

Sunday 30th March

Natalie Rogers reports from Colden Common (SU484217) (Road verge) One Brimstone seen on roundabout near Environment Agency building.

Dave Pearson reports from New Alresford (84) Peacock, Comma, Brimstone 6 (males), Orange Tip (male).

Andy Barker writes "As this morning's weather was sunny and mild, Linda and I decided to head to the New Forest in search of Pearl-bordered Fritillary larvae. Not the easiest thing to do, but we've had success previously so we thought we'd give it a go. We saw plenty of male Brimstones flying around in the warm sunshine and counted more than 20 Common Lizards sunning themselves along the ride-sides. We spent 3.5 hours searching in Parkhill, Pignal and Ramnor Inclosures without success, even though conditions seemed perfect. Eventually our perseverance was rewarded when Linda found a small PBF caterpillar (4th instar) amongst oak leaves and bracken litter. Between short bouts of feeding on common dog-violet leaves the caterpillar would move around, then stop to sun itself on a dry oak leaf (see photo of caterpillar in action). Note: Some books list the Common Lizard as a potential predator of PBF larvae, so we wondered whether we should be glad to see them or not!



Mike Wildish reports from Watson Acre, Andover (SU351459) (85) Brimstone - 1 "My first garden butterfly of the year. "

Richard Symonds writes "En route to Noar Hill I saw a male and a female Brimstone flying on the roadside at Ramshill, Petersfield. At Noar Hill (SU742319) I saw two male Brimstones and a Red Admiral. A Brimstone was frequently patrolling the same stretch of scrub. Briefly looking at the buckthorn bushes I identified two ova of the Brown Hairstreak.



Mike Duffy reports "An early afternoon visit to Basing Forest, in warm bright weather, had me see, 20 + Brimstones, including 3 + Females, 1 Peacock, 2 Comma feeding in a Willow bush and 1 Orange Underwing flying around the top of a Birch tree.

Tim Walker reports from St Cross, Winchester (SU474281) (85) Brimstone - at least 3 males, Small White - 1, Comma - 1. "Finally, the first butterfly sightings of the year in my garden. Several Brimstones zooming through, the Small White briefly nectaring on Primrose, and Comma basking on garden seat in afternoon."

Andrew Bolton reports from Axmansford, Tadley (SU566607) (85) Brimstone 3- one female, two male. Peacock 1, Comma 1. "Today felt like the first day of spring- at last. Three months into the year and I'd only had one sighting up to today, so these were very welcome in the garden."

Friday 28th March

Lynn Fomison writes from her Ropley garden. "I think 27th March was the very nicest day of Spring so far. And the butterflies thought so too! I saw 2 male Brimstones, 1 Peacock (yes it was one of the three from the shed lured out by the warm sunshine) and my first Comma of the year. I visited a warm sheltered corner of one of my wild flower meadows where I have seen Orange Tips on dates in March - none to be seen but I was able to enjoy watching a pair of Long-tailed tits building a nest in a large bramble bush. Should I be thrilled - do they eat butterflies I wonder?"

Mike Duffy writes "On my back from the Blashford Lakes reserve, via the back roads to Basingstoke, in fine bright weather, I saw a total of 8 Brimstones as I drove back home, all were roadside sightings."

Thursday 27th March

Dr David Tinling reports: "At last the start of the Great Awakening! Small Tortoiseshell flying and basking near nettles in Stanley Park, Gosport (SZ592989); another Small Tortoiseshell and 12 Peacocks (including a courting couple) were flying and basking, mostly on very short mown grass, at Stokes Bay, Gosport (SZ595985); an adder was basking at Browndown North. Wed 19th March; Peter Scott saw a Small Tortoiseshell and two Peacocks on the Gosport and Stokes Bay Golf Course (north-west) (SZ604981). Fri 7th March: Peter Scott saw a Peacock basking on his house wall in Old Road, Gosport(SZ612994).

Geoff Jones writes "It was my Duty Day today at Titchfield Haven (SU533023) - a nicer Spring day than expected. Whilst working in the shop I happened to glance out of the window and was most pleasantly surprised to see an **Orange Tip**, my first significant local butterfly sighting of the year. Earlier this morning I had saw a distant butterfly in flight which might have been a Small Tortoiseshell.

Paul Guymer reports from Winchester City Centre (SU487294) (86) Brimstone x2 "Seen flying in spring sunshine in Winchester."

Mike Wildish reports from Longstock Village (SU356368) (84) Brimstone - 3; Test Way, Stockbridge (SU357347) (84) Brimstone - 3; Longstock riverside (SU362368) (2) Brimstone - 1; Westdown, Chilbolton (SU384391) (84) Brimstone - 1. "A sudden outbreak of Brimstones !"

Wednesday 26th March

Lynn Fomison writes "Nice to see a male Brimstone in the garden in one of the brief spells of sunshine today. It landed several times on celandines and primroses to take nectar. Not a lot else in flower just now. Well the catkins on goat willow are lovely but most are so high hard to see if any butterflies are up there! It is interesting to note that bumble bees love hellebore orientalis but it does not attract butterflies."

Monday 24th March

Mike Wildish writes "I share Dr David's frustrations. How different this year has been compared with last spring. Only 1 Hants sighting so far (3 species in Wilts). Today I braved the cold, drippy weather and did Anton Lakes, mostly to get my 999th and 1000th lists in for BTO Birdtrack. Saw Sand Martins and many Chiff-chaffs hanging out by the water where insects can be found, but no Swallows yet, and definitely no butterflies! Never mind folks, it can only get better!"

Saturday 22nd March

Dr David Tinling has sent in details of these recent sightings. Friday 7th March: 3 Red Admirals in Gosport, the first at Carters Copse (SU586001); the second in Ann's Hill Cemetery (east) (SU602002), and the third in the Rectory Allotments, Alverstoke (SZ606989); Comma at Browndown North (SZ583997). Wednesday 19th March: Small Tortoiseshell at Stokes Bay (SZ595985), Gosport; Red Admiral at Carters Copse, Gosport (SU586001). Both were flying around and basking on nettles. Saturday 22nd March: the above 6 butterfly sightings are the only ones that I have had so far this month, compared with 13 in January and 36 in February. By now we have usually had the Great Awakening; instead we have had a Great Anticlimax!

Friday 21st March

Pete Durnell reports "A **Speckled Wood** in the garden at Normandy Farm on afternoon of Friday March 21st"

Trevor Carpenter writes, "I finally saw my first butterfly of the year a Brimstone from the car at Godshill near Fordingbridge today. The first of many I hope."

Wednesday 19th March

Dan Hoare reports from Oxenbourne Down (SU715183) (34) Peacock 1. "Today in the faltering sunshine I took a walk around our new office at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, and an opportunity to explore

Oxenbourne Down for the first time. I was eventually rewarded with a Peacock flying weakly around near the ground, when it suddenly disappeared down a rabbit hole in front of me. It went immediately out of site, at least 6 inches down the hole. Clearly not warm enough for it yet!"

Monday 17th March

Pete Durnell writes: "A Large Tortoiseshell flying around next to the barn at Normandy Farm, Lymington on the afternoon of Friday 14th of March. It was probably disturbed while overwintering as I had moved some wood earlier in the day. It landed after a short flight and I was able to catch it to confirm id. I released it back at the same location later the same day and it flew around strongly before appearing to land on an ivy covered wall. I presume it is still around so will keep an eye open when things warm up. This may have been a recent arrival (as at Portland in the last couple of weeks) but it seems more likely to have arrived last autumn and be wintering .

Peter Hutchins submitted the following report to HantsMoths "On leaving for work this morning, at c.04:45, I found a Comma on the outside of the front door. It remained, apparently, to at least mid-morning and, presumably, settled there late the previous day, not having been noted by early evening at least. This was the third butterfly species recorded in the garden, in Overton, this year and now means that I have seen as many species of butterfly as of moth this year! I hope that it is a little busier for you than it has been for me, lepidoptery speaking, this year."

Saturday 15th March

Andy Barker writes "11.45am. As the thermometer in our car was reading 14oC and the sun was trying to shine through, Linda and I were hopeful of seeing a Brimstone flying as we drove to the HOS AGM in Winchester. We were not disappointed as a male Brimstone came to meet and greet us as we parked. Unfortunately the rain set in a couple of hours later so presumably he only had a short flight."

At long last I have seen a Brimstone, writes Lynn Fomison, on Saturday 15th March. This is my second butterfly of the year - the first being a Peacock (see 6th March). Incidentally all three Peacocks are now in the shed again. All hanging head down on a piece of timber which is leaning at an angle of about 60 degrees. There are some useful nectar sources in the garden - primroses, blackthorn, the lovely golden catkins of goat willow and *Daphne odora aureaomarginata*. (Incidentally we saw a Hummingbird Hawkmoth on this plant in March one year.) The wild plum is over as are the species crocus.

Thursday 6th March

All winter I have had 3 Peacocks hibernating in a shed, writes Lynn Fomison of Ropley. Yesterday (5th March) a Peacock was flying around the garden and only two are in the shed today. Is anyone else watching hibernating butterflies ? asks Lynn. She is interested to know if others fly around & do not return to their original place.

Tuesday 4th March

Dr David Tinling sends the following sightings Wed 27th Feb: 2 Red Admirals in Gosport, one at Stokes Bay(SZ595985) and the other at Carters Copse(SU586001). Tues 4th March: my first Red-tailed Bumblebee of the year at Stokes Bay, Gosport (SZ595985); Buff-tailed Bumblebees have been active all winter.

Sunday 2nd March

It was the regular 1st Sunday in the month walk at Magdalen Hill Down today. One of the visitors glimpsed what was described as an orange-y butterfly in the car park opposite the cemetery. A keenish wind on the reserve guaranteed no butterflies were seen but pleasingly Patrick Fleet found us a Common Footman caterpillar - it feeds on lichen on fence posts. We also saw a roe deer and a couple of buzzards were cicling overhead. Numerous skylarks were singing. Lynn Fomison Reserves Officer