

Butterfly
Conservation
Scotland

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East Scotland Branch
Newsletter 19





Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary



Peacock

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**For events and Field Trips
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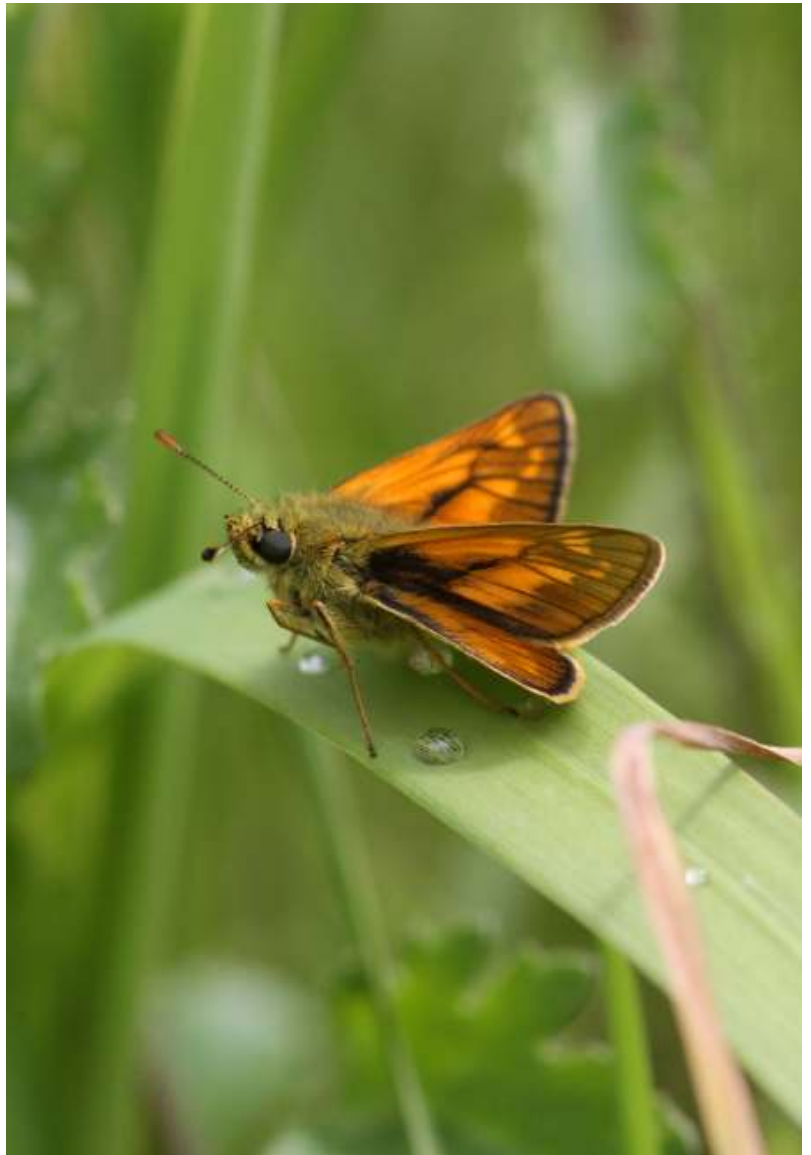


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Notes from your new Chairman *Barry Prater*

It was with a mixture of enthusiasm and uncertainty that I took over from Richard Buckland as Branch Chair/Organiser back in July. Enthusiasm over the immense opportunities this role gives and uncertainty because my home base is in the Borders and there is so much of the branch area which I have yet to discover and get to know. One of the things which has given me confidence is learning that the branch has been very well organised in the past and has an effective devolved structure with a good number of people who not only have plenty of detailed local knowledge but are also willing to use and share this for the benefits of our members and Lepidoptera.

I'm not going to give a summary of how our butterflies and moths fared during 2011 – the articles by our local area organisers and recorders do this very well – suffice it to say that there were plenty of interesting discoveries. For me the highlights of every year are often the summer field trips and moth evenings. Yes, the weather can intervene and threaten disaster but this rarely materialises; instead there is an upwelling of excitement and an overt appreciation from those who come along to these events. People see things they've never seen before but have just read about and even the 'experts' who are there learn a lot from others. There is no substitute for experiencing wildlife first hand, particularly in a world where biodiversity is threatened on many fronts, and this could be one reason why membership of the branch has risen dramatically from 456 in September 2010 to 522 in September 2011 and now stands at 532.

