wurzel, but I shall keep looking! And yes, retirement is ideal for this hobby of ours. 😊

It was an excellent day yesterday, Mike and Trevor – really good to see you again, and everyone else too. It felt a bit like an open-air party! 😊 It'll be a day or two before I post my photos as there are a couple of other trips to slot in first... 😊

Saturday 9th June: Once again the day dawned warm and sunny, and beckoned me out. I went not that far really, just down to Fairmile Common between Cobham and Esher. As expected, dozens of Silver-studded Blues were on the wing, with lots of pale blue dots bobbing along over the heather and gorse. Before too long, the sun became a bit hazier with the odd cloud, which proved a great advantage as the butterflies settled often, and with their wings open. Out of the many individuals flying across all areas of the site, I only found two females. The intensity of the blue colouration in the males varied quite a bit, both intrinsically and also with different angles to and intensity of the light. This is only a small selection of the many beautiful examples seen during the day:

First, the two females, the first of which was darker and had significant blue scaling on the hindwings and the second the more typical form looking a little like a Brown Argus.





Now the males.







Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-18 01:18 PM GMT

I don't know who your retirement is proving to be harder work for Dave; you as you're out so much with sorting to do upon your return or me for trying to keep up with your PD 🤔😂 Lovely set of Silver-studs – another species I need to try and catch-up with 🤔🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

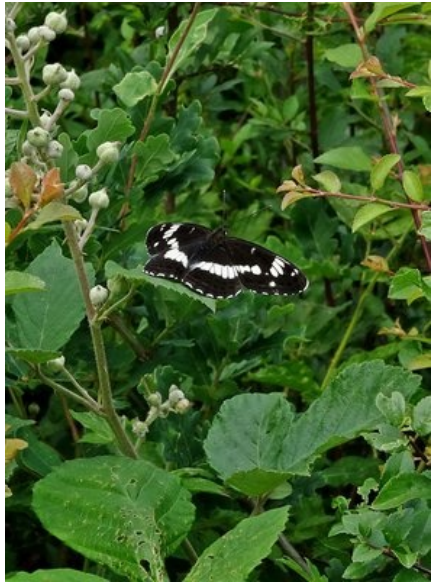
Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Jun-18 10:22 PM GMT

It is hard work, Wurzel – it's easy to take a few hundred photos every day at the moment and choosing the good (least bad and blurry) ones is certainly

time-consuming. The trouble is the weather has been so good, and everything has been happening at once - it seems a shame not to go out! 😊

A post-script for the day: after Fairmile it is no distance at all to Bookham. I only had a brief stop here, but saw my first White Admirals of the year. I managed a couple of distant shots, which at least showed their velvety black newness as yet unbattered by constant close proximity to brambles...



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jun-18 10:46 PM GMT

Cricky again it's certainly all go! 🤪😄👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 14-Jun-18 10:51 PM GMT

That's a truly bizarre female SSB, Dave. I've never seen one marked like that.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-18 10:33 PM GMT

Pretty well non-stop, Wurzel! 😊

It was a very unusual female SSB, David - I only wish she had opened up a little more to show the full extent of the blue markings.

On **Sunday 10th June**, I dropped by Box Hill, but there was really nothing out of the ordinary and I took no photos of any note.

However, **Monday 11th June** was a different story. There was some cloud about first thing, and I hoped some might be a feature at my destination today, which was Collard Hill in Somerset. In fact, the further west I went the more the cloud disappeared, so I arrived to wall-to-wall blue skies. It was very warm and quite breezy too. Large Blues were flying, and I soon encountered the first egg-laying females in the steep terraced section (known as the quarry). Around half a dozen were patiently patrolling along here, dipping down to lay on the tiny thyme flowers and then quickly moving on.



A warm bright cloudy day is the optimum for seeing this species – the weather was far too good today, but the views were stunning.



Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-18 11:00 PM GMT

Yes, the views from Collard are most impressive. Is this your first time there?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jun-18 11:06 PM GMT

I've been before, Mark, but never on such a brilliantly sunny day! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 16-Jun-18 06:01 AM GMT

I can't keep up with you either Dave! Each time I look there's something new and exciting in your diary – and even more that I've missed. That female SSB is very unusual and the Large Blues, to use a Wurzelism, are lush 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jun-18 06:55 PM GMT

Thank you, Pauline – I'm just trying to make the most of the combination of retirement and good weather! 😊

When I returned home from Collard, the news had broken about the Sussex Black Hairsreaks. However, the forecast for 12th wasn't that good, so I held

back a day before heading down to the excitement. On **12th June** therefore, I had a brief sortie onto my local patch under cloud and saw very little more than Small Heaths and Meadow Browns. I did encounter this rather curious sign by the River Colne... What on earth is electric fishing, and why are dogs in particular banned? 😊



A couple of Small Heath shots...



I thought initially that it was "blind", but there is the tiniest of white dots in the middle of the dark forewing spot.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Jun-18 07:03 PM GMT

Lovely Large Blues Dave, Collard Hill is where i want to visit, not seen them yet, it looks a lovely site from your shot. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jun-18 08:11 PM GMT

Great Large Blues Dave 😊🍀 I'm trying my luck for them at Daneways tomorrow and if the forecast is to be believed then hopefully they'll be opening up 😊 Fingers crossed...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

P.S. Years ago my dad gave me a book called The Lazy Salmon Mystery and in it poachers run an electric cable into the water near a weir so that when the Salmon swim up they get stunned, then they turn the power off and can just pick the fish up. So that could be what's going on on the your river? Perhaps it's a survey?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jun-18 11:50 PM GMT

It is a lovely place, Goldie, with amazing views like that one. The Large Blues are a bonus! 😊😊

Best of luck with the Large Blues at Daneway, Wurzel. I shall be interested to hear how it goes as I was hoping to see the place myself very soon. Thanks for the idea about the lectric fishing – as its the Environment Agency, it could well be a survey (no doubt related to to the Heathrow expansion project as the River Colne is going to be mucked about with quite a bit 😊).

Wednesday 13th June: A lovely sunny morning, and down to Sussex to see the remarkable Black Hairstreaks at Ditchling Common. A most enjoyable day with lots of folk to chat to and catch up with and a selection of very amenable Black Hairstreaks to aim the camera at. Most of the males seen were getting worn or had suffered bird attacks, but there were a few nice fresh females. There were other species about too – I saw my first Ringlet of the year near the lake, and there were Meadow Browns, Speckled Woods, Large Skippers and Small Heaths.

It wouldn't surprise me if all the good shots of all the best butterflies had already been posted (several times), so I shall keep photos to a minimum.





So, an absolutely splendid day, but there was still time for tea and flapjack at Box Hill on the way home – and maybe something else as well. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 17-Jun-18 08:36 AM GMT

Dave – its amazing what you have clocked up recently in quick succession. Heath Frits, Black Hairstreaks, Large Blues, even a reasonably early White Ad and a fantastically coloured SSB. You must be well chuffed! 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 17-Jun-18 09:46 AM GMT

Nice shots of the Large Blues, Dave 😊 they seem to be doing well at Collard Hill this year. Great shots of the Sussex Black Hairstreaks too, especially the first on the bramble blossom 😊 It was a great day out.

Mike

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jun-18 10:14 AM GMT

Hi Dave,

A great selection of species clocked up recently 🍷🍷🍷, you are certainly making the most of your retirement. I know we shouldn't wish our lives away but I am really looking forward to when I will have more time to be able to get about like this in the week instead of being stuck at work.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jun-18 10:03 PM GMT

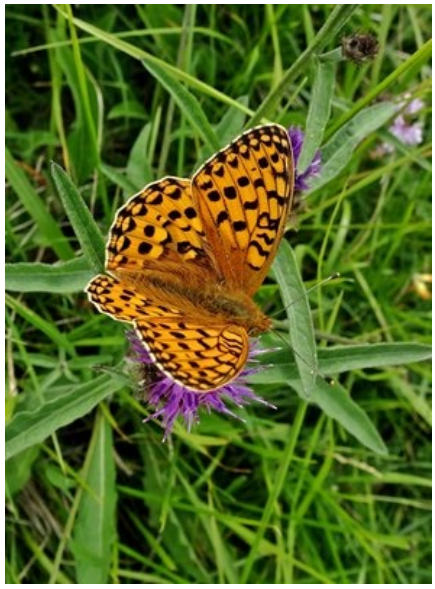
Thank you all - It has been a busy week or so, and there have been some cracking butterflies to be seen. Retirement has a lot going for it as you say, Neil! 😊

Wednesday 13th June (continued):

On the way back from Sussex, I detoured very slightly from the A23 to the A24 and refreshment at Box Hill. I wandered out onto Burford Spur with a bit of cloud obscuring the sun, and nothing much appeared to be flying. However, just a few steps down the slope and no less than three Dark Green Fritillaries flew up from the ground and zoomed about. The sun re-emerged and it became clear that there were four or five altogether, all males, flying up and down the hillside and occasionally settling on the chalky path along the ridge. Then their behaviour changed, and they started to seek out the knapweed flowers partly hidden in the longish grass and set about nectaring. When the sun went in, they tended to drop to the grass and bask amongst the stalks. As I've observed before, they attract the attentions of Meadow Browns, who chase them quite forcibly off the knapweed flowers in a manner rather untypical for such an unassuming butterfly. At one point I watched four Meadow Browns accost a single DGF at the same time - of course the bigger butterfly can outfly them easily, but I have no idea what lies behind this particular antipathy. No Marbled Whites were out here yet: it can't be long before they join the Fritillaries, and hopefully in good numbers. Also seen: faded Common and Adonis Blues, Large Skippers, Small Heaths and also Speckled Woods in the shadier wooded areas.

All the Dark Greens were brand new, almost glowing in the late afternoon light.







A great end to what had already been an excellent day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Jun-18 10:06 PM GMT

Nice to see Large Blues in one of this site's PDs, Dave!! They've been rather neglected this year given all the SPBF and Black Hairstreak activity.

Things look to be improving weatherwise as next week goes on, so hopefully the mid June species will benefit the same as the late May/early June ones.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

Brill stuff Dave 😊 Daneways was looking splendid, but the weather was a complete let down, bloody BBC wouldn't know their a from their e 😞
Definitely worth a punt when the weather improves 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by keving, 18-Jun-18 07:35 PM GMT

Dave,

Great diary you have here. Love the Large Blues. I have to get to Collard Hill at some point. too long until I retire though 😞
The DGF at Boxhill are beautiful too. I was there 4 years ago and had a great day. Will have to return.

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 19-Jun-18 10:10 AM GMT

Fantastic Large Blues Dave, well done getting that open wing shot. 😊 Lovely DGF's. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jun-18 10:06 AM GMT

Thanks, all – more Large Blues to come soon, everyone – I had another chance to visit Collard on a much better day weatherwise (mostly cloudy!), and they were opening up all over... 😊 And more DGFs as well.

I am now a week behind (a slight touch of Wurzelitis as Buggy mentioned), so back to **Thursday 14th June** and a vist to another of my fairly local SSB sites, Dawney's Hill.

A mix of sun and cloud, but rather windy, so mixed conditions really. However, there were good numbers of SSB, concentrated wherever the heather was flowering, and far more females around than I had seen at Fairmile. Many were pretty new, with the characteristic rainbow oily sheen, but none sported any blue colouring at all.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-Jun-18 01:55 PM GMT

You've been really busy recently Dave.
Where do I start !. Great results from Collard hill, mostly cloudy when I went there.
Fabulous Dark Greens, lovely and fresh. And your mating Silver Studded Blues are worth a mrgreen or two. 🍷🍷.

What a month June has been so far, manic is the word,
when we're usually twiddling our thumbs in the early weeks of the month.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Jun-18 02:18 PM GMT

More cracking images Dave – you're really taking to this retirement lark 😊
As for Wurzelitis all I'll say is...Tortoise and Hare 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 21-Jun-18 06:10 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, those SSB look like they all emerged that morning especially for you, we're you whispering to them?. In the middle of a week long camping trip chasing butterflies with very intermittent internet access. I fear my case of wurzelitis is becoming more severe by the day 😊!

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 21-Jun-18 08:14 PM GMT

Those Dark Green Frits are stunning looking, as are the SS Blues, Dave 😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by David M, 21-Jun-18 11:13 PM GMT

Well done, Dave. You've captured the essence of butterfly midsummer on a single page!

Helps that you no longer have that nasty four letter word 'work' to contend with? 😊😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-18 12:20 AM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – more from Collard in a post or too, and on a cloudier day as well. 😊

More like Tortoise and Tortoise, Wurzel – I'm falling further behind as the sunny days pile up! 😊

Cheers, Buggy – no whispering to the SSB, I only speak Holly... 😊😊 There were surprisingly few older butterflies around, considering they'd been out here at least a week.

Thanks to you too, Mike – fresh DGFs are terrific butterflies and look wonderful swooping and diving over the top of the ridge at Burford Spur. 😊

Thank you, David – you could be right, though a certain imperial contender is edging forward into the midsummer category these days. 😊 And yes, not doing the "W" word any more is a distinct advantage. 😊

Friday 15th June was another sunny one. I headed first to Chiddingfold for a curtain-raiser before the rides fill with the heady aroma of tuna (and worse things)... As I expected, I quickly saw several White Admirals along all of the main paths. They were cruising up and down, but spent far more time on the ground itself than on any of the brambles or up in the trees. They were very restless though and continually moved on to a new patch of gravel, making photos hard to come by.





After Chiddingfold, I headed for Denbies to see if any Marbled Whites had emerged. I saw ten or so, but it was windy as usual and they were mostly hunkered down in the grass. I also saw a couple of DGF suffering in the same way. Small Heaths and Meadow Browns were everywhere, as were a variety of very worn blue butterflies. Age turns Adonis Blues a shining electric blue, and they flash in the sun as the wind tumbles them along.





There probably as many, if not more, female blues but telling them apart becomes tricky as they age. I think this is an Adonis.



I went on after Denbies (and after popping into the Surrey Hills Brewery behind Denbies Vineyard for some Shere Drop for the weekend) to Box Hill again. This deserves a separate post. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 22-Jun-18 07:23 AM GMT

Dave – Great shot of a White Ad on a pile of dung. I always find the juxtaposition of a beautiful butterfly on something gross amusing.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 22-Jun-18 06:56 PM GMT

That's a mighty dollop of horse manure...are you sure there isn't an escaped elephant roaming around Chiddingfold 🤔

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-18 11:27 PM GMT

It really had taken on more than it could cope with there I think, Ernie. 😊

As you say, Neil, it was a mammoth pile... 😊

15th June – final part. Over to Box Hill for the end of the afternoon, where the DGFs of a couple of days before had been joined by Marbled Whites on

Burford Spur. I love the combination of these two species at this time of year, and all the butterflies were in great condition. There were perhaps a dozen DGF and twice that of Marbled Whites, both making the most of any knapweed flowers they could find.



Interestingly, the DGFs would approach the many purple orchids as well, but always shy away at the last minute – so there are never nicely posed shots of one on the other.

Some shots of the DGF...





...and the Marbled Whites





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jun-18 11:46 PM GMT

Saturday 16th June marked a slight change in the weather to more cloud and a cooler breeze. Faced with the M25 solid in both directions, I went the relatively short distance down the A30 to Chobham Common to seek out some more Silver-studded Blues. Eventually, a bit of sun and brightness brought a few out from hiding – a female and perhaps half a dozen males.



The only other butterflies seen here were a handful of Small Heaths blowing around in the wind, but I was disturbed by a very noisy flock of small birds. I managed a shot of one from a distance, and I think it's a Stonechat.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 23-Jun-18 06:36 AM GMT

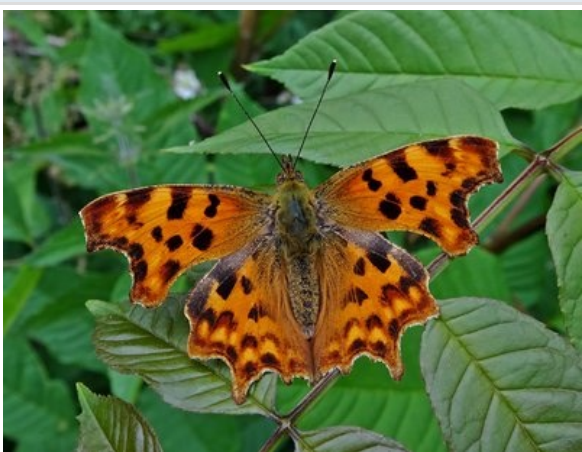
Lovely photo's of the DGF Dave, they're out in Southport Dunes but it's just finding them, it's like a needle in an Hay Stack 🤔 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Jun-18 10:43 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – I bet the wind over the dunes whips them out of sight really quickly too! 😊

Sunday 17th June – Father's Day, and I was treated to a cream tea down at Runnymede. It was mostly cloudy, and the only butterflies were a single Painted Lady and hundreds of Meadow Browns which rose up from every step taken off the paths. Returning home, I ventured out locally, and was soon rewarded by the sight of the first new brood *hutchinsoni* Commas, just in time for Midsummer's Day as usual. They really are lovely creatures, and will soon be picking fights with the Large Skippers that are already out, as well as each other.



Another first for the year was a single Ringlet.



The colony here is very small for such a common butterfly, and some years I haven't seen one, so it was good to add it to the tally for the year here.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Jun-18 11:01 PM GMT

"Tortoise and Tortoise" – hear that 😊 So now not only am I behind with my own PD but also catching up on everyone else's! Still sorting the latter now. Even more butterfly packed days, mind you things have been going crazy at the moment, it's hard work keeping up as everything is emerging all at once 😊 Fantastic White Admirals, brill Silver-studs and lush DGFs 😊🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 23-Jun-18 11:20 PM GMT

DGF and Marbled Whites do indeed make a great combination, and are often found together, at least in the south. It's been a long time since I've visited Box Hill, I must find my way back down there sometime...

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jun-18 11:00 PM GMT

Thanks Wurzel. 😊 Yes it's a struggle to keep up and I'm just not getting round to looking at everyone else's PDs as much as I'd like 😊 I know I'll have missed some real gems...

You should definitely visit Box Hill if you can, Mark – combine it with a trip to Denbies as they are so close to each other. There is a bit of effort being made at Box Hill (the Small Blue project for example) and I've seen a lot more here than in previous years, and in a lot of different sites around the whole area – which is pretty big and includes a variety of habitats. It'll be interesting to see what July and August bring.

Monday 18th June: I'd been invited down to see an old school friend in Taunton, so I decided to pay Collard Hill another visit. I thought it would be another brilliant sunny day as last time, with firmly shut butterflies, but mysteriously the cloud appeared just past Wincanton, and Collard was blessed with thin, bright and very warm overcast. Would the theory for ideal Large Blue conditions be correct, or blown to bits over an hour or two?

Well, it turned out to be the best day I've had with this stunning species. Many of the butterflies were fresh, and most of them settled relatively often and opened their wings wide. The females were noticeably heavily spotted, but the males were much more lightly marked.





There were other butterflies too – a few Marbled Whites, several Common Blues (well past their best), Large Skippers, endless Meadow Browns and a couple of Painted Ladies. I spotted one of the Painted Ladies lay an egg on a viciously spiny thistle...



...and caught a threesome of Common Blues showing there was still some life left in them.



The day, however, belonged to the Large Blues...



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Jun-18 05:21 AM GMT

Stupendous, is this only word to use for those open wing Large Blues shots. 🍷🍷🍷.
Now we need the Emperors to do the same !.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 25-Jun-18 07:51 AM GMT

Just saw your last batch of Large Blue pics. Fantastic.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Jun-18 10:24 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor - if only... 😊

Thanks, Ernie - perfect conditions on the day, a real piece of luck. 😊 They seem (like most things) to be doing really well this year.

21st June - as it isn't far from Taunton, I had a look at Haddon Hill for Somerset Heath Fritillaries. Up on the fringes of Exmoor, the cloud was unrelenting and produced some drizzle (there had been overnight rain judging by the puddles). It was windy and fairly warm, but all I saw were dozens of Small Heaths.

Wednesday 22nd June: My drive home was extended via Dorset, and the west country cloud persisted somewhat. Up on the cliffs at Durlston the sun came through from time to time, but it was really windy. However, there were butterflies to be seen (albeit briefly as they barrelled past on the breeze): Blues, both Common and Adonis, Small Heaths, Meadow Browns, and a scattering of fresh Marbled Whites.



As I made my way along the path at the very edge of the cliff, I found it surprisingly free of the wind, and located another Skipper nectaring on thyme flowers. It moved to perch on a blade of grass and this time was very clearly a Lulworth Skipper.



Dave

Re: millerd

by essexbuzzard, 25-Jun-18 10:47 PM GMT

Yes, definitely Lulworths those last ones. It's amazing to think they will probably still be present at the end of summer. To think the number of species which will have come and gone by then. Your Large Blue pictures clearly show the conditions the photographer needs, which I also found when I visited Daneway Banks a couple of years ago. Driving from afar, you need a bit of luck too!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 26-Jun-18 12:04 PM GMT

Some great reports Dave, fantastic Large Blues. 🍷 😊
I've also been loving the DGF / Marbled White combo. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Jun-18 10:31 PM GMT

Thanks for the confirmation on the first Lulworth, Mark – I was pretty confident, but it was nearly as orange as the Small Skippers, unlike the second one which was the more traditional olive colour. They are both males. It is astonishing how long and drawn out their emergence is: the first ones appear in May around Lulworth itself, and you can still see them in September here at Durlston Country Park. Nearly as long a season for a single brood as the Meadow Brown.

Cheers, Andrew – I was really pleased with the Large Blues; I am going to struggle to better that day with them in the future. The DGF/Marbled White double act was still going strong today at Box Hill, if you can get there. 😊

Thursday 21st June: Home again and the weather was, as you might have guessed, very warm and sunny. After a few days away, the first priority was to visit my local patch and see what had changed. Quite a lot was the answer. Though I still saw a few Common Blues, a battered Brown Argus and yet another very tired female Holly Blue, most of what was out there was new. The first Gatekeeper appeared, and the first Small Skippers.



However, the area was very dried up and I wonder if it will be able to continue despite the best efforts of these two butterflies. It is also the only time I have seen both Small and Essex Skippers here for the first time on the same date.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Jun-18 11:24 PM GMT

More brill stuff Dave 😊 Looks like you had the perfect conditions for open wing Large Blue shots. I was there this afternoon and it was so hot they just wouldn't open up 🙄 but at least I saw them 😊 I was going to confirm your Lulworth but Essex got there first; one trick I use with the tricky fresh males is that they seem to have the pigment plastered on whereas Small Skippers are more metallic – if that makes sense 😊😂 A collection of Purps next?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Jun-18 10:44 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel! 😊 I can see what you mean about the Lulworths they have more of a matt finish than the Small and Essex. It is tricky at Durlston as all three fly together at this time of year.

Nearly time for things purple, but first the rest of the day on **Thursday 21st June**, which was spent up at Black Park in South Bucks, next to Pinewood Studios. Purple Emperors have been seen here, but I always have to manage with White Admirals and the odd Silver-washed Fritillary, plus Purple Hairstreaks inevitably evading the camera. Today was no different, though only one SWF was seen, and not very closely at that. However, the White Admirals put on a good aerobatic display, and even stopped on the brambles towards the end of the afternoon, as did a few new Commas and a Ringlet (out in the sun for once).



Dave

Re: millerd

by Janet Turnbull, 27-Jun-18 10:56 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the White Admirals - they look so velvety 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Jun-18 11:46 PM GMT

Cracking H.Comma Dave and the last White Admiral of the sequence is brill, I love the underside of the White Admiral 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Jun-18 07:47 AM GMT

I see you're still using and abusing your retirement to within an inch of its life Dave. Great stuff and very handy to find out where my next target is likely to be 😊

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 28-Jun-18 08:36 AM GMT

Dave - My vote is for the four-wing underside shot despite the frayed edges.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 28-Jun-18 09:22 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, just catching up on posts, Lovely LB's , the White Admiral shots are great I like the Under side of the Admiral better than it's upper side 😊 I hope they're still around next week when I come South 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jun-18 10:45 AM GMT

Thanks all for your comments on the White Admirals. They are a lovely butterfly (especially the underside), and it has been interesting to see them being almost completely ignored as everyone concentrates on their larger, more purple, cousins.

I wouldn't use my wanderings as an up-to-date basis, Buggy – I'm still a week behind reporting things. 😊 A week is a long time when it's hot and sunny every day and the butterflies are active for 14 hours a day and wear themselves out!

Friday 22nd June: Time at last for the first trip down to Chiddingfold. As I wandered down from the Botany Bay entrance, I was greeted by several White Admirals, one of which was inseparable from a damp and muddy patch even if I stood in the middle of it.



As an aside, has anyone else noticed that viewing a PE photo on the the computer screen at different angles changes the degree of purple showing on the wings? Just like the real thing!

A great day, with great company and some terrific butterflies.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Jun-18 11:16 PM GMT

Saturday 23rd June, and a complete change of scene. I drove over to the other side of London, and the splendid little spot near Leigh-On-Sea Station

that abounds with White-letter Hairstreaks. This is on the edge of Hadleigh Country Park, which has other hotspots, but this one is most easily reached and located. It didn't disappoint: the warm and sunny weather brought out dozens to the brambles. They were easy to approach, but their habit of positioning themselves edge on to the sun didn't make them easy to photograph.

I walked a bit of a way into the verges of the park, where dozens of Marbled Whites, Ringlets and Essex Skippers flew in and over the grass and along the path.



There were also various whites, including a mating pair of GWV.



For me, though, the oddity was seeing a series of female Holly Blues, in far better condition than the last few stragglers I had seen at home.



They appeared to be laying on the brambles, there being very few other options around here that still held unopened flower buds.



However, the main event was the Hairstreak population, which included some fresh examples, mostly females.









It's a bit of a way to travel, but well worth it, and the M25 was unusually kind on the day.

Dave

Re: millerd

by keving, 28-Jun-18 11:45 PM GMT

Dave, Lovely photos of the WLH. I have visited that very spot for the last couple of years and the population continues to grow. Like you I got up close and personal with them too. Very nice butterfly

Kind Regards
Kev

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 29-Jun-18 06:05 AM GMT

I agree with you Dave that the WLH is not an easy butterfly to photograph but you have done them proud with your lovely images – especially on the Columbine (?). You didn't do too badly with those PE's either – I'm looking forward to reading the next installment 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Jun-18 08:16 PM GMT

Thanks, Kev – they are very easy to approach at this spot, and it's hard to tear yourself away. 😊

Thank you, Pauline – I think it's just common or garden bindweed. I have another photo of a Large Skipper almost engulfed by the flower, so it does have attractions for butterflies. The WLH is sucking something up from the surface of the petal. There is one other instalment before I return to the Land of Purple...

Sunday 24th June. I stayed local today, and as an exercise performed a long loop around my patch, trying as far as possible not to cover the same ground twice. In around two and a half hours, I counted the following:

Small Skipper/Essex Skipper – 40 fairly evenly split

Large Skipper – 4

Large White – 4

Small White – 20

Green-veined White – 3

Common Blue – 5

Red Admiral – 2

Small Tortoiseshell – 12

Comma – 7

Speckled Wood – 2

Gatekeeper – 9

Ringlet – 4

Small Heath – 18

Meadow Brown – 71

A small selection of what was seen...



On top of this, I was investigating the tiny Essex Skipper colony by the airport perimeter and strangely drew a blank. However, a small brown butterfly flew past and into the hedgerow elm next to me. Having got my eye in for such things the day before, I quickly identified it as a White-letter Hairstreak. However, before I could get the camera on it in its shady perch, it set off for the tops of the scrubby elms. I saw it (or another) again shortly afterwards high up. I have always suspected they might be present here, but this is the first definite sighting I've had. This is the area, Essex Skipper spot on the verge, elms to the left.



There was one other stand out moment today. I had noticed that the Small Heaths were now a mix of old and new brood examples. The new ones seemed larger and more sandy-coloured, and I wonder if they had somehow managed to match the increasingly dried-up nature of the grassland.



(Shame about the shadow on the right wing...)

It really is a pity that they don't routinely open their wings.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Jun-18 10:30 PM GMT

Brilliant stuff Dave 🤔👍 I've heard about being able to talk the birds down out of the trees but you can do the same for butterflies 😊 You're looking good for a 50+ year by the look of things 🤔👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 30-Jun-18 08:01 AM GMT

Blinking eck Dave, I was looking forward to seeing those Small Heath shots after you told me about them but.....! 🤔👍👍👍

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Jun-18 11:14 AM GMT

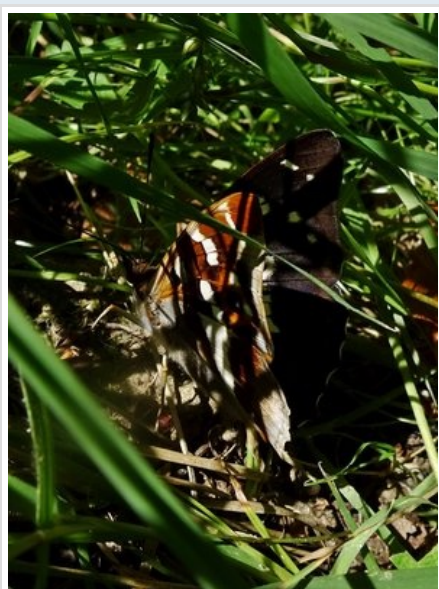
Thanks, Wurzel – you could be right as the tally stands at 46 at the moment. And it's not quite July yet... 😊

Cheers, Buggy. I was pleased with the Small Heath shots, though there was more luck than judgment involved in achieving them. 😊 I don't think any other of our butterflies is that colour so it is a shame they almost always hide it.

Monday and Tuesday 25th and 26th June: Two consecutive mornings at Chiddingfold in the company of Purple Emperors, plus Trevor of course and a number of other people of a purple persuasion, including another sighting of Pauline on the second day. Great to see you all. Glorious weather, good company and many encounters with the Emperors. 😊 Here is a selection of shots from both days. The stark contrast between sunshine and shade, and

the butterfly's propensity to sit in areas where both mingled did not make things particularly easy. I also sadly missed seeing Trevor's ab on Tuesday, being occupied round the corner with three others taking it in turns to sit on the track.

25th:



26th:







There were fewer around on Tuesday, and most (for me anyway) kept their wings shut in the heat.

Memorable summer's days... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 30-Jun-18 12:42 PM GMT

Dave – Great shots of all those Purple Emperors. Also I looked back through your recent posts and found that wonderful moment you captured a Small Heath with its wings open. Now that really is a rarity!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 30-Jun-18 04:24 PM GMT

You've been very busy lately, Dave.
Love your WL Hairstreaks, all look pretty fresh.
You also managed some purple, I agree the harsh sunlight and dark shadows made photography difficult, with glare from the ride surface combined with a dark Butterfly, not the best combination.

Good to see everyone again,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Jun-18 10:13 PM GMT

Brilliant Purple Emperors Dave 😊 It seems like I need to get to Chiddingfold one year 🍀 Fingers crossed they play nicely tomorrow at Bentley Wood 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 04-Jul-18 10:20 AM GMT

Great WLH's Dave, and your Emperors and White Ads are very nice indeed. 😊

But my favourite has to be the Small Heath upper wing shots. A fantastic thing to see and catch on camera, well done! 🍀 😊

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 04-Jul-18 04:41 PM GMT

Hi Dave – your diary sets a challenging pace. I am struggling to keep up especially in this heat and I'm wondering where you've been most recently 😊 You were way too modest about your Chiddingfold PE's – some really cracking shots there – but for me the real envy lies with Durlston (got to be one of my favourite places) and your shots of the Lulworth. 🍀 🍀

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 06-Jul-18 09:06 PM GMT

Just caught up with those open winged Small Heath shots Dave, great stuff and well done 🍀 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Old Wolf, 06-Jul-18 09:18 PM GMT

Hello Millerd,
I love the shots of the White Admirals and Purple Emperors.

I have never seen either of these butterflies so I love looking at pics and hoping one day I get a shot like those.

Stay Hydrated.

Old Wolf.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Jul-18 07:20 PM GMT

Thank you everyone for all the enthusiastic comments! Much appreciated... 😊 I've been away for a week and unable to post anything, but hopefully that will be rectified shortly... It's been sunny and/or hot everywhere I've been, sometimes uncomfortably so, and as far as I can see almost the whole of England is turning yellow. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Jul-18 07:38 AM GMT

Having beaten Sweden surely your anxiety; "almost the whole of England is turning yellow" is slightly unfounded 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jul-18 12:37 PM GMT

Fair point, Wurzell 😊😊

I'd better start catching up, being more behind than a hyper-gluteal African elephant...

