

SMALL BLUE BUTTERFLY

ANGUS NEWSLETTER 2016-17



*Small Blue Butterfly (left) and
Kidney Vetch (right)*

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Tayside Biodiversity Partnership



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INTRODUCTION

Angus is home to isolated populations of the UK's smallest butterfly: the Small Blue. Although surveys have been undertaken along the coastline since the 1970's, it is only in recent years we have realised there is very little data on its host plant Kidney vetch. The Small Blue Butterfly Interest Group was set up in 2011.

The project was officially launched in early 2012 with Butterfly Conservation Scotland and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership facilitating annual volunteer surveys of both species, not just along the Angus coastline, but also inland at key sites. Volunteer recording data continues to be mapped and added to historical data.

The Butterfly Conservation Scotland's Regional Action Plan shows the Small Blue's place in the regional (and national) picture - <http://eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/actionplans.html>. The Plan was revised in 2013. Actions for all relevant Tayside butterfly species, including the Small Blue, are included in the 2nd Edition of the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan, published in the summer of 2016.

Although the Angus Small Blue Butterfly project was initially planned as a five year initiative, the addition of growing on and planting Kidney vetch in key sites has naturally extended the project. With the need for more survey work and Kidney Vetch planting phase 2 of the project will continue at least a further five years.

PUBLICITY AND TRAINING

Poster/Postcards

The Small Blue/Kidney Vetch poster and postcards were reprinted and widely circulated, not just along the Angus coast but inland as well to the sites around Forfar and Glamis. If you would like a small supply of either the poster or postcards to distribute, just let us know.



Training

A Small Blue training day was held at Barry Buddon on June 5th as part of the Barry Buddon Open Day. The session led by David Lampard was attended by about 20 enthusiasts. After a dull start (weather-wise) to the day the sun appeared when it was time to go and look for Small Blues and we were rewarded with 20 butterflies in two areas of the site. As well as the Small Blues three Small Coppers and a Painted Lady also put in an appearance. It was a good day and for several of the group it was their first sighting of this lovely little butterfly.



Enjoying Small Blues at the Barry Buddon Training Day © C A G Lloyd

Kidney Vetch Planting

Kidney Vetch is essential for Small Blues. It is the only plant on which the caterpillars can feed. Ensuring a supply of the plant is thus essential for the conservation of the species.

*(right) Poster nestling in Kidney Vetch © C A G Lloyd;
(below) Kidney Vetch in flower*



Survey work indicates that the Small Blue colony at the MOD Barry Buddon Training area and the adjacent Carnoustie golf course is the stronghold of the Small Blue along the Angus coast. Thus by planting Kidney Vetch along the coast on either side of Barry Buddon it is hoped that this provision of suitable habitat will encourage the butterfly to spread along the coast.

Members of the Monifieth Eco-force have planted Kidney Vetch in the Monifieth flower meadow. Dundee Dighty Connect have planted Kidney Vetch around the mouth of the Dighty at Blamossie and the Friends of Riverside Park are creating a butterfly bank including Kidney Vetch. Volunteers from the East Haven Together Group were heavily involved in not just planting Kidney Vetch on their patch, but keeping the plants watered and preparing interpretative signs to safeguard the new areas.



The East Haven Together group planting Kidney Vetch at East Haven © C A G Lloyd

Wide spread Kidney Vetch planting was carried out by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Small Blue interest group and a host of volunteers. A report on the planting will be available in 2017.

A vast area of Kidney Vetch was found at Montrose golf course in 2016 ironically very close to where new planting was carried out. The site was surveyed more than once but no Small Blue butterflies were found.



Kidney Vetch planting at Montrose Golf Course ©Kelly Ann Dempsey

Kidney Vetch plants have been provided by local nursery Celtica Wildflowers using seeds of local origin kindly donated by the Angus-based business Scotia Seeds. A further 250 plants are currently being grown on for planting in 2017.

Carnoustie Golf Links, a GEO accredited course, has created a wild flower area around the club house. Kidney Vetch is one of the flowers present.



Left – Kidney vetch in flower; right - Wild flower planting (both at Carnoustie Golf Course) © C A G Lloyd

Kidney Vetch plants have been provided by local nursery Celtica Wildflowers using seeds of local origin kindly donated by the Angus-based business Scotia Seeds. A further 250 plants are currently being grown on for planting in 2017.

Site Reports

(Based on records received to date-others may follow. If you have any records please send them to glynedwards19@yahoo.com)

Glamis

This year Glamis was the star site with 48 butterflies being recorded on June 4th. The butterfly is mainly found along the old railway track which provides the right combination of Kidney Vetch, nectar plants, and shelter for the Small Blue butterflies.



(above) the old Glamis railway line

Barry Buddon

This site remains a stronghold for the butterfly with 20 being recorded on the training day on June 5th. The site offers a range of nectar sources and shelter for the butterflies. It would be useful if more surveys of this area could be conducted during the flight season.

*(right) Barry Buddon Small Blue Butterfly Survey Training Day 2016
© Kelly Ann Dempsey*



Carnoustie

Only one butterfly was recorded this year on June 3rd compared to 50 last year. The amount of Kidney Vetch was restricted to a patch at the west end of the site and a few plants near the golf course. Hopefully the Kidney Vetch planting and the habitat work done by Carnoustie Golf Club will improve the situation

Elliot Links

Paul Duncan at Angus Council found some Kidney Vetch at this site but there have been no reported sightings of Small Blue butterflies. This could be an area for planting next year.

