



# Borders Newsletter



Herald

Spring 2010

Issue 4

Welcome to the latest issue of the local Butterfly Conservation newsletter for people living in the Scottish Borders. It goes out freely to all members of Butterfly Conservation in the region as well as to other groups, agencies and individuals with an interest in butterflies, moths and their conservation. Please pass it on to others and let us know of people who you think should be added to the circulation.

Barry Prater  
Tel 018907 52037  
email [barry@prater.myzen.co.uk](mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk)

## Butterfly & Moth Conservation in the Borders

This year has been designated International Year of Biodiversity and you've probably already seen some publicity about events taking place in Scotland or further afield. Raising the profile of nature through major world-wide initiatives like this has to be a good thing. It's now 18 years since the Convention on Biological Diversity was agreed in Rio de Janeiro and nine years since the EU set its target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. And yet, apart from some much-publicised success stories, it's hard not to look around our natural environment and see that a further erosion of the quantity and particularly the variety of wildlife has happened over this period. So there is a danger that politicians and others will seize on the few good, and often single species-orientated results which have been achieved, while failing to address the broader issues of land use and loss or degradation of habitats which are incrementally reducing our biodiversity. There is a common misconception that lots of green fields and trees mean that our countryside is OK for wildlife.

### Contents

Butterfly & Moth Conservation in the Borders.....Barry Prater

Breaking new ground in Selkirkshire.....Malcolm Lindsay

Just Half an Hour from Home .....Alison McArthur

Autumn Moths.....Margaret Carlaw & Derek Ogston

Berwickshire Butterflies..... Kathleen Brownlie

Events & Field Trips 2010..... Barry Prater

Cinnabar Survey.....Barry Prater

We are planning events for Scottish Biodiversity Week (15-23 May) and some details of these and other field trips are given later in the newsletter. Our events have the dual aims of getting people out to see butterflies & moths and also extending our knowledge of what we have in the Borders. This knowledge is now well-documented and is routinely accessed in connection with planning applications or other developments. Any changes to land use which impact adversely on butterflies and moths should be challenged.



Dark Green Fritillary



Saxon (photo: Roy Leverton)

[All photos are by the authors (except where otherwise noted) but not necessarily in their own articles]

Please write in with your articles and views. The next issue will go out in the autumn. Email to me at the above address or by post to: 12 Barefoots Crescent Eyemouth, Berwickshire TD14 5BA

This year I hope that many of our members will be able to contribute to a programme of butterfly and moth recording which is targeted at species which are of local conservation interest - not necessarily very rare, but perhaps just characteristic of our part of the country and therefore important to us. Butterflies such as Northern Brown Argus and Dark Green Fritillary and for moths some of the upland species such as the Saxon.

The articles in this issue reveal how enthusiastic members are about the butterflies and moths we have in the Borders - many thanks to all the contributors.

Barry Prater

## Breaking New Ground in Selkirkshire

Malcolm Lindsay, Galashiels

Moth recording in Selkirkshire is enormously enjoyable. It is a beautiful county with a large number of interesting habitats awaiting exploration. Because its moths have been very patchily recorded in the past there is always the chance of making discoveries and during 2007 and 2008 no less than 40 new species of macro-moth were added to the county list.

This rate of progress was bound to slow down but during 2009 a further 11 species new to Selkirkshire were found.

In March the old birch wood in Blakehope Glen yielded a Pale Pinion a species which has been extending its range northwards into Scotland in recent years. An April evening found me with a light trap amongst oaks at my golf course at Torwoodlee. There are magnificent oaks here (though members don't always appreciate their magnetic attraction to golf balls) and these oaks were responsible for the arrival of a Lunar Marbled Brown which bustled into the trap at dusk. A few days later I headed south into the less recorded area of the county and in the Mill Lade estate near Yarrowford, Neville Morgan (the landowner) and I trapped two of the more elusive spring species which emerge to feed on willow catkins, Twin-spotted Quaker and Powdered Quaker.



Lunar Marbled Brown



Hedge Rustic

In late May & June while I was holidaying in Italy, Douglas Methven of Selkirk carried on the good work, trapping regularly in his riverside garden and being rewarded with excellent records of two locally scarce species, Least Black Arches and Sallow Kitten.

Then Jeff Waddell ran a trap in his brother's garden in Galashiels producing a July record of Small Yellow Wave, only the third Borders record for this species whose food plants are alder, sycamore and maple. Moths can be extremely local - my own garden is only 500m flying distance from that of Jeff's brother but over many years of trapping I've not encountered this species.