Richard continues to be our Membership Secretary (amongst other things) and members who have joined in recent years will recall being sent a questionnaire asking about their interests and what activities they would like to get involved with. I cannot over-emphasise how valuable this information is to the branch committee and others who organise things from helping at BC displays to carrying out important survey and monitoring work.

The branch's Regional Action Plan (originally published in 2000) sets out our priorities for butterfly and moth survey and conservation work and is being revised and updated to cover the next few years. It will be available on-line through the branch and the main BC websites and volunteers are needed to help achieve the new targets which have been set. Some of you will already have been contacted, but there are many opportunities to get involved wherever you live and whatever your level of knowledge so if you have some time over the coming years and would like to make a real contribution to the conservation effort you should get in touch with any committee member and they will point you to where you can help. While there is an understandable emphasis on survey and monitoring work in the plan, there are also opportunities to press for appropriate habitat management, which is often the only way of ensuring that colonies of our scarcer species survive. Branch members can have an increasing role here, not just by promoting the well-established guidance which is available for many species, but also by being alert to potential threats to important sites which they know and flagging these up so that BC can have an input to protect them. Threats include new windfarms, inappropriate tree planting, land drainage schemes and grassland improvements; while there is the possibility of conflict with landowners, very often they do not realise the importance of particular sites for butterflies and moths and developments can be modified to satisfy all parties. Getting involved in this way presents different challenges to survey work, but apart from the hopefully positive benefits for Lepidoptera it is an excellent way of making more people aware of Butterfly Conservation and very often these are the people who have influence on the future of our wildlife.

One of the butterflies which the branch will be having a particular survey and conservation focus on is the Small Blue, both in Angus, where there are quite a few sites and along the Berwickshire – Northumberland coastal strip where just one significant colony remains (see Iain Cowe's article later on). More details will appear in the spring, but get in touch any time if you'd like to help.

You will read elsewhere in the newsletter that we wish to reduce the amount of paperwork which is posted out to members, but at the same time our communication systems are being strengthened. As well as the branch website:

www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/ we now have a Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/EastScotlandButterflyConservation>

and we are on Twitter:<https://twitter.com/#!/ButterflyConsES>

and these are all good places to get up to the minute information on what's happening in the branch and, through links, further afield. Now that we have over five hundred members, these are the only ways in which we can hope to get in touch with so many people in a speedy and cost-effective way. We should say thank you to Mark Cubitt (webmaster) and Amanda Wilson (our new Youth Development Officer – see article elsewhere) for the development of these on-line resources; if you haven't yet explored the website you will be amazed at the depth of information there, including lists of summer outings, past issues of the branch and local area newsletters, sites to visit, and full details of the current distributions and flight times of all our macromoths. Some of the information on the website is unique and is accessed by huge numbers of people and Mark's efforts were recognised nationally in 2011 when he was given an Outstanding Volunteer Award by Butterfly Conservation. And last year Duncan Davidson our Butterfly Recorder received a similar award so the branch is very much on the map. Well done to everyone who has contributed – here's to further successes in the future. If you have any thoughts on what the branch should be doing or if you'd like to get involved in any way do get in touch with me or another committee member.

Editor's Note: This will be the last newsletter that the branch intends to send out to all members in the Royal Mail. In future it will be posted on the branch website and members encouraged to read it there. That will cut down on mailing and printing expenses. If, however, you do not have access to the internet, or wish to receive a paper copy for other reasons, please let us know and we will send it out as we do now. My contact details are on the Committee page of this newsletter.

Important Message:

Our Branch Treasurer has recently stepped down so we need a replacement to come forward – it's not an arduous job but a very necessary one. Could you help or do you know someone who might do this? Contact Barry Prater if you'd like to talk.

The Garden Moth Scheme 2011 Heather Young

GMS co-ordinator, Scotland. e-mail: heather.young@tiscali.co.uk

The Garden Moth Scheme (GMS) runs from early March to early November, with people recording the numbers of around 260 species of the more common moths in their gardens once a week throughout this period. Further information on the findings of the GMS for the whole of the UK and Ireland, both current and historical, is available in the form of annual reports and quarterly newsletters, which can be found in the Downloads section of the web-site: <http://www.gardenmoths.org.uk>

At the time of writing (early January 2012), 21 sets of results have been returned from Scottish gardens for the GMS 2011. Of these, 8 are from the Glasgow & South-west (G&SW) BC branch region, 8 from the East, and 5 from Highland (including 2 from Shetland and 1 from the Outer Hebrides).

