

Country Notes for August 2025

The famous countryman and broadcaster from my childhood, Jack Hargreaves, once said that if you stay quietly and long enough in one place you will eventually see something you have never seen before or see something do something you have never seen it do before. He is absolutely right.

I walk out in the beautiful countryside of our villages at least twice a day with my two spaniels Bracken and Tilly, and like many of us I have a series of set routes that seldom vary. We are, after all, creatures of habit! A couple of weeks ago I was passing a group of oak trees that I pass several times a week and I noticed some small butterflies busy exploring the leaves, many of them quite high up. There must have been at least a dozen. They looked as if they might be members of the hairstreak family but I could not get close enough to be sure or even see the details on their wings. The following day I returned – this time with binoculars! It was soon apparent that these were purple hairstreaks and I don't know when, or if, I have ever seen these butterflies before. Further research revealed that this particular butterfly does indeed favour oak trees. What was particularly intriguing was that despite having a choice of oak trees virtually touching each other, all the butterflies were on just one of them. Watching since, this has continued to be the case.

They are indeed very beautiful butterflies. They are quite small and have dark forewings with a purple iridescence. Their underwings are a light brown with slight striping and a very small amount of orange.

To say that I was excited would be putting it mildly! How lovely to see something so beautiful in our villages that I have never seen before, in a place I pass so regularly. Jack Hargreaves was quite right!

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