Barry Prater's Cinnabar postcard reporting scheme paid off with two Selkirkshire records of this species in August. While walking in the Hangingshaw valley Sarah Eno was surprised to discover some 20 caterpillars far from their usual coastal habitats. A further sighting of a Cinnabar caterpillar in Galashiels was reported anonymously.

A session in Blakehope Glen in August produced several good grassland species including the first Selkirkshire record of the splendid Hedge Rustic. A wee peek through the microscope was required to confirm the identity of an Autumnal Moth taken at Glenkinnon in November. This species cannot be separated from another two close relatives without examination of the genitalia.

Finally I put an actinic light trap in my Galashiels garden in mid-December just before the snow arrived. I did this mainly to discharge/recharge the battery (to keep it in good condition) and didn't expect many moths. In the event only one turned up, but it was a surprise - a Dark Chestnut, new to the county and Selkirkshire's 300<sup>th</sup> species of macro-moth.

For this year and beyond we need to target some of the species found in neighbouring counties but not yet in Selkirkshire, we need to look more closely at our SSSIs and we should concentrate on the as yet poorly recorded

areas in the upper Yarrow and Ettrick valleys. We have a long way to go in Selkirkshire (and the whole Borders region) before we have accurate pictures of moth distributions, essential as we try to focus on their conservation and that of their habitats. More recorders are urgently needed to enter an area of fieldwork that is endlessly absorbing, satisfying and of conservation value. Please do not hesitate to contact your local county recorder (see details below) if you are interested.

My thanks are due to the landowners of the sites mentioned.

---

## The Borders County Moth Recorders

**Peeblesshire:** Reuben Singleton, Garnock, 6 Dukehaugh, Peebles, Scottish Borders EH45 9DN  
[reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk](mailto:reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk) Tel: 01721 723858

**Selkirkshire:** Malcolm Lindsay, Burn House, Mossilee Road, Galashiels TD1 1NF  
[malcandles@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:malcandles@tiscali.co.uk) Tel: 01896 753425

**Roxburghshire:** Andy Fitchett, 1 The Croft, Nether Blainslie, Galashiels TD1 2QF  
[andy.fitchett@virgin.net](mailto:andy.fitchett@virgin.net) Tel: 01896 860643

& Jeff Waddell, 33 Eildon View, Dingleton, Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9RH  
[jeffwaddell11@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jeffwaddell11@yahoo.co.uk) Tel: 01896 822089

**Berwickshire:** Barry Prater, 12 Barefoots Crescent, Eyemouth, Berwickshire TD14 5BA  
[barry@prater.myzen.co.uk](mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk) Tel: 018907 52037

## & The East Branch Butterfly Recorder

Duncan Davidson, 140 Pitcorthie Drive, Dunfermline KY11 1HG  
[duncan@dwwd.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:duncan@dwwd.freereserve.co.uk) Tel: 01383 730446

---

## Just Half an Hour from Home . . . .

Alison McArthur, Dolphinton

Living on the north-westernmost boundary of the Borders region I find myself in an area which supports many species of butterfly. I'm fortunate that my garden regularly hosts Orange-tip, Green-veined White, Meadow Brown and Ringlet as well as the very familiar Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Painted Lady. Species such as Small Copper, Common Blue and Small Heath thrive at an abandoned sand and gravel quarry nearby, and others like Green Hairstreak and Dark Green Fritillary are to be found on the south facing slopes of the neighbouring hills, less than two hundred metres away.

My interest in butterflies has only developed in the past few years and I still have little knowledge of the host plants they depend on or even their preferred habitats. However, I've been delighted to simply come across all of these lovely species either in my garden or on my local walks. Now, spurred on by my growing list of butterflies, I'm keeping my eyes open wherever I go.



Common Blue



Scotch Argus

So it was, on a sunny day last July, whilst enjoying a picnic near the Megget reservoir, that I was lucky enough to come across my first tiny Northern Brown Argus. This was on a banking of stones and scree by the side of the road, only metres from where we had parked to do some bird-watching. Then, a few weeks later, while enjoying a cup of tea just off the road north of Moffat, I spotted a Scotch Argus and several other species. Here I was, coming across even more butterflies within half an hour of my home!

Satisfaction comes from knowing that all of these sightings, once reported to the recorders, can add to both the national database, supported by Butterfly Conservation, and the data held by the Scottish Borders Biological Records Centre\*. Imagine then, just how pleased I was to learn that the Northern Brown Argus was the first record within that 10km square! Proof indeed, that casual recording can help supply valuable information.

From all of these encounters I've developed a real passion for photographing butterflies, so now a day out and about would not be complete without some nice images - in fact this is often what drives me to go out. Having recently received a copy of the new "Butterfly Atlas of the Scottish Borders" I'm now learning a lot more about habitats and distribution. As a result I can't wait for the new season to arrive to give me lots of excuses to pack a picnic and go exploring with my camera!

