



Straits Inclosure - Alice Holt Forest.

Photographs from North Hampshire

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I was hoping to see my first Purple Emperor of the year in Alice Holt Forest on 26th June when I met Mark Tutton, a regular visitor to these woods at this time of year. Straits Inclosure and Abbots Woods Inclosure being two of his favourite haunts where he's been observing Purple Emperors for the past twenty years.

Mark pointed out, a well camouflaged PE pupa, attached to the underside of a sallow leaf, about 20 feet off the ground which he had found several weeks earlier in the dark with the help of an infra-red torch.

Over the road in Abbots Woods, we briefly caught sight of a male flying through the treetops. Whilst chatting, Mark showed me a video he'd taken on his phone last year of an Emperor dragonfly catching a male PE and another clip of three male PEs approaching a sap run on the bark of an oak tree.



Purple Emperor pupa.

26th June '24



Abbotts Wood Inclosure, Alice Holt Forest.

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Revisiting the forest ten days later, I met another fellow PE observer. Dan Moles who like Mark is fascinated in these magnificent creatures and has been monitoring the butterflies in Straits Inclosure. Dan told me he had been keeping an eye on the pupa through his binoculars and noticed it darkening. An indication the adult was close to emerging. Having a ladder to hand, on the roof of his van, Dan was able to get close to the pupa and witnessed the newly emerged female's wings inflating. Apparently, the butterfly crawled onto his finger, rested for a few minutes, before flying off in search of a more suitable mate.

Hearing Dan and Mark enthuse about their PE experiences and seeing their photos felt very special and I as did seeing thirteen other species during the course of the day between the brief patches of sunshine and several heavy down pours.

I left Alice Holt with one thought on my mind, which Dan raised, concerning the success rate of Purple Emperors reaching adulthood. It is a known fact that their well camouflaged pupae are heavily predated. By bats, titmice or even dormice. A case that Dan and Mark are hoping to solve one day with the help of their infra-red torches and a spycam or two.



Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*)

Straits Inclosure - 6th July

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Black-tailed Skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

Abbots Wood Inclosure - 26th June



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Large Skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*)

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Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

Abbots Wood Inclosure - 26th June

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Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)

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Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*) male.

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Comma (*Polygonia c-album*)

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Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)

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White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*)

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White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*)

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White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla*) Underside.

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Purple Hairstreak (*Favonius quercus*)

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Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

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