Seaton Cliffs

Two surveys on June 4th, which was a sunny day when butterflies were on the wing at Glamis and Barry Buddon, failed to find any butterflies.

Whilst there is plenty of Kidney Vetch on the cliff faces there are only a few remaining plants on the cliff tops. Two butterflies were recorded around Dickmonts Den (NO669417) on June 22nd and July 6th. There is an accessible gully here with a good crop of Kidney Vetch and shelter for the butterflies.



(top and left) Kidney Vetch at Seaton Cliffs

Boddin Point

Two or three large areas of Kidney Vetch persist at this site but surveys failed to find any Small Blue butterflies.



© Kelly Ann Dempsey



Boddin Point © Kelly Ann Dempsey

Friockheim

A survey of this site on June 16th failed to find any evidence of Small Blues. A couple of Common Blues brightened up the visit. The Kidney Vetch in the area NO59774851 is still surviving well with a good range of nectar plants. It is now 20 years since the butterfly was recorded here but it is not known (apart from visits in 2012 and 2014) how many times the site has been visited. It is possible the butterfly is still present.



*Kidney Vetch
and Common Blue at Friockheim*



(There are a number of late 20th century sightings of Small Blue along the route of the old railway near Pitmuies Mill. Visits in 2014 and 2015 by DL indicated that many of these sites are now overgrown with scrub and inaccessible. It is believed that although there is a good spread of Kidney Vetch at the quarry this may be a relatively modern colonisation since the quarry was filled and capped in 2006.)

JOIN US FOR OUR FIRST SCOTTISH SMALL BLUE BUTTERFLY WEEK! Saturday May 27th to Sunday 4th June

Ross Greer, MSP, is the new Species Champion for the Small Blue:

<http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/page/Small-blue.pdf>.

We hope we will be able to welcome Ross to Angus during 2017 to show him our work. In the meantime, however, we are planning a week of events around the country to raise awareness of this special butterfly – and to raise awareness of the various projects going forward.



In Tayside we will focus on the **Barry Buddon Open Day which will be on Sunday 4th June 2017**. This get-together will help train volunteers on what to look for and encourage as many people as possible to spread out and search for our elusive Angus butterfly.

If you can offer a Small Blue event to join in the celebrations, just let us know and we will publicise it on both the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's website and the Butterfly Conservation Scotland's website. It would be great to get schools involved – an art or poetry project perhaps – new Kidney Vetch plantings, citizen science get-togethers, public talks and walks. Let Glyn Edwards know what you are planning so that we can help publicise it - glynedwards19@yahoo.com.

Thank You

Thank you to the members of the Angus Small Blue Butterfly Interest Group –

- David Lampard: Butterfly Conservation East Scotland Branch (& VC90 Moth Recorder)
- Glyn Edwards: Perth & Angus Butterfly Recorder; BC East Scotland Branch
- Catherine Lloyd: Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (TBP)
- Kelly Ann Dempsey: Angus Council and Leader, TBP Coastal & Marine Working Group
- Daniele Muir: Celtica Wildflowers
- Wendy Murray and Ann Bancroft: East Haven Together
- and Friends of Riverside Park; Craig Borland, Angus Ranger Service; Rose Toney, North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership; John Thornton, Monifieth Community Council; Fiona Guest and Giles Laverack, Scotia Seeds; Jon Cook, BC East Scotland; Claire Rainey, Dundee Botanical Gardens.

and to all the Surveyors - Dennis Kennedy, Mike Fuller, Ramsay Reid, Stephen Fuller, Keith Edwards, Daphne Macfarlane Smith, Bob McCurley, BTO, Angus Bird Club, Montrose Basin Rangers (SWT), Pat Gaff (botanist), Jim Cook, Anne Reid (Dundee Naturalists), Liz Houghton (SWT local members' centre), Elmwood students, Bruce Lynch, Newtyle Community Group, Trevor Rose (Angus Herpetological Group), Eleanor Stamp, Art Sangster, Stevie Smith, Harry and Eileen Bickerstaff, Carol Littlewood, G. Addison, Alban Houghton, Rod Cain, Astrid Smith, C. Fenton, L. Reaney, Adam Garside, C. Milne, J.B Davies, K Stewart, Kim Ross, Gillian Gibson, Mary Morrissey, Heather Barnes, Sadie Cotterill, Heather McGowan.

Further Information

Contact:

- Butterfly Conservation Scotland: Glyn Edwards - glynedwards19@yahoo.com
- Tayside Biodiversity Partnership: Catherine Lloyd – caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk

Websites:

Butterfly Conservation Scotland – <http://butterfly-conservation.org/842/scotland.html>

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership - <http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/get-involved/projects/projects-butterflies/>

Scottish Environmental Link - <http://www.scotlink.org/work-areas/species-champions/>



Above – Arbroath Small Blue Butterfly Survey Training Day 2014 © David Lampard
Below – from left: Small Blue female; Small Blue male; Small Blue showing underside (all © B Prater)