After Chiddingfold on **26th June**, I popped into Box Hill, where Marbled Whites abounded.



However, the latter hid down in the grass for the most part and were very hard to find settled.

On **Wednesday 27th June**, the target for the day was the first flush of Graylings at Dawneys Hill. As usual, as soon as I stopped to survey the scene, one of this fascinating species bounded over the gorse and settled on my leg.



This was to happen several more times, and I ended up with more photos of them sitting on me than on the ground.





On **Thursday 28th and Friday 29th June**, I met up with Bugboy down at Bookham as there seemed to be a large emergence of Purple Hairstreaks and some opportunities to see them low down. We were not disappointed, and the large amount of oak woodland contained good numbers, as well as lots of Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals.





A quick visit to Denbies later in the day revealed that the Chalkhills were still to emerge, and the Marbled Whites still had the hillside largely to themselves.

After today, I set off on a week of wandering further afield.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Jul-18 10:10 PM GMT

Saturday 30th June: I drove up to Stamford in Lincolnshire to spend the night with an old school friend. On the way I stopped off at Bedford Purlieus, near Peterborough. This is a curious piece of woodland with several rides crossing it, but only one, running East-West, seems to have a good population of butterflies.

Immediately I saw Silver-washed Fritillaries, Ringlets and Meadow Browns in good numbers, but the heat was keeping them mostly in the shade. It was a bit later I spotted an area of the path that had been neatly trodden down by a stand of brambles, and in this area I discovered a colony of White-letter Hairstreaks centred on a relatively small stand of small elms. There were a couple of dozen butterflies flying energetically around the trees, but quietly nectaring on the flowers were several others.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Jul-18 02:10 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave – any two Hairstreak day is a goodun in my books 🤔👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Jul-18 10:55 PM GMT

In fact, strictly speaking there were three Hairstreaks flying in the woods on 30th, as I saw several Purple Hairstreaks around the tops of the many oak trees (though none came down). Now that would have been a sight with all three together... 😊

On **Sunday 1st July**, I resumed my travels and headed in leisurely fashion northwest to a hotel I'd booked in Lancaster. On the way I passed quite close to the fire up on Winter Hill and the TV mast almost engulfed in smoke. The smell of burning was quite apparent. I arrived in unusual heat, and after a break (hoping it would become cooler) I headed the extra ten miles up to Arnside Knott. As it turned out it was no cooler up there, even on the higher slopes, and I didn't spend as long as planned. There were lots of butterflies, mostly Ringlets, but the first individual I came close to on a bramble was a White-letter Hairstreak. I had no idea they were up here and it came as a bit of a surprise.



I saw no Fritillaries this evening, but did encounter a Red Admiral and a new and quite intensely coloured Small Tortoiseshell.



With it still hot, I decided to head back to the hotel for refreshment and return early on Monday morning.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 09-Jul-18 11:20 PM GMT

Good spot with that Hairstreak Dave. I'll be interested to see what else you came across there since it was less than week from when I was there!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 10-Jul-18 01:28 PM GMT

I see you are now wearing Graylings quite regularly Dave ! 😊
Good to read of your recent travels and conquests, complete with some great images.
All we need now in this wonderful season, are a few surprises from the Continent,
there's still time !.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Jul-18 09:54 PM GMT

It wasn't the first thing I was expecting, Buggy, but very welcome all the same. 😊 Part Two of the Arnside adventure coming up.

I reckon they think I'm a tree, Trevor. It invariably happens. Fingers crossed you're right about continental immigrants – even some Clouded Yellows would be good, but anything more unusual would be even better... 😊

Monday 2nd July: Up early and on the Knott at Arnside shortly after 8am. It felt nearly as hot as it had the previous evening, with even brighter sunshine, so any hopes for dozing butterflies disappeared immediately. However, I did soon spot a Fritillary, a female DGF. This was the first of several seen during the morning – but no males.



Everywhere were Ringlets, Meadow Browns and Small Skippers, plus the first of the year's Gatekeepers.



A very successful morning though uncomfortably hot especially when climbing the steep paths! As ever, though, the views were stunning.





Over the two days I counted 20 or 21 species (Small and/or GVW), an impressive total – and anywhere that provides three Fritillaries has to be good!

I now drove across the country to my sister in York, where I had a different sort of day planned for the 3rd.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Jul-18 11:14 PM GMT

Brill stuff Dave 😊 Have you visited Arnside earlier this time as I seem to recall that there are also Scotch Argus here 😊? Looking forward tot eh next installment 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 11-Jul-18 08:16 AM GMT

Dave – you've had a fine time recently haven't you? Great encounters with WL and P Hairstreaks and NB Argus, etc but for my money the Grayling on the knee shots are the most memorable. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Jul-18 09:10 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – yes, it was three weeks earlier than I've ever been up there and there were no Scotch Argus out. Hopefully I'll manage another trip at the end of the month and unless they've taken one look at the hot weather and given 2018 a miss they should be flying. There might still be a female HBF then, but I can't see the NBA asting that long. 😊

Cheers, Ernie – a pair of faded jeans is all you need and Graylings will be your best buddies! 😊

So... over the top to York, and a couple of days with my sister. On **Tuesday 3rd July** while she was at work (I vaguely remember the concept... 😊), I drove up onto the North York Moors to a spot roughly halfway between Pickering and Whitby. This is Fen Bog, an upland bog whence streams flow out both north and south. However, trickle would be a better word at the moment. It lies in a bowl with heather covered banks at the sides, and is bordered by the North York Moors Steam Railway.





I made my way down to the flat area of the bog itself, noticing that the side slopes "leaked" trickles of water every so often. There was one solitary fellow out in the middle with a camera, so I hailed him and asked where a safe route might be out to where he was. He replied that normally it wasn't possible to get out there easily, but in this very dry spell, it was actually possible to just walk straight across. So it proved: the ground was tussocky and even between tussocks the grass gave a bit underfoot, but nowhere was at all squishy. Now, why was I here? Ah yes, this location is a known hotspot for the Large Heath, a species I had never seen, and the cotton grass all around was evidence of this. However, the first thing I noticed was that the thistles around the edge of the bog were hosting a gathering of Dark Green Fritillaries – almost all fresh males.





More Small Pearls were also flying over the bog itself.



However, I eventually noticed another kind of butterfly popping up whenever the sun shone (and sometimes when it didn't). I had been led to expect that Large Heaths would be difficult to approach, but it was only really the nature of the terrain that proved any obstacle. Given a clear path I found I could get pretty close, especially if the sun went in. I probably saw fifteen to twenty individuals at varying distances, mostly quite worn as it is at the tail end of their season this year.



my first ever Large Heath!







At one point, I did find my knees were wet from getting down close to one target – the water hadn't completely disappeared. 😊

Returning to the car park, I found the thistles amongst the heather and bracken were home to more splendid fresh DGF.





Mission accomplished – and at a lovely spot as well, enhanced by the astonishing weather. No doubt this is quite a different place at other times!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 11-Jul-18 09:21 PM GMT

Well done Dave, two more lifers in the bag for you now. Even if they weren't fresh those Large Heath are nicely marked. How many species you got left to find now?

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Jul-18 10:46 PM GMT

You've filled your 'northern boots' there, Dave. Arnside is a lovely part of the world and having the best concentration of High Browns in the UK makes it even better.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Jul-18 10:56 PM GMT

Congratulations on the Large Heath Dave, you're ticking them off this year 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 12-Jul-18 08:29 AM GMT

Having spoken to a few local people who know Fen Bog quite well, I can tell you that that's a remarkable count of Large Heaths, Dave! I saw one on my visit and felt pretty pleased even about that! 😊 Well done, they must be having an exceptional year.

Fab WHLs from Arnside as well. I love the one on bramble with the meadow in the background.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Jul-18 02:58 PM GMT

Your most recent excursion to the North seems to have been a bit of an epic, Dave !. And two life time firsts. I do like the thought of Large Heaths 🍷 near the NYMR, with Gresley teak coaches passing by !. I could use some of that sort of therapy. It was also pleasing to read of the Small Pearls that you found, presumably a natural wild colony.

Great images, and a good read.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Jul-18 10:27 PM GMT

Cheers, Buggy and Wurzel – yes, two lifers, leaving only three to go plus such recurrent maybes like the Large Tortoiseshell. Also 49 for the year at this

point... 😊

Arnside is a splendid place, David, though I have to say finding HBF is usually quite hard work up there, especially in scorching heat! 😊

There did seem to be quite a few, Callum, especially when the sun came out properly. I was there a couple of hours and covered quite a bit of ground, but of course double-counting is quite possible. I did have a couple of views with three or four in sight at one time, and got views of more than half a dozen different individuals settled in the grass (there were some awful shots I didn't post!). Thanks for the WLH comment too – I may try a different crop with that photo and include a bit more of the top of the view to include more distant sea. 😊

The steam railway backdrop worked very well, Trevor. With a famous named guest loco in shot, you could get some cracking photos. 😊 The Small Pearls were a real bonus (and the unexpected DGF too), and like those at Arnside occupy a different sort of habitat and behave differently to those down here in the south of England. They just fly with all the other common butterflies. I don't know how widespread they are over the NYM – Callum may have an idea. PBF on the other hand are very restricted up there.

From **4th to 7th July**, I stayed with my friend in Holmfirth. The weather here was still amazing, something I have never experienced before over many visits! There were butterflies every day, mostly Ringlets all over the place, but the garden was visited by Red Admirals, Commas, Small Tortoiseshells, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and all three common species of White.

The most interesting sightings were not actually butterflies. On a local walk above the town, I spotted a bird on a wire which was too far away for me to even begin to identify. I zoomed in as far as I could and then enlarged the image. Staring directly at me (and no doubt seeing me far clearer than I could see it) was this little chap:



I'm told this is a Little Owl, but any confirmation or rebuttal gratefully received.

The same evening amongst a host of small moths that appeared after dark was this much larger beast, sadly somewhat worn and battered. I really don't know what this one is:



Finally, a couple of views towards Holme Moss. The second was taken very early on 7th, when the wind had gone round to the west, and the smoke haze from Saddleworth was drifting across.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 12-Jul-18 10:32 PM GMT

Yup, that's a Little Owl alright and your moth is a A Swallowtailed Moth.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Jul-18 10:48 PM GMT

Great shot of the Little Owl Dave 😊 Isn't Holmfirth near to where they shot Last of the Summer Wine – or am I barking up the wrong tree? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-Jul-18 06:52 AM GMT

Fabulous shot of the Little Owl, Dave. I've never seen one in the wild in the UK.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Jul-18 03:43 PM GMT

Thanks for the confirmation of IDs, chaps. I was pretty surprised by that owl, not expecting to see something like that on a wire in the open in broad hot sunny daylight! You are spot on about Holmfirth, Wurzel – though I think Compo, Cleggy and co. would have found the straw-coloured countryside pretty unrecognisable last week. The town still makes much of this particular claim to fame, and I have to say that Compo's Fish & Chip Shop is well worth a visit (plenty of other purveyors of food and drink are available...).

Back home, and hotter Heathrow weather. I gave 8th July a miss and ventured out onto my local patch for the first time in a while on **Monday 9th July** when there was a bit of cloud. Lots of butterflies around as you might expect, with large numbers of various Whites, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns in particular.





All these two species were a bit on the small side, and the male blues looked to my eye to be a deeper less shiny blue than their spring forbears had been.



Several mating pairs were seen of different species, including Gatekeepers...



...and Green-veined Whites.



Last but not least was today's guest moth, a first for me in these parts, a Jersey Tiger.



Initially seen in spectacular gaudy flight on the wing, it was hard to find when settled in the shade. Which is the idea of all those stripes, of course.

Over 200 butterflies of 15 species were seen over two hours – which curiously didn't include a single Small Heath.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 13-Jul-18 04:48 PM GMT

Just been catching up on your travels Dave, particularly enjoyed your reports from Arnside, I will be up there again in a couple of weeks 😊

I knew that WLH were supposed to be at Arnside Knot but my visits have usually been too late to see them there.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Jul-18 07:58 AM GMT

Cracking lush shots, particularly of the Brown Argus Dave 😊 I'd be chuffed with the Jersey Tiger – I've not seen one of those 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 14-Jul-18 01:42 PM GMT

That latest post is a feast of colour, Dave. Interesting to see Peacocks emerging again – I suspect we'll be blitzed with them for a couple of weeks before 95% of them suddenly disappear.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-18 12:04 AM GMT

I may be popping into Arnside again in about ten days time or so, Neil – we may coincide as we once did before! Fingers crossed the Scotch Argus will have started to emerge. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – the Brown Argus round here are amazing, and currently very small indeed. The moth was a bonus and a first sighting here though I've seen them at Durlston and in the Greek Islands. 😊

Thank you, David. Lots of Peacocks around at the moment and some are acting territorially rather than feeding up. There may well be second brood in late summer – it's happened before here. 😊

Tuesday 10th July and time to go looking for Chalkhill Blues down at Denbies. Luckily, there was still some cloud about while I was down there, so the butterflies did open up a bit. I saw dozens over the hillside (certainly not plague proportions by any means), along with Brown Argus, Common Blues, several female Dark Green Fritillaries, lots of fading Marbled Whites, endless Meadow Browns, Small and Essex Skippers and a Small Copper. I also spoke to a couple who showed me a photo of a WLH they had taken right in the far southwest corner of the site, but I couldn't locate it.









Next stop would be Box Hill, where a couple of slight surprises awaited me.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Jul-18 06:34 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave, I'm still waiting for the Chalkhills over this way, they like me are behind 😊 Your second Brown Argus has the little white ring around the cell spot, ab snelleri (or some such)? 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 15-Jul-18 09:19 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

The Small Pearls were a real bonus (and the unexpected DGF too), and like those at Arnside occupy a different sort of habitat and behave differently to those down here in the south of England. They just fly with all the other common butterflies. I don't know how widespread they are over the NYM - Callum may have an idea. PBF on the other hand are very restricted up there.

Sorry for a slow reply! As I understand it, SPBF can crop up pretty much wherever the habitat is suitable across the NYM (though no guarantee that they *will*). Not quite a wider-countryside species but certainly widespread. Fen Bog is pretty much THE place to go looking for frits within the park, though, as it's got pretty much the highest density of both SPBF and DGF.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Jul-18 11:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel - are you still waiting for the Chalkhills in real time or in Wurzel-time? 😊😊 It's interesting that little white ring round the forewing spot - they are sometimes quite marked, especially amongst the ones up at Aston Rowant.

Thanks for the info, Callum - fascinating to see how habits and habitat differs between northern and southern populations. 😊 Also good to know what a hotspot Fen Bog is, though getting the overlap between all three notable species might not always be so easy.

10th July (continued). From Denbies, across the valley once again to Box Hill and a cup of tea. I walked down past the members' car park with its prominent elm tree and along the path by the old fort. To the right is a mix of brambles and wild raspberries (the berries are minute this year), and a nicely posed Comma caught my eye. As so often happens, it set off at the last minute after something, but sitting close by on another bramble leaf was the now familiar figure of a White-letter Hairstreak.



To finish the day I went back to the WLH spot and found them still bumbling around. I was then aware of a graceful larger shape gliding over the brambles, where it stopped and turned into a female White Admiral. It was a very amenable insect, completely ignoring my presence, but unfortunately not responding to my gentle attempts to "herd" it next to the hairstreaks for an unusual combo! 😊





Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 16-Jul-18 09:29 PM GMT

A brilliant selection from your recent reports Dave. Particularly like your Chalkhills, Brown Argus and WLH. 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Jul-18 10:08 PM GMT

In real time Dave, though I saw my first this afternoon, posting come September 😊😊 Great series of shots Dave, your fantastic range of sightings show how effective it is to just get out there as much as possible 😊🌿

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Jul-18 11:48 PM GMT

Thanks, Andrew – more Chalkhills to come... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – I'm glad the Chalkhills have appeared down your way too. 😊 You're right, getting out somewhere (almost anywhere) is what seems to do the trick. And strangely things come to you when you least expect it... That's Fritillaries in Yorkshire, two sets of unanticipated WLH sightings and I wasn't expecting that last White Admiral either. 😊

Wednesday 11th July: Northwards for a change today and up to Aston Rowant where the first Silver-spotted Skipper has been seen. Well, in the heat and sunshine even if I had seen one I doubt I'd have kept track of it – and as it was I definitely didn't see one. Plenty of other things to see, and at the end of the visit I'd clocked up 23 species (three of these in the car park and one of them very unexpected indeed). Chalkhill Blues now predominate across the slopes here, though there are patches where Common Blues are more frequent, and others where you'll find more Brown Argus. Chalkhills first:





The most interesting bit came when I got back to the car park. I looked up at a few oak trees to see if they were inhabited by Purple Hairstreaks (they were, naturally!), when a large dark butterfly glided from the top of one tree to the top of another. Another enthusiast who was also watching looked at me and said "Was it? Wasn't it?" However, about fifteen minutes later, the big black butterfly appeared again, and made a longer flight between trees. This time I could clearly make out the backlit wing pattern, and coupled with the way it flew, it was clearly a Purple Emperor. They certainly get around...

I then managed a few Purple Hairstreak shots...



...before a largish orange butterfly appeared at ground level, making short bursts of powerful flight between the scrubby thistles. This was a Painted Lady, making egg-laying sorties.



In the first shot of the egg, you can make out another (blurred) at the top left. Both were very blue, unlike the one I'd seen laid down at Collard Hill in June.

Quite a day really!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-18 02:34 PM GMT

"Quite a day really" - I'll say! 🤩 🍷 Twenty three species including 2 Purps, Painted Lady laying, lovely bright Small Coppers and Chalkhills a plenty 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 17-Jul-18 07:55 PM GMT

Ah!...Aston Rowant, I really must get myself down there soon, I haven't been for a couple of years now 😊

Great sighting of the Purple Emperor, it seems that quite a few species are dispersing quite widely in the recent heat.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Jul-18 10:39 PM GMT

Yes, definitely the highest species tally anywhere this year, Wurzel, despite the lack of the Silver Spotted target species. The Imperial appearance was probably worth two points, though. 😊

Give it just a little while to let the Silver-spotted Skippers get established, Neil, and the second round of Adonis to appear. With luck there might even be a Clouded Yellow or two – they like this hillside and tend to arrive here and venture no further. Fingers crossed! 🤞

Thursday 12th July: Southwards again to Bookham, and on the trail of a different wild goose that had been reported but turned out to be hiding from searches at any rate – Brown Hairstreak. I bumped into Bugboy once again and neither of us had any luck on this score. However, the woods were still thronging with other things, especially Silver-washed Fritillaries. Initially, a mix of cloud and hazy sun kept them amenable and perched on various tall thistles along the rides. There were males and females in close proximity, showing little interest in each other and it was only when the sun came out more towards the middle of the day that we saw a few become amorous. Though some of the females looked reasonably fresh, I suspect most had been mated and they therefore displayed only passing interest in males doing their best to shower them in scent scales.



With plenty of day left, we elected to head down to Denbies before the sun took over the day completely – again. However, the morning really belonged to the Fritillaries.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Jul-18 11:03 PM GMT

Great Butterflies Dave, what a selection 😊 I'm just catching up on posts, Chalkhills are out in force here , it's been great to see them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-18 11:17 PM GMT

Cracking Frit shots Dave, especially the final one 😊 🇬🇧 You're right about the Holly Blue Dave, it's the species that behaves where the Hairstreaks end and the Blues begin 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Jul-18 12:08 AM GMT

Those last couple of posts are a feast for the eyes, Dave. I see you're back in Holly Blue mode...you may well have them hypnotised again for a little while, I suspect? There could be good numbers over the next week or two.

Re: millerd

by Pauline, 18-Jul-18 06:21 AM GMT

Your diary has kept me entertained whilst I take my coffee break Dave. Some great shots there – that SC positively glows and the Chalkhill with meconium, well, how many other shots like that have you ever seen? My favourite tho' is that Painted Lady egg-laying and shot of egg – how I would like to see and record that 🇬🇧 🇬🇧

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-Jul-18 07:45 AM GMT

There's a lot of very familiar butterflies in that last post 😊. I've not even gone though mine for that day except for getting rid of the obvious blurred and duplicate shots.

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 18-Jul-18 08:26 AM GMT

millerd wrote:

Thanks for the info, Callum – fascinating to see how habits and habitat differs between northern and southern populations.

No worries Dave. It's amazing to see these variations. I'm just embarking on a 6 week stint chasing Speckled Woods up and down the country for work – I did the same last year and it was truly astonishing to see the scale of the differences in behaviour and even physical appearance between populations

in the south of England and the north of Scotland.

In other news, those are some gorgeous shots of the Chalkhills – well done. I'm hoping they'll still be going at Martin Down when I come down to the Salisbury area for Specklies in a month's time, but with the year being so early so far I suppose there are no guarantees!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Jul-18 11:06 PM GMT

Cheers, Goldie – I'm glad there have been plenty of Chalkhills in Kent as well. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel. Those SWF were very easy to approach. However, at some point in the morning something flicks their internal switch and they all go off chasing each other up and down the tracks. 😊

Cheers, David. There are plenty of Holly Blues on my local patch at the moment, but the heat keeps them firmly closed up and flying in the shade.

Many thanks, Pauline – I have been lucky with finding some less usual bit of behaviour lately. That Painted Lady following immediately on the surprise of an Emperor sighting was a great bonus. 😊

Some more familiar ones coming up, Buggy! 😊

Thanks, Callum – you should be in luck with Chalkhills at Martin Down, plus hopefully quite a few other things. 😊

12th July (part two): Denbies. As expected, Chalkhills were the predominant species here, with numbers still building.



This CB female was absolutely tiny.



The Marbled Whites were really fading now and fluttering weakly like bits of tissue paper. There were a handful of Small Heath – all were small and were distinctly sandy in colour, rather than grey: changing to blend in better with the straw-coloured landscape?



Another great day out. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Jul-18 02:28 PM GMT

Lovely set of Chalkhills Dave 😊 I too have noticed some rally small Blues around recently, some the other day were about half the size of the Chalkhills 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Jul-18 03:33 PM GMT

That shot of the egg came out really well dave 😊

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 19-Jul-18 04:34 PM GMT

Some lovely crisp Chalkhill images Dave.

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Jul-18 10:55 PM GMT

Well done with the Chalkhills, Dave. I'm expecting an explosion of these in the next fortnight or so so I suspect we'll see many more similar reports. That said, unless it rains soon the resultant larvae are going to have a hard time. Here's hoping for a heavy thunderstorm or three otherwise LHPs are going to wither on the vine. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Jul-18 11:32 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. All the Chalkhills I've seen so far (and there were hundreds up at Aston Rowant today) are normal-sized except for one or two females, and that might be what you'd expect. I'm now awaiting the first Adonis with interest... 😊

Yes, not a bad photo in the end, Buggy, though it has been mildly Photoscaped I have to admit. 😊 I'm acquiring quite an egg collection one way or another.

Cheers, Ernie – I can't resist taking shots of Chalkhills. They are all subtly different in shade and patterning and you can quite see why the Victorians amassed vast collections of them. I think they would have enjoyed digital photography! 😊

Thanks, David – yes the horseshoe vetch is pretty shrivelled in lots of places, though not too bad yet at Aston Rowant.

Time to return to my local patch. On **Friday 13th July** I went out and saw such a lot of butterflies and so much variety that on **Saturday 14th** I resolved to walk my usual route and actually count what I saw as best I could. I picked a good day – at the end of two hours, I had seen 288 butterflies of eighteen different species (which I think has to be a record for a local walk). There were even one or two absentees which could have put in an appearance but didn't. It was largely sunny, with a high of 29 degrees.

For those who like stats, here is the species list in order of abundance:

Small White – 53
Gatekeeper – 32
Meadow Brown – 30
Common Blue – 30
Brown Argus – 27
Holly Blue – 27
Large White – 23
Green-veined White – 19
Peacock – 12
Speckled Wood – 9
Comma – 8
Essex Skipper – 7
Small Heath – 4
Red Admiral – 2
Painted Lady – 2
Small Skipper – 1
Small Copper – 1
Purple Hairstreak – 1

Sunday 15th was an even hotter day, and even though I went out again, it wasn't for long – though I did succeed in getting a few shots of the Small Copper seen the day before.

For those who prefer the pictures, here is a selection from all three days.











Finally, an amazing bit of camouflage...



Actually, looking back at everything above, that Painted Lady is also pretty well camouflaged with its wings closed against a background of dried grass. It was a splendid fresh specimen too. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Jul-18 11:56 PM GMT

That's quite some tally, Dave. Whenever you can reach high teens in Britain at a single site, it's a good sign.

The next week or two will provide the best opportunities for species range, with both Whites and the garden vanessids all increasing in numbers.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Jul-18 06:15 AM GMT

Your local patch is a bit of a Butterfly factory, churning them out one after the other !. Looking forward to your Wood Whites, you ventured further than I did. I stopped off in the middle of a long journey and was getting peckish. Good luck with the Scotch Argus.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Jul-18 08:16 PM GMT

Fantastic selection of species and shots Dave 😊 any 20+day is a cracker 🍷 The comments loaded before the images so I thought at first you were referring to the came of the Painted Lady underside which is pretty good, but when the Silver-Y image loaded the PLS seemed a feeble by comparison 🙄😬

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Jul-18 10:59 PM GMT

Cheers, David. It was a pretty good tally, though none of the species are that unusual. I'd seen a Brimstone the previous day, too, which would have made 19. 😊

Cheers, Trevor – the odd thing is it's not in any way an exceptional piece of countryside. There's just a bit of a mix, and one area in particular benefits from being mostly left alone. This will almost certainly change when Heathrow expands unfortunately. Wood Whites coming up! A double dose in fact as I went down to Chiddingfold twice this last week. 😊

Thank you, Wurzel! I saw the Silver-Y go to ground right in front of me, and it just vanished. It took a while to spot it... 😊😬

Monday 16th July: Chiddingfold again, this time to see how the second brood Wood Whites were doing. Very well indeed was the answer – there were dozens, both along the rides and in the cleared meadow area near the Triangle. I spent most of my time in this area in fact, as that's where most of the other species were to be found: SWF, Large and Small Skippers, Large, Small and GV Whites, Brimstones, Peacocks, Gatekeepers, Ringlets and Meadow Browns. Aside from the Wood Whites, the most memorable sighting was that of a *valesina* Silver-Washed Fritillary. Unfortunately, it was nectaring in only semi-shade, and the day was very warm, so aside from one or two clear glimpses when it changed flowers, I didn't see a great deal of the dark upperside. Unmistakeable, though and a first for me. I did get a few underside shots though.



Wood Whites were the main event, and amongst the multitude were quite a few indulging in their curious courtship ritual.







Another good day. It always seems strange to see Chiddingfold bereft of purple people and the strange aromas that come with those magical days around midsummer, but there's plenty to make up for it at this time of year. Worth another visit later in the week!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Jul-18 11:32 PM GMT

I agree that the second brood Wood Whites are plentiful. When I found about a dozen for my short visit, I didn't bother to venture further. I also agree that the place seemed deathly quiet after all ' the purple people ' had gone.

Going by your images, Dave, you had a great time. Trevor.

PS. Shame about the slippery Valesina, I've only ever seen one.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 21-Jul-18 10:28 AM GMT

Great stuff Dave 😊 Two things I've not seen this year – Wood Whites and Valesina 🐛 Whilst the topside is what most people want I reckon the underside is just as beautiful 😊 🐛

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 21-Jul-18 05:16 PM GMT

I love those images of the Wood Whites, Dave. How did you capture those? Do you have a 'burst' setting?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Jul-18 10:58 PM GMT

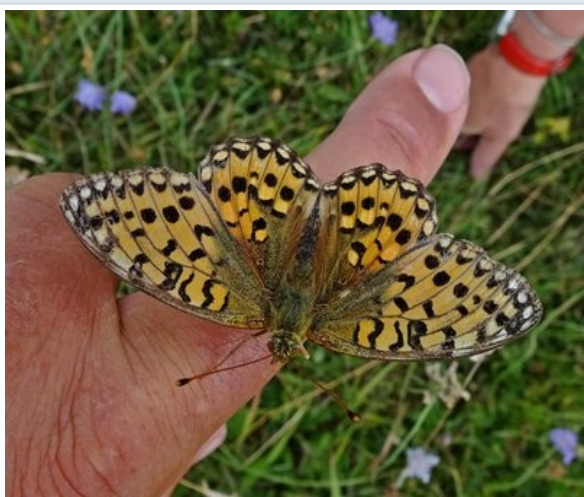
Thank you everyone – Wood Whites are a fascinating species to observe, with behaviour peculiar to them – helped by being easy to approach closely. And yes, David, I do use the "burst" mode to get those open wings, but should have remembered I need to set it to take at 1/1000 sec or faster to properly "freeze" the wing flap. Unfortunately it was quite dark down in the foliage, and 1/400 was the best compromise – hence the blurred wingtips. I can't say I was dissatisfied, though! 😊

Tuesday 17th July was almost a day off from the butterflies – but not quite. I'd arranged to have a walk on the Chilterns with an old school friend, and we took in both Ivinghoe Beacon and Dunstable Downs (driving between the two!).

At Ivinghoe I did notice a scattering of Chalkhills being blown along on the breeze, plus a few skippers and browns, and a territorial Red Admiral landed on my chest for a second or two as if to remind me not to ignore all things lepidopterous. I also did manage a shot of a pair of Chalkhills.



Over at Dunstable Downs, the main butterfly event was a docile female Dark Green Fritillary, which was sitting in the grass shivering. It happily crawled onto my hand and basked for a while before flying off apparently in good health. I know butterflies do shiver to warm up, but it wasn't exactly a cold day. A bit of a mystery but it did impress my companion as she had never seen one before. 😊



The uncharacteristic docility of the butterfly allowed for some less usual close-ups.



After all the walking, refreshment at the visitor centre was a must and during tea and cake we were visited by a very tame rook.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Jul-18 08:26 AM GMT

I 'need' on of those for my 'in the hand' collection Dave 🤔🇬🇧 I suppose it must have been a shock to the system to have a sudden drop in temperature b even a few degrees after this seemingly endless heatwave 😊

Have a goodun

Wuzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-Jul-18 10:34 AM GMT

Love the shot of the Dark Green Frit Dave, it's one I went looking for at home and didn't find, you don't usually get them so docile 😊 sitting on your fingers 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-Jul-18 08:24 PM GMT

Fabulous close encounter with the female DGF, Dave. That's not something you see very often, especially in warm weather.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Jul-18 11:37 PM GMT

Thank you everyone! 😊 Yes, it was a bit unusual. Looking at the DGF now I see that it looks really thin, and despite its lack of tears and other damage it may have been more towards the end of its life than it looks. Maybe suffering from a lack of moisture, though it made no attempt to suck any up from my hand. I was very pleased with those close-ups. 😊

Wednesday 18th July. I had arranged to meet Bugboy down at Bookham again, prior to another trip down to Chiddingfold. I arrived quite early and spent an hour or so watching a series of Purple Hairstreaks down on the lower vegetation or in some cases right down in the grass. Unfortunately, now we are well into their season, they are starting to get worn, but a few hints of purple are visible.





After meeting up with Bugboy, it clouded over and there were even a dozen or so drops of rain (I'd almost forgotten what that is...), but before setting off down the A3 he pointed out some Purple Hairstreak eggs he'd spotted earlier.



Next stop, Chiddingfold (again!).

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 23-Jul-18 01:56 PM GMT

I'm a bit late in congrats but I have just seen the pic of the DGF on your hand. Recalling one I saw earlier in their flight period this year and the way it was bombing back and forth almost non-stop I am amazed that this one did not mind stopping on you for awhile. As they get older, they get tired I suppose, especially under this heat.

Re: millerd

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

Interesting behaviour Dave, were they seeking shade? They are looking a little past their best there, so much so they could almost be 'Brown' Hairstreaks 😊😄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Jul-18 10:54 PM GMT

Hard to believe Purple Hairstreaks are on their last legs with a full week still to go in July!!!

Perhaps another sortie into Chiddingfold will redress the balance somewhat. I would expect 2nd brood Wood Whites to be in their pomp!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-18 12:03 AM GMT

Cheers, Ernie - I'm still uncertain what was going on there.