*\* Biological Records from the Borders are now held and managed by The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) based at Gorebridge. TWIC covers both the Lothians and all of the Scottish Borders.*

---

## Autumn Moths

Margaret Carlaw & Derek Ogston, Stichill

Butterflies and a number of day-flying moths are a familiar sight to many of us, but the strictly nocturnal moths are seldom seen and their ranging forms and colours can be a revelation. Having identified an array of moths during the summer in an area close to a light trap in a Stichill garden, we continued our observations in 2009 over the period from September through to November. The garden, which is large and partially walled, contains a variety of flowers, shrubs, bushes and fruit trees, providing an environment attractive to moths, butterflies and numerous other insects.

A number of distinctive and colourful moths appear in the Borders in the autumn months, many exhibiting the hues of the season and adding to the second generation of species seen earlier in the year. Examples of moths with the rich browns and yellows of autumn observed in the Stichill garden were the Chestnut, the Feathered Thorn, the Canary-shouldered Thorn, the Frosted Orange, the Mottled Umber, the Satellite and the Pink-barred Sallow. Other autumn moths have shades of green: these include the Red-green Carpet and the Green-Brindled Crescent and the striking Merveille du Jour.



Green-brindled Crescent



Mottled Umber

While some of the moths we recorded are common and widespread, a national decline in a few species has led to their inclusion in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority List: examples of these seen in Stichill over the autumn were the Anomalous, the Rosy Rustic, the Centre-barred Sallow, the Brown-spot Pinion and the Large Wainscot. On a single occasion we also saw the Pale Pinion, a rare visitor to Roxburghshire.

As the year wore on we added to our list of autumn moths, the November Moth and the male Winter Moth, the latter frequently attracted to the light from house windows. Our final observation, in late November, was the December Moth.

Carrying out this modest survey has greatly increased our fascination with these spectacular insects and our awareness of their diversity. It has also provided the incentive to continue studying moths and their habitats and we hope that by sharing our experience and enthusiasm others may be encouraged to develop an interest in these oft over-looked, but very important fragile creatures.

## Berwickshire Butterflies

Kathleen Brownlie, Earlston

My interest in butterflies dates back to 'Nature Study' at school in the 1940s (eggs, caterpillars, chrysalis and butterfly), to Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopaedias which had such a wealth of illustrations and information and to the butterflies in our garden - 'cabbage' whites (more vegetables grown then), Red Admirals and Tortoiseshell. The garden grass and the roadside verges were scythed, not cut, and horses were still in use on farms. In the countryside reading after dark would be accompanied by many 'mealie' moths batting around any light (now rarely seen here). There were no buddleias or *sedum spectabile* in the garden at that time.



Small Copper

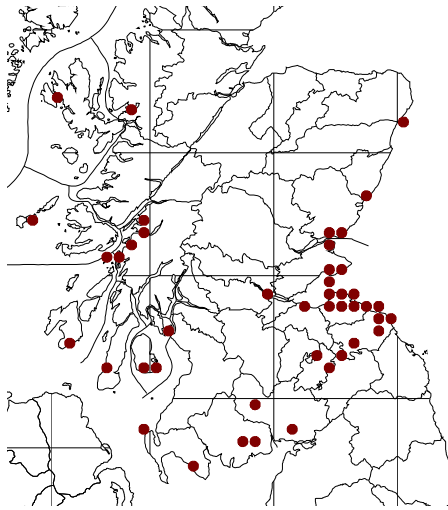
The garden now supports Orange-tip, Peacock, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell (which hibernates in the house), Comma, Small Copper, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites as well as Hummingbird Hawkmoths. The favoured plants are buddleia, sedum, sweet william, catmint, lavender and nettles; occasionally Ringlets and Meadow Browns are attracted from the adjoining fields.

Despite my efforts, I fail to record butterfly eggs, caterpillars or chrysalises - this perhaps indicates a serious lack of observation - I wonder if any other recorders have this problem also?