Members counted 26,696 individual moths of 228 species at an average of 1,271 per garden over 679 trapping events (ideally everyone traps once a week for 36 weeks – inevitably some weeks are missed, but these are kept to a minimum), and not including any 'extra' species encountered that are not on the monitored list of common moths. The figures ranged from a total of 66 on a Glasgow balcony to 5,509 in a large rural garden on South Uist.

Dark Arches was the commonest moth overall, occurring in every garden from Shetland to the Borders, and in triple figures in 9 / 21 of them. The Scottish top 20 are shown on the next page, along with their regional averages – figures highlighted in bold designate the regional Number One species.

	Average / garden			
	Scotland	G&SW	East	Highland
Dark Arches	144.0	79.6	89.9	333.4
True Lover's Knot	94.0	0.9	0.3	392.8
Hebrew Character	89.4	27.0	173.3	55
Large Yellow Underwing	82.6	91.0	69.0	90.8
Common Quaker	68.5	25.0	153.6	1.8
Common Rustic aggregate	42.8	28.5	48.0	57.2
Square spot Rustic	33.9	1.3	8.6	126.4
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	31.0	21.1	58.5	3
Chestnut	30.0	6.5	72.0	0.2
Small Wainscot	28.2	0.6	3.3	112.2
Clouded Drab	24.8	9.8	53.8	2.4
Dotted Clay	24.4	23.1	37.4	5.6
Lesser Yellow Underwing	21.2	14.1	34.3	11.6
Antler Moth	19.1	6.0	14.8	47.2
Rosy Rustic	16.5	3.5	23.3	26.4
Red Chestnut	16.2	0.4	4.5	60.4
Bird-cherry Ermine	15.7	5.3	35.9	0
Beautiful Golden Y	13.4	6.9	8.5	31.8
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	13.0	8.5	18.0	12.4
Burnished Brass aggregate	12.0	3.5	14.9	21

Occasionally, a locally abundant species can occur in such large numbers in a single garden that it ends up in a high position in the charts – True Lover's Knot is an example of this, with almost all of them recorded from South Uist.

Regionally, on average Highland recorders trapped the highest number of moths, with the fewest being encountered in Glasgow & South-west, as shown below.

	Average / garden
Scotland	1271.2
G&SW	637.3
East	1507.6
Highland	1907.4

This can be slightly misleading though, as other factors such as trap type do have an effect. The members in G&SW have a greater diversity of trap type than those in the rest of the country, with a much greater use of actinic tubes, as shown in the figure below:

The top 20 for the East of Scotland branch region is shown below, along with their overall rank in Scotland as a whole. It is interesting to note that some species seem to be more common in the region than they are in other parts of Scotland, such as the *Orthosia* species.



	Average / garden	Rank Scotland
Hebrew Character	173.3	3
Common Quaker	153.6	5
Dark Arches	89.9	1
Chestnut	72.0	9
Large Yellow Underwing	69.0	4
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	58.5	8
Clouded Drab	53.8	11
Common Rustic aggregate	48.0	6
Dotted Clay	37.4	12
Bird-cherry Ermine	35.9	17
Lesser Yellow Underwing	34.3	13
Rosy Rustic	23.3	15
Yellow-line Quaker	22.9	21
<i>Agriphila tristella</i>	18.0	19
November Moth aggregate	17.6	27
Silver Y	15.8	26
Spruce Carpet	15.3	32
Burnished Brass aggregate	14.9	20
Antler Moth	14.8	14
Small Quaker	14.4	39

When all results for 2011 have been returned, a slightly more detailed report will be available in the Scotland section of the GMS web-site, and eventually a full Annual Report for the whole of the UK will be published and be available for download by interested parties. The GMS is still relatively new to Scotland, although it has been operating since 2003 in the West Midlands, and it will be a few years before any trends can be established in terms of 'winners and losers' amongst our common garden moths. There is still plenty of opportunity for new members to take part, and I would welcome enquiries from anyone, experienced moth-er or complete beginner, who would like more information on the scheme. The new recording season starts at the beginning of March, and there are lots of gaps in coverage across the country that we would like to fill, but even two different gardens in the same town can have very different moth communities, so please get in touch if you can trap regularly (at least 27 / 36 weeks) between March and November.

**Burnished
Brass**



On the Track of the Large Blue *Lesley McCabe*

There are only a few of the British butterflies that we have never seen in UK. So this summer when a course in Somerset for moths and butterflies included one of our 'missing list' we signed up. Collard Hill in Somerset is billed as THE place to see Large Blue butterflies, even before its recent appearance on BBC1's Countryfile program, and it certainly lived up to its reputation this summer. It is the only site open to the public for viewing of this reintroduced species, and even has wardens to help visitors find butterflies, as well as explain their convoluted life cycle.

The reserve is along the hillside, so is sloped, making it quite tiring chasing after the butterflies for a better look. The slopes have clumps of Thyme and also lots of humps and bumps which are the sites of ant nests, both old and current. These ants are, of course, vital to the life cycle of the Large Blue since the caterpillars is 'looked after' by the ants in their nest until they pupate. One end of the reserve is lightly wooded and has sheltered clearings which the Large Blue seemed to like, especially on our later visits when the weather was breezy and cooler.

Our first day at Collard Hill was warm and sunny, and no sooner had we climbed up the hill to reach the reserve than we were enjoying Large Blue butterflies flying around on the slope. They were typical Blues; very active, investigating the many clumps of Thyme so were a nightmare to photograph, but wonderful to watch. The wardens had an easy job with so many individuals flying – it was a case of sitting beside a good clump of thyme and waiting a wee while for it to be visited by a Large Blue!

They are fairly large, a size up from the Common Blue, and have striking dark marks on their upper blue side, but underneath are patterned more like a Small Blue!

Our second and third visits were on cool damp days, so when we could find a Large Blue (that was the tricky bit) they were relatively docile and a few even allowed a good inspection with the camera.

So another UK butterfly that we have seen and photographed in the UK (although some purists would argue that it isn't properly established as a UK species yet!).



The Small Blue in Berwickshire 2011 *Iain Cowe*

It was mid June 2007 when I set off towards the Berwickshire coast at Lamberton, having read an article in the Berwickshire News declaring the probable local extinction of the Small Blue Butterfly in the Borders, after many unsuccessful attempts throughout the preceding years to rediscover it. I was at the time very new to butterflies, and my knowledge was very limited. I did not have much of a clue as to what I was supposed to be looking for. However, I was convinced enough that they must still exist somewhere that I was not too down-hearted when at first I could not find anything that day. I wandered back and forth along the same stretch of coastal path for a good few hours. Painted Lady, Small Heath and Common Blue keeping me entertained for a while. It was desperation I suspect that led me to kick a few long grasses in a shallow ditch by a Gorse bush. A few grass moths, nothing else, but then, a small dark insect flitted out among them and settled beautifully on a grass stem in front of me. I knew, despite my lack of knowledge, what it was; it took a while to sink in. Shaking with excitement I settled myself enough to get a few photos of this mythical little beauty. I knew then how lucky I was, but who do I tell, who needed to know about this? Thanks in no small part went to Fiona Aungier of the Berwick Wildlife Group whom I had been in contact with. She gave me the info I needed to contact the relevant people...and the rest is history.

Since 2007 the Small Blue site near Burnmouth has been a bit of a Mecca for me come May/June time. I am always turning up earlier and earlier in anticipation. This year as early as May 9th, I thought a wee bit premature, but due more than probably to the very warm dry spring we had, a few males had emerged and had taken up positions on Coltsfoot leaves that provide shelter, radiation, moisture to drink and most of all an excellent aerial launch pad for intercepting any passing female they see.

On a visit to the site on the 14th of May, there were 16 Small Blue adults and 18 eggs counted, so they had got off to a bit of a flyer in 2011. On the 18th I counted 21 adults scattered around, this is just about the time the weather caved in. A further visit on the 31st I saw only 3 adults, and, I had presumed the season to be nearly over before it would normally have just begun. So, I moaned a fair bit about this predicament for about 2 weeks. Then off I went again to the site on the 13th of June, and lo and behold they had bounced back with 18 individuals, mostly female, busily laying eggs on the freshly hydrated Kidney Vetch plants. With hope in my heart that all was not lost for the year I dared to venture north of Burnmouth to an area that I had previously scanned and found nothing. I had found lots of Kidney Vetch, but despite that, I thought that finding Small Blue here would be nigh impossible. So, along the pebble strewn beach I stumbled and it was not long before I spotted a very bedraggled lone Kidney Vetch plant sprawling over some bare rock. I thought, well, what the hell; I will check it for eggs. To my disbelief, 1 egg was attached to the flower buds!! I looked at it closely again, and again. I still could not believe my eyes.....Small Blue, here, after all my previous searches. I did not see any adults as yet, but buoyed by the egg find I wandered further along the shoreline until I came to a good nectar spot containing a good crop of Thyme and more importantly a good crop of Kidney Vetch. I sat and I waited...and waited. Northern Brown Argus caused a few excited moments as they sped in to nectar on the Thyme and away. Then, as if by magic, a Small Blue adult spun around my head and landed on the Thyme only a few feet away. What an extraordinary sight that was! In all I found 5 adults that day. I returned on the 15th and found 6 adults and 11 eggs. And finally, the 19th, with 4 adults, 2 of them very minty fresh. Due to last year's pretty horrible weather, the adults were never easy to find. I have learned to look for scrub bushes nearby...the adults can be found very often from around the base.



On the 24th July I returned to the original Burnmouth site, not to find adults this time but to look for the caterpillars. That does not sound very exciting, I know. I had up to that point never seen the caterpillar of the Small Blue...so...why not. I knew that it would be no easy task. As proved to be the case. Much crawling and cursing, head shaking and just short of despair.....when finally I found one. Stupidly small, and incredibly camouflaged, with its head buried inside the seed head of a Kidney Vetch. In all I found 6...I was over the moon to have seen them. I was also very interested to see, what seemed to be a Black



Ant...probably *Lasius niger*...attending the caterpillar. Ants attending Small Blue in the UK is as far as I know not all that common. So this was more than probably a very rare sight indeed. During May, June and July this year (2012) we are hoping to encourage a few hardy individuals to investigate some of the many possible sites for Small Blue on both sides of the border, continuing a theme we began last year in looking at potential sites, not all necessarily on the coastal strip. There should be some details of that out and about by the time you have read this article.

News from the North East *Helen Rowe*

Over the past year, Butterfly Conservation members in North East Scotland have continued to engage in recording and raising awareness of butterflies and moths to encourage more people to become involved.

Various events were arranged during 2011, many in partnership with other organisations. Several public moth (and bat) nights/mornings and butterfly (and dragonfly) walks were held at nature reserves, country parks and other local wildlife sites across Aberdeenshire, some for Save our Butterflies Week, International Year of Forests or as part of community festivals. Many were organised by myself with support from other recorders/members in the area or from other Aberdeenshire Council Rangers, from Aberdeenshire, Balmoral Estate and Aberdeen City Council Ranger Services plus Scottish Natural Heritage. These were generally well attended and most blessed with good weather, so people of all ages were able to discover the diversity of species in their local area and learn about their importance in ecosystems and need for conservation.

Highlights included: 9 different moths and 2 species of butterfly at Cambus O' May Forest moth morning/butterfly walk/minibeast hunt, near Ballater on 28th July – few species, but was nice to find a beautiful Birch Mocha (local and scarce in NE Scotland) in the Heath trap, plus both Pearl-bordered & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were on the wing for comparison.

21 species of moth and 6 butterfly species at Haddo Country Park moth morning/butterfly walk on 14th July - nothing particularly unusual, but attractive moths such as Light Emerald and Lesser Swallow Prominent made an appearance to enthuse people. Lots of Ringlets and Common Blues were flying in the meadow – children enjoyed the challenge of trying to net them, having been shown the correct technique!

41 species at Burn O' Vat, Muir of Dinnet NNR moth morning on 27th July - Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing (widespread but scarce in NE Scotland) and the nationally rare (but previously recorded at the site) pyralid *Scoparia ancipitella* were among them. A Spotted Flycatcher nesting nearby was also very interested in the moth trap contents!

31 species at Benholm Mill, near Johnshaven moth and bat night on 27th August – notable were Centre-barred Sallow (scarce and local in NE Scotland, though apparently increasing in recent years) and the

pyralid Mother-of Pearl (also scarce and local). A fresh Canary-shouldered Thorn was the favourite find for many. Over the past year, I have also had requests from local groups to give butterfly and moth talks, as well as co-leading with Nick Littlewood, Insect Ecologist at the James Hutton Institute, an evening introductory course on moths for the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association Grampian Region, which have provided further opportunities to promote the work of Butterfly Conservation.

Tom Prescott, BC Scotland Species Conservation Officer, with local members and recorders, organised a successful Deeside Pearl-bordered Fritillary survey day on 14th May. Back in March local member/recorder Nick Picozzi was signed up by BC Scotland to identify sites with potential habitat where the species had not previously been recorded. The day itself was attended by a good number of volunteers – after an introduction at Burn O' Vat Visitor Centre, where the butterfly and its habitat could be seen, experienced recorders teamed up with novices; each group visited one of 5 sites. This resulted in the identification of 4 'new' sites for the butterfly, filling in gaps between known locations and building up a better picture of habitat connectivity. It is hoped that a similar survey day can be organised in 2012, focusing on an area further up the Dee valley.

On-going monitoring on Deeside of the nationally very rare Dark Bordered Beauty moth had mixed results – they seem to be doing well in one location, with new sub-sites found in the last 2 years.

My personal highlights of the year included an expedition with Nick Picozzi to Morrone Hill in early July to record and photograph the Scotch or Mountain Burnet Moth, which in the UK is only known to occur on hills in the Braemar area. Having missed the perfect weather window in the previous few days, when another recorder had reported several Scotch Burnets active on another site, following a time and leg-saving lift from the Invercauld Ranger/Forester up the landrover track to the summit, it was at first unpromising when setting off in thick mist with a cold wind! After descending a short distance, visibility improved a little and the first moth was found, albeit a rather sorry-looking specimen with a deformed wing. Another was discovered nearby, drowned in a peat pool. Later, however, a few much better-looking moths, along with a solitary Black Mountain Moth were found across in a sheltered gully, very sluggish in the cool conditions, but easy to photograph! While traversing towards the path down to Morrone Birkwood, a fresh female Mountain Burnet was found, close to a vacant cocoon, which was the icing on the cake.

In late September, I set up a couple of Heath traps in the Old Wood of Drum SSSI with the hope of catching a Merveille du Jour to photograph. The following morning I was joined by Nick Picozzi to open the traps. A respectable haul included a couple of Merveille du Jour, but the unexpected highlight was a Red-necked Footman larva that had apparently fallen into one of the traps from the oak tree above it! This turned out to be a new vice-county record for VC92 and only the 2nd for NE Scotland, the first being an adult found earlier in the year at Denlethen Wood near Laurencekirk (VC 91) by Stevie Smith. This species appears to be moving northwards, but who knows when it first made it to Aberdeenshire?



Mountain Burnet and pupa



Canary Shouldered Thorn

Last year was a busy one across the Borders, but all the activity has reaped plenty of rewards, not only in species recorded but also engagement with our local members and the broader conservation community.

Outdoor Events

Firstly, the butterfly field trips. Most readers will recall that the cold start of 2011 was followed by a promising warm April, but this was not to last and overall the weather through the summer can best be described as mixed. So there was much anxiety as the date for each trip approached. However, the gods were kind to us and all three of the Borders days out happened in fair to excellent weather and we found and showed people everything that we were looking for.

On 25th June we went to Gordon Moss and the wet fields south of the moss itself in search of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary colony rediscovered in this area just a few years ago by Iain Cowe; as well as Iain the eight of us attending were also in the capable hands of David Long and Ron McBeath who have known the moss and its wildlife for many years. There was not much sunshine but we still managed to find around 40 of the fritillaries which put on a good show for people, the weather making them less flighty than when it's hot. There were plenty of commoner species too – Small Heath, Small Copper, etc. and some moths which we put up, including Green Carpet and Small Argent and Sable, which until recent years has been regarded as quite a local species in the Borders.

The following Saturday, 2nd July, saw us at Edrington, on the banks of the Whiteadder, again under the leadership of Iain, but this time seeking both Large and Small Skippers and the Speckled Wood. It was hot and the sun shone and the butterflies performed well for the 'crowd' of thirteen who turned up, some from as far away as Perth. Small Skippers were in large numbers along with a few Large and the occasional Speckled Wood; other highlights were a Hummingbird Hawkmoth and plenty of Banded Demoiselles dancing by the water's edge.

The final butterfly trip was to Tweedsmuir and Fruid Reservoir on 30th July, with Alison McArthur, who had found Scotch Argus and a possible Northern Brown Argus in the area in 2010. Again there was a good turnout of ten which allowed us to do