They do lose the purple very quickly, Wurzel, even though underneath they still look quite fresh. All that tussling in the treetops I suppose. 😊 I tend to agree with the Bugboy theory that they are after moisture in the grass - having now seen two Purple Emperors doing it this year, and having seen both Black and Brown Hairstreaks doing it in the past.

Yes, another Chiddingfold adventure coming up, David! 😊

Wednesday 18th July - continued...

Bugboy and I drove down the A3 to Chiddingfold. It was still mostly cloudy, but as the middle part of the day approached it became increasingly warm and somewhat muggy. There were definitely more Wood Whites around even than there had been two days earlier, along all the rides and in the meadow by the triangle again. As before, SWFs abounded too, and with it less sunny, they spent more time nectaring. I didn't see the valesina female again.





We walked right through the wood to the Oaken Wood entrance, and resolved that on the way back we would actually count all the Wood Whites we saw – the linear nature of this would largely preclude double-counting.

However, before reaching Oaken Wood, a surprise awaited us. An unmistakeable and very large butterfly glided into view in front of us and performed a few elegant dives and swoops before briefly touching down on the ground. Neither of us was at all prepared to record the event, but Bugboy did manage to achieve a couple of shots before the magnificent creature took off and effortlessly soared up and into the tops of the trees. It was of course an Empress – and in pretty good condition too. It took a while for the "wow" factor to wear off, and sadly the display was not repeated on the way back. However, we concentrated instead on counting, and by the time the Botany Bay entrance was reached, we had seen no fewer than 122 individual Wood Whites. This seems a really good total, but it was notable how when the sun shone briefly, the numbers in sight went up quite a bit. Consequently we reckoned that as it had been mostly cloudy, the true numbers along the rides were at least 30% higher.

In amongst all those butterflies, there were several examples of courtship behaviour, and lots of females laying eggs.



However, the best find of all – which has to be credited to Bugboy's sharp eyes – was a newly emerged individual with the empty pupal case below it complete with drop of meconium. I'd have walked straight past this amazing sight for certain.



Here are the best of the rest, plus one or two other species seen as well!







Another excellent day!

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 24-Jul-18 01:18 PM GMT

Your diaries rather handy at the moment, I'm so far behind it helps remind me where I've been 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Jul-18 10:40 PM GMT

This'll confuse you, Buggy – you weren't on this trip! 😊

On **Thursday 19th July**, it was sunnier and warmer again. I decided the Silver-spotted Skippers must be properly out up at Aston Rowant now and headed on up there. I was fairly early, and the most striking thing about the hillside was that it shimmered with Chalkhill Blues fluttering just above the ground. There were more flying than I've seen for some years now (a view corroborated by another enthusiast I met in the middle of the slope a bit later). Here are a few to start things off:



...plus many other species too.









Worth another trip in a week or two I'd say.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-18 10:42 PM GMT

Fantastic Wood Whites Dave 🤔🍷 That freshly emerged one is a real cracker and to see the pupal case left intact like that is brill, really was fresh out of the box 🤔 Great set of Silver-spots too 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Jul-18 10:30 AM GMT

Chiddingfold continues to provide the ingredients for a great day out !.
Well done with that freshly emerged Wood White.
Like me, you were probably astounded to find an Empress so late on.
At least the one I saw gave a wonderful, low, flying display before departing.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Jul-18 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely images again, Dave. I'm quite struck by how fresh many of your butterflies are. Of course, I'd expect that with species like Wood White, Chalkhill Blue & Silver Spotted Skipper, but round my way, Ringlets & Meadow Browns are looking well past their best and Dark Green Fritillaries positively lacklustre!

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 27-Jul-18 02:36 PM GMT

Fantastic stuff from Chiddingfold Dave, you got some great shots and views of the Wood Whites and their behaviour. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-18 12:23 AM GMT

Cheers, all. 😊 Wood Whites really do make a good study, and it was an exceptional day in that respect with ideal conditions and a large number of butterflies to observe. I've never seen so many in either brood in all the years I've been visiting these woods.

I've been away for the best part of a week, suffering the upheaval in the weather in northern climes and not seeing huge amounts of interest – one or two high points though, but it'll be a while before I get round to those as I need to catch up a fair amount of other stuff. 😊

Friday 20th July: the last day of term, and an early finish at school for my youngest son, so I had to stay local with only half a morning to play with. It was cloudy but very warm, and once again activity was dominated by the high numbers of Brown Argus and Common Blues on the wing (21-18 today).

Brown Argus:







Common Blues:







Along the edge of the grassland area where they were flying are thistles and fleabane, and behind that, thick beds of brambles. Just to confuse things slightly, Holly Blues were making sorties from their usual haunts on the bramble flowers and settling on fleabane alongside the other two species.



Also seen were a couple of Red Admirals – there are still very few of these around this year – and the usual variety of summer species.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Jul-18 05:50 AM GMT

Your first Brown Argus has a bit of 'Northern' look about it, surely only hours old.
Holly Blues around here are not behaving, staying high and not landing.

I imagine you'll have something exotic for us in a later post, at least a species not seen down here !.

Great stuff,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-18 08:30 AM GMT

Great set of shots Dave it's good to stay local sometimes 😊 Your first, lush Brown Argus does look a bit 'snelleri' 😊 Only having a limited amount of time butterflying must have come as a bit of a shock 🤔 😊 🌱

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-Jul-18 08:44 AM GMT

Your patch really does produce the goods, those BA are wonderful looking insects.

I've still not finished going through my Chiddingfold pictures yet, thinned them out significantly but still need some editing due to the cloudy conditions throwing the white balance all over the place! I'll get there by the end of the week though 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-18 04:23 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – the Hollies have been coming down and nectaring in the shade, but staying tightly shut. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel – you're right, the local option should never be overlooked as all sorts of things turn up. 😊

Cheers, Buggy – the Brown Argus have been brilliant here this year, and with luck there will be a third brood at the end of August. You're right about getting decent shots of those Wood Whites – the selection I posted were pruned down from nearly 300 (with a little help here and there from PhotoScape...). 😊

Saturday 21st July: Southwards today to Box Hill, and then Denbies. I was hoping to see the first Silver-spotted Skippers at both sites, but drew a blank at both. However, there was plenty on offer at both locations.

At Box Hill, there were still fading Dark Green Fritillaries, though they were either careering around at high speed in the sunshine or diving well into the grass to lay, completely hidden from view. One or two Marbled Whites remained, but overall, Common Blues predominated in all areas visited. There were also Chalkhills over on Dukes, plus a few Brown Argus and a nice dusky Small Copper. Amongst the Common Blues, I found several females including one which unusually appeared completely devoid of blue scales – but was definitely not a Brown Argus.





The Small Copper posed nicely, including settling in close proximity to a Common Blue.



with small "silver studs"



very pale underside with light yellow lunules



Finally, in the shade I found a selection of fresh Speckled Woods, including this richly-coloured example.



After a cup of tea, on to Denbies...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-18 07:47 PM GMT

Lovely dusky Copper 🍷🍷 and cracking 'Silver-studded Chalkhill', I need to find me one of those 🍷🍷🍷 Also interesting to see the higher concentration of blue scaling on the female Common Blue is in a similar area/block as on a female Purple Hairstreak 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Jul-18 10:32 PM GMT

You're right, Wurzel - I must have a look at the other female blues around at the moment and see if it is a consistent feature.

Silver-studded Chalkhills seem to crop up fairly often, mostly females from what I've seen.

21st July part two: On to Denbies. I walked down through Steers Field by way of the path at the extreme right (facing downhill), close to the hedgerow. All along here were Ringlets and Small Skippers, Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns, plus a handful of worn Marbled Whites. There were even one or two Holly Blues. However, the most interesting feature was where the hedgerow fell away a bit to expose the interior of the woodland - chasing each other in and out of the shade were a pair of Silver-washed Fritillaries (a male and a female). Unfortunately they remained out of range, but were a nice sight nonetheless. Moving down the slope I then came upon a group of Small Coppers. This species pops up in small numbers at Denbies every year, never consistently in the same spot, and it is unusual to see more than a couple at a time. The group today numbered five or six.



However, here the Chalkhills were definitely the most numerous, though compared to Aston Rowant a few days ago they were far more spread out.



I also came across another female Dark Green Fritillary, and I was surprised to see that it was really quite fresh compared to the others I've seen lately in various locations.



As I headed back to the car park, the peace was disturbed by the sound of jet engines...



On their way to Kent, I believe.

Finally, the guest moth spot today was filled nicely by this male custard-and-jam moth, which I'm told is officially known as a Clouded Buff.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Aug-18 08:51 PM GMT

More great stuff Dave, those Coppers are really dusky looking 🤔🌍 I've seen a few butterflies with deformed wings over the years but never one with such a small wing 😊 Also a surprisingly fresh DGF, where has she been hiding? 😊 I think 'Custard and Jam' is a much better name than Clouded Buff 😊 as that moth is neither 'clouded' or 'buff' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Aug-18 10:08 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. There should definitely be a set of alternative (more apt) names for various species... 😊 Yes, almost all the Coppers I've seen lately have been dusky: apparently it's a sure indicator of hot weather.

Sunday 22nd July: Time to see how the Graylings were doing down at Dawney's Hill. This Surrey heathland site was looking very dried up, with even the smaller gorse plants apparently dying off and very little heather blooming. Nevertheless I was surprised to see a handful of Silver-studded Blues still active, though they all looked very worn and none stopped for more than a moment or two. There were a couple of Common Blues flying to add to the confusion, though these were much more fresh.



Also in the mix were a few Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, plus a single Small Copper – one nearly always turns up here when I visit.





...but my attempts to get some "in flight" photos bore very little fruit:



It really was getting too hot on the heath to hang around for long, so I headed for home and a late afternoon look at my local patch where hopefully it might be a bit cooler.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 02-Aug-18 07:30 AM GMT

Great set of Grayling shots, Dave. But the image that stays with me is the Common Blue with the one stunted hind-wing. Amazing.

Re: millerd

by Old Wolf, 02-Aug-18 04:04 PM GMT

Hello Millerd. I have very fond memories of Box Hill but haven't been back in many years. I think I may have to look into a return visit one day.

Great shots with a good number of butterflies I am yet to meet 🍷

I must say, the antenna on the Clouded Buff are very impressive 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Aug-18 09:50 PM GMT

More great images Dave 😊, they serve to remind me of all the posts I've got to write up 😊 Digging the Trousered shot 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

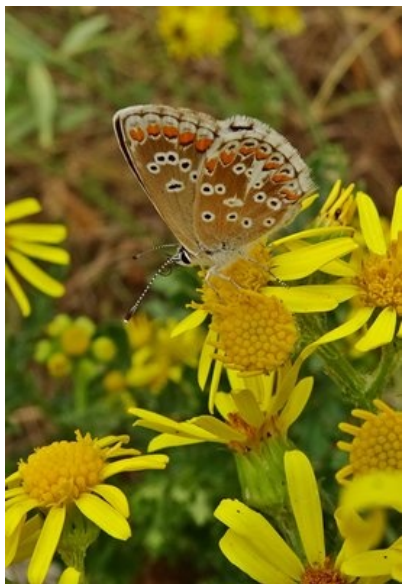
by millerd, 02-Aug-18 10:52 PM GMT

Cheers, Ernie – that deformed Common Blue was a very unusual butterfly. It's amazing how they carry on pretty well as normal with such defects.

Than you Old Wolf – Box Hill is definitely worth a visit, especially if you are prepared to walk around quite widely and cover various differing habitats.

Cheers, Wurzel. This is probably the only place in the world where "Digging the trousered shot" actually has a real meaning. 😊😊

Back to home territory later in the day on **22nd July**. However, between 4 and 6 it was probably even hotter than earlier on. Over the desiccated yellow grassy areas, Common Blues(17) and Brown Argus(19) were still whizzing around and finding nectar on ragwort, fleabane and thistles.



Two distinct bird strikes on an otherwise new butterfly – or an encounter with a ticket collector...

However, Holly Blues(20) squeezed ahead in numbers – I was finding most of them on brambles, though some were on the fleabane too.



No amount of heat seems to slow these little warriors down.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Aug-18 11:24 PM GMT

23rd July turned out to be yet another hot and sunny day. Consequently I took my youngest son (now 13, unbelievably) down to the beach at Studland for the day. It was surprisingly uncrowded, the sea was almost glassy calm and not at all cold, and we ended up spending the best part of the day there. In the dunes behind the beach, it was like an oven, and only a few brave Gatekeepers were flying. I used to see Grayling here every summer, but not for some years now. We hadn't left any time to visit Durlston, but a recent report from Bugboy indicated that it was badly dried up and that coupled with the heat meant I wasn't too disappointed. We did stop in the NT car park at the foot of Corfe Castle but, only a few Common Blues were flying here.



24th July was the same again weatherwise, but only another local outing was feasible as we were heading up to York the following day. A very similar picture to 22nd July (HB-23; CB-22; BA-13).



One of the Brown Argus was a minute creature – I managed to get my index fingernail in shot close to and in the same plane as the butterfly to provide some scale.



A different selection of species today.



The Red Admiral was right down in the vegetation, seeking out the green nettle shoots at the base of the dried-out stems.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 03-Aug-18 07:43 AM GMT

Butterflies aside that's a great pic of Corfe Castle.

Its like the Common Blues around the car park were laying siege to it. 😊

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 03-Aug-18 10:09 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, love the shot of the Argus on the Berry 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Aug-18 06:46 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Dave and that is a really tiny Brown Argus 😊😊 I'm surprised about the Grayling missing from the dunes mind you if could have been the heat, I usually see them by the National Trust outdoor education centre which is slightly further from the beach 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-18 11:02 PM GMT

Thank you everyone.

Up to the York area for a few days from **25th July**, staying with my sister in Wilberfoss. Three blazing hot days were followed by a spectacular lightning show and three much cooler days with rain a feature of all of them. Yorkshire seemed (initially!) nearly as dried up as the south-east, and there were definitely fewer butterflies overall in my sister's garden this year (though there were more Holly Blues than usual). Over the time we were there, I spotted Meadow Browns, Holly Blues, Commas, a Painted Lady, Red Admirals, Peacocks, a Brimstone and all three Whites. Interestingly the two Commas, seen on separate days, were one each of hutchinsoni and of the hibernating variety.





A selection of the rest:



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Aug-18 11:27 PM GMT

During my stay in York, there were one or two outings. On **26th July** we visited the York Maize Maze, the site of which is surrounded by a selection of oaks. As on a couple of previous occasions, I spotted several Purple Hairstreaks, disturbing a couple from the grass and then another down on corn leaf in the Maze itself. On **29th July**, a walk around Allerthorpe Common not long after the rain finished produced no butterflies at all – somewhat unusual, as it wasn't cold and had brightened quite a lot.

However, on the previous day, **Saturday 28th July**, an afternoon trip to Kiplingcotes, a long disused chalk working next to the footpath that runs along the line of the old railway line between Market Weighton and Beverley, was more productive. It was mostly sunny, refreshingly much less warm, but unfortunately really windy. The footpath itself was home to Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Speckled Woods, with a few white butterflies thrown in. Stepping into the open area of the old chalk pit, I was struck by the resemblance to chalk landscapes much nearer home – I was expecting Chalkhill Blues to appear at any moment. However, it was only on reaching the northeast corner of the pit, with a sheltered bit of slope facing the sun, that I found anything. Suddenly there was a whole variety of other species: Common Blues, a Comma, Small Skippers, a possible Brown Argus...





but the surprise for me was finding the bright orange–brown butterfly I had taken to be a Small Tortoiseshell was in fact a female Wall.



Any guesses as to the identity of the photobomber here?





Shortly afterwards, I spotted a male as well, but this one stayed resolutely wings shut, edge-on to the camera.

The moral of the story: Always expect the unexpected!

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 04-Aug-18 06:47 AM GMT

Well done on finding those two Wall Browns. Is it likely to be an unknown site for them? These odd finds could suggest that they are more wide spread than given credit for.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 04-Aug-18 10:37 AM GMT

Great you finding the Wall's Dave, 🍷 they've been a bit elusive this year here, I spotted one in Southport Dunes in Spring and that's the last time I saw one. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Aug-18 08:00 PM GMT

That's a great motto Dave, and in this heatwave really appropriate as things have obviously read the literature and thrown it out of the window 🤪 Great set of shots 🍷 🍷 Is the photobomber a Bad Attitude...sorry I mean a Brown Argus? I reckon your fly was *Volucella pellucens* Pellucid Fly 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Aug-18 09:14 PM GMT

Wurzel's right with that big fly ID, its a type of Hoverfly. I reckon that photobomber is a common blue, the brown doesn't look chocolaty enough for a Brown Argus.

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 05-Aug-18 10:01 PM GMT

Nice to hear about your East Yorks travels Dave! Interesting to hear of Purple Hairstreaks at the maize maze - I've never yet been but might have to squeeze a visit in ASAP! I'm sure there must be Brown Arguses at Kip but I've never managed to confirm one - every time I think I've got one it magically turns into another female Common Blue... ?

trevor wrote:

Well done on finding those two Wall Browns. Is it likely to be an unknown site for them ?

Not an unknown site for them Trevor, but you still have to be a bit lucky to see one there. It's my local patch and I hadn't, until today, following up on Dave's sighting (now in my PD)!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Aug-18 10:29 PM GMT

Thanks everyone - it was good to see those unexpected Walls (like those you found in a Wiltshire churchyard, Trevor 😊), and better still that Callum saw a reasonable number a few days later. Now looking at the photobombing butterfly, I'm inclined to go with the female Common Blue hypothesis. The bit I thought was a long (male) abdomen is actually a bit of hindwing. And thank you for the fly ID - an odd-looking creature: its rear looks almost stuck on, the dividing line between white and black is so stark. 😊

Monday 30th July: We headed back via Rugby to drop in on one of my other children, and thence to home down the preferred route along the M40. The Southam Bypass had no butterflies of any description (I've seen second brood Small Blues here in the past), so I also tried a stop at Bishop's Itchington. There was a bit more sunshine, and though there were no Small Blues here either, one small area that looked surprisingly green was densely populated with Common Blues. There was much variety amongst the females, from strikingly blue to almost totally brown.





An interesting little side trip barely a mile off the route home. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-18 12:00 AM GMT

That's a brilliant selection of Blues Dave, and I had to do a double take – a brown female Common 😲 since when have female Common Blues been Brown 😊😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Aug-18 10:01 PM GMT

I think it could be the heat making them darker, Wurzel – like all the dusky Small Coppers I keep seeing. 😊

Tuesday 31st July: Home again, and a visit to my local patch to start things off. The first immediate point of interest was the demise of two ivy-covered ash trees which harboured good numbers of the local Holly Blue population. One had fallen one way (damaging a couple of cars) and the second fell the other way, luckily damaging nothing.



I imagine the soil around the roots had dried out so much that it no longer kept the trees stable, and the weight of the ivy was just too much for them. Perhaps the additional mass of a single extra Holly Blue was enough to tip the balance... 😊😄 It may well affect the numbers a bit next year, especially if eggs have already been laid, though there is so much alternative ivy around it shouldn't be by much.

There were certainly plenty of Hollies around this morning (15 seen in various spots), mostly nectaring on shaded brambles.



... as well as various whites and browns, a Comma and a Small Copper.



Large
Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Aug-18 10:26 PM GMT

Later on **31st July**, I thought I'd try and find some assorted Blues basking before going to roost down at Denbies. I hadn't reckoned with it being so windy, and though not as hot as recently, it was very sunny. Consequently, most of the assortment of Common, Chalkhill and the first second brood Adonis (not to mention Brown Argus) were going straight from being blown around in flight to roosting position on equally wind-blown grass stems. To be honest, the mission wasn't much of a success! Some of the roosts did have sizeable numbers of butterflies in them, though none of my shots were worth posting. Back up at the car park of course there was not a breath of wind... 😊😄 A small selection of what I managed to get close to:





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Aug-18 10:39 PM GMT

A lovely set of shots Dave 😊👍 even if they were hard won! It seems that in this hot weather open wing shots are at a premium, the minute anything lands it closes up shop and that's it 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Aug-18 06:08 PM GMT

You're right, Wurzel – the hot weather and bright sunshine are far from ideal.

Nevertheless, on **Wednesday 1st August** I pretty well repeated the previous day, with a morning trip out locally and a late afternoon visit to Denbies. Very similar results, as you might expect. First of all, a selection from home. Brown Argus:





I was trying to get a shot of a dark female Common Blue, when another Argus dived in.



For once a Meadow Brown opened up.



they appear deep in conversation...



Dave



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-18 08:19 PM GMT

That's a cracking close up view of the Holly Blue Dave 😊👍 The other shots are great too but the "Incoming!" one is a corker 😂😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Aug-18 10:55 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. It was such a fresh and amenable sort of butterfly that I couldn't resist the close up. Taken from all of an inch or two away... 😊 And it was a Holly Blue of course. 😊

1st August continued: And so, on to Denbies again. It wasn't so windy this time, though every bit as warm and sunny and basking butterflies were at a premium. First to be seen today were a couple of Small Coppers, one of which was characteristically dusky as they seem to be in this hot year.





There were still some decent Chalkhills, though the males are fading really fast now with ore days of heat and sunshine than usual.



...and there were plenty of Brown Argus too.



Finally – a view westwards, and also a full zoom cropped shot of Leith Hill Tower over on the greensand ridge – it's amazing what these clever cameras can do.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Aug-18 11:11 PM GMT

Some really nice Adonis there Dave, did you use your whispering ways on them to get them to open up? 😊🍷 The sheen from the back of the wing on the final Adonis is brilliant 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 08-Aug-18 07:43 AM GMT

Nice close-ups of Silver-spotted skips and Adonis, Dave. I am still itching to see my first 2nd brood Adonis this year. No luck as yet.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 08-Aug-18 09:58 AM GMT

Great reports and shots Dave, a lovely selection of Blues. I've noted some dusky Coppers as well. 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Aug-18 12:04 PM GMT

Hi Dave, I am trying to catch up again, you don't half get about 🍷😊

Great reports and photos in your recent reports 😊

Small Blue doesn't usually have a second brood in Warwickshire...but I suppose anything could happen this year, I have even heard of a couple of reports of second brood Orange-tips in the county.

Wurzel wrote:

That's a brilliant selection of Blues Dave, and I had to do a double take – a brown female Common 😳 since when have female Common Blues been Brown 😳😳😳 ...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Pretty regularly in the midlands. During my travels I have noted that Common Blue females are often more brown further north with the more blue ones seen more often down south. Around my patch I am seeing both brown and blue ones with all variation in between.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Aug-18 09:34 PM GMT

Whispering is probably the wrong word for how I was addressing the little chaps, Wurzel... 😊😊

Thanks, Ernie – the Adonis seem to be appearing all over the place now, so you should catch up with them any time soon. 😊

Cheers, Andrew – it's probably the peak time for variety of Blues in a single spot at the moment. 😊

Hi, Neil – thanks for that. Having seen second brood Small Blues at Southam on 1st August back in 2015, I wondered if this was a regular occurrence – hence the two stops. It seems that may have been a one-off! However, the display of Common Blues at Bishops Itchington made it very worthwhile. 😊 There were all variations of blueness there certainly!

Thursday 2nd August seemed a good point to start looking for Brown Hairstreaks down at Bookham. Hot and sunny and mid afternoon – probably not the best conditions to be honest, but the morning had been otherwise occupied: I found the very round total of absolutely none at all. However, the various quite extensive patches of fleabane were covered in butterflies – Whites, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers, Speckled Woods, Common Blues and Brown Argus were there in numbers, plus a sprinkling of perching Small Coppers and Small Heath.



indulging in a bit of wing-rolling...



I didn't even see a Purple Hairstreak, let alone a Brown one. No interesting moths today, but this bright red dragonfly pestered me along one bit of path

until I agreed to take its picture... 😊



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 08-Aug-18 09:54 PM GMT

That sounds like a familiar day, very similar to mine there yesterday in fact, although I did get a few Purple Hairstreaks flybys, unbelievable they're still going! That Fleabane is a hive of activity at the moment though isn't it, just a shame our little Hairstreak friends aren't in the mood to visit yet 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Aug-18 10:01 PM GMT

Friday 3rd August. Another hot and sunny day and another quest for Brown Hairstreak. The last minute decision was to try Noar Hill as I noted just before I left that they'd been seen there by Pauline on 2nd. Noar Hill didn't look as dry as some places I've been to recently – though that's only relative! The one noticeable point was the vast amount of hemp agrimony flowering at present – a favourite source of nectar for those elusive hairstreaks. I felt more hopeful...

However, the first butterfly to catch my eye, hopping rapidly between scabious flowers then sailing off on a wide circle before coming back to do it over again, was a Clouded Yellow. During a longer-than-average pause on one flowerhead, I managed to get close enough for a few quick shots before it set off on a much more extended flight and disappeared. It was male, and somewhat battered – a relatively recent arrival, perhaps escaping 45 degrees and more in Iberia.





Immediately after this surprise sighting (which was also species no. 52 of the year for me), I came across another likely immigrant – a very worn Painted Lady.



This is where the excitement stopped, as despite leisurely searching of the agrimony and stands of blackthorn, once again no Brown Hairstreaks were to be found.

I did see several worn SWF, mostly females, a couple of Red Admirals and large numbers of Common Blues and Brown Argus.



Not quite the day I was anticipating, but the adage was proved accurate once again: always expect the unexpected. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Aug-18 10:30 PM GMT

Species 52 🤔👍👍 Retirement has really paid off Dave 😊 Great shot of the Cloudy which looks in fine fettle 🍷 As this was the 3rd August I reckon that you might have gotten onto a Brostreak by now but if not then you could always give Shipton Bellinger a try, three visits so far this year and Brostreaks down low on all three occasions... 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Aug-18 10:53 PM GMT

Worth a go, Wurzel - I drew a blank at Bookham again today (8th) from the photo angle, though there were a few in the top of an ash that seems to be a master tree.

Saturday 4th August. Far too hot and sunny to be out - both for me and for the butterflies. However, I made a morning tour of my local patch and was staggered by the numbers of Holly Blues there were, almost all of them in the shade, and a surprising proportion nectaring on one particular patch of fleabane. Ten to a dozen were here, about a third of the overall total seen today of nearly 30.



There was also a single Small Copper – I rarely see more than one at a time, but there must be more somewhere...



Some of the increasing numbers of Speckled Woods (logically) seemed to be new ones.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Aug-18 10:50 AM GMT

Nice to hear reports of good numbers of Holly Blues, Dave. Your countryside looks to be a bit greener too. I guess that wet weekend at the end of July refreshed things somewhat?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Aug-18 10:25 PM GMT

Not really greener, David – you should see the grass around here! However, the last couple of days of heavy rain should make a difference. Yes, the Hollies are doing well, though finding them hiding in the shade in groups together on flowers seems all wrong to me. 😊

Sunday 5th August. Hot and sunny again, and a late afternoon excursion out to Aston Rowant was what could be fitted in today. At first, the hillside seemed to be very quiet, but as I moved slowly along the top of the slope, I became aware of lots of darting orange-brown shapes which on closer

examination (on the rare occasions this was possible) turned out to be Silver-spotted Skippers. Gently zig-zagging down the hillside, I tried to count them, but in the end gave up around the 40 mark. There were many more. Here are some of those seen today:



I also managed a photo of the Copper on its own.



I was also on the look out for Adonis Blues, having seen them out at Denbies recently. I found two males, but as on that occasion getting them to open up in the sunshine was a real challenge. All the butterflies were angling themselves at 90 degrees to the sun, making shots very tricky even if I managed to approach them quite closely.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Aug-18 11:41 PM GMT

Fantastic Silver-spots Dave 😊 Your report mirrors what I saw the following day at Broughton Down; the hills were crawling with SSS 😊😊 I suppose with the 2nd brood Adonis that's almost it for the season 😊 Good luck at Shipton tomorrow – we only got one male today at the Hedge but the weather was far from conducive during the golden hours 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 11-Aug-18 07:39 AM GMT

More great trips out it would seem !. What a Summer to be retired ! 😊 .
Apparently we're both on a Brown Hairstreak hunt today, best of luck.
From what I have seen they seem to be a bit elusive this year.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Aug-18 11:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – the heat hasn't affected the SSS one bit – possibly even the opposite, no doubt down to the fact that the foodplant is drought resistant. There was plenty around over the hillside. 😊 I didn't get up early enough for Shipton today, but gave Bookham another go and was successful there instead before the cloud moved in. However, by the look of your diary you were even more successful down at Steyning, Trevor. 😊

Monday 6th August was just too hot to go out, and truth be told so was **Tuesday 7th**. However, I did have a bit of a walk around my local patch on Tuesday for an hour or so in the morning. The situation was broadly similar to a few days back, with good numbers of both Holly(25) and Common(19) Blues, but only one solitary Brown Argus made an appearance.



Most of the other butterflies seen were various Whites, with Small Whites the most frequent. A Red Admiral was found once again deep in the undergrowth where there are fresh nettle leaves – hopefully the offspring will be around in October as they usually are.



Some of the Common Blues seemed quite fresh...



...the Holly Blues less so.



As before, many of them were nectaring in the shade, and here is the favoured fleabane patch if referred to a few posts back.



I think there are eight visible in the second photo.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Aug-18 11:55 AM GMT

Love the shots of the Hollies on the Fleabane Dave, there was lots of Fleabane at Southport but I didn't see many Butterflies on them only CB's. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 12-Aug-18 04:54 PM GMT

I didn't realise how much I had missed from your diary, Dave. I had to scroll back to the start of the current page! I am a sucker for backlit photos and you got a whole bundle of them, Brimstone, Holly Blue, Clouded Yellow, etc. I especially liked the SSS pics including the one of the eggs!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-18 06:03 PM GMT

You need to start a "Trousered" collection Dave 😊🍷 You're rolling in Holly Blues 😲 I don't think I've seen that many one on small patch 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Aug-18 11:18 PM GMT

Thanks, everyone. I'll have a search back and see how many there are in the trousered section, Wurzel! 😊🍷

At last, the weather was on the change. The night of 7th August was full of thunder and lightning, and it actually rained. However on **Wednesday 8th August** it was sunny again, and though cooler, it was still 25+ degrees. I decided to try Bookham once again for those elusive Brown Hairstreaks, and though this time I did see some activity in their favourite ash tree, nothing came down to my level or even close. Overall, there seemed to be fewer

butterflies than on my last visit under a week ago, with the activity on the fleabane beds much reduced. This was particularly true of the Meadow Browns and Gatekeepers, though there were still good numbers of both Common Blues and Brown Argus.



with a Common Blue in the background





Whilst searching for the Hairstreaks along the hedge bordering Banks Common, the usual series of Small Coppers appeared, one after the other, and there were many scraps at the territorial boundary points as I disturbed them walking through. A distinct path has been worn here (probably by Bugboy and myself, truth be told 😊), and the Coppers do seem to use it as a thoroughfare as well – maybe it provides a degree of shelter.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Aug-18 11:36 PM GMT

More great stuff Dave 😊 That Brown Argus looks like it's in 'mint condish' 🤪🤪🤪 Lovely to see the Small Coppers as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 13-Aug-18 10:34 PM GMT

Great late season array of species, Dave. Make the most of them....in a month's time there'll be precious few left.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Aug-18 12:29 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel. 😊 There are still new Brown Argus appearing, which is interesting since the first of the second brood appeared at the end of June. Could these be third brooders already, or is it just a long drawn-out second brood?

Cheers, David – the late season seems to have come early this year (apart from the Brown Hairstreaks). We're not quite halfway through August yet! Still, last year I was seeing butterflies well into November, so there is still time – and we may get some more extra broods to see too. Here's hoping! 😊

Thursday 9th August, and to some extent Friday 10th, were complete washouts. The rain came down in large quantities. Luckily I was otherwise engaged on both days, being occupied with the delights of the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia on the Thursday, and taking a friend to Stansted Airport on the Friday. (We have a perfectly good airport just up the road, but... 😞😞).

Saturday 11th August promised much better, and I had originally planned to head down to Shipton B. However, I failed to get up early enough and took the next best option of another try at Bookham for the Brown Hairstreaks. As I pulled into the car park, a familiar figure was studying the oaks – Bugboy was already there and set on the same quest as myself. He had just noted that a third Purple Hairstreak egg had appeared close to the two he had been monitoring. We headed along to the Banks Common area and scoured the blackthorn for Hairstreaks. On the way we were distracted by the variety of other species still flying here: Commas, Speckled Woods, Meadow Browns, a few tired Gatekeepers, Small Heaths, Common Blues, Brown Argus and the ever-present Small Coppers.



Soon afterwards, Bugboy spotted another, feasting on a blackberry, and a bit later I found what was probably the same one on another rotten fruit.



Oddly enough we also found a very worn Purple Hairstreak indulging in the same way.



When I disturbed it, it promptly fell off its perch straight downwards – a bit of over-indulgence perhaps? 😊 Bugboy then had to leave, but I stayed a few minutes longer, enough to see another Brown Hairstreak high up with wings open, but bothered by a dragonfly before I could get closer. I also saw a Painted Lady, again at some distance...



At last, some success – they've been a while coming. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Aug-18 06:56 AM GMT

Good to see your Brown Hairstreak at last, and it saved you half a tank of petrol !. Purple Hairstreaks seem to be a long lived species, as yours demonstrates. I'm off for another fix at Steyning today.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Aug-18 07:32 AM GMT

It's a relief to see a few Brown Hairstreaks in people's PDs, Dave. I was starting to worry that the hot spell had somehow accounted for many of them.

Let's hope normal service will now be resumed.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Aug-18 10:13 PM GMT

Cheers, both – a great relief to see the Brown Hairstreaks and get some reasonable shots. 😊

I've been away for a week in Yorkshire, but before I went, on **Monday 13th August** I had another quick visit to Bookham as the weather seemed half decent. As before, there was a good variety of species present, including perhaps the last Gatekeepers I shall see this year.





ambling along: sloe, sloe, quick quick sloe...



the autumnal blackthorn leaves offer good camouflage



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Aug-18 10:45 PM GMT

👤👤 I was there two days later but didn't see any 😞

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 20-Aug-18 10:15 AM GMT

Love the pic of the Brown Hairstreak actually next to a Sloe Berry.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Aug-18 09:33 PM GMT

None to be seen today (20th) either, Buggy. 😞

Thanks, Ernie 😊 I think I read that Brown Hairstreaks usually avoid the bushes covered in fruit – but then they don't read the books either... 😊

On Tuesday 14th August I travelled up to stay with my sister in York again for a few days. The weather was nothing special, but I managed a couple of trips out, and saw one or two things in the garden as usual.

Wednesday 15th August: just a couple of minutes up the road from my base in Wilberfoss is **Calley Heath**, a piece of sandy grassland that has never been cultivated. It had obviously been recently very parched, but the low vegetation was just starting to re-emerge – including many tiny sorrel plants. This is all to the good, as the remnants of the latest brood of Small Coppers were still hanging on. An adjacent field has now been added to the reserve and was being grazed by hebridean sheep, and between the two areas I saw eight or nine rather ragged Small Coppers.





Also seen were a few GVW and one or two Meadow Browns.



Finally, in the original reserve area (which is basically one huge rabbit warren), I spotted a Peacock flying low across the ground, settling from time to time next to rabbit holes and scrapes. I have seen one do this before in this area, and it is quite possible they hibernate in the rabbit holes.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Old Wolf, 21-Aug-18 01:58 PM GMT

Great pictures millerd. I particularly like the CB where you can see the underwing spots through the top forewing. I have also been studying your SW underside shot as I don't think I have ever seen one with its wings closed before. Whenever I see them they are either flying or landed with wings fully open. I need to see one in the flesh now 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Aug-18 11:10 PM GMT

Cheers, Old Wolf – Speckled Woods do close up like that in very sunny warm weather (and also when it's chilly and not sunny at all!). Fresh ones have a very intricate and attractive pattern, and they vary a fair bit between individuals and broods.

Friday 17th August: After an astonishingly quick fix of a punctured tyre this morning by my breakdown company (from call, via transport into York on the back of a trailer, and return to base with new tyre was less than two hours...), a bit of brightness tempted me out to Kiplingcotes chalk pit near Market Weighton. I hadn't expected to go, so it was a bit of a bonus. The track down to the reserve was full of Speckled Woods, plus a few whites, and on arrival the faint hint of sun was enough to energise a Small Heath into nectaring on a bed of marjoram.





By the time I reached the fruitful northeast corner, the sun had retreated behind much thicker cloud, and all I saw was the orange-brown of a Wall fly up in front of me from where it had been sheltering in the grass. On the way back to the car, the Speckled Woods were still making the most of what meagre brightness remained.



Here is a view looking towards the northeast from not far inside the reserve.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-18 08:03 PM GMT

Those are mighty fine Brostreak images Dave and I'm glad that you got them in the end 😊 Kiplingcotes looks like an interesting reserve; the Blues look good for this time of the season too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Aug-18 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – those Brown Hairstreaks have been mighty difficult this year one way or another, as you'll see when I've posted a few more outings... Yes, Kiplingcotes is interesting, being part of our most northerly set of chalk hills (the Yorkshire Wolds). I now need to see it in spring!

Before I leave Yorkshire, here a few shots from my sister's garden. The weather had something to do with it, but there wasn't much around this time.





Regardless of what sort of season they are having, there is always a Painted Lady! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Aug-18 11:36 PM GMT

It must be great to have a reliable source for Painted Lady Dave 😊, I always struggle with them as you never know if you're going to see one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Aug-18 01:28 PM GMT

I know what you mean, Wurzel, but for some reason I always see them more consistently up in Yorkshire than I do on my local patch. 😊😊

Talking of which... Back home and on **Sunday 19th August** I wandered round locally for the first time for about a week. Not a lot had changed, and Holly Blues, though more and more worn, were still the most frequently encountered species (24 seen).



The other notable increase in numbers was with Red Admirals. Of course, it was their favourite time of day at this time of year (late afternoon), and each patch of sunlight along the path between the lake and the River Colne had at least one. There were frequent battles as their territorial patrols overlapped, with as many as four butterflies squabbling together and occasionally sucking Speckled Woods into the mix. I saw nine altogether, the

highest total this year so far, a mixture of battle-worn and relatively new.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 23-Aug-18 07:36 PM GMT

That is a more than respectable number of Holly Blues Dave, your whispering ways must be bringing them in from far and wide 😊🇮🇪 You've done well with the Jersey Tiger, I've only ever seen one and that as foreign 🇮🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 23-Aug-18 11:50 PM GMT

Those Hollies are still going strong, Wurzel, though perhaps not quite so many today. I've seen about half a dozen of those Tigers this year round here, so they must be spreading into these parts, having been established in the London area for a while. 😊

Monday 20th August. Time to go a bit further again, and have another crack at those Bookham Brown Hairstreaks. Despite reasonable sunshine and warm conditions, I saw not a single one, either high, low or in the middle. However, it is never a wasted trip to Bookham, as something interesting always appears. Today it was a pretty fresh male Chalkhill Blue, nectaring on the mint that grows profusely in some of the damper patches. It took a moment to work out what it was, so completely out of its normal context, much larger than any of the other blues, and almost white in colour. This individual must have strayed from the nearest chalk: Denbies may well be the nearest spot, 7km due south of the location in which I found it.



not where you would expect to see a Chalkhill

The by now usual array of Common Blues and Brown Argus to be seen – there seems to be a continuous supply of fresh butterflies. The Brown Argus in particular is doing well here, as in previous years I have only seen one or two.





some energetic wing rolls from this one
There were some nice female Common Blues today with variable amounts of blue.



As well as one or two fading Small Coppers, a couple of new ones had appeared – once again, there appears to be an almost a continuous emergence of them here this summer.



Speckled Woods were around in good numbers too, also looking brand new.





A shame there were no Hairstreaks, but this wandering individual rather made up for it.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 24-Aug-18 11:55 AM GMT

Nice shots Dave. Definitely need to check Bookham out at some point. 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 24-Aug-18 01:14 PM GMT

You still seem to be finding plenty of nice fresh butterflies of various species, Dave 😊 That Chalkhill Blue at Bookham was a very interesting find 😊😊

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Aug-18 11:02 PM GMT

Thank you, Andrew. 😊 Bookham is a great site, with a lot of variety throughout the season. It covers quite an area with varied habitats so worth exploring at leisure.

Cheers, Mike – as ever, always expect the unexpected! 😊 I'd love to know where that Chalkhill hatched... 😊😊

On from Bookham to spend the afternoon of **20th August** down at Denbies. My last visit was nearly three weeks ago on 1st, and the immediate change was that scintillating pale blue butterflies had largely been replaced by bright shining electric blue ones. Adonis were now out in good numbers, the horseshoe vetch clearly not suffered too much from the lack of rain while the caterpillars were munching. One or two individuals were a bit undersized, but most weren't, and none of the Chalkhills I've seen here have been either. This is a contrast with the Common Blues and Brown Argus, which are mostly below normal size here – as elsewhere. In amongst all the numbers of Adonis, I only spotted one slightly aberrant underside.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 25-Aug-18 11:18 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, catching up on posts, it's been nothing but rain or dark cloudy days here, I love those Peacock shots , you've brought out there true colours with your shots and the same with the Adonis 🍷😄 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 25-Aug-18 07:48 PM GMT

Cracking set of shots Dave especially the aberrant, really interesting markings 😊👍 Interesting to see the Chalkhill out of place, what with this and my Silver-stud it looks like the warmer weather that we had has gotten the butterflies a bit bamboozled 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Aug-18 10:29 PM GMT

Thank you, Goldie – it was good to see a Peacock in Yorkshire as they have completely disappeared down here now. 😊 Glad you like the Adonis too – there are some more coming up from other sites in a mo. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – it probably is the heat that has caused the butterflies to wander, but it doesn't half confuse! 😊

On **Tuesday 21st August** I had offered at short notice to pick up a friend from Heathrow and take her home to Northants when her offspring had let her down. A cool and cloudy morning gave way to an unexpectedly glorious sunny afternoon, and on the way back, I diverted to the more pleasant route down the M40 which of course passes right next to Aston Rowant. I stopped naturally enough, and spent an hour or so there in the late afternoon sunshine. Most noticeable were the Silver-spotted Skippers, still darting around madly but also seeking out the less-frequent-than-usual scabious flowers.





As with Denbies, there were large numbers of small brown females of several blue species, plus good numbers of Brown Argus and Meadow Browns. All very confusing.



Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Aug-18 12:00 AM GMT

Things still looking lively round your way, Dave.

I had hoped the warm weather may have led to a greater emergence than has been the case here in south Wales, but not to be, unfortunately.

I particularly like those Brown Argus. I've seen precious few in the UK in 2018.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-18 09:03 AM GMT

Lovely sets of Silver-spots Dave 😊 There's a really fresh one hidden in there 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 26-Aug-18 09:41 AM GMT

Great to see the Skippers Dave, I managed to miss both this year and last year so it's good to know they're still around 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Aug-18 09:55 PM GMT

Cheers, David - I'm sorry things have ground to a halt over your way. 😊 My own experience locally is that Brown Argus have done really well this year, with high numbers in both broods so far and new examples still appearing. On some days they have outnumbered the Common Blues. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel - the SSSkippers have been around for five or six weeks now up at Aston Rowant, and as you noticed, there are still one or two fresh females. These attractive ladies are naturally subject to much attention from the remaining rather scruffy males, but mostly they shrug it off as they are egg-laying (having already mated). 😊

Thank you Goldie - they certainly are (and I hear reports of good numbers from Kent as well). 😊

Wednesday 22nd August. The weather promised for today was increasing sunshine and warmth, if not heat, by the end of the afternoon. I picked up Bugboy from Dorking Station and we headed down towards Steyning on a Brown Hairstreak hunt. Still wall-to-wall cloud on arrival and with no sign of a change we made for nearby Mill Hill where there was a good chance the less-picky butterflies would be responding to the brightness and the degree of warmth that came with it.

Initially, we found a number of resting Adonis.



It would have been interesting to have had a lightmeter to hand - at a certain level of brightness, the green slopes were suddenly dotted with brilliant blue dots as the male Adonis Blues opened up in response. To be fair, many were a little worn, but there were plenty of relatively new individuals as well.



The conditions were ideal for photography, as the butterflies opened up, were fairly calm and moved around only very slightly. Much harder to spot were the females, but I tracked a few down.





Also seen were a number of Meadow Browns, some of the females being pretty fresh.





There were also a few Common Blues and Small Heaths in amongst the Adonis, but I didn't come across any Brown Argus or Small Coppers.



On the non-butterfly side, I found a mint moth sharing a flower with a beautiful hoverfly of a type I had not seen before.



There were more Adonis to come, as in the absence still of any actual sunshine, Bugboy and I moved down the road to Anchor Bottom.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Aug-18 10:22 PM GMT

Those Adonis really did glow in that light didn't they 😊. Your hoverfly is a *Sphaerophoria* sp. probably *S. scripta* and your mint moth is actually a close relative called *Pyrausta purpuralis*. The closest I can get to your other moth is a Wood Carpet *Epirrhoe rivata*.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Aug-18 11:06 PM GMT

Thanks for the IDs, Buggy. 😊 Yes, the Adonis really seemed to be internally lit! Oddly enough the cloudy conditions probably enhanced this effect. Glorious butterflies. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Aug-18 11:58 PM GMT

Great Adonis Dave, they're a real value for money butterfly in that you can see such a range of blue colour in them as you described 😊 I reckon the moth is a Common Carpet *E.alternata* as it seems to have a wave/line inside the white band 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Aug-18 12:20 AM GMT

It's like a different world round your way compared to mine, Dave.

I wish we had Adonis Blues to lift our spirits with Autumn just round the corner. A few Meadow Browns and Small Heaths wouldn't go amiss either!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 27-Aug-18 07:56 AM GMT

it would seem that we have both enjoyed an Adonis fest. in recent days. Some great shots of the males there. My Wiltshire ones were not so relaxed as they were beginning to warm up when I arrived.

Looking forward to your Steyning report,

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 27-Aug-18 08:03 AM GMT

trevor wrote:

....

Looking forward to your Steyning report,

Trevor.

Don't hold your breath Trevor...

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Aug-18 07:40 PM GMT

Thanks for the moth ID, Wurzel – these subtle variations are a bit beyond me I'm afraid. 😊 Variations in the colour of the Adonis is about my limit – and whether they have black marginal spots or not. 😊

The season does continue well into Autumn down here in the southeast, David, though there are some marked absentees at the moment. Red Admirals are usually a reliable staple late in the year, but there are hardly any at the moment as the ivy comes into flower for them. 😊

Trevor – see below in a moment... 😊 😊

Wednesday 22nd (continued): On to Anchor Bottom, just a couple of minutes' drive along from the Mill Hill car park. This is a wonderful example of a chalk landscape dry valley, with lovely smooth contours and a slight curve to it. We approached from the top, and initially with the cloud particularly thick we saw nothing at all. I started looking at the flowers, and soon found this...





We found an area of low scrub very similar to areas on Mill Hill, and here was a greater concentration of butterflies including more Adonis and numbers of Brown Argus and Meadow Browns. I spotted what at first sight seemed to be a pale Meadow Brown, but the flight was wrong somehow, and when it landed it turned out to be the ghostly vestige of a female Wall.



The whole area was too large to explore properly – a day might be needed to do it justice and walk from top to bottom and back (or vice versa of course) – and we still had hopes of Steyning. Back to the car then, avoiding the large herd of grazing cattle, and with fingers crossed...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Aug-18 07:51 PM GMT

bugboy wrote:

trevor wrote:

....

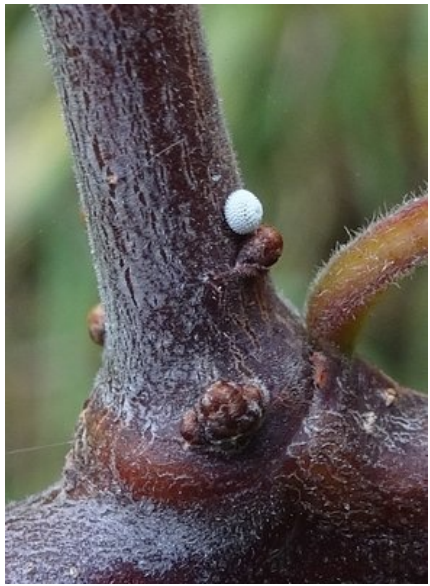
Looking forward to your Steyning report,

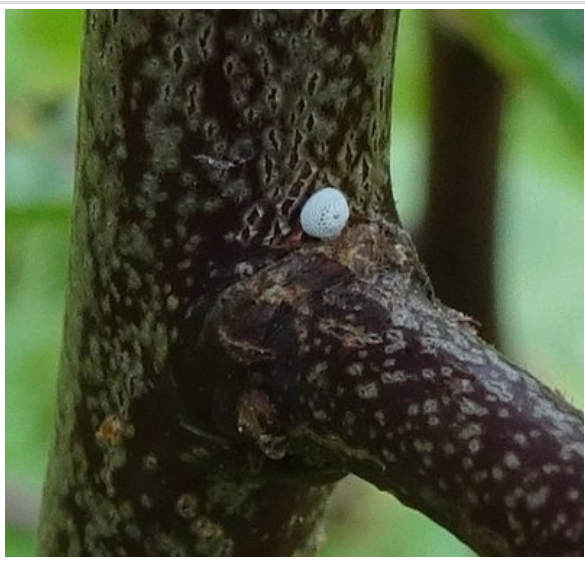
Trevor.

Don't hold your breath Trevor...

You'll see what Bugboy meant now, Trevor! We made our way the short distance back to Steyning, and set off up the path to the Rifle Range. On the way we saw what could well have been a Brown Hairstreak flying in typically bimbling fashion over a stand of brambles, but it didn't stop and we couldn't be sure. At the hotspot though, we spent a while waiting and searching, but despite constant weather forecasts promising sun at any moment, it remained bright and nothing more and the Hairstreaks failed to appear. It must have been just below their threshold in that respect as it was far from cold. We had to content ourselves with spotting Speckled Woods and searching out eggs instead.







A somewhat frustrating end to the day, though all those magnificent Adonis went a long way to making up for it and the Brown Hairstreak season was by no means over yet. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Aug-18 08:38 PM GMT

More cracking Adonis shots Dave 😊👍 There certainly seems to have been a pause in this years Brostreak season after the early start but things are now getting back on track, there are still some fresh females around at Shipton 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-18 08:07 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel. I was pleased with the Adonis – it was amazing to see so many. 😊 There's more hairstreak activity to come as well... 😊

Thursday 23rd August: Time once again to return to my local neck of the woods. At last it was cooler for my gentle stroll around my local patch. Though the mix was generally the same, the butterflies were opening up more, including the Holly Blues. I hadn't seen a male open its wings for months before today! Females could be found egg-laying on the ivy.





I found more Commas than recently, six in all – an odd mix of four old *hutchinsoni* and two new hibernators.



a very small one



...and in the same area were two relatively fresh Small Coppers...



...and a few Small Heaths. This one managed to fit itself precisely into the depression in the pebble.



Amongst others seen were a new male Small White and a ragged Red Admiral.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 28-Aug-18 08:26 PM GMT

Friday 24th August started with some sunnier weather, so I decided to go down to Steyning again. By the time I had reached the site, the sunshine was a bit patchy, but still better than Wednesday. A small group of fellow Hairstreak hunters arrived soon after I did, and before long had discovered one. Not much later, another appeared, followed immediately by a third and the arrival of Neil Hulme – who had spotted another couple on the way up the lane to the Rifle Range. Good to see you and chat, Neil. None of the individuals I saw was pristine, but were not too worn nonetheless.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 28-Aug-18 08:33 PM GMT

a few 🍷🍷🍷 for those Steyning Hairstreaks!

Also your Small White in the previous post has some very extensive black marking at the wing tip, verging on looking like a Southern Small White... 🤔

Re: millerd

by trevor, 28-Aug-18 09:17 PM GMT

Pleased that your second trip to Steyning was a success. The rifle range has performed extremely well this year.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-18 06:43 PM GMT

Cracking set of Brostreak shots Dave 😄🍷🍷🍷 I, like Bugboy, was wondering about that Small White, I can't see the little fork in the veins but it is more difficult when looking from the upper side down 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Aug-18 08:56 PM GMT

Thanks, Buggy – the following day was pretty good as well, as I'm sure you remember! 😊

Thank you, Trevor – it is a really good site (as long as the sun is shining of course!). 😊

Cheers, Wurzel. 😊 Interesting that you and Bugboy both should wonder about that Small White. If the Southern variety really has established itself in the Low Countries, then surely it can't be long in appearing here. However, checking every Small White I see, just in case, isn't going to be easy. They have been the second most frequent species seen on my local patch this year, after (you guessed it) the Holly Blue.

Saturday 25th August and back to a fairly sunny Bookham again. I was fairly confident Bugboy would be there somewhere, and so it proved. We initially set off in different directions, combing the usual haunts for Brown Hairstreaks, but for the first couple of hours saw none. There were, however, plenty of other things to see and distract the camera lens. New Speckled Woods were frequent, often in the spots a hairstreak might feel at home.





However, at around 1200 or so, I finally spotted our quarry – a Brown Hairstreak had materialised on the hedgerow.



I think we actually saw no more than two individuals altogether – they kept us busy by moving about and spent time sitting and basking well above head height, making for some less usual shots (see Buggy's diary for some of these).



At one point Bugboy was investigating an egg he'd seen laid, whilst I followed the egg-layer. Just as she settled nicely she was rudely accosted by a male Small Copper, who chased her all over the place. At one point she took a rest in an inaccessible part of the hedge, about ten feet up, and the Copper continued to pester her. Whether he was attracted by the orange colour of her undersides and thought he had found the biggest and best female ever, we shall never know. When she flew again, he took off again in pursuit and unfortunately I didn't see any more. I don't think I've ever seen a Brown Hairstreak interact with anything else, though to be fair, she was a very passive player in this little drama.

Here are a selection of the closer shots achieved.



The final encounter was brief. Having seen our second individual fly over the hedge to the path, we went to see if she had gone far. Having almost given up, I turned round and there she was in front of me, wings open. I had time for a quick shot and then she was away again.



Patience has paid off at Bookham this year in the end! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Aug-18 10:40 PM GMT

Cracking set of images again Dave 😊👍 Persistence did pay off this season when it came to Brostreaks 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 29-Aug-18 10:44 PM GMT

Great shots Dave. Like you say, patience paid off 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-Aug-18 11:13 PM GMT

Love your fresh Speckled Woods in their ' Pullman ' livery, and that pair of Brown Hairstreaks, they can play hard to get, but what a prize when you get ' that ' image to take home.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 30-Aug-18 10:17 AM GMT

Lovely Adonis from Mill Hill and Anchor Bottom Dave. You have a great selection of Brostreaks as well, and a very nice Speckled. 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Aug-18 10:54 PM GMT

I really envy you with those drop-dead gorgeous Adonis, Dave. They must really lift the spirits having them nearby on the cusp of autumn.

Good to see you're still a magnet for Holly Blues too....as well as several other desirable species!

If you spot a Small White that you have question marks over vis-a-vis *mannii*, get a clear, close-up underside shot. The absence of a fork in the underside forewing apical vein is the definitive characteristic of the latter! See Roger Gibbons' excellent diagnostic:

<https://www.butterfliesoffrance.com/html/Pieris%20mannii.htm>

Good luck!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Aug-18 11:40 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel and Buggy – patience and persistence is still bearing fruit as you'll see in forthcoming posts... 😊

Cheers, Trevor – there were some beautiful fresh Specklies around that day – they do wear quickly though so it was good to catch them in pristine chocolate and cream. 😊

Thank you for the kind comments, Andrew – there have been some lovely late season sights out there. 😊

Thank you, David – Adonis Blues are proving a real end-of-season bonus at the moment (I have a report from Denbies shortly concentrating on the females, some of which are stunning). And the Hollies just keep on coming (again, a report soon with a very new one – third brood?). 😊 Many thanks for that link. I shall get as many underside shots as I can over the next few weeks (especially as the wind is going round to the east for a bit) and see what I can find. 😊

25th August (continued): After Bookham, I saw it looked clearer towards the south so I had a quick stroll around the top of Box Hill. There was actually not a lot flying: Some Adonis, and rather worn Chalkhills, but no Silver-spots. The latter is a bit worrying as this is usually a good site for them.



Still, this is the fifth spot where I've seen Adonis in the space of a week. 😊

Sunday 26th August was one of those unusual days – a complete write-off with near constant rain. Not even a soggy Speckled Wood to report.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-18 12:05 AM GMT

Monday 27th August was better, though not exactly sunny. However, bright and warm has proved the ideal combination for seeing things this year, so it was the turn of my local patch again today (bearing in mind Bank Holiday traffic).

As is so often the case, the walk belonged to the Holly Blues, with 17 seen all told. These varied from very worn to completely new, setting me to wonder whether a third brood might be emerging. The first of the second brood had appeared at the end of June, so it could be possible... The new

one, a male, was found on a large pile of horse manure (or has the local elephant been by?).



Now the heat is over and normal temperatures prevail, these butterflies have started to open up again – even during nectaring.







Sometimes two would share a flower.



There was more to be seen, with that other local star, the Brown Argus, but I'll put that in another post. This one belongs to the Holly Blue.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 31-Aug-18 07:40 AM GMT

Third brood Holly Blues !. I have not done too well with this species this year. I suppose the hot weather helped to bring on the latest brood. Superb close up shots of the male.

Great report as usual,
Trevor.

PS. It's umber and cream !.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-18 09:08 AM GMT

Thanks, Trevor. I'll need to keep going out to see if it really is a third brood or just a very late outlier from the second.

There was a sprinkling of other species locally on **27th August**.





There were a round a dozen Common Blues as well, but all very worn indeed. However, the Brown Argus were not quite so ragged.



reduced underside spotting and small





I watched two indulging in courtship – or at least the male was, as I think the female doesn't appear so keen...





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Aug-18 12:31 PM GMT

Crikey Dave it's hard keeping up – three posts in quick succession! 🤔 Some cracking images as always and I don't think the Holly Blue could have chosen a bigger poo to take salt from 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-18 10:43 PM GMT

I'm trying to catch up with myself a bit, Wurzel, but each day I seem to go out again and see more interesting stuff, even if it's just the ones round the corner. I do like the behavioural shots, so I could hardly ignore a brand spanking new Holly Blue on a towering pile of poo now could I? 😊😂

Tuesday 28th August. Another reasonable sort of day with some sun, some cloud, but enough brightness and warmth to mobilise the inhabitants of Denbies hillside. Though plenty of male Adonis were still flying, and some of them were pretty fresh, today belonged more to the female of the species which were out in numbers, and now the weather is cooler were sitting and basking to warm up enough to go egg-laying.

Firstly, few males...





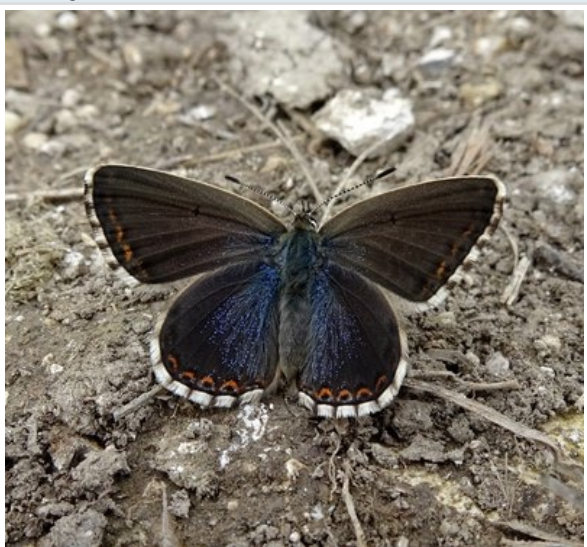
The females are worth a post to themselves, I think! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Aug-18 11:09 PM GMT

28th August, Denbies hillside, Adonis Blue females...





Even with all that variety, there was more. I spotted another Adonis female which looked almost orange in flight and subtly different in some way. I followed it until it settled, and it turned out to be an ab. *krodeli*, with much reduced underside spotting. The upperside was pretty well normal, however, certainly not out of place amongst the variety above.



However, the hillside still had a bit more to offer when after one of the butterflies above had just flown off, I found a somewhat worn Silver-spotted Skipper sitting happily on a scabious right next to me. It was so photogenic I shall devote a separate post to it. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Sep-18 06:49 AM GMT

Your first closed wing specimen looks 'different', the black spots circled white, are surely much larger than usual. All your females look factory fresh, as did those Wurzel and myself saw a Tilshead.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 01-Sep-18 08:22 AM GMT

I hadn't looked at your diary for awhile. Sorry. I am glad I did today. Highlights for me was that almost black Adonis female with a speckling of blue scales and the Holly Blue with a huge pile of dung all to itself.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 01-Sep-18 08:33 AM GMT

The females were definitely worth their own post Dave – some cracking shots and the aberrant is stunning 🤩👍👍 I reckon that female looks good for a Chalkhill as well – the marks near the hind wing lunules looks white and not blue and the margins look more 'smudgy' there is also a je ne c'est quoi that says Chalkhill 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 01-Sep-18 04:22 PM GMT

Fantastic shots Dave, Lovely Adonis their colour is stunning and the Females look good too inspire of not being Blue 🤩 But it's the Holly Blue Male with open wings that caught my attention, you don't see many like that. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 01-Sep-18 04:45 PM GMT

You've been very prolific of late, Dave 😊😊 what a gorgeous butterfly that dark female Adonis is 🤩😊 and that lovely ab *krodeli* too 🤩

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Sep-18 09:18 PM GMT

There were a lot of fresh ones, Trevor. 😊 I am guessing that most of the less fresh female blues flying were mostly Chalkhills (and or Common Blues and Brown Argus). The one you highlighted does seem to be heavily marked, and was really chestnut-brown underneath as well.

I'm glad you like that really dark female, Ernie. 😊 That's definitely going to be one of my top butterflies of the year, that one. 😊

Every way you look at it, Adonis Blues are a beautiful species, Goldie! 😊 And yes, it's always a special moment when a fresh Holly Blue opens its wing out like that. 😊

Thanks, Mike – those two really do stand out, don't they. 😊

It was worth a separate billing, Wurzel – the only way to do them justice. 😊 I'm glad you agree about the Chalkhill, though looking at the female Adonis above (and others recently), the rule of thumb about blue scales in the gap between the black spots and the wing fringes doesn't always seem to hold good. From what I've seen, if there are blue scales, it's definitely an Adonis, but if there aren't, it may be either... In other words, Adonis don't always have them. (A bit of controversy here perhaps... 😊).

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Sep-18 09:33 PM GMT

28th August, further adventures from Denbies hillside: A Silver-spotted Skipper.

As mentioned earlier, whilst still on the ground from getting close to one of those Adonis females, I noticed a Silver-spotted Skipper had settled itself close by on a scabious flower. I had seen several others during the visit, but none had stopped for more than a second or two, yet this one seemed happy to concentrate on having a jolly good feed.





A quiet contrast to the activity of the Blues – and big-eyed cuteness as well! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-18 09:47 AM GMT

That is one cute little butterfly – and extraordinarily well behaved 🤪😁🍵 Did you try a little 'whispering' on it? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-18 10:08 PM GMT

Well, I don't know about you, Wurzel, but I do have the odd word with them sometimes... 😊😁 Once in a while it seems to do the trick!

Wednesday 29th August. Another local walk – I expect these to become a bit more frequent again as the specialist sites quieten down. However, I was rewarded today with eleven different species, which included a brand new Small Copper patrolling a spot very close to home.



However, today's overall star had to be the Small Copper.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Sep-18 10:49 PM GMT

Thursday 30th August. The weather was good – I decided to go for one final look at Bookham for Brown Hairstreaks. I arrived around 1100, and despite sunshine, there was surprisingly little around. Bugboy had mentioned to me that a Small Copper was always to be found just on the other side of the stile into Banks Meadow... and here is the little chap in position, looking almost transparent with age now.



A few gentle wanders up and down the path by the hedgerow just inside the field produced nothing, but then approaching noon the first Hairstreak appeared. This turned out to be the first of two seen. Neither one was pristine, but then again neither was particularly battered.



At one point one of them set off over the field and settled on the grass – I managed a (less than perfect) backlit image, somewhat unusual for this species I imagine.



A very successful morning at Bookham, but a sudden impulse sent me on to Fairmile Common, just the other side of Cobham, where something rather unusual awaited me...

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Sep-18 11:00 PM GMT

Great set of Brostreak images Dave 🤔👍 The actions of the Small Copper sound very familiar – there always seems to be another species of butterfly interfering when you're trying for a shot of something else 😊 I'm intrigued now about what you found at Fairmile...

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 03-Sep-18 09:09 PM GMT

Fabulous Brown Hairstreaks, Dave, but the female Green Veined White is the pick...a stunning specimen.

Looking forward to seeing the 'unusual thing' that was awaiting you at Fairmile.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Sep-18 10:29 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – I was pleased with that particular set of encounters as it's been a bit like pulling teeth with the Brown Hairstreaks this year. 😊 Having see the Small Copper/Brown Hairstreak interaction twice now, I wonder if the superficial similarity in colouration has something to do with it. A real nuisance both times, I can say that... 😞

Thank you, David – I rather liked that GVW too, and she gave me a choice of shots to choose from as well. Very cooperative. 😊

And now for something rather different...

After Bookham on **30th August**, I pondered where to go next. Then it struck me – Fairmile Common was only a few miles away, just the other side of Cobham in fact. My first thought was that I had never explored it for Graylings, which I knew persisted on the other Surrey Heaths into the beginning of September. Once I got there, the thought of Silver-studded Blues came to mind as they abounded here back in early June.

Well, I certainly didn't see any Graylings. However, as I walked slowly through the gorse and heather I spotted a small light-coloured butterfly flying low down. Closer to, it did look blue, and closer still I was able to identify it as a Silver-studded Blue, albeit quite a pale one. I managed a few shots, and though the individual was a bit worn (it must have been out a few days) it was clearly not any other species. A small brown butterfly wandered past, making me pause and think "female!", but the blue took no interest at all and when I peered closer, it turned out to be a Brown Argus. Well, if there is one, perhaps there are others... I looked further and came upon a threesome – two blues and another small brown one. I followed the brown – another Brown Argus! I backtracked and tried to follow one of the blues, but in the end I lost sight of both. It would not be unreasonable to say they were also SSB, as they looked similar to the first.

Having read that a second brood of this species has appeared in Cornwall, and given the date – some 12 weeks after the SSB were out here earlier – I have to conclude that the individual(s) I saw were also a second brood. Here are the photos...





blackberries for "time of year" context



the turquoise "silver studs" are just visible



wide dark borders



I don't know if this has happened before in Surrey, but this year anything is possible. 😬😬😬 Certainly a very unusual sighting.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 03-Sep-18 10:44 PM GMT

Certainly a very noteworthy find Dave 😬. Glad and slightly 🍷 you managed a few more Hairstreaks at Bookham 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 03-Sep-18 11:15 PM GMT

That is quite a find Dave 😬🍷 It's certainly been a funny old year and there have been second broods of Dingies and I swear I saw a second brood Orange-tip mentioned from somewhere in Dorset 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 04-Sep-18 08:16 AM GMT

Thanks for the heads-up on the possibility of 2nd brood SSBlues, Dave. I shall check out my patch to see if any are there.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Sep-18 10:06 PM GMT

Sorry about the Bookham Brownies, Buggy... I couldn't resist another go. 😊 The sunshine brought them out, though I'm still a bit miffed that the Small Copper chased away what was probably the best one.

The SSB was a definite bonus as that's not really what I went for. It may well be worth checking other SSB sites for similar emergences as you say, Ernie.

An odd year indeed, Wurzel – there have definitely been second brood White Admirals seen, and I think Neil Freeman mentioned Orange Tips somewhere in the Midlands. Maybe I should be searching Bookham for something different now. 😊😊

Friday 31st August. Another local foray to kick the day off. I actually got no further than the other side of the hedge (where the fallen ash tree still lies, its ivy festoons still largely alive). This was because I was sidetracked by the now resident Small Copper...





One other Holly Blue was lying prostrate on the foliage – it could no longer fly, though its struggles to do so had left silver scales alongside it on the leaf.



Eventually it flipped itself off the leaf and disappeared into the grass. I found this rather sad – it is surprising how rare it is to find a dead or dying butterfly that hasn't been obviously predated. 😊 I hope this female had managed to lay a good many eggs!

The only other butterfly I saw in this small area was a Large White on the sprawling wild buddleia bush. This particular bush seems to attract very little to be honest.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Sep-18 11:10 PM GMT

Those are perfect looking butterflies Dave! I don't think I've seen a Holly Blue looking that fresh. Then from one extreme to another, it must have been sad to see the other Holly Blue so near to the end 😞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 05-Sep-18 08:28 PM GMT

Silver Studded Blue in September is a highly notable find, Dave. This summer's abnormally hot weather is truly beginning to have consequences.

Love your fresh female Holly Blue, and it's quite something to see one so faded at the same time!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Sep-18 09:22 PM GMT

Thanks, both. 😊 The Holly Blues at the moment are beginning to polarise into the really old and worn, and the absolutely brand new. Whether this signifies the start of another brood, I wouldn't like to say for definite, but it wouldn't surprise me. Whether I keep seeing them into November like last year is another matter! 😊😞

That quick local visit was just the start of the day (**31st August**). After the trip to Fairmile and its attendant surprise, I thought I'd have a look at another of the Surrey heathland sites at Dawneys Hill. Unlike Fairmile, there were no SSB but there *were* Graylings (between 15 and 20 seen), but like Fairmile there were heart-stopping moments when other butterflies masqueraded a possible Silver-studs. Once again there were Brown Argus and this time there were a couple of Holly Blues down on the heather too.



The Grayling were getting a bit battered at this end of the season, but I still had a go (like Wurzel) at catching them in flight for those open wing shots.



Off course, it is traditional to play Spot The Grayling at this point...



As it turned out, there was a bit more to see on this bit of sandy heath. I must have seen three or four Small Coppers, disturbed a Small Heath, and miles away from the trees, turned up a Speckled Wood.



Another good late season day out, and I'd say there is at least another week left in those Graylings if the weather holds.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 06-Sep-18 07:16 AM GMT

I didn't get over to Dawneys this year, looks as though I missed a treat. Well done With the Graylings, and your very late Silver Studded Blues. But it's that fresh female Holly Blue that earns the mrgreen 🍷.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by CallumMac, 06-Sep-18 08:20 AM GMT

Nice set millerd! Those Small Coppers fairly shine off the screen. And a trousered Grayling – is that unusual? In my experience they can't get away from me quickly enough... 😊

And I spotted it this time (usually I can't!). But it took a minute or two, so I won't give the game away...

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 06-Sep-18 02:06 PM GMT

Wow Dave! So much good stuff recently. 🤩 😊

Love the Adonis from Denbies, a nice ab, and that dark female is a real stunner. 🍷

I also like your close up of the Silver-spotted Skipper, your lush Small Coppers, and the Graylings. 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 06-Sep-18 06:21 PM GMT

Nice to see the Grayling are still going strong at Dawneys, Dave, nice shots, and what stunning Small Coppers 😊 As Dawneys is only fifteen minutes from us I might have to pay a visit – weather permitting!

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Sep-18 10:52 PM GMT

Thank you for the appreciative comments, everyone. There have been some good things to see recently, but the Small Coppers are stand-out stars at the moment. 😊

As for trousered Graylings, Callum, my own experience is that I can't visit one of their sites without being settled on in this way. Sooner or later one will bound up and plonk itself down. They particularly like denim – whether it looks like a tree trunk to them, I don't know! 😊

Saturday 1st September. Staying local, I decided to carry out one of my periodic counts of butterflies across my patch. Not very scientific, but carried out to avoid double-counting as far as possible, and with fewer photos taken so I didn't miss things whizzing by while I'm stuck in some ungainly position on the ground. The results over a two-hour walk were:

Small White – 22
Holly Blue – 12
Brown Argus – 8
Large White – 8
Common Blue – 7
Speckled Wood – 7
Small Copper – 5
GVW – 4
Small Heath – 4
Red Admiral – 1

I would have expected a Comma or two, considering the day was sunny and pretty warm. Only one Red Admiral is very poor as well – this time last year, numbers were starting to build.

I did manage a few shots...





On **Sunday 2nd September**, my son was involved with his first rugby training session of the season so I had little opportunity to go out on what was a very sunny and almost hot day. In a very short local walk I saw the same set of species, though for some reason there were twice as many Small Heaths around. A Red Admiral was patrolling a piece of sunlit path and was reasonably amenable



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Sep-18 11:12 PM GMT

How did I miss the Grayling post Dave 😊? A cracking set of shots and those open wing ones are brill – something I've still got to find 🍷 Also good to see another trousering 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Sep-18 11:37 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – it does take a bit of perseverance and muttering under the breath to get any open-wing shots at all. 😊 I was just extremely lucky three years ago with that threesome, and have never come close since. 😊

Monday 3rd September. Will the end of the school holidays approaching fast, and a good weather forecast, it was time for another day out at the beach. Amazingly the traffic was good too, and at 1030 the beach at Studland was almost deserted. I didn't see any butterflies down there, but after lunch we had a walk over at Dulston Country Park, where there were quite a few worn Adonis flying along with a couple of Meadow Browns and Small Heath. It struck me that the slopes hadn't recovered yet from the long hot spell and were still looking quite brown.



At this point, any further butterfly searching was interrupted by my son shouting out "dolphins!" and tearing off downhill to the top of the cliff. He was right – swimming along a little way out was a group of dolphins. He'd not seen them before, and I'd not seen them in the UK. By the time we were down at the edge, they had moved a bit, and they swim a lot faster than you can walk along a cliff path so kept ahead of us. I managed a few distant photos and Elliot took some video on his phone.





I have to say it did go some way to make up for the lack of butterflies! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 08-Sep-18 10:56 AM GMT

Hi! Dave , catching up on posts, you've some great shots of the Copper's, there seems to be loads of Blue badges this year, infact there's more Copper's than I've ever seen 😊 Your shots of the Dolphin's though distant or good, I've not seen one either so I bet you were excited to see them. 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 08-Sep-18 04:40 PM GMT

I'm rather envious you saw 8 Brown Argus on your count, Dave. I doubt I've seen that many all year in south Wales. 😊

Great that you got to see those dolphins, not something I've ever witnessed in the UK.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Sep-18 05:05 PM GMT

Well done with the Dolphins at Durlston Dave, I saw that some had been reported but didn't see any when we were there. Like you, I thought that it was looking very dry there still and the gully looked particularly parched.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 08-Sep-18 10:33 PM GMT

Cracking stuff Dave - I've not seen Dolphins there in all the years I've visited 🙄👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Sep-18 11:12 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – the dolphins were a brilliant bonus to the day. Though we were not really all that close, you could actually hear them expelling air and water through their blowholes. A great sight from a great site. 😊

Tuesday 4th September. Another decent day again, so I headed down to Fairmile Common again – well, you never know! As it was, I didn't see any more Silver-studs, but there were more Brown Argus than I had previously realised, with over half a dozen seen. I wonder why I've never come across the first brood while looking for SSB in June.



The other notable species was the ever more ubiquitous Small Copper. They are appearing everywhere, and today I found ten to a dozen individuals in various states of wear and tear and with varying numbers of blue spots.



For the time of year, the flower display on the common was very colourful.



Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 09-Sep-18 08:18 PM GMT

Your Small Coppers really stand out on Heather, a great backdrop.
Good luck with your Cloudie expedition, Tuesday looks good for them.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 09-Sep-18 08:43 PM GMT

That is a very bright floral display for the time of year Dave 😊 Lush set of Coppers, especially the Blue Badger 😊 Good luck with the Cloudies from me too 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Sep-18 09:03 PM GMT

Nice mosaic of colours at that site, Dave. Not surprising that you saw Small Coppers as they seem to be abnormally ubiquitous almost everywhere right now, but the Brown Argus are welcome as I haven't seen too many of them myself this year.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Sep-18 11:07 PM GMT

Thanks, Trevor – the Coppers do indeed look particularly bright on the heather! I may try tomorrow for the Cloudies, and take in Mill Hill again as well, as my sources tell me third brood Walls are appearing up there too... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – didn't even expect to see them, but then they are having a good year everywhere (except Dungeness so far... 😞) Fingers crossed for a few Cloudies – you haven't heard any whispers from Southbourne this year have you? 😊

Thank you, David. 😊 Your dearth of Brown Argus certainly isn't mirrored in the spots I've visited – in fact they are popping up in unexpected places as well as persisting in good numbers on my local patch (though to be fair most are getting a bit tired now).

4th September (continued):

At Fairmile, I was halfway down to Denbies, so another trip there seemed a good idea. To be fair it was very similar to the last one, only with fewer butterflies. There were still some Brown Argus around, a few Small Heath over the middle part of the hillside, and a single female Silver-spotted Skipper still searching out egg-laying spots.



Females, however, were around in higher numbers than the males, and some were fresh.





One was similar to the dark one I had seen a few days before, with perhaps more blue scales and less intense a ground colour. It was quite content to wander onto my hand and open up before hopping down and basking more conventionally.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 10-Sep-18 09:28 AM GMT

Lovely Butterflies Dave, 🍀 I didn't see the Adonis this year so seeing the one on your finger makes me green 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Sep-18 10:25 PM GMT

Thank you Goldie – the Adonis are still going strong (just about!) on most of their sites. They seem to have done well in spite of the dried up landscape. That one was unusually friendly, as the females don't normally cooperate though the males will sometimes suck sweat off your fingers.

Wednesday 5th, Thursday 6th and Friday 7th September.

I stayed local again on all three days for various reasons, and went out on all three at different times. All the usual suspects were present, but most notable were the continuing good numbers of increasingly worn Brown Argus which now outnumber the Common and Holly Blues. The numbers of Small Coppers are rising too, and I'm finding them in ones and twos over the whole area I cover, with no big concentrations. The only consistency is the one closest to home, which I have seen every day I've been out since 29th August patrolling exactly the same spot. Holly Blues are at last dwindling to only one or two seen, and though there are Commas about, they all seem to be weary hangovers from the spring/summer brood, rather than shiny new autumn ones. Meadow Browns have disappeared, but a few new Small Heaths are around again.

Here is a selection from all three days.







I spotted a Brown Argus laying an egg, and when I checked to see if I could find it, I actually found three on the tiny cranesbill plant, and others nearby. Interestingly two of the three were on the top surface of the leaf, and one was underneath...





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Sep-18 11:09 PM GMT

Great set of Small Copper and Brown Argus shots Dave and the female Adonis in the last posting – another beauty 🤔🌿 Brown Argus seem to have had a good year, though possibly better over your way?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 11-Sep-18 12:32 PM GMT

Those last pair of images of the female Adonis are exceptional, Dave. I so wish we had them in my area. 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Sep-18 12:03 AM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel – yes, a very good year for the Brown Argus round here. On my probably-not-very-scientific way of counting, they come out sixth in the sightings league on my local patch this year. I think I've also seen them in a few spots where I can't remember doing so before. 😊

That female Adonis was another cracker, wasn't she? 😊

Saturday 8th September. I had time for another trip out today. I initially tried for Bookham, but there must have been something happening in Cobham as the traffic heading into the town was solid, so I headed back to the M25 and a surprisingly clear run to Denbies again. Diminishing returns once again – no SSSkippers and only a couple of forlorn Chalkhills in amongst the remaining Adonis and Brown Argus. I did notice there were quite a few Small Heaths around, but as always there was a strong breeze across the slopes and they were impossible to approach at all closely. The best of the blues:



a touch of the krodeli about this one





There was a bit of a look forward to spring – one or two of the violets were flowering again.



As long as there are plenty of new leaves for the Dark Green Fritillary caterpillars, that's all that matters. 😊

I'm not sure whether it's worth visiting Denbies again this year now. The season is moving south as it always does at this time of year, so it looks like trips to the South Coast may be in order instead. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 12-Sep-18 09:35 AM GMT

Those Adonis still look good to me Dave 🍷🍷😄 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Sep-18 12:00 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie. A few more to come from elsewhere – their season isn't over quite yet, I'm glad to say. 😊

Sunday 9th September. With only the afternoon to play with, it was good that the sun appeared soon after lunch. I stayed local, and at this time of year, there is more variety on a patch like mine than there is at somewhere like Denbies. The first interesting thing was an absence rather than anything else – this is the first time since June that I didn't see a Holly Blue! 😞 However, there were ten other species on the wing, with approximate counts:

Small White – 17

Speckled Wood – 11

Brown Argus – 9

Small Copper – 7

Large White – 3

GVW – 3

Small Heath – 3

Common Blue – 3

Comma – 2

Red Admiral – 2

I managed photos of all except the three species of White – not unusual, and often only possible first thing when they are warming up.



least worn of the whole bunch



a female CB



a rarity this year

Still plenty to see when the sun shines! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Sep-18 10:15 PM GMT

The forecast for **Monday 10th September** was a good one across southeast England, so I headed for Sussex and a visit to the unlikely spot of Shoreham Harbour. After the glorious South Downs countryside this little hotspot by the sea requires driving into rather unedifying urban scenery, complete with oil tanks, power station and piles of scrap metal. The harbour itself is a long (several miles altogether) canal-like waterway running parallel to the actual coastline proper. The western part is tidal (being the estuary of the river Adur), but the eastern part is protected by locks and is where most of the commercial shipping docks. Opposite these wharves, between the harbour and the A259 (and not far from Southwick station) is a

long narrow area of greenery, mostly tangles of brambles but with wild buddleia and other flowers as well. There are steps down and a path running the whole length.

When I visited, there was a stiff breeze from the west but it was fairly sunny and quite warm too. Before very long, I was met with a Clouded Yellow bowling along with the wind. As far as I could tell, this individual was flying endlessly up and down the path, so I just waited a few minutes and it would be back from the opposite direction. Settling was rare, unless a cloud obscured the sun, when it would drop like a stone onto the bare ground or maybe a low plant. Timing one of these pauses to the moment when I was in the close vicinity was the trick, and eventually it worked (though I had to be quick as the sun was just appearing again as the camera drew close... 😊).





Curiously, while I was there, not a single butterfly paid a visit to any of the buddleia plants. However, it's an interesting spot, and certainly worth revisiting on a less windy day in the near future...

As it happens, I had been to Mill Hill on the way to Shoreham, and had seen quite a bit more: worthy of a longer post to be constructed in more leisurely fashion. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 12-Sep-18 10:58 PM GMT

That Copper is certainly aging well Dave 😊, I wish I was 🇹🇹 😊 Great work with the Cloudy, persistence paid off 🇹🇹 😊 I've often wondered how butterflies manage when flying in event eh slightest breeze, they seem to be skilled as utilising the ever changing gusts and lulls 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Sep-18 07:45 AM GMT

Great description of the Cloudie site, Dave.

Not a likely Butterfly spot when viewed from a car on the A259 !.

As the Clouded Yellow is apparently resident at Southbourne (never been there), it has me wondering whether this is the case at Southwick. It seems uncanny that migrant Cloudies find that same spot year after year. The site is certainly sheltered from northerly wind, and catches the Sun from dawn till dusk all year round.

We know that they breed there, hence the fresh specimens seen at this time of year.

Only a thought,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 13-Sep-18 08:29 PM GMT

Glad you found the place and got your Cloudie Dave. Looking forward to seeing what you found at Mill Hill the day after I was there 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Sep-18 11:29 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – those Common Blues were tiny yet coped with the wind incredibly well even when chasing each other about. Extraordinary control and reactions in something so small... 😊

Thank you, Trevor. It's certainly very sheltered down there. I went there again after seeing you up at High & Over and down on that path there wasn't a breath of wind and it was very warm indeed. If it stays frost-free by the water then who knows what might survive. 😊

Thanks, Buggy. Mill Hill coming up! (Though Neil H. has got in there with a stonking post about today's explosion of Walls up there... 🇹🇹)

On **Monday 10th September** before my visit to the unusual bit of Sussex seaside, I had dropped into Mill Hill for a look around. It was very windy with few sheltered nooks today, though warm in the sunshine. The butterflies took a while to get going and most were concentrated in the same corner as usual on the main slopes towards the northern end. However, there were other spots on the less steep grassy areas and paths at the top on the hillside which produced butterflies too. However, I saw no Walls in any of the places I walked, and judging from Neil's report from today I must have been just a few days early.

There was plenty else to see though. The main attraction for me was a Clouded Yellow (just the one, though), which spent a lot of time in the sheltered bit mentioned earlier, nectaring on the buddleias or occasionally dropping to the ground when the sun went in. It would then set off on a long loop across the hillside before returning again to repeat the process. There is no point chasing a Clouded Yellow, I've decided. 😊





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 13-Sep-18 11:43 PM GMT

More great shots Dave, brilliant final close up shot 🤔👍 My fave is the one on the Buddleia, shot number 4, with the beautifully curved proboscis 😊👍👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Sep-18 08:07 PM GMT

Thank you, Wurzel. It was worth getting in shots from all angles, and managing to get within a couple of centimetres of the butterfly as well – after all they are not something you see every day. 😊 I've just noticed why this particular Cloudie seems a bit odd – it seems to lack almost all the pale brown spots you normally see around the hindwings (compare the one from Southwick just a little way up the previous page).

Tuesday 11th and Wednesday 12th were blank days, the first because of other things going on (a pity as the afternoon became very warm) and the second for want of any sunshine at all.

On the other hand, **Thursday 13th September** had a very encouraging forecast... I set out into brilliant but chilly sunshine (9 degrees here at 9am), but arrived at my target, High & Over near Seaford, in much warmer conditions. A warm local welcome too, as Trevor was already on site lining up Wall Browns along the hedge at the top of the hill by the viewpoint. Over a couple of hours, we encountered probably just into double figures, with a mix of new and slightly worn individuals. and had five in view more than once. All were male, aside from one female which didn't keep still long enough for either of us to record the moment. As the morning went on, they opened out less and less and became their usual tricky highly active selves.



One of their favourite haunts earlier in the day is the set of steps by the viewpoint. It is just possible to make out three individuals here, one per step...



Amongst other sightings were Speckled Woods, Small Coppers, a Holly Blue and this extremely worn Clouded Yellow which could barely fly.



An excellent morning – great to see you again, Trevor. It's been nearly three months since the heat of Chiddingfold! 😊

On the way back, another look down at Shoreham Harbour (Southwick) seemed like a good idea...

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-Sep-18 08:58 PM GMT

Nice set of others at Mill Hill, particularly the very blue female Common Blue and good to see a strong third brood of Walls at High & Over once again. I think that final Cloudie is a female, something I've yet to see this year.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-18 10:00 PM GMT

More great shots of those Walls Dave and another Cloudy 😊😊 I've only seen one of those (in the UK) all year 🌍 Those Walls are really fresh looking too, almost 'mint condish' 😊 I see what you mean about the Cloudy previously, could that be wear, perhaps those scales come away first leaving the yellow scales beneath? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 14-Sep-18 10:10 PM GMT

Great sequence, Dave. Those Wall Browns are a delight to see and any Clouded Yellow is a bonus, irrespective of its condition.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Sep-18 10:32 PM GMT

Cheers, all! 😊 Walls and Cloudies make a great postscript to the season, and a few new Common Blues as well make things very colourful too.

With regard to those spots, Wurzel, I think they do diminish with age, but I reckon that individual didn't start with many as it's not all that worn. At least, not compared to the one from High & Over... 😊😊

So... **Thursday 13th September** (continued).

Making a slight detour on the way back home from High & Over, I had another look at the harbourside at Southwick again. It was much less windy today and very warm down there in the sunshine, and immediately I disturbed a basking Comma – which promptly disappeared. However, the first of two patrolling Clouded Yellows very soon hove into view (almost a very apt geographical pun there... 😊), and I resolved to be patient and wait for one or other to coincide with me walking past as the sun went in. In the meantime I found a very bright Small Copper...





I then found another Small Copper, striking a splendid autumnal pose on the brambles.



As I took the shots, the light gradually improved, changing the colour of the butterfly with more sunshine leading to deeper yellow hues.





Finally, some views of the site – in bright sunshine, carefully leaving out the power station and dockside paraphernalia immediately opposite, it scrubs up quite well!



Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 15-Sep-18 10:41 PM GMT

Great sequence Dave showing the colour changing with the light levels – they go from a limey to bright yellow 🤔🤔🤔 Like the almost pun 😊😂

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 15-Sep-18 10:54 PM GMT

You make that tiny strip of green look huge in those final pictures 😂

Re: millerd

by trevor, 16-Sep-18 07:18 AM GMT

Wall Browns and Clouded Yellows in one day, in September !.

Not many Counties can offer that.

Pleased you found a well behaved Cloudie.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Sep-18 01:39 PM GMT

Love the Cloudies Dave and the Wall's, 🤔🤔 right now here, it would be good to see a White 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by David M, 16-Sep-18 07:18 PM GMT

Superb, Dave. I'm still hoping a Cloudie or two will make its way to my neck of the woods, although with a stormy week forecast that's probably wishful thinking. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Sep-18 09:27 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – it made an interesting study, quite by accident of course. With the sun out for the last one, the butterfly took off within a few seconds of it being taken. 😊 Glad you appreciated the almost pun. I thought it might brighten up your day... 😊😂

Well, Buggy, it just shows the old saying that "the camera never lies" is not exactly true... I was quite pleased with the last view in particular – almost a picture postcard image. 😊

Thanks, Trevor – Sussex has a lot to offer at this time of year, and that Cloudie was a particularly fine offering. 😊

I thought the northwest might be suffering a bit, Goldie. 😊 Hopefully there's still a bit of decent weather to come up there too so you can see some more Tortoiseshells to make me envious! 😊

Thank you, David. I think you'd have to be lucky enough to find some home-grown ones, offspring of an earlier arrival. You never know – they can pop up anywhere... 😊

Friday 14th September: time and weather conspired to leave me with a late afternoon accelerated amble round part of my local patch. A few whites and Speckled Woods were flying, plus the surprise of a nicely marked female Common Blue. There have been a few fresh-looking males, but this is the first female of roughly the same vintage.

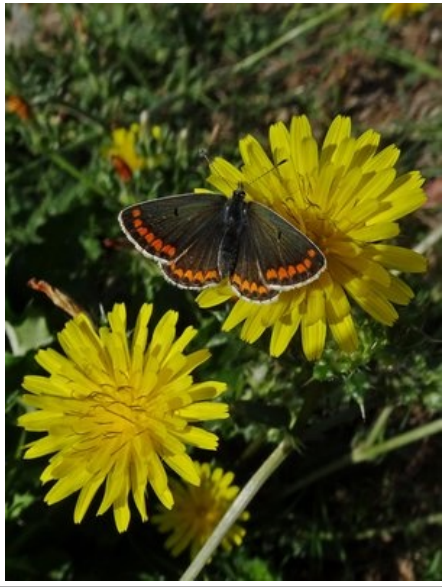


Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Sep-18 09:48 PM GMT

Saturday 15th September provided me with a bit more time, and the weather was better too. I had a longer local walk in the morning to start off with, highlighted by a sighting of the first Small Tortoiseshell for some while. However, it took off with the wind as soon as I approached it and goodness knows where it went. Aside from that it was back to the usual suspects: Common Blue numbers are rising again as newer individuals appear – I would guess a definite third brood.



There were whites (mostly Small as usual), Speckled Woods and a handful of Small Heaths.





However, the surprise here was that the one I've seen regularly nearest home was not around – but apparently it had been usurped by a different individual!



That still left the afternoon for another trip somewhere...

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 17-Sep-18 10:34 AM GMT

Hi, Dave. Just realised I hadn't looked at your PD in a while. I ended up looking through the entire current page! Fantastic set of Wall Brown shots and

you managed to capture what I had missed this year – A Clouded Yellow with wings open!

I also found your sequence of Clouded Yellow shots in different lighting conditions interesting. I have recently had the same experience with Grayling. The depth of colour change between shade and full sun can be astonishing.

Re: millerd

by David M, 17-Sep-18 06:21 PM GMT

That certainly MUST be a third brood Brown Argus, Dave. Excellent find!

Your Common Blues are still looking decent too. Ours in south Wales have all but gone, sadly.

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 17-Sep-18 07:04 PM GMT

Nice find in that third brood Brown Argus, Dave 😊 the present weather is helping, although it's a bit breezy. Nice Cloudies and Wall Browns in your recent post too.

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 17-Sep-18 09:04 PM GMT

Thanks, Ernie – that Cloudie only opened for a fraction of a second, and it happened to coincide with me hitting the shutter – a fluke in other words! 😊 The lighting effects seem particularly marked with certain species, and the yellow in the sunlight appears to have an affinity for the yellow in a Cloudie. That series of shots was an unintended accident too... 😊😊

Cheers, David. 😊 Third brood Common Blues are appearing in several places I've visited recently, but that is the first third brood Brown Argus I've seen anywhere this year. It happens round here about one year in three that I'll find one or two. I hope there may be more considering how good the second brood has been, and the widespread germination of tiny cranesbill plants after the return of a bit of rain in August.

Thank you Mike – the season seems far from over yet I'm glad to say. 😊 As mentioned above, the return of some rain has led to the sprouting and flowering of another round of plants in many places. This has included a major flush of thistles, ox-eye daisies and even ragwort, providing nectar sources that normally would be fast disappearing at this time of year.

The afternoon of **Saturday 15th September** turned into another trip to Denbies. It was fairly warm, but breezy (of course) and with blue sky all around clouds were bowling along the line of the ridge and messing with the sunshine. This often happens here if the wind is roughly parallel to the slope or very slightly upslope.

By far the commonest butterfly today was the Small Heath. They were around across the slopes in various sizes and shades of grey and sand.









Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 17-Sep-18 09:49 PM GMT

The 'blue' gene in the female Adonis does seem to be particularly strong on the denbies population I've noticed since I started going there over the past few years. You certainly captured some stunners!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Sep-18 10:45 PM GMT

Lovely looking Brown Argus in the last post Dave 😊 And the second Adonis female down is a cracking looking individual 😊🍷🍷 I'd go with Chalkhill for that one as well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 18-Sep-18 10:01 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, I don't know how I missed your postings of the Cloudies and the Grayling because there fantastic! It must have been one of my miserable weather days 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Sep-18 11:27 AM GMT

I think you're right about the Denbies Adonis, Buggy. I've seen a few blue females over the years, nearly always in the second brood. It puts a whole different meaning on the concept of blue genes... 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – she was very eye-catching wasn't she. 😊 Thanks for the confirmation on the Chalkhill too – even worn it does look distinctly different.

Thank you Goldie – I hope your weather perks up again soon! 😊

Sunday 16th September: Another warm and increasingly sunny day, but the morning was occupied watching my son rugby training with Quins u-14s at a college in Twickenham. I happened to notice that a piece of ground between the playing fields and the road had been deliberately sown with some kind of wildflower mix.



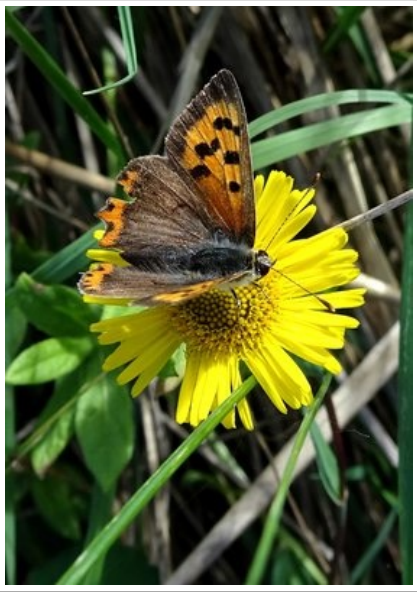
A few more examples of this sort of thing in suburban areas wouldn't go amiss! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Sep-18 11:44 AM GMT

During the afternoon of **16th September**, I made my way to Bookham again in strong warm sunshine. Things are gradually declining here as elsewhere, with only one or two Speckled Woods, Common Blues and Small Heaths seen, a single worn Brown Hairstreak disturbed from the blackthorn (but evading a photo) and one Comma (likewise).







As can be seen, the fleabane is still going strong here and providing pretty well the only nectar source.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 18-Sep-18 09:08 PM GMT

That's a nice fresh looking last female Copper 😊. I hope the sun comes out tomorrow 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Sep-18 10:20 PM GMT

Cracking 'Force' of Coppers Dave 😊 One seems to have quite small markings on the fore wing 😊🇧🇪 And you caught a two spotter 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Sep-18 07:48 AM GMT

That's a Hoggers type haul, Dave. Lovely specimens, well captured.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 19-Sep-18 04:00 PM GMT

Love the Clouded close up Dave, and the Wall and Copper. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Sep-18 10:26 PM GMT

Thank you all – Coppers every day wherever I go it seems! 😊 (and I spotted the collective noun for them, Wurzel! 😊). There will be a few more to come I feel certain...

Monday 17th September: an absolutely glorious warm sunny day transplanted from high summer induced me the 60 miles down to Sussex again, and the slopes of Mill Hill. I think I saw 18 species altogether:

Painted Lady
Red Admiral
Comma
Peacock
Wall Brown
Meadow Brown
Speckled Wood
Small Heath
Brown Argus
Common Blue
Adonis Blue
Chalkhill Blue
Small Copper
Brimstone
Clouded Yellow
Large White
Small White
Green-veined White

Admittedly, some of these were singletons and some were very well worn, but it was an impressive showing.

A round-up:

I counted around 20 Walls, including 5 females which appeared to be egg-laying on the lower slopes. The sunshine made them all very active and I managed only a few shots.



A Painted Lady appeared on a wholly inaccessible buddleia.





I also got chatting to guy called Ben from Brighton, recently arrived in the area from north east London, and sung him the praises of UKB!

Another terrific day out. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Sep-18 11:25 PM GMT

That was indeed a terrific day Dave, a brilliant range of species for this time of the season 😊 Sme glorious looking butterflies; those Walls and Coppers are lush looking 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Sep-18 10:32 AM GMT

That is indeed an impressive haul, Dave.
The sight of two Peacocks in the same shot would not normally be cause for comment, but it is this Autumn. The whole Vanessa family seem to be missing around here at the moment. With the exception of a solitary Red Admiral on Monday.

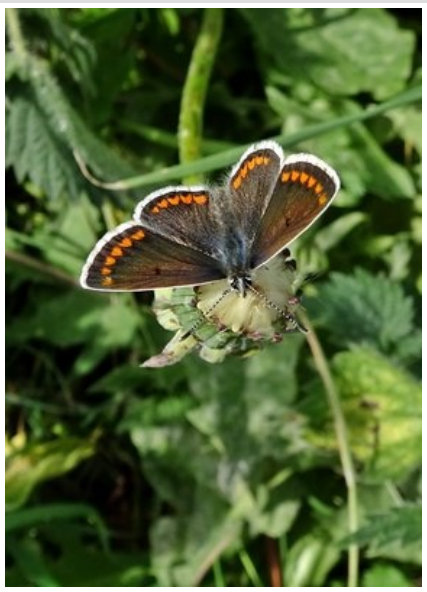
A mrgreen for your female Wall sightings 🍷 , Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Sep-18 11:13 AM GMT

Cheers Wurzel and Trevor – I suspect that may well be the last day quite like that of the year, especially with the current forecast for the next few days. 😞

Tuesday 18th September: back to the home patch and some more warm sunshine, though overnight it had been very windy and there was still more than a breeze blowing. As always, there was something worth seeing. To start with, there were some faint echoes of last year, with both a Comma and a Red Admiral on the ivy flowers. I saw another of each species elsewhere as well.





I know the second brood females were ranging out early on to find cranesbill that had not been shrivelled by the summer heat, and I suspect this individual is the result of one of those peregrinations. Next spring they may continue to pop up in unexpected places: this species does seem to be gradually getting more widespread around here over the years I've been watching them.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 20-Sep-18 10:27 PM GMT

That Small Copper definitely made the right choice, and it also makes a cracking photo Dave 😊 Also cracking is that 3rd brood Brown Argus – mint condish and lush looking 🍃🍃 Looks like we're in for some more typical UK weather over the next few days 🤞

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 21-Sep-18 07:09 AM GMT

Great Adonis ab, Dave. It must have looked remarkable when it first emerged. Good to see a few species still flying near you (18 must be some kind of record for September?), especially those Small Heaths which I have seen precious few of in 2018.

Yet another new brood Brown Argus as well! My envy-meter is rising.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 21-Sep-18 10:02 AM GMT

Love the Peacock shots Dave, 🍃 I've not had one in the Garden this year which is unusual, they don't seem to have done too well here this year. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 21-Sep-18 11:32 PM GMT

Yes, the Small Copper was lucky there, Wurzel – the spider seemed to be reaching out for it nonetheless, but was just too far off. 😊 The Brown Argus was a great little butterfly to see at this end of the season. 😊

The 18 species at Mill Hill could have been 19 if there had been a Small Tortoiseshell, or 20 if the Brown Hairstreak seen the day before had appeared. Pretty good for the time of year, David, certainly. I'm glad you also liked the Brown Argus! 😊

Thanks, Goldie – those Peacocks were one of the highpoints of the day to be honest. All my local ones went into hibernation in July, and if it wasn't for this second brood at Mill Hill I wouldn't have seen any more this year I'm sure.

Wednesday 19th September. Another warm, largely quite sunny but very windy day. Touring my local patch once again, things were similar to yesterday, but not quite the same. There were fewer butterflies for a start, with no Brown Argus seen for the first time since June and the gap between broods. A couple of Common Blues...



...and at least three Coppers remained...



Once again though, there was an unexpected highlight. Nectaring on the dandelions for all it was worth was a Small Tortoiseshell.



Great to see one – I spotted one briefly a couple of days ago, but otherwise I haven't seen one around here since 24th June (curiously the same last date I didn't see a Brown Argus).

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 22-Sep-18 07:11 AM GMT

I was going to say 'great to see your Small Tortoiseshell', but actually it is something of a relief to see it. I have not seen one since the Spring. I think we have both seen more Emperors and Black Hairstreaks this year than Small Torts.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 22-Sep-18 10:51 AM GMT

Hi! Dave, it's great your still seeing so many Butterflies, hope fully next week we'll all see some more before the season ends 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 22-Sep-18 10:14 PM GMT

I suspect you are right about those numbers, Trevor. It will be interesting to see what the spring brings as that's when I see the most Tortoiseshells these days. Not like when I was a kid in London in the sixties when in September the michaelmas daisies in the garden were covered in them.

I'm hoping this dismal weekend of weather won't have wiped everything out, Goldie, as next week promises much better conditions again. 😊

Thursday 20th was cloudy and windy again, and all I saw anywhere was a Small White and a Small Copper, both being blown around.

Friday 20th September was even windier, though there was at least some sporadic sunshine. It was noticeably cooler though. In the only sheltered bit of my local patch I could find today, I found a couple of Small Whites, two Speckled Woods, a quite fresh-looking Red Admiral above my head on the ivy flowers, and finally a new Comma, but a bit lower down.



Today (21st) has been chilly, wet and windy and tomorrow looks similar for most of the day. This does mean however that I have finally caught my diary up to date!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 22-Sep-18 10:28 PM GMT

A belated 'good to see' Dave for the Small Tort, they've been a bit thin on the ground round this way too but then they usually are and then in the Spring they're all over the place, fingers crossed 😊 Great shots as always Dave but that Comma it a cracker, it's throwing a great pose 😊 I've also got my fingers crossed that the weather hasn't knocked the butterflies on the head quite yet 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 23-Sep-18 01:11 PM GMT

I'm pleased you got to see that Small Tortoiseshell, Dave. I seem to recall they had a decent showing further east in 2017, but this year the pickings have been slim – even round my way (where they're usually pretty common) they have been around in disappointing numbers.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 24-Sep-18 07:49 PM GMT

Hi Dave, nice Small Tortoiseshell 😊 Like yourself and others, I saw far more this spring than I did later in the summer.

From what I have seen reported on facebook and twitter there seems to have been more about further north than down south this year. This could be due to the southern ones going into hibernation earlier, I guess we will not know until next spring.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Sep-18 10:59 PM GMT

Thanks all of you – it was good (and unexpected) to see a Small Tortoiseshell, especially hearing the poor results from the count earlier in the year. I wouldn't be at all surprised if they went into hibernation in July in the south of the country along with the Peacocks. Certainly the nettles were in a bad way round here in the height of the hot weather and there weren't any of the usual lush patches that would have supported a nest of caterpillars.

After about 36 hours of cold wet and windy weather, the sun at last reappeared on Sunday afternoon (23rd September), and the temperature scraped up to around 15 degrees. I went out locally to see what might have shrugged off the weather and be making the most of the bit of sunshine. Not a lot... Three Small Whites popped up in various places, plus a single Speckled Wood. However, in one particular area I turned up three Common Blues, one worn male and two different scruffy females.



...and three very different Small Coppers.





The weather improves markedly now, which should give a better picture of what has survived what was almost a sneak preview of winter... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Sep-18 11:07 PM GMT

I can see why you're struggling to ID the Blue/BA 😊 The easiest ID features seem to have been totally lost 😊 Lovely triad of Coppers 😊 Fingers crossed that much more is hiding out until the weather gets better, hopefully we'll have a the company of the butterflies a little while longer yet. 😊 Mind you if the newspapers are to be believed then that wasn't a sneak preview it was actually lulling into a sense of false security – I've read four months of crippling snow 😊 But then that was in the Mail 😊 I only get it cos it fits perfectly in the woodburner 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Sep-18 11:19 PM GMT

I've heard the dire prognostications about the forthcoming winter as well, Wurzel – who knows what may happen. I don't think the very cold snap at the start of March and the amazing summer were forecast far in advance, so we'll just have to wait and see. 😊

The following day, **Monday 24th September**, was exactly as forecast – bright sunshine, a bit of a breeze, and up to 17 degrees in the afternoon. I covered my local patch again, with one of my periodic counts. The results:

Common Blue 11

10 males and one female, almost all looking ragged



Small White 10
definitely no GVW amongst them





Speckled Wood 5
some are looking a bit tired now





Small Copper 4
not looking too bad





Red Admiral 4
actually nectaring on buddleia and ivy, the most for a while





Small Heath 1
very worn indeed



Only six species, but still not a bad showing. I was surprised at the numbers of Common Blues, having seen no males at all the day before. Most were suffering from living in an environment currently almost entirely composed of various types of thistle. The other pleasing part of the trip out was finding four different Red Admirals, though compared to this time last year this is poor. However, going back further, there have been one or two similar bad years.

A non-butterfly picture too: this splendid beetle, which looks to me like a rose chafer. I've only ever seen them in spring when they sometimes sit on hawthorn flowers and compete in the greenness stakes with Green Hairstreaks.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 26-Sep-18 08:12 AM GMT

Dave – although its sad to see all those tatty butterflies, nevertheless its a good record of the season changing.

Its amazing how frayed they can get and yet still be able to fly!

Re: millerd

by David M, 26-Sep-18 05:24 PM GMT

Some of those butterflies look positively geriatric, Dave! 😊

Others, however, remain fresh and you still look to have a respectable range on the wing down your way.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 10:48 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave 🍷 – I've been trapped in all week and now as the weekends approaching the warm weather is set to go, fingers crossed the terrible winter doesn't strike for a while 😊 Interesting to see Small Heath still hanging on in there 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 26-Sep-18 10:54 PM GMT

Cheers, Ernie – yes it is astonishing how little wing area a butterfly seems to need to allow it to fly successfully. 😊

Things are hanging on in there, David, but each time I go out something else has disappeared. 😞 This is called Autumn, I suppose... 😊

Tuesday 25th September. After a really chilly start this morning (there was even a little wet ice on the car windscreen at 8am and the temperature had sunk to 3 degrees), lots of sunshine followed and 17 or 18 was reached in the afternoon. I spent the morning at Banks Common down at Bookham, missing Bugboy by less than half an hour. I think I saw a better selection of Small Coppers, but aside from a single Speckled Wood, I came across nothing else at all.







There's plenty of life in these Coppers yet!



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 26-Sep-18 11:01 PM GMT

You really did see a better range of Coppers than me, some lovely fresh ones there. I wonder where they all vanished to when I arrived?

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 26-Sep-18 11:10 PM GMT

A cracking Force of Coppers Dave 😊 That fresh female is a bit of a stunner, and a blue badger to boot 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Sep-18 10:41 PM GMT

Cheers, chaps – the female Coppers I saw (WPCs, Wurzel? 😊) were particularly fresh, and aside from a tiny nick that Blue Badger was near enough perfect. The one guzzling blackberry juice was none too shabby either. 😊

25th September (continued) After Bookham (and just missing Bugboy), I drove the relatively short distance to Fairmile Common again. Having discovered that this spot has a life outside the world of Silver-studded Blues, I may well pay more regular visits here in future. Today, there were quite a few blue butterflies flying over the flowering heather, but every single one was a male Common Blue and some were pretty fresh. Curiously, when the Silver Studs are out, there are very few Common Blues amongst them, if any. They can however be found just outside the boundaries of the heathland where the SSB don't venture – it's as if there is an invisible line between them in June which disappears after the SSB season.

I probably saw at least ten Common Blues, all males except for one solitary female which did not oblige with a photo.



Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 28-Sep-18 10:44 AM GMT

Dave – I recently went to Binswood near me and found 5 Small Coppers but absolutely no flowers to nectar from. I wondered how they were sustaining themselves. Your pics of a Copper on a Blackberry opened my eyes. 😊

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 28-Sep-18 07:42 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

...**Tuesday 25th September**. After a really chilly start this morning (there was even a little wet ice on the car windscreen at 8am and the temperature had sunk to 3 degrees)...

A cold one here as well on Tuesday morning and our first frost of the autumn, just a light one but I had to scrape the car windscreen at 06.00am when I left for work. Its' been a bit warmer since then though.

Your moth is either a Treble-bar or a Lesser Treble-bar, difficult to separate these two but I think I would go for the latter with that one.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 28-Sep-18 10:12 PM GMT

WPCs indeed Dave 😊 Some nice and fresh individuals in the mix there hopefully they'll keep safe during the little cool snap, they're even threatening frosts in some places 😊 The (Lesser) Treble Bar is a good find as you say they are very unapproachable 😊🇧🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Sep-18 12:22 AM GMT

Rotting blackberries seem to provide a welcome alternative to nectar for lots of species, Ernie, but I think that's the first Small Copper I've seen indulging. 😊

Thank you for the moth ID, Neil – I was surprised at how numerous they were. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – it does look a bit nippy in the overnight forecasts, but it does mean sunshine during the day by all accounts, which can't be bad. 😊

Wednesday 26th September. A case in point: it was quite chilly overnight, but it swiftly turned into a beautiful warm late summer day. I set off once again to the south coast and the slopes of Mill Hill in particular. I was not the only one with this idea – I soon came across Katrina, Trevor and Dave Cook amongst others, and we were joined not much later by Bugboy who had been down at Southwick with a Clouded Yellow or two. Great to see all of you again in such terrific surroundings. 😊

A wide variety of species were seen again today, though some (like the last few Adonis females) were getting very worn. There were perhaps half a dozen Clouded Yellows in various spots – one demonstrated for me what good camouflage their markings are at this time of year.



However, the highpoint of today was the large patch of flowering hemp agrimony I'd seen last week with a couple of Peacocks on it. Today they had been joined by several very fresh Red Admirals and Painted Ladies and made a splendid sight in a season that has been largely lacking in all three nymphalid species.



Bugboy and I followed up with a look down at Widewater Lagoon (Lancing) where Vince recently reported Clouded Yellows – we managed to see one (it may have been two), but not close to.



There were a few Common Blues and Small Whites as well.

Another splendid day out.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 29-Sep-18 07:47 AM GMT

It certainly was a splendid day, Dave. It's not often that four UKB'ers meet on one site. You mention the late season mating Meadow Browns at Mill Hill, that could explain the fresh November specimen we found there last year.

Good to spend time with you all,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 29-Sep-18 02:09 PM GMT

WoW! Dave, you did well to spot that Clouded Yellow, looks like it was hiding 😊 You seem to have seen loads of Wall's we don't seem to have had too many a round here this year. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 29-Sep-18 06:14 PM GMT

What a cracking day Dave 😊👍 I see what you mean (or should that be didn't see 😊) about the camo - I've never thought of Clouded Yellows as having camouflage before now 😊👍 Lovely set of vanessids as well 👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Sep-18 10:35 AM GMT

Wonderful selection there, Dave. Strange that a few vanessids have finally decided to make an appearance having been so scarce these last two months.

I'm pretty envious that you've still got the likes of Common Blue & Meadow Brown. My area has dried up significantly this last 10 days or so - even Whites have practically gone now. 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-18 07:58 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor - Mill Hill really is a splendid spot, holding on when almost everywhere else has given up. There were still good numbers of flowers around, which must help. 😊

I watched where that Clouded Yellow landed and never would have seen it otherwise, Goldie! 😊

The camouflage only really works when the leaves are turning, Wurzel, so I wonder why it has evolved like that? Brimstones are a bit similar, but they match the shady bits of ivy in which they roost and hibernate. 😊

Thanks, David. All three - Peacock, Red Admiral and Painted Lady - were very new and likely just emerged locally. I imagine the individuals from the second two species may well be in France by now! Common Blues are into their third brood down here in the south (though not everywhere - I've seen none at Denbies for example), and Meadow Browns always linger into October here too with there being still a few fresh females around even now. The warm southeast... 😊 Your sightings from the Pembrokeshire coast were pretty good, though!

I've slipped slightly behind again - soon to be rectified. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-18 10:08 PM GMT

Thursday September 27th. Once again, a beautiful warm and sunny day. I set off at a leisurely pace down to Denbies, as much as anything because there had been reports of Clouded Yellows here as well, and seeing one inland would make a change. Compared to Mill Hill, there really wasn't much flying here at all - a few Meadow Browns, slightly more numerous Small Heaths and a handful of the very last Adonis females were pretty much it.



One or two other flypasts (Speckled Wood, Small Copper, Red Admiral, Brimstone, Small White) before the target species appeared in the distance. As ever, it came tantalisingly close before heading off past me. Denbies is a large hillside, and any regular circuits a Clouded Yellow makes take a considerable time, and they tend to get distracted off the route as well. Nevertheless, I saw the same butterfly at least six times (or six individuals once, or perhaps any permutation in between that maths allows...). It did stop a few times, but never near enough for more than shots providing evidence of its existence and the fact that it seemed to be a male.



With the customary strong breeze blowing despite almost calm conditions everywhere else, and bright sun, in the end I restricted myself to a shot or two of the view.



I popped into the vineyard afterwards, where the harvest was underway already, and took a few views here as well.



Box Hill in the background



Looking up the hill towards Ranmore



Ripe and ready

Returning home, it was worth a look on my local patch as at this time of year there can often be more to see!

Dave

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 30-Sep-18 10:11 PM GMT

Great to see you on Wednesday – I enjoyed it so much I went back again today!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 30-Sep-18 10:44 PM GMT

Good to see you too, Katrina! 😊 There is some more decent weather forecast for the middle of the coming week so I may well have to pop down again too. 😊 😊

Back home again on **27th September**, and as predicted a different set of things to see. Things kicked off with a Holly Blue, something that has been absent for nearly three weeks now. It skulked in the shade unfortunately, but at least it stayed put.





This was also true of the two Small Coppers I saw today.



Large and Small Whites, plus several Speckled Woods, completed the list.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Sep-18 10:49 PM GMT

With those vineyards and a Clouded Yellow in great nick that could be somewhere continental Dave 🤔 😊 🇹🇷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 01-Oct-18 08:27 PM GMT

Is that where Denbies grow there grapes, Dave?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 01-Oct-18 10:36 PM GMT

True, Wurzel, not a traditionally English scene. Denbies is a massive vineyard – I believe at one time it was the largest vineyard in single ownership in Europe (most continental vineyards were actually owned by lots of individuals who pooled their shares: this may still be the case). The wine is pretty good, especially the various types of fizz – in common with many English vineyards. And, as I've mentioned before, there is the Surrey Hills Brewery round the back. 😊

The butterfly hillside is further on to the west , David, but yes, this is where Denbies English Wine is grown.

Friday 28th September. Still mostly sunny today, but distinctly cooler as promised. First off, I decided to revisit Bedfont Lakes Country Park. Since retiring last year, I am not on the doorstep as I used to be at work, so I neglect this patch. Today wasn't especially thrilling, with two third brood Common Blues and two Small Whites seen.





Clouded Yellows do turn up here, but not today.

For the afternoon, it had to be my local patch again. Nine species seen (there were seven yesterday):

Speckled Wood 5

Small White 5

Common Blue 4

Red Admiral 2

Holly Blue 2

Brown Argus 2

Small Heath 1

Small Copper 1

Peacock 1

The Peacock was probably the same one as I saw yesterday, but this time I had some better views.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 02-Oct-18 09:19 AM GMT

It's great you've seen a Peacock Dave, I used to have loads in my Garden and I've not had one this year, a fact that makes me wonder if their on the endangered list for local Butterflies Here 😞 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Oct-18 05:51 PM GMT

Thanks, Goldie – the last one I saw here was way back in early July so it was a pleasant surprise. 😊

Saturday 29th September: another sunny and warm day. By chance, I had been invited to afternoon tea celebrating a friend's 50th birthday down in Eastbourne. With the morning to take advantage of, I set off early enough to have an hour or two at High & Over which after all is not by any means very far from my later rendezvous.

On arriving at the car park I found it full of large vehicles housing parascending enthusiasts, who were busy jumping off the top of the ridge and riding the thermals the sunshine was generating. However, I spotted a space big enough for my normal-sized car but clearly too small for the assorted wide/high/long monstrosities parked along the verges. As I walked down the path through the trees, I was surrounded by an assortment of Speckled Woods charging about in the strong sunshine, and looking pretty fresh too. I watched a couple gyrate in the air for a while, when one of them

plummeted into the undergrowth. Peering through the leaves, I watched the "playing dead" act performed by the female spurning a would-be suitor. He hung around briefly and then gave up. However, she stayed immobile for a bit longer, just in case, allowing me a couple of quick shots through the shade into the pool of bright sunshine where she was lying.



Clearly she didn't see me as any kind of threat as she then quickly sat up and flew off.

Out of the trees and down the steps, where there were two Walls arguing strenuously over the territory. The (temporary) victor paused to take stock.



There were perhaps half a dozen male Walls in the area, mostly on the northern side of the hedge today, and a couple of females were spotted as well but were camera-shy and ranging out across the open spaces. One male in particular had developed an obsession about one of the few remaining ragwort plants, returning time and time again to nectar and offering unusually good photo opportunities for this notoriously skittish species.







Well worth the slight detour before the main event of the day!



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Oct-18 07:27 PM GMT

Good set of Walls there Dave. They're having a fabulous end of year party!

Re: millerd

by trevor, 02-Oct-18 07:41 PM GMT

Pleased you had a great morning with the squabbling Walls,
And plenty of great shots. The last one in your sequence looks pretty fresh.

Hope they last a while longer,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Oct-18 10:24 PM GMT

Cracking set of Walls Dave – it must be great seeing more than a solitary one 😊👍
I got a bit of a shock as I read your post – "parascending enthusiasts", "a couple gyrating in the air" plummeted into the undergrowth" and "dead" was what my extremely tired brain took in 😳 " Hold on this isn't anything like Dave's usual posts, it's all gone very, very dark! 😬"
It made a lot more sense and was much more cheerful when I reread it 😊😁😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 03-Oct-18 11:44 AM GMT

Great reports Dave, I like the Coppers, Cloudies and Walls. I too have enjoyed the Hemp Agrimony corner at Mill Hill recently. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Oct-18 09:10 PM GMT

Cheers, everyone – High & Over is the place to go for Walls, as Trevor will tell you. 😊😁

Sunday 30th September: Big Ship Day in our family... 😊 I was watching my son play rugby again this morning, but the wildflower bed next to the playing fields no longer had any Common Blues. It did, however, have a moth: I was even able to identify it as a Box Tree moth following the recent postings here.



They really are spreading.

Monday 1st October: Three-quarters of the year gone – how did that happen? 😊 I had another stroll around my local patch on a day that was cooler than of late and a bit breezy, but sunny enough to bring out a few things. I found a Comma, unusually down on the ground, and a look at the photos shows that it was sucking up moisture from the leaf litter.



I spotted the Small Copper I had seen a couple of times previously:



It appeared to have adopted a particular pebble as a perch, and kept returning to it.



However, all was not to remain calm, as a newcomer appeared.





The second Copper made a daring approach...



Finally, a single Small Heath flew past, confusing the Coppers no end, and settled somewhat precariously.



Not that many butterflies seen in total today (only 12), but plenty of interest – the Coppers were most entertaining. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by David M, 04-Oct-18 12:08 PM GMT

Thanks for confirmation regarding the vineyard, Dave. Looks a decent spot in all honesty.

You're still doing marvellously well with your species range. Nine in a day is great for late September. Good too that there are Wall Browns to be seen near you. Is this species beginning a recovery or is this year just a one-off?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-18 12:51 PM GMT

Yes, the vineyard and environs are a very attractive location, David, especially in the sunshine! 😊

To be honest, the Walls at High & Over are not really that close – nearly a two-hour drive if the traffic is in its habitual clogged-up state. Mill Hill is nearer (about 65 miles), but both are definitely worth the effort. 😊

Tuesday 2nd October: noticeably warmer today, but a visit to the dentist and a bit of cloud impeded any longer trip out. A very brief look locally late in the afternoon produced very few butterflies, though these did include a Comma and a Red Admiral.





Wednesday 3rd October: today started sunny, became completely overcast for an hour or so, then became very sunny and warm too for the afternoon. I started off with another look down at Banks Common (Bookham). Very few flowers are now left here, but in one area where ragwort remains in bloom, I found the customary Small Copper.



Moving to the main meadow area, it appeared that the edge of the field along the hedgerow was in the process of being cut. The trim was not especially short, but the process was mangling the edge of the hedge rather badly and may well have affected some of the Brown Hairstreak eggs laid along here.



As the sun began to reappear I walked back to the car, finding that several Speckled Woods were now out and about.



With what looked like a sunny afternoon ahead, I continued down to Denbies again. A very good decision as it turned out... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 04-Oct-18 07:39 PM GMT

They really have strimmed it back 🤖. Still we have mused on more than one occasion as to the benefits of giving that field a decent annual hair cut 😊. we might see a mini explosion of activity there next year, perhaps more Dingy Skippers.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Oct-18 08:19 PM GMT

Great Small Heath 'tease' shot Dave in amongst the other brill shots Dave 😊 Really like the first Comma shot – the Deep Purple colour is gorgeous and the 'Comma' is almost a full circle, almost, so it looks a little like a capital G if you side it with your head tilted 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 04-Oct-18 11:11 PM GMT

You're right, Buggy – it'll be interesting to see what next spring brings. Only six months to go till the first week of April.. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel. Yes, that Comma had a very bold marking – it often looks to me like an arm flexing a bicep, though in this case it is almost exactly a "G" shape: *g-album* perhaps? 😊

3rd October: part two, and another visit to Denbies. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the hillside today was the number of Small Heaths that appeared when the sun shone – at least fifteen in various places, with no particular concentrations.



Similarly, a Small Copper was searching hard for sorrel.



My best effort yet – more practice required, though...

Another shot of the view, over towards Dorking this time.



A great afternoon once again! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 05-Oct-18 07:28 AM GMT

Superb Cloudie shots, Dave. Including one of my favourite types of image, light and shadow, great stuff.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 05-Oct-18 07:17 PM GMT

Just catching up again Dave, I thought I was reading Hoggers PD for a minute a few posts back with those Small Coppers 😊

Great Clouded Yellow shots 🍷😊. Good to see there are plenty of butterflies about down there still, things are definitely coming to an end up here although I hear there were good numbers of Clouded Yellows about earlier in the week at Sywell Country Park in Northamptonshire so they are not all down south 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 05-Oct-18 10:30 PM GMT

Beautiful backlits shots and those uppers are non to shoddy either! I've still yet to see a female Cloudie this year 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Oct-18 10:25 AM GMT

Fantastic set of Cloudy images Dave 😊🍷 They're very fresh looking so are they 'homegrown' - I'd have thought that there would be some wear and tear associated with crossing the channel? 😊 I've got a couple of hours down in Bournemouth tomorrow and the weather is showing sunny and 10-9 degrees and I know that you've frequented this site before so I was wondering - what are the chances of a few Cloudies down there?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 06-Oct-18 12:04 PM GMT

Good set of Clouded Yellow images, Dave. I don't think there's much wrong with the female in flight either....there's no way I could improve on that!

Some interesting ladybirds too. A couple of those I've never seen before.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 06-Oct-18 01:15 PM GMT

Some great shots lately Dave, love the Clouded Yellow in flight 🍷 I'm glad your still seeing plenty of ButterfliesGoldie 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-18 05:17 PM GMT

Thank you all for your appreciative comments and observations. That has to be one of my best Clouded Yellow days since the amazing year of 2009 and the field near Birling Gap. 😊

The upperside shot was largely luck and there are dozens of others in the recycle bin... 😊 I'm pretty sure those females at least were locally grown, as Denbies is a good 30 miles inland and they were very fresh indeed. The timing is also right for them to be the offspring of some early August wanderers, which is when I believe there were a number of inland CY sightings (I saw one myself at Noar Hill on 3rd August).

Southbourne must be worth a look tomorrow, Wurzel. The slopes behind the "Bistro on the Beach" have been reliable in the past, and all along to Boscombe. I've not wandered the other way to Hengistbury Head, but it might be worth a look. In fact the forecast looks good all week now, so I might try there myself if I can resist the temptation of the Sussex sites again.

Talking of which... But I'll have to insert a day first. 😊

Thursday 4th October was a bit hit and miss weather-wise, but I had a small wander out locally. I saw a definite (but very ragged) Green-veined White for the first time in a while, and several Small Whites, including quite a new one.



The Small Copper chronicled before had clearly beaten off his rival and remained cock of the rock (though it was a different rock today).





Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-18 08:51 PM GMT

Friday 5th October. The forecast was confident that there would be constant warm sunshine today, especially on the south coast. I headed out through fog and low cloud and gradually the sun burst through so that when I reached Mill Hill the final scraps of mist were receding northwards and the temperature had jumped from 12 to 17 degrees in less than 20 minutes. Once again, it felt like summer was back. I spent about four hours wandering the slopes and this time only came across one other enthusiast; Ben, who has recently joined UKB.

There was still lots to see: I counted 15 species altogether (LW, SW, CY, Brimstone, CB, AB, BA, SC, SpW, Wall, MB, SH, PL, RA, Peacock). In fact, I shall divide the day up a bit, or it will be a very long post. 😊

The nymphalids on the hemp agrimony still provided the most spectacular sight – the highest count at any one moment was three Painted Ladies, Two Red Admirals and two Peacocks. One of the Painted Ladies was very large, dwarfing the others, but also very mobile and wary, unlike the others. One Red Admiral appeared to have been disturbed mid-emergence, but could still fly pretty well.





Part two coming up.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-18 09:11 PM GMT

Mill Hill, **5th October**, part two. Though there were at least half a dozen Clouded Yellows across the site, they managed to remain at arms length, with the bright sunshine keeping them moving – never mind, my afternoon at Denbies was unlikely to be bettered. 😊 Common Blues were everywhere, though initially I thought there weren't many. However, I discovered that there were surprising numbers of females in the more sheltered patches along hedgelines, often well-burrowed into the grass and inconspicuous – they they popped out from time to time to nectar.



Here too were a couple of Small Coppers...



However, there was one more species that deserves its own post. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 06-Oct-18 09:36 PM GMT

Mill Hill, 5th October, part three.

On the way down from the car park early on, I spotted a couple of Walls and managed a bit of an opportunist shot of a female somewhat below me on the hillside.



My surprise must have been contagious as the female took to the air with the male in tow and luckily landed in a better position (though edge-on to the sun of course). She seemed a great deal larger than he was, almost engulfing him, which is why I hadn't initially worked out that they were indeed a pair.



Not long afterwards I encountered another female, looking very fresh indeed. She was flitting between ragwort flowers and allowed a few reasonable shots before moving on.



Finally, one posed in a very autumnal setting, its colours fitting the scene perfectly.



Another brilliant day. Standing in the sunshine at the top of Mill Hill, with Walls and Clouded Yellows floating by, it was hard to believe that the following day would be cold and wet... but it was! However, the week ahead promises to be much better. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 06-Oct-18 09:42 PM GMT

And it was only a day or two ago you were telling me you had yet to find a mating pair of Walls. I reckon you'd have to be very unlucky not to find a mating pair this year though!

Re: millerd

by Benjamin, 07-Oct-18 12:54 PM GMT

Great post and diary in general Dave.

Was great to bump into you again. Mill Hill is certainly a wonderful place to be in the autumn sunshine – so much to enjoy there.

Re: millerd

by trevor, 07-Oct-18 05:06 PM GMT

Great images of that female Wall, Dave, and the mating pair !.
I think this third brood has even taken the experts aback !.
There's even a tiny (from what I can see) population here in Wilts.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Oct-18 05:37 PM GMT

A brilliant selection of Walls Dave 😊, the stunted wing Red Admiral throws an interesting shape, a bit like a H.sara 😊 and the Painted Lady is a gorgeous looking specimen 😊👍
Cheers for the Southbourne tip, it worked a treat as after walking quite a way I finally got what I went for in the car park behind the 'Bistro on The Beach' 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 07-Oct-18 06:37 PM GMT

Tremendous selection of Wall Browns, Dave. How do their numbers this year compare with past years?

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Oct-18 09:22 PM GMT

You're probably right, Buggy – with so many females around at the moment, sooner or later a male is going to take advantage. 😊

Cheers, Ben – Mill Hill is a great place at any point in the butterfly season. 😊 You are lucky to have moved so close. 🍷

Thanks, Trevor – yes, it does seem an unusually abundant third brood from what Neil has been saying. Do you know if they are out over more of Wiltshire?

This probably answers your question too, David! 😊 There's more in Neil Hulme's diary on this.

The much-featured female Wall was a lovely creature with a wonderful golden colour, Wurzel, and the Painted Lady was one I had to keep coming back to. It would have allowed photos all day. 😊 I'm glad Southbourne was a success – it obviously continues to be reliable. 😊

Saturday 6th October was a winter's day parachuted in to follow Friday's summer and make you wonder whether it actually happened. Wind, rain and temperatures no higher than 12 (and that was probably first thing in the morning – it got colder). Needless to say, no butterflies were seen.

Sunday 7th October was much better, with sunshine, a gentle breeze and respectable temperatures. I went out locally to see what might have survived Saturday. Three new-looking Red Admirals were seen, but only one was nectaring and all when disturbed flew off towards the sun.



There was also a newish female that was too active for me to follow. I wondered if the usual Small Copper would still be around – I didn't have to wait long as it soon appeared in fierce pursuit of a Common Blue. It does look a bit worn these days! 😊



Not too far away, but far enough for there to be no interaction, I discovered another Copper...



...and not long after that, a third. This last one was really a shadow of its former self, but still flew energetically around between perches.



Only four species: things are very much winding down... unless you are a Small Copper that is. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Oct-18 11:01 PM GMT

Is this a sign that the season is starting to draw to a close Dave, only 4 species in a day 🤔 Mind you some of those could be round for a while as they're still in good nick, those Admirals in a particular 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 08-Oct-18 07:36 PM GMT

A great selection from Mill Hill Dave, really jealous of those Wall Browns 🍷 😊

Looks like you had a much better Sunday than we did up here, it was better than Saturday (could hardly have been worse) but persistent high cloud took the edge off the sun and it struggled to top 12 degrees.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by David M, 09-Oct-18 11:52 PM GMT

millerd wrote:

...Only four species: things are very much winding down... unless you are a Small Copper that is.

It's that time of year I think, Dave, when things start catching up....mind you, with temperatures of 23c forecast tomorrow, there may be a distinctly late summer feel to proceedings, rather than a mid-autumn one. 😊

Hope you get the chance to enjoy the balmy conditions.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 10-Oct-18 10:55 PM GMT

The Red Admirals are the only properly fresh species left round here, Wurzel, though one or two of the Common Blues are fairly new. The trouble is, I think they are not hanging around long! 😊

Cheers, Neil – it would be great if the Walls took this summer and autumn as an opportunity to spread out a bit again! Sussex seems to have plenty at present. 😊

I did get out today, David, and it didn't feel like autumn at all down on the south coast again.

Tuesday 9th October. A none too shabby day at all weatherwise, with sunshine and temperatures nudging 20 degrees. I spent the morning locally, and managed to see at least seven Red Admirals scattered around the site. A few were nectaring on the ivy, but never for very long, and all ended up disappearing towards the sun in energetic flight.





Add to that a Comma, a Speckled Wood and three Small Whites, and I reached six species today.

For the afternoon, I had another look at Denbies. Things really are winding down here now as in a there-and-back traverse of the slope I managed only six Small Heaths, two Meadow Browns, two Common Blue females and a single Clouded Yellow. Photos were very much at a premium too, as the Clouded Yellow (a male) was not playing ball at all.



Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Oct-18 06:08 PM GMT

Wednesday 10th October: With a weather forecast that was encouraging to say the the least, there had to be one more visit to Mill Hill. I arrived around 1100, and there was a bit of a breeze at the top of the hill, but it was a warm one and the sun was amazingly strong for the time of year. By dint of heading for the sheltered lower slopes, I managed to miss Trevor, and for the next couple of hours somehow continued to do so. I did however bump into Ben again as he hunted for Wall eggs along the bottom of the hillside.

I think I may need to split this post again... 😊

Since my last visit five days earlier, not a great deal had changed, and clearly the day of rain, wind and cold last Saturday had made no difference whatever. Clouded Yellows were patrolling everywhere I went, and curiously as I think Bugboy mentioned, I didn't notice any definite females amongst them. As ever, they were almost impossible to approach.



at the moment of takeoff...
The lower slopes still had plenty of Common Blues, Small Heaths and Meadow Browns.







There was even a Small Copper.



Part two to follow shortly...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Oct-18 07:01 PM GMT

10th October

Mill Hill: Part two

A visit to Mill Hill wouldn't be complete at the moment without a few Walls. The warmth and sunshine today was summery enough to energise them rather more than last week, and for the males there was less nectaring and more sitting on bare patches with wings nearly shut. The females were busy egg-laying, and difficult to track down as they often get right into the foliage. So – not so many shots today, though the butterflies were to be found

everywhere, and still in reasonable numbers.



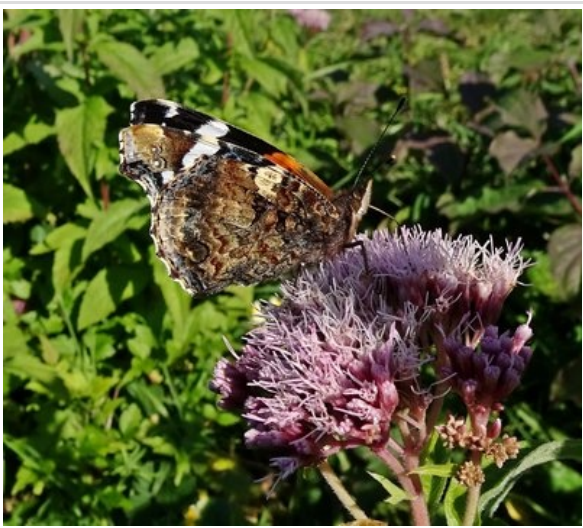


The renowned patch of hemp agrimony was a bit windswept today, though the breeze died down a bit during the course of the day. I saw no Peacocks here, nor Painted Ladies (though Ben had seen one of the latter earlier on), but there were an assortment of Red Admirals, including one much smaller and more worn than the others. Maybe it had come a long way.





a more diminutive specimen



I did see a Brimstone fly by, and something that could well have been a Peacock, but there was no sign of the Comma of which Trevor got some good shots.

However, on my last pass by the agrimony patch, there was a newcomer. But I'll leave that for part three.

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Oct-18 07:11 PM GMT

10th October

Mill Hill: part three

My last look around up by the car park, an area which had been productive of Walls last time, had very little. However, a silvery flash caught my eye: a very new male Brown Argus. I had seen a somewhat worn female down at the bottom, but this one still had some of the sheen that new individuals display. Clearly a third brood butterfly.





So, one last look at the agrimony, where shadow was starting to encroach. I spotted something different – I thought it was a Wall to start with, but it was just too bright. A Small Tortoiseshell, a real rarity this autumn and a delight to see.



My final encounter of the day was a Red Admiral nicely posed in autumn sunlit foliage.



Another splendid day (well into double figures for species), and this time likely to be the last full day this year. Though Saturday looks to be very warm again, and fairly sunny, it looks to be also very windy, so with some rather wild weather in between, I suspect it won't be the same.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Oct-18 08:38 PM GMT

That Brown Argus is practically mint Dave 🤩 😊 🍀 Double figures in October is not to be sneezed at 🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Oct-18 09:57 PM GMT

I probably should have listed them...

Brimstone
Clouded Yellow
Small White
Common Blue
Brown Argus
Small Copper
Speckled Wood
Wall
Small Heath
Meadow Brown

Red Admiral
Small Tortoiseshell
Peacock (probably! 😊)
Comma (seen by Trevor)
Painted Lady (seen by Ben)
Fourteen, most likely fifteen, species on 10th October. Pretty good. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Oct-18 06:43 AM GMT

A great haul, Dave. Would love to have seen that Small Tort. !.
And that Brown Argus is brand new. 🍷 It seems I should have stayed longer.

Lets hope the frost keeps away for a while.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Oct-18 11:09 PM GMT

It was a lovely finish to the day to find that Brown Argus, Wurzel, and a terrific day altogether. 😊

The Tortoiseshell was a most welcome sight too Trevor. 😊 No frost in the forecast yet, but it will be cooler – probably down to normal for the time of year! 😊

Saturday 13th October: My first chance to go out anywhere since Wednesday. It has been extremely windy as well as continuing to be very warm – last night the temperature didn't dip below 19 degrees here, which would be unusual in July...

The day started with a shower, and quite a lot of cloud, but by lunchtime the sun was out and it was very warm indeed – but still windy. 😊 I set off along my usual local walk and quickly saw a couple of Small Whites. In a more sheltered bit of path near the lake, I found a Comma basking on the ground. Every time it flew up to the brambles to sunbathe, the wind dislodged it, so it gave up and stayed earthbound. It was a beautiful new deep orange.



Next was another Small White, lodged by the wind in a curious nook. Its wings were a bit askew I think, but it soon upped and flew off with the wind.



Soon after this, I caught sight of a Peacock on the ground nearby, but it took to the air almost immediately. This sighting was followed by my spotting a Small Tortoiseshell on some late-flowering thistles, but it too was lively in the sunshine and flew off downwind. A final Small White and another Comma nearer home completed the tally.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 14-Oct-18 09:41 AM GMT

That is a lovely Brown Argus from Mill Hill Dave and an amazing tally for the time of year 🍷 😊

Glad to see you are still seeing butterflies around your local patch. No chance here yesterday, we copped the edge of storm Callum and although we missed the deluge that came down further west, we still had some heavy rain through the morning and high winds all day.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Oct-18 06:31 PM GMT

Seems that you had a better forecast than me Dave – mine told me that today (which was terrible) was going to be the better day and Saturday was going to be dire – hence I made plans accordingly and voila they messed it up again! 😞 😞 Glad to see that you were able to take advantage of the sunny spell 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 15-Oct-18 07:21 PM GMT

Cracking stuff, Dave. You truly are blessed in your neck of the woods.....especially from a Brown Argus perspective!

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Oct-18 11:02 PM GMT

Cheers, everyone – the season continues I'm glad to say, despite one day of solid rain, and one day of grey dampness.

Tuesday 16th October started sunny, and the warm sunshine persisted until just after lunch, when the cloud returned. I headed out locally again, and things seemed more as they should be in mid-October, with three Red Admirals spotted in quick succession – though none of them settled for more than brief moments. Commas were more cooperative, with three individuals counted and some reasonable images to be had.





I wandered into the Small Copper area, and amazingly was soon in the company of the same individual first seen a day short of four weeks ago. This is his territory – between the clumps of vegetation are the bare patches with pebbles he favours.



He is looking a bit ragged now, but his energy is undiminished.





I saw but one Small White today, in roughly the same area, but it was a very new male. The underside shot clearly shows the extra apical vein that distinguishes this species from its Southern cousin.



Finally, there was the one that got away. I stumbled (almost literally) upon a brand new male Holly Blue taking minerals from a patch of damp soil, but it was disturbed and flew up and away with a flash of perfect azure wings. There may of course be a few more around, but my prolific local colony has likely taken a hit with the loss of several ivy-covered ash trees.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Oct-18 11:48 PM GMT

Lovely Commas Dave and hat is a very fresh Small White 🍀 - is that the last throw of the dice for this species in 2018 or could there be a few more should the weather pick up I wonder? 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 16-Oct-18 11:50 PM GMT

Nice to see that you're still finding lots of butterflies, Dave 😊 That Small White looks very new, as was the Brown Argus at Mill Hill in your previous post 😊 Lets hope that the weather behaves itself for a bit longer!

Mike

Re: millerd

by David M, 18-Oct-18 09:36 AM GMT

These fresh looking butterflies could extend the season well into November for you, Dave. Assuming there is no cold weather forecast you might rack up 7 or 8 species around Bonfire Night, which would be quite phenomenal.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 18-Oct-18 11:12 PM GMT

That would be exceptional, David. Two or three species locally in November is usually the limit. 😊

Looks like some decent weather coming up, Mike. 😊 Things should hang around a bit longer, hopefully.

Who knows, Wurzel? Today was pretty good... 😊

Thursday 18th October: A mostly sunny day after a disappointing damp and grey one yesterday. Fairly warm too, but I went out locally without any great expectations. However, on a mass of ivy that has been notably bereft of anything lately, I was greeted by no less than five Red Admirals and two Commas. Most of the Admirals looked quite fresh and may well be local hatchlings, and today they were nectaring calmly rather than charging of southwards.











During the rest of the walk I saw another four in different spots, and the total of nine is the highest for a while – though at this time last year I was regularly seeing 15 to 20. A single Small White also made an appearance.

I obviously also had to look in at the Small Copper spot, and walking through a different (but similar) area, I spotted another ancient stalwart dashing around.



However, the Copper first encountered on 19th September was still there monitoring his usual territory.





I have to say that he was looking a bit frail today, and at one point when walking he slipped off his leaf. I suspect, sadly, that his time will soon be up, after at least 29 days and surviving a wide variety of weather. What a resilient little creature! 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 18-Oct-18 11:25 PM GMT

Lovely shots of the Admirals and Commas Dave 😊👍 That Copper has certainly been through the wars Dave I wish him well 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 19-Oct-18 06:42 PM GMT

Superb looking Commas and Red Admirals, Dave 😊 and an ab.*bialbata* in there too!

Mike

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Oct-18 07:01 PM GMT

Lovely vibrant Red Admirals, Dave.
It's great to see them in good numbers at last.

Hope you'll have a trip to the seaside soon.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Oct-18 08:56 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel - I'm afraid I wasn't able to pass on your best wishes today, but you never know, he may be around next week. 😊

Thank you, Mike - I hadn't spotted that *bialbata*... 😊 I seem to remember from last year that they pop up fairly regularly, but it was the only one I definitely saw yesterday.

Thanks, Trevor - they were a good-looking lot of Admirals, and a welcome sight considering how few have been around in this neck of the woods this year. And now for a trip to the seaside, as you predicted! 😊

Friday 19th October: An inauspicious start, with an early trip to the dentist and only 4 degrees first thing as well. However, with all that out the way, I drove down to Southwick again, following Trevor's and Bugboy's reports from Wednesday. It was much warmer when I arrived, and a bit of high cloud was occasionally obscuring the sun - very useful. To start off, here are some more views of the site, without the careful cropping to conceal the industrial bits!



Westwards: the power station



At the top of the slope, looking towards Brighton. Clouded Yellows were flying along up here too: one crossed the road (out of shot to the left) and headed north.



To the left the slope is covered with a mass of flowering honeysuckle. I saw my first Clouded Yellow at the top of the steps, and then found a fellow enthusiast (from Peacehaven) engrossed with another which had grounded during a cloudy interval and not yet moved: it was a nice fresh female.



There followed an assortment of others, both male and female, either nectaring in the sunshine or perched when the sun was in. By the time I left at 2, the cloud had disappeared and the butterflies had become very active and unapproachable.







A few fresh-looking Small Whites were also around, even harder to get close to than the Cloudies. There were also several Red Admirals, none of which settled for more than a moment or two, usually on the path where they appeared to be taking moisture.



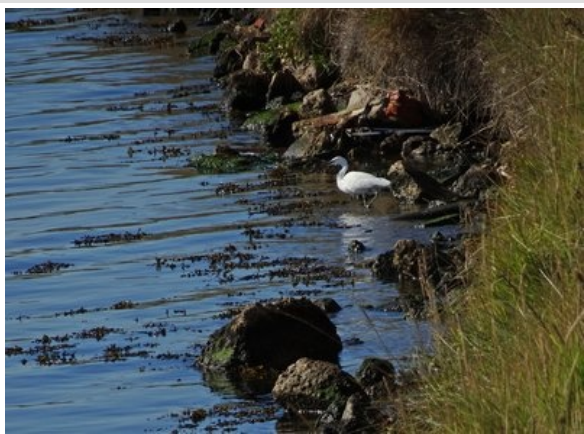
I watched a number of them take off from this position and head across the harbour towards the sun and the open sea.

Last but by no means least were a few Common Blues. One was a bit tired...





Today's non-butterfly is this Little Egret, probably the one Bugboy spotted on Wednesday.



Another great day out on the Sussex coast. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Benjamin, 19-Oct-18 10:38 PM GMT

Some lovely shots recently Dave – that female Clouded Yellow will have me heading down there when next I get a chance. I've had my face buried in horseshoe vetch on mill hill for far too long in recent days, and I still can't decide if i'm looking at Adonis or Common Blue hatchlings and that despite having a good look at the egg prior to hatching in several cases – hmmm – a change of scene will do me good!

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 19-Oct-18 10:48 PM GMT

A great selection of Cloudies Dave 😊🇬🇧 That certainly looks like a juxtaposition of a site – "on your left we have cracking butterfly filled grass banks, on your right we have a view of an industrial estate" 🤔😬
You'll have to call the Small Copper Sid 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 19-Oct-18 10:58 PM GMT

It would seem that more Cloudies have emerged at Southwick since Wednesday.
For a start we didn't see any females, and your males are different specimens to mine.
Another visit beckons !.

Great report and images,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 19-Oct-18 11:18 PM GMT

Uh oh, I can see myself parting company another few quid in train fares..... 😬

Re: millerd

by David M, 20-Oct-18 09:17 PM GMT

Fresh Clouded Yellows in late October! Wonderful, Dave! Industrial elements aside, that looks to be a decent hotspot for butterflies.

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 23-Oct-18 10:01 AM GMT

Beautiful Commas and Red Admirals from your local patch Dave. Some great shots of the Cloudies as well. 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Oct-18 07:52 PM GMT

Cheers, all. I was glad to get down to Southwick last Friday, as I was travelling up to Yorkshire on Saturday, and missed the two weekend days of good weather down south.

Sunday 21st October was actually pretty warm up north too, though the sunshine was limited where I was. However, two Red Admirals graced the ivy in my sister's garden in Wilberfoss.



We saw some folk coming out of the woods laden with baskets and bags of other assorted fungi, which I assume were of more edible varieties. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Oct-18 08:25 PM GMT

21st October (continued): On the way back from Allerthorpe, we stopped at Calley Heath, and were met by no less than three Small Coppers immediately inside the gate. A leisurely wander around the rest of the site discovered another four. Amongst the seven were a couple of quite fresh and very bright females, but most were worn to a greater or lesser degree.



One of the newer females was a nice blue badger, but had unfortunately lost a bit of one hindwing.



The other was interesting as it lacked a spot from each forewing, making it look particularly orange.





Good to see a strong third brood of Coppers up here as well as down south.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-18 08:54 PM GMT

I reckoned that the Blue Badger seemed to show reduced fore wing markings Dave and then I saw the final one – really makes the orange fore wings stand out even more 😊👍

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 24-Oct-18 09:57 PM GMT

Those two were very orange indeed, Wurzel, even without direct sunshine on them. 😊 It was good to see some less worn individuals too, as all those down here are on their last legs now.

Wednesday 24th October. I wasn't free till late morning, which precluded another trip down to the south coast today. However, it turned into yet another warm sunny day so I had another look at my local patch instead – which wasn't such a bad idea as it turned out.

Five or six Red Admirals were enjoying various clumps of ivy, looking in some cases to be newly hatched.



For me, the highpoint came while watching one ivy-festooned fence. I saw a flash of silvery blue, which resolved itself into a very active male Holly Blue: it eventually paused for a second or two near enough for a photo.



A fly-by Small White completed the outing: sixteen butterflies of six species altogether.

Dave

Re: millerd

by ernie f, 24-Oct-18 10:05 PM GMT

Oh, wow. You are doing well aren't you? Clouded Yellows, Holly and Common Blues, Small Coppers, Red Ads, etc, etc. Is it really the last week of October?

And what about that fresh-looking Brown Argus!?!?

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 24-Oct-18 11:40 PM GMT

That is a cracking set of butterflies Dave – how unseasonal is that Holly Blue? 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 25-Oct-18 05:48 PM GMT

Cheers, Ernie – not a bad selection for the time of year, really... 😊

Thanks, Wurzel. Well, the last Holly Blue here in 2017 was on 16th November, so it's early days yet. 😊😊

Thursday 25th October: For various reasons I decided to stay local again today. The sun was out and though noticeably cooler, it wasn't really cold. I was rewarded with another sixteen butterflies, but there were eight species rather than six, which was an unexpected bonus.

I only found four Red Admirals today, and they were playing hard to get high up on the ivy.





Eight species, more than I've ever seen around here as late as this, and surprisingly not a Comma amongst them. It will be interesting to see how all these butterflies cope with the much colder weather ahead.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 25-Oct-18 07:08 PM GMT

I've seen several fresh Common Blues recently, But no Brown Argus at all. Great find and great shots. If some of what we are seeing at the moment can find suitable shelter, we may see some of them again when the cold snap ends in the middle of next week.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 27-Oct-18 12:02 AM GMT

Thanks, Trevor - I have a feeling that yesterday was probably the last day this year I'll see such variety round here... 😊 Still, it has been really good while it's lasted. 😊

Friday 26th October: Another local walk in much cooler and windier conditions, but with a bit of sunshine around lunchtime. I saw only six butterflies today - three Red Admirals, two Common Blues and the same Speckled Wood I saw yesterday. The ragged Small Coppers had disappeared, and to be honest I can't see those two Blues lasting much longer. They looked distinctly unhappy today.





Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 27-Oct-18 03:12 PM GMT

Great set of images from the last couple of posts Dave – you did your usual trick and crammed in a two or three while I had a night or two 'off' 🤔🤔🤔
The Small Tort was a great find as they've been a bit thin on the ground this year 😊 but the star butterfly had to be the Brown Argus – with a little touch of snelleri? 🤔🇩🇪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 27-Oct-18 07:21 PM GMT

[quote] Eight species, more than I've ever seen around here as late as this, and surprisingly not a Comma amongst them. It will be interesting to see how all these butterflies cope with the much colder weather ahead.

That really IS quite notable, Dave, and even more so for the fact that it could have been more. Autumns really ARE becoming milder in the UK, and these figures are evidence of it.

PS - that earlier fungus is one of the finest I've ever seen.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 29-Oct-18 11:52 PM GMT

Cheers, David. That really was a textbook (or should that be fairytale) example of a Fly Agaric. 😊

Thanks, Wurzel - I was very pleased to see both those species, and a fresh male and female Brown Argus on such a late date is most unusual. You're right - just a hint of white around the dark spots on the forewing.

Monday 29th October: There was me thinking things were over round here. Certainly the last couple of days reinforced that opinion, with low temperatures, wind, and even rain yesterday morning. Scraping ice off the windscreen again first thing today didn't bode well either. However, the sun shone and the wind wasn't too strong, so I set off around my local patch - though more in hope than expectation, truth be told.

I soon spotted a Red Admiral on the usual ivy, which doesn't really count as a surprise. It was a beautiful new individual, a recent local emergence I would say.





I need to study the photos to establish the continuity, but there is a possibility that this Small Copper could be the one first seen on 19th September. It has certainly been around in this spot for a while. As I reluctantly left the Copper and the Blue sparring away, I came across a male Small White bowling along in the wind.



Finally, nearly back home again, I disturbed another Red Admiral from some south-facing new nettle growth – a bit of a search didn't come up with any eggs, but I shall look again at this spot which does appear favourable.

Only five butterflies, but four different species. This is by some way the latest date I have seen Common Blues and Small Coppers on my local patch, and equals the latest date for a Small White (in 2017 oddly enough). The Brown Argus I saw on 25th was also a record latest showing.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 30-Oct-18 08:52 AM GMT

Incredibly, that Red Admiral is very fresh. It won't have long to feed up before hibernation or departure South. A great find.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 30-Oct-18 12:32 PM GMT

Catching up on some posts, I was surprised your still seeing Butteries Dave 😊 that will make your season longer. Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Oct-18 05:24 PM GMT

A fantastically velvety Red Admiral Dave 😊🍄 Mind you the other species definitely look how I feel at the moment 😊😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Oct-18 08:16 PM GMT

Thank you everyone – most of the Red Admirals I've been seeing have appeared very fresh. I think they are still hatching, offspring of the ones I was seeing in late August and September I suppose.

Wednesday 31st October. A sparkling ground frost this morning, with the air temperature pretty close to freezing as well. However, the breeze that soon got up had some warmth in it, and when I went out to the local shop (not just for local people... 😊) at 1100, it felt quite pleasant. From here, I accessed my normal walk by a different path, and a different patch of sheltered ivy. I soon spotted a Red Admiral flying around the top, and then another butterfly, which settled high up as well. I was very surprised to find that it was a Painted Lady, looking from where I was to be quite a new individual. This was only the fourth one I'd seen here all year, and I didn't expect to see one so late on, and especially after the recent cold nights in particular. I'm sure I read somewhere that they couldn't cope in any life stage with temperatures below 4 degrees. The downside was the lack of a decent photo opportunity: I managed a couple of record shots before the butterfly took off and soared away in characteristically powerful flight.



On the way to the Copper patch, I passed a Speckled Wood heading purposefully the other way, but on arrival there was a battered Small Copper still flying quite strongly around. Though clearly immune to whatever the elements could throw at it, it had no Common Blues to chase today.



So, five different species today and a total of ten since 24th. That has to be a first round here for the last week of October. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 31-Oct-18 08:25 PM GMT

It was decidedly warm today wasn't it, I found myself having to shed a few layers in my wanderings this afternoon. The weekend isn't looking to shabby at the moment either, perhaps some November butterflies 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 31-Oct-18 11:08 PM GMT

Your typo had me befuddled there for a mo, I thought that I was only just behind you Dave 🙄😅 The Painted Lady is certainly a surprise this late in the day Dave 🍀 Fingers crossed for a few November sightings 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 31-Oct-18 11:44 PM GMT

Thanks, Wurzel - date now corrected. 😊 The butterflies are certainly confused, so it appears to be catching... 😊 Here's hoping for some November butterflies - the weekend ahead looks relatively balmy.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 01-Nov-18 10:10 AM GMT

I'm afraid you will have waited in vain for a report ' from Sussex '.
I have been nursing, what is for me, a rare, nasty cold.
However, I'm off to Wiltshire tomorrow, so if the weather is suitable
I will stop off at Southwick, and hopefully some November Butterflies.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Nov-18 08:05 AM GMT

millerd wrote:

So, five different species today and a total of ten since 24th. That has to be a first round here for the last week of October.

That's quite remarkable, Dave. So long as we don't get a cold blast, I wouldn't rule out half a dozen or more during the early part of November!

This time of year really IS becoming milder.

Re: millerd

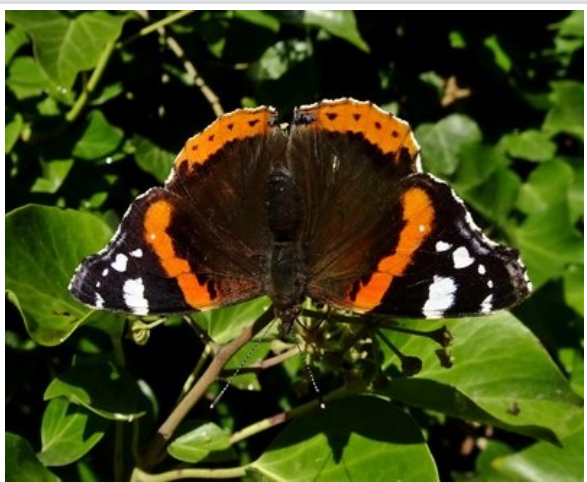
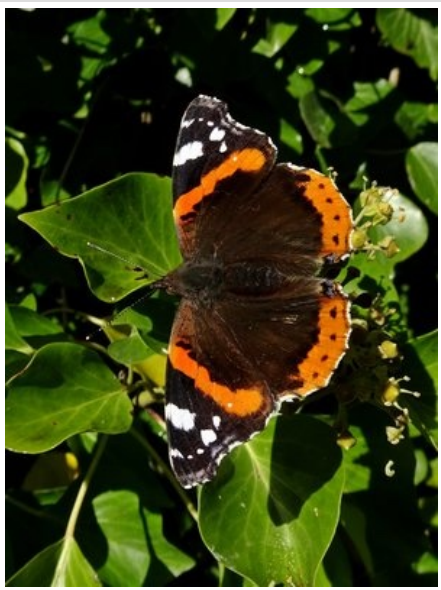
by millerd, 02-Nov-18 09:29 PM GMT

It has been a good run at the end of October, so after a grey and dismal start to November you might think it would all be over. Not quite...

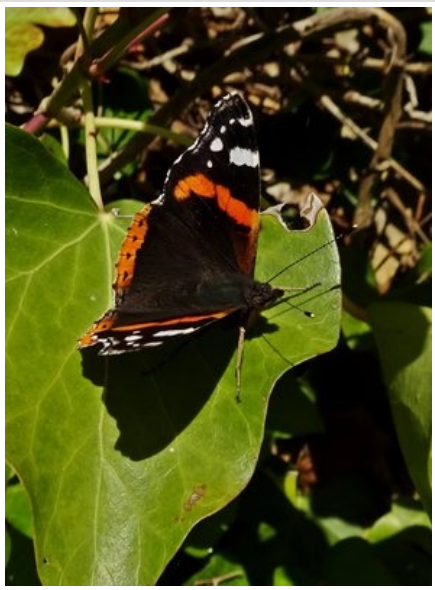
Friday 2nd November: Another frosty start to the day, but lots of sunshine to bring the temperatures up to 11 or 12 degrees by lunchtime. Not much wind either. The local hotspots round here were all ivy patches today, with the Copper territory now apparently empty. 😞

Altogether, I counted seven Red Admirals and a Comma, plus a rather worn Holly Blue which I disturbed whilst moving closer to a Red Admiral and lost track of. Remarkably, this is an almost identical count to that achieved on 1st November 2017 (7 Red Admirals, 2 Commas and a Holly Blue a year ago). It's interesting that after an entirely different sort of year for the species, the numbers of Red Admirals at the start of November should be the same.









Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 03-Nov-18 06:17 PM GMT

Saturday 3rd November: Reasonably sunny and warm, but spoiled by a strong wind. I managed to see a single Red Admiral, but it was very mobile and up against the breeze.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 04-Nov-18 09:33 AM GMT

Cracking set of shots Dave 📸👍 – I really like the 'imperious looking down on you lower mortals' pose that Red Admirals manage to throw 😄😄 Only a fly-by butterfly for me in the last couple of days 😊 Fingers crossed for the Social – I might set off a day or two before 🙄🙄

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 07-Nov-18 10:07 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – Red Admirals definitely live up to one of their names and have an aristocratic attitude sometimes. I've been very happy to see a few more around at the end of what hasn't been a terribly good season for them around here.

I've just returned from another break in Holmfirth – no adult butterflies to report, but in the unlikely setting of the middle of the town, someone has planted a row of cabbages of some sort. They looked distinctly chewed, so I had a closer look and discovered that they were covered in Small White caterpillars of various ages. There has definitely been a frost up here (as the the nearby soggy nasturtiums could attest to), but somehow the cabbages must have afforded enough shelter for the caterpillars. With relatively benign weather for another week or two, these little chaps stand a good chance of pupating.



A very autumnal view over the town.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 07-Nov-18 10:59 PM GMT

Interesting to see the two instars together like that Dave 😊 Where the Cabbages in a front garden or on public land instead of a floral display? If the later is it some 'Guerilla gardening'? I knew a University lecturer that used to go round Swindon and Bath and plant potatoes etc in the Town Planters 🤔

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 08-Nov-18 03:32 PM GMT

The cabbages were in a planter on top of a low wall next to a main road, Wurzel. There was a sort of open courtyard next to a shop, and there were a few other vegetables – some carrots I think – but mostly brassicas. There were nasturtiums as well, but these had been turned by frost into sludge. I think, like you suggest, it was instead of a floral display and intended to provide something edible for a change. Certainly the local Small Whites had taken advantage, and there were maybe as many as fifty caterpillars across all the plants. I'd have taken more photos, but I was causing a minor obstruction on the pavement... 😊😊 They came as a bit of a surprise, as firstly as it was November, secondly this was up in Yorkshire rather than the balmy south coast, and finally there had clearly been a recent frost.

Thursday 8th November: Back home, so with bright sunshine and 14 degrees today, I set off around my local patch. The strong wind put a bit of a dampener on things, but a Red Admiral appeared around each of the first two ivy patches I visited.



I now need to check a few more nearby nettle patches! 😊

For the time being, the season continues...

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 08-Nov-18 04:14 PM GMT

You are still finding them, Dave. Your fresh looking Red Admiral ab. bialbata is a great find. We must now be down to the final few days of 2018 sightings, but in these strange times, who knows ?.

I hope to get out again, weather permitting!.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 09-Nov-18 07:32 PM GMT

Amazing to see that you are still finding butterflies into November Dave 🍷😊, it's more like winter than autumn here now.

Cheers,

Neil.

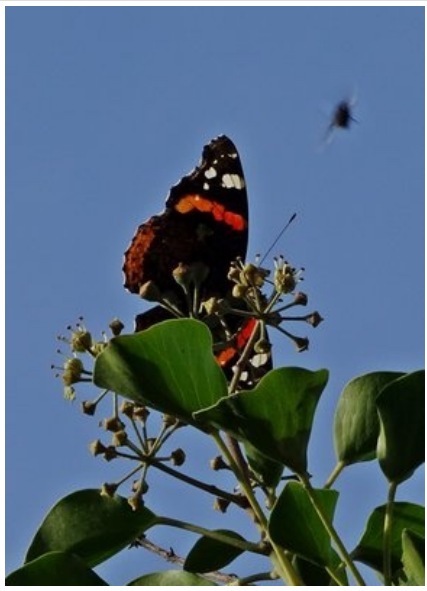
Re: millerd

by millerd, 09-Nov-18 10:49 PM GMT

Two of the ones I saw yesterday were *bialbata*, Trevor, and there is even a hint of a white spot on the egg-laying female too. They usually turn up here about one time in three or four. I hope you get to see something down there too – wind and rain are the problem at the moment, rather than cold. 😞

Cheers, Neil – still definitely autumn here as the leaves are only now falling in numbers and the sun is still warm for the few hours it gets to shine. 😊

An hour or two of sunshine straddling midday enticed me out again today (**Friday 9th November**). The wind was indeed an issue, but I still found one Red Admiral on one of the ivy patches.



The weather ahead looks to remain pretty warm for week or so, perhaps with some more sunshine too: worth a few more walks to see what survives. 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 10-Nov-18 09:26 PM GMT

Alright for some Dave 🍷, whilst it looks to be warm we've got plenty of wet over this way 😊 Lovely set of Red Admirals especially the first one from the previous post – real velvety looking lady that one 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 11-Nov-18 04:10 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel – it was certainly wet here yesterday afternoon and evening, after a lovely sunny morning too. Thunder, lightning and torrential rain. I didn't see a butterfly, despite the early sun, and after such a storm I didn't expect to see much today (**Sunday 11th November**) either. However, it was sunny most of the day, and during a morning excursion around my local patch another Red Admiral appeared. This wasn't any of the ones seen recently either, lacking the *bialbata* spots and clearly fresher than the egg-laying female from the 8th.



Unusually warm and sunny weather forecast in the south and east for the next few days apparently, so there could still be a few more... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 11-Nov-18 06:58 PM GMT

Fingers crossed I can get onto some Dave and if they're only half as decent looking as this one then I'd be more than happy 😊🍀

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 12-Nov-18 08:18 PM GMT

Not surprising you're still seeing butterflies, Dave. Even in Swansea we are into the teens by day and 10/11c at night. Problem here is the wind and grey skies which effectively make temperatures academic. 😞

Re: millerd

by millerd, 13-Nov-18 04:32 PM GMT

There has certainly been a lot of rain here, David, but generally there has been a fair bit of sunshine along with the relatively high temperatures. It's probably averaged out at a daily high of 14 degrees since the start of November. 😊 After the coming weekend, though, things look to change drastically... 😞

Good luck Wurzel - there must be some around down your way too. 😊

Monday 12th November was sunny, quite warm, but a bit breezy after some overnight rain. I drew a blank today on the butterfly front.

Tuesday 13th November looked superficially similar, but the wind had calmed a bit. I extended my usual local walk a little, and came across two Commas, the first on some ivy...



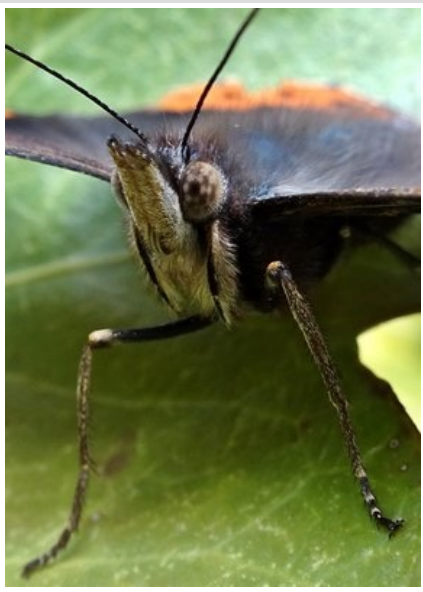
...and the second squeezing some nectar out of the ox-eye daisies nearing the end of their second flowering.



As soon as I started wondering where the Red Admirals had got to, one appeared – a distinctly worn and faded individual making the most of the sunshine.



Passing another ivy patch for the second time, I found another somewhat fresher Red Admiral, which settled down to pose nicely. Not only was this a *bialbata*, but the red bands on the forewings were divided into two: ab. *fructa*.



The close-up clearly shows the reduced first pair of legs that Nymphalids have - very hairy and earning them the epithet "brush-footed".

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 13-Nov-18 05:09 PM GMT

It is a job to say whether your latest finds have yet to hibernate, or have been aroused from their slumber by the warm weather. Whatever, very nice finds for near mid November.

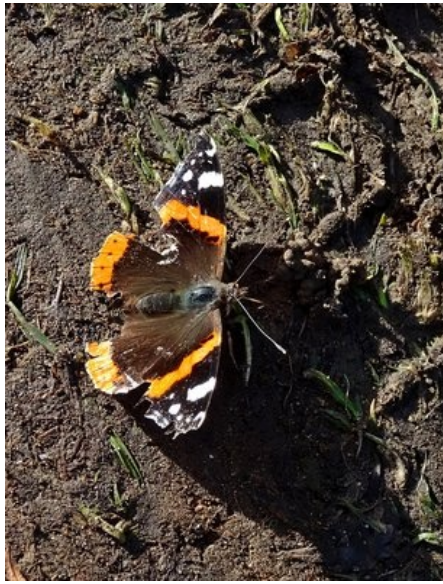
Hope to go out tomorrow,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Nov-18 04:26 PM GMT

I reckon the two Commas had been woken by the warm sunshine, Trevor, but the Red Admirals have probably been relatively active – certainly one of them looked to have led a longish life.

In fact, that worn individual appeared again today (**14th November**), as did another which I don't think I've seen before. This one had been in the wars a bit.



However, that didn't turn out to be the end of the story today...

Dave

Re: millerd

by millerd, 14-Nov-18 05:46 PM GMT

Wednesday 14th November (continued):

After seeing the two Red Admirals, I was pretty well satisfied that this was all there would be today, unless another one appeared nearer home. I turned the corner into the last bit of open ground next to the lake, and for some reason cast my eyes down to the grass. Something moved, and you can imagine my pleasure in discovering that down on the ground was a beautiful new female Holly Blue. She allowed a whole variety of shots as she flitted between perches to try and maximise the amount of sunlight falling on her wings, and also managed to find some flowering deadnettle from which to nectar. No question about opening up today – she needed as much energy as she could get, and after each bask she flew to the next perch with noticeable added vigour. Eventually, she flew higher into the trees.

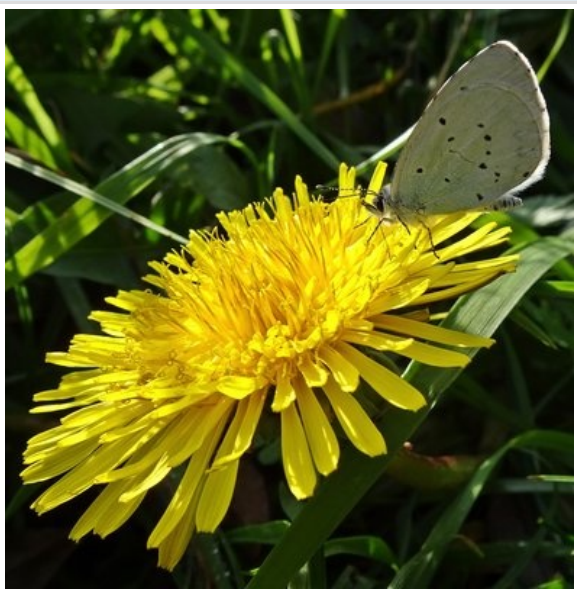






Very pleased indeed with this sighting, which matched the one I had on 16th November last year, I continued towards home. However, I hadn't gone more than ten metres or so when I disturbed something else from the grass. Amazingly, this was another new Holly Blue: a male this time. His behaviour was generally similar to that of the female, but at one point he was taking minerals from the surface of the leaf he was sitting on. He struck some splendid poses amongst the autumn leaves in the warm sunshine before he too disappeared into the same set of trees as the female had done.







Here is the area where they were seen, with a bit of local atmosphere:



An absolutely extraordinary 40 minutes watching two gloriously new butterflies.



Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 14-Nov-18 10:36 PM GMT

A couple of beauties there Dave, just a single Cloudie for me today 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 14-Nov-18 11:17 PM GMT

That find could only happen to ' Mr. Holly Blue! ', and is absolutely incredible. May I be the first in the queue with the mrgreens 🍷🍷 . A fresh male and female Holly Blue on 14th November, what's going on?.

More to the point, is this a record?.

Fabulous, Dave,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Katrina, 14-Nov-18 11:36 PM GMT

Amazing sighting! Well done for spotting them 😊

Re: millerd

by Maximus, 15-Nov-18 07:09 PM GMT

What a great find those two fresh Holly Blues were, Dave 😊 I wonder how they'll fare with the dip in temperatures forecast for next week.

Mike

Re: millerd

by millerd, 16-Nov-18 10:02 AM GMT

Thank you, everyone. Those two butterflies were a wonderful thing to find in mid-November, and I would have been happy to have such shining new and cooperative subjects at any time of year. Not a record though – I saw an equally new female Holly Blue on 16th November last year – but seeing a female and then a male in quick succession was astonishing. 😊

Since then it has been cloudy (though still quite warm) so they have had no real chance to fly. Two days of sunshine, but with cooler temperatures, are forecast, so they may get an opportunity then with luck. I shan't get the chance to check, unfortunately, and after that it all goes rapidly downhill, with even a bit of sleet in the cold easterly winds. I suspect the season may finally have come to a standstill. 😞

But what a way to end... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 16-Nov-18 07:51 PM GMT

Hi Dave, those two Holly Blues make for a most impressive sight at this time of year, beautiful examples and great photos of them. Well done 🍷🍷

Neil.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 17-Nov-18 01:18 PM GMT

Hi! Dave, you lucky thing 🍷🍷 My neighbours garden is full of yellow Blossom right up to our fence I've forgotten what the plants called ,I keep looking for Butterflies but in vain 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 17-Nov-18 03:33 PM GMT

Flipping hell Dave you really are living up to the Holly Whisperer title – now you're whispering them into existence 🍷🍷🍷 Cracking shots 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Nov-18 05:43 PM GMT

That's practically a Holly Black rather than a Holly Blue, Dave! I'm not sure I've ever seen one with such extensive dark wing margins. You must have been absolutely delighted to stumble upon her.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 20-Nov-18 11:59 AM GMT

Thank you, Neil – I'm still not sure I believe this was less than a week ago, as the cold rain (with hints of sleet) comes down. 😊

I think these were the last butterflies of the year now, Goldie – we'll all be wishing away the time till next March now. 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – I have a reputation to maintain you know! To be honest, 😊 I hadn't expected to see any more this year and certainly not one of each sex within a few metres of each other. Paradoxically, they were probably more approachable than any others I've seen all year. One of those unreal moments, 😊

I was very pleased to see both of them, David. 😊 She was indeed a particularly dark specimen.

It does make you wonder what it is that determines the degree of black scaling on the wings of the females. Spring individuals have far less black than summer ones, and all the third brooders I've seen over the years have matched the second (summer) brood. All I can think of is increasing day length in the spring and the opposite for those emerging in summer – markedly so for a butterfly hatching in November. Certainly the third brood have a much greater resemblance to the second than the first. Larger areas of black increase heat absorption from the sun, increasingly a factor as daylight hours decrease, so it makes sense. Watching the female last week, each period of basking was like charging a battery – she flew much more strongly after each bit of sunbathing. The male on the other hand, was mostly using the reflective strategy, warming his body by focusing the sun's rays by varying the angle of his wings (much as white butterflies do). The males are much shinier than the females, and the blue has a different quality to it. In females it seems almost powdery in texture, especially as they wear.

Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 20-Nov-18 04:07 PM GMT

After last weeks exploits at Mill Hill, I literally had to mop my brow on the climb back to the car park.

Six days later the central heating is on, and last week seems a world away!

Nov. 22nd saw my last Butterfly of 2017, I don't think I'll beat that this year.

Looking forward to 2019.

All the best, Dave.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Old Wolf, 21-Nov-18 12:21 PM GMT

Hello millerd,

What a great find and an absolute treat that they were so accommodating 🍷 I am yet to see a Holly Blue with its wings open. They regularly visited the bushes just outside my garden fence this year but because they were high up, any open wings could not be seen by me down below.

I had given up on finding anything a while ago and funnily enough my dogs disturbed something which flew up and away in a dark flash only the other

day. I was thinking probably Red Admiral but have no way of knowing.

REVIEWING 2018

by millerd, 28-Nov-18 08:23 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – we're well and truly into the beginning of winter now, and those sunny warm days are slipping into memory. Those two Holly Blues were only a fortnight ago, though. 😊

Thank you, Old Wolf – a brilliant way to end an exceptional season. 😊

53 species seen this year, including two new ones for me. It will be tricky to do better than that, but you never know. 😊

I thought I might now have a review of the year, picking out the interesting bits, including sites new to me and less commonly visited, as a way of passing some of the cold grey and miserable days of winter. There may be the odd new photo too... 😊

MARCH

After having to wait until late March to see the first butterflies of the year (the first was a Peacock on 16th, but I didn't get a photo), the lovely sunshine on 26th stirred no less than five species into life. The surprise amongst them was a Small White along with the usual hibernators.



Dave

Re: millerd

by Andrew555, 29-Nov-18 09:52 AM GMT

Very much enjoyed your recent local reports Dave. Particularly of course those fantastic Holly Blues. 🍷🍷
I was waiting for those, and you didn't let me down! 😊

Cheers

Re: millerd

by David M, 30-Nov-18 06:55 PM GMT

Given what you've seen this year, Dave, I feel this review of 2018 might be quite time consuming! 😊

Looking forward to it....and I expect multiple Holly Blues. 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 30-Nov-18 11:47 PM GMT

Great stuff Dave – looking forward to further episodes of your Review 😊 53 species in a year 🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 02-Dec-18 03:02 PM GMT

Thank you, Andrew – lovely butterflies. 😊

Yes, there will be the odd Holly Blue in there, David! 😊

Cheers, Wurzel – though I now have to interrupt my look back at the year, and will have to add another chapter at the end! 🤔 😊

Sunday 2nd December: After a coffee at the local café, I found the sun was shining quite strongly for all its low elevation, and it felt really quite warm. I therefore set off for a couple of circuits of part of my local patch close to the River Colne. There are plenty of dandelions flowering, and almost every one had attracted a hoverfly or two.



These sightings are my latest for both species, and in fact are the first butterflies I've ever seen free-flying in December: previously the latest date for both was 30th November (2014). I have now seen both species in every month of the year except January.

Dave

Re: millerd

by bugboy, 02-Dec-18 05:45 PM GMT

That's a very orange and lightly marked Comma, if I didn't know better I'd say it was a *hutchinsoni*! I had no luck, the sun didn't return after vanishing upon my arrival on site 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 02-Dec-18 06:03 PM GMT

That is a very lightly marked Comma Dave, and as Bugboy says could easily be mistaken for a H.Comma 🤔 Was it your early Christmas present? 😊 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 02-Dec-18 06:56 PM GMT

You sure are in an exceptional spot, Dave. 🍷

I haven't seen a Comma since August and I might struggle to catch up with any before next April such has been their scarcity. 😊

Re: millerd

by trevor, 03-Dec-18 07:55 AM GMT

Well found Dave 🍷. At this rate there will only be one Butterfly free month, January. Even then, who knows if the mid-Winter month is mild. Dave Cook, of Black Hairstreak fame, found a fresh Clouded Yellow on 30th November. This is remarkable as it is not one of the five hibernators.

Congratulations on your new, late, personal record.
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 05-Dec-18 09:42 PM GMT

Cheers, Wurzel and Bugboy – it was indeed a distinctly pale-looking Comma, and not much like a hibernator. Bearing in mind the date, though, that's what it had to be! 😊

Thanks, David and Trevor – this really should be the last of what has been an exceptional autumn... But you never know... 😊

Meanwhile, back to my Review of 2018, which has now been extended by a month!

APRIL

After the late start to spring, April arrived and within a couple of weeks it felt like summer, with the temperature peaking around here at 29 degrees on 19th. I spent most of my time on my local patch, seeing each new species appear: Orange Tips on 14th, GVW and Holly Blues on 17th, Specklies and Red Admirals on 19th and Large Whites on 22nd. Highlights included numerous courting Small Tortoiseshells early in the month...



...the first Orange Tips, true indicators that it really was spring...



...and shiny new Holly Blues, the first of many.



This was on a nettle, but the following day I saw one lay on elm as well.

The unusual heat around the middle of the month actually depressed the numbers of butterflies seen, and many sought out the shade during the afternoons, like this Brimstone.



As the end of the month approached and the good weather continued, the first excursion away from home beckoned. On 21st, I made a day of it and took in Mill Hill in Sussex, and then Denbies Hillside in Surrey on the way back. At the former site I found good numbers of Grizzled Skippers...



For the remainder of the month, I stayed local and the weather returned for the time being to what you might expect in late April. However, there were still some points of interest: a very fresh-looking Red Admiral and a mating pair of Large Whites on 22nd...



...a very nice GWW on 23rd...



and a CVW egg on 25th.



I noted at the time that this latter day was "Blue Heaven" – not wrong: around this time, Holly Blue daily counts were peaking between 25 and 30, and photos were relatively easy to come by.





The last few days of April were relatively cool and quite wet, so I'll move on to May... In many ways the most congested month for new sightings, and 2018 was no exception.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 06-Dec-18 10:54 PM GMT

A great look back Dave and what a funny month April was – snow to start with and then compressing everything in 😲 Great set of shots, the OT;s in particular are making me crave spring 😊 The colour on that final Holly Blue shot – sublime 😊🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 07-Dec-18 12:19 PM GMT

Beautiful shots, Dave. Can't wait till it all starts again. Lovely though the Holly Blues are, I think that Green Veined White stands out most (with the mating Large Whites a close second).

Re: millerd

by Neil Freeman, 07-Dec-18 07:11 PM GMT

Cracking reviews so far Dave, and interesting to compare with my own experiences up here. Looking forward to the rest 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: millerd

by millerd, 12-Dec-18 08:09 PM GMT

Thanks once again, everyone. Now to continue the review!

With May pretty congested, it deserves to be split into a few separate portions.

EARLY MAY

The weather came good again as soon as the month started and numbers built quickly on my local patch with 87 butterflies of nine species seen during a walk on 3rd. Nothing new as yet, but Orange Tips and Holly Blues dominated with GVW not far behind.



Females of various species were appearing now as well...



On 3rd, I visited the southern part of Bedfont Lakes Country Park, and was very pleased to find Green Hairstreaks, including a female that was extraordinarily approachable as she set about laying on dogwood. If disturbed (as inevitably she was), she would be back within a second or two.



Over the next few days I ranged out a bit further, specifically with the Duke of Burgundy in mind, taking in Noar Hill on 4th, and the Chiltern trio of Totternhoe, Dunstable Downs and Ivinghoe Beacon on 6th. I was successful at each site, though it was interesting that Dingy Skippers were not yet out at any of them. However, at Noar Hill was the first Neil Hulme sighting of the year – a first for me at this location. 😊



The linghoo individual was a bit of a curiosity.



On 8th I had an another trip down to Denbies Hillside: here the first Dingies were out...



...along with the first Small Heaths...



As if that wasn't enough, on 9th May, Bugboy and I had been invited by Trevor to sample the spring delights of Sussex. This proved to be a long and very packed kind of day, taking in Trevor's local patch in Hailsham, Abbots Wood (twice), High & Over, and ending up in fading light at Mill Hill. Abbots Wood provided some great views of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, particularly in late afternoon...



...and the Grizzlies roosting in multiple at Mill Hill at the end of the day were particularly memorable.





Dave

Re: millerd

by trevor, 12-Dec-18 11:08 PM GMT

A great review, Dave, and some lovely images. The one dampener on your visit to Sussex was how quiet the old railway was on that day. A few days before, that location was heaving with Butterflies. But as your images show, we had a cracking early evening with the Pearls.

All the best,
Trevor.

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 13-Dec-18 09:08 AM GMT

Love that third shot of the pearls Dave, i'm sure it posed for that shot 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Benjamin, 13-Dec-18 01:35 PM GMT

Great reports and pics Dave –

I particularly like your hairstreaks – your shots have inspired me to make a bit more of an effort with them next year.....

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 14-Dec-18 08:03 PM GMT

Cracking new installment in the review Dave 😊 Cracking shots too – especially the mobbing OT's and the 'centrefold spread Pearl' 😊😊 I've manged one of those with a Small Pearl but not with Pearls yet 🍷🍷
Interesting looking Duke too – is that an incomplete wing pumping/drying? Mind you that wouldn't explain the large white mark on the fore wings 😊?

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by millerd, 15-Dec-18 09:30 PM GMT

Cheers, Trevor – it was a great day out. 😊

I was lucky with that one, Goldie. The butterfly lost its balance while I was composing a shot and spread its wings to try and regain it. 😊

Green Hairstreaks make a great subject Ben, and Mill Hill is not a bad spot to find them amongst everything else it offers in the spring.

Thanks, Wurzel – I think the Duke may have emerged like that, but it didn't affect its ability to fly as far as I could see.

MID-MAY

The next few days were spent locally, with Orange Tips just after their peak numbers and nothing new appearing just yet. However, there were new

Small Whites in the mix of white butterflies...



...and this female Orange Tip stood out too.



However, on the 14th the lure of something more exotic beckoned and I set off for the first visit to Chiddingfold of 2018. Heading in from the Botany Bay entrance, as soon as I had crossed the little bridge I encountered (as well as good numbers of Wood Whites) the unforgettable sight of Pauline in the ditch. Our first meeting out in the field as well. I found the Wood Whites indulging in various aspects of behaviour: courtship, nectaring and puddling for salts.



On the way back I went the long way via Denbies again, where I saw my first Common Blue of the year...



The 15th saw more first sightings, this time on another trip to Mill Hill. This terrific site produced Adonis Blues...



...Brown Argus...



...Small Coppers...



On 17th May I headed north instead, for look around various Chiltern sites, with Small Blues particularly in mind. Totternhoe was the first stop, but though none of the main target species were seen, I did find a lovely new Duchess still unafraid of the world. With it posed on a finger, you start to appreciate just how small this butterfly actually is.





The next stop was a new location for me, the old chalk workings near Pitstone. with large areas of kidney vetch, it was not surprising to find dozens (if not hundreds) of Small Blues.

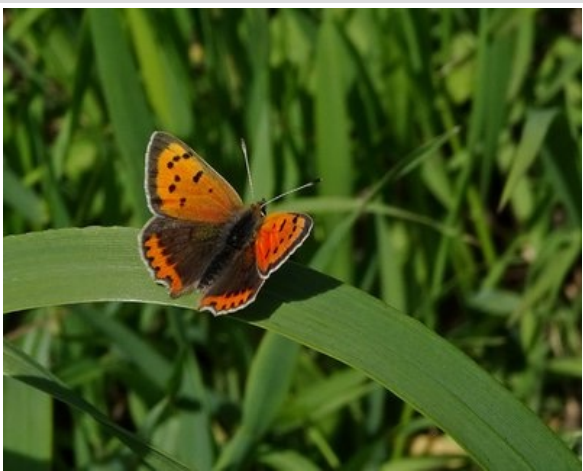




There were numbers of other species, including Grizzlies, Dingies and Green Hairstreaks. At my final stop on the tour, Aston Rowant, the first Brown Argus and Small Heath were appearing, but not much else as yet. A visit to my local patch at the end of the day showed that the latter species had emerged here too.



Staying close to home, on 18th May I walked to Harmondsworth Moor and then back via my usual haunts. New today was a Small Copper – I hadn't seen a first brood individual here for some years, so it was a most welcome sight.



There were also several ageing Small Tortoiseshells, the first since April's good showing. They seem to disperse quite widely after the initial post-hibernation nectaring and courtship.



With the weather so good through this period, and more new species appearing, there was no reason not to go somewhere every day. This would continue until the end of the month – but that requires another post.

Dave

Re: millerd

by Goldie M, 16-Dec-18 09:58 AM GMT

Fantastic shots Dave, I love the Wood White shots they're such delicate Butterflies, I'd love to visit Mill Hill has well it sounds great 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: millerd

by Wurzel, 16-Dec-18 05:46 PM GMT

Another great report with cracking shots – faves this time must go to the Small Blues, you got the fine dusting of scales perfectly 😊🇩🇪 I reckon I'll be seeing a familiar site soon 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by David M, 19-Dec-18 12:46 PM GMT

Another lovely presentation, Dave. Seeing spring butterflies in such mint condition is lifting my mood considerably! 😊

Re: millerd

by millerd, 19-Dec-18 11:01 PM GMT

Thank you all – looking back through the sunlit spring photos is very therapeutic as we approach the shortest day... 😊

LATE MAY

As Wurzel guessed, it was time for one of the high points of the year for me, the excursion down to that increasingly well-known hill not far from Warminster in Wiltshire. I believe several of the adjoining chalk hills are also blessed with strong and varied butterfly populations, but this is the one that has become the place to which pilgrimages are undertaken. Last year I saw Trevor and Katrina here; this year on 19th I had arranged to meet Wurzel and Philzoid, and once there I also bumped into Lee Hurrell.



The hill didn't disappoint: it started quite chilly, and initially only Grizzlies, that most hardy of spring species, were in evidence.



...but it was after 10 before the stars appeared – the Marsh Fritillaries. The sunshine made them quite active, but at least a few could be persuaded to pose.





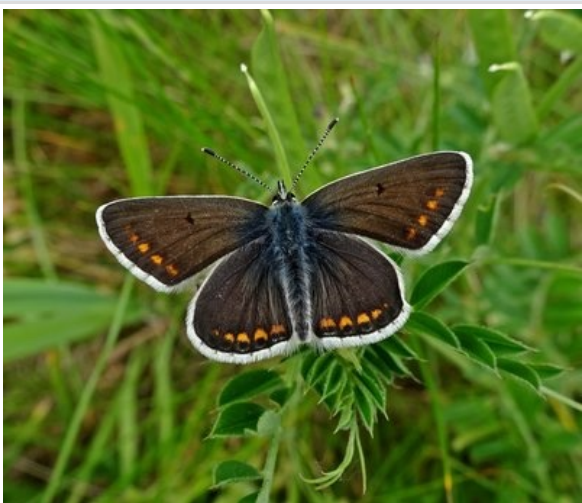
The final point of interest was the largest Orange Tip any of us had seen – but it refused to stop to allow its stature to be recorded for posterity. 😊
Another great day out.

On 20th, I founds Adonis numbers were growing down at Denbies, but the trip was spoiled somewhat by the encroachment of a group of travellers onto Steers Field. I decided to carry on across the Mole Valley and visited Juniper Bottom, part of the huge Box Hill estate, somewhere I hadn't been for a few years. The highlight here was a group of newly emerged male Common Blues, along with a few Grizzlies and Dingies.



I should include this on my spring itinerary more often.

The 21st saw a trip to Aston Rowant, but no Adonis had appeared here yet. I returned to my local patch late in the day to find the first Common Blues and Brown Argus had emerged – lovely new butterflies.





Over the next few days here, the numbers of both built to a peak on 30th – curiously a day with almost no sunshine.

I returned to Bookham Commons on 22nd, mainly to look for Small Coppers. I wasn't disappointed in this respect...



On the blackthorn where the Brown Hairstreaks pose in August

The meadow here is full of trefoil, but Dingies are not a species I'd seen here before, and the Surrey record keepers have taken an interest.

The pace picked up a bit again, and I had two more days out in quick succession. First up on 25th was the Eastern Clearing at Bentley Wood where the immediate surprise was the first butterfly to appear: a Marsh Fritillary. I had never seen one here in many years of visits.



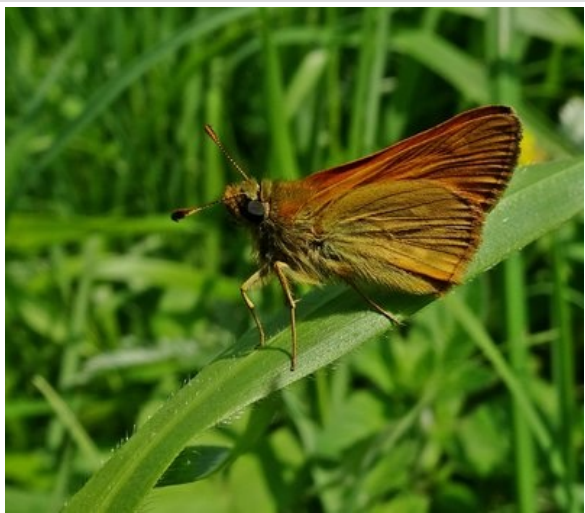
Pearl-bordered appeared as well in the brief sunny interludes.



The following day, the weather promised better, and I put myself in the care of TFL for the day and headed for Hutchinsons Bank, and the outside chance of a Glanville Fritillary. All there was at the end of the day was a maybe moment (my money was on a Painted Lady, but the onsite local view from MrSp0ck was more towards the fritillary). Nevertheless, this site is always worth a visit for the sheer numbers of Small Blues, plus many other chalk downland species.



...and my first Large Skipper of 2018.



On 28th I was at Box Hill again, where very good numbers of Adonis were now flying.



There were also plenty of Common Blues, including this female ab, paired with a normal male.



I then stayed local for the end of the month, seeing my first Large Skipper here on 30th...



and my last Orange Tip of the year on 31st (quite an early finish). By the end of the month Common Blues and Brown Argus were, as mentioned earlier, really doing well, and amongst the blues were some striking females.



Finally, on 31st, I popped along to Harmondsworth Moor again – there wasn't a great deal flying in comparison to previous years, but I did find a female Brown Argus egg-laying, and defying accepted wisdom by depositing the egg on the top of the leaf...



Not to be outdone, later the same day the Holly Blues on my local patch were also egg-laying.



Quite a month! But then June would be rather similar... 😊

Dave

Re: millerd

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

Some lovely Blues in there Dave but the stars of the show have to be the Marshies – both sets 😊 Where the Marshies at Bentley have been hiding I don't know – if only the Small Pearls can do the same trick and reappear in a timely fashion 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: millerd

by trevor, 21-Dec-18 11:21 AM GMT

Most of your recent posts have had a Springlike feel to them. Although still distant, the Spring is something we can now look forward to, with the passing of the shortest day. With that out of the way, I start to feel optimistic again!.

Have a great Christmas and a very active camera in 2019.

Trevor.

Re: millerd

by David M, 22-Dec-18 01:46 PM GMT

More vivid colours to brighten up a grey winter's day, Dave. Some nice behavioural shots in there too....especially the ovipositing Holly Blue.