## Some Events and Field Trips in 2010

Check with the contact name to get more information. Note no dogs on some trips. Remember to have appropriate footwear and other clothing and bring refreshments!

date	event	details	contact
Sat & Sun 10 & 11 April  10 am - 5 pm	Science Week at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	Butterfly Conservation will have a display in the John Hope Gateway as part of this major event.	Barry Prater e-mail: <a href="mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk">barry@prater.myzen.co.uk</a> 018907 52037
Sat 15 May  9.00 pm to midnight	National Moth Night in the Monynut Valley, Abbey St Bathans; also part of Borders Biodiversity Week	Meet at 9.00 pm and park cars at NT734636, opposite track to Bushelhill, on a minor road about 4km NW of Abbey St Bathans. <b>No dogs.</b>	Barry Prater e-mail: <a href="mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk">barry@prater.myzen.co.uk</a> 018907 52037
Sat 15 May  1.30 - 4.00 pm	Search for the Green Hairstreak at Spurlens Rig, Leadburn. Part of Borders Biodiversity Week.	Park off the A703 at Craighburn Farm (NT 238542). Wellies or hiking boots advised. <b>No dogs</b> (lambing season).	Reuben Singleton e-mail: <a href="mailto:reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk">reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk</a> 01721 723858
Sat 15 May  8 - 11 pm	Moth and bat evening in Jubilee Wood, Peebles. Part of Borders Biodiversity Week.	Moth traps will be run and bat detectors used during a walk around the wood.	Reuben Singleton e-mail: <a href="mailto:reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk">reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk</a> 01721 723858
Sun 23 May  10.30 am - 12.30 pm	Butterfly field trip to Pease Dean Nature Reserve for Speckled Wood and Orange-tip. Part of Borders Biodiversity Week.	Meet in the car park serving the Pease Bay caravan site (NT793706) just off the A1107 at 10.30 am. Paths in the wood can be muddy. <b>No dogs.</b>	Barry Prater e-mail: <a href="mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk">barry@prater.myzen.co.uk</a> 018907 52037
Sun 23 May  2 - 4 pm	Butterfly walk along coastal path south from Coldingham. Part of Borders Biodiversity Week.	Meet in the Coldingham Bay car park opposite the St Veda's hotel (NT914665) at 2.00 pm. The path is narrow and steep in places.	Barry Prater e-mail: <a href="mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk">barry@prater.myzen.co.uk</a> 018907 52037
Sun 30 May  10.30 am	Butterfly field trip to Auchencorth Moss for Green Hairstreak	Meet at the entrance to Auchencorth Farm on the B road off the A701 from Penicuik to West Linton (NT201571) at 10.30 am.	Richard Buckland e-mail: <a href="mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk">r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk</a> 0131 332 0615
Sun 13 June  10.30 am	Butterfly field trip to Lamberton for Small Blue	Meet at 10.30 am and park cars on patch of waste ground just before going under the railway bridge at NT957605 on minor road off the A1. The site itself is a steep scree slope.	Barry Prater e-mail: <a href="mailto:barry@prater.myzen.co.uk">barry@prater.myzen.co.uk</a> 018907 52037
Sun 4 July  10.30 am	Butterfly field trip to Monynut Water, to try to confirm the presence of Northern Brown Argus	Meet outside the church in Abbey St Bathans (NT759623) at 10.30 am.	Richard Buckland e-mail: <a href="mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk">r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk</a> 0131 332 0615
Sat 17 July  10.30 am	Butterfly field trip to Linn Dean Water in a joint outing with the Edinburgh Natural History Society to see Northern Brown Argus and Grayling.	Meet at the car park at the top of Soutra Hill (NT465595) at 10.30 am.	Richard Buckland e-mail: <a href="mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk">r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk</a> 0131 332 0615



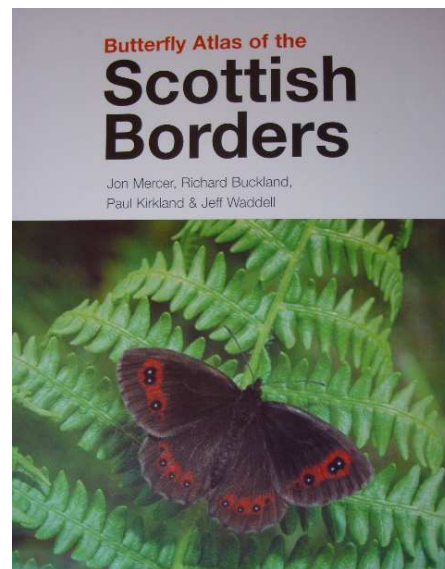
## Cinnabar Survey

Remember that the survey of the Cinnabar moth continues this year - please send records from anywhere in Scotland of adult moths or their caterpillars to Barry Prater. The map shows all the 2009 records received.

---

## Borders Butterfly Atlas

A reminder that this excellent publication is now available. Published by [Atropos](#) and also available from the [Natural History Book Store](#) for £14.99.



---

Butterfly Conservation is a non-profit making company limited by guarantee, registered in England (2206468). It is also a charity registered in England & Wales (254937) and in Scotland (SCO39268).  
Butterfly Conservation Scotland can be contacted at Balallan House, Allan Park, Stirling FK8 2QG, Tel 01786 447753.  
Butterfly Conservation East Scotland branch: [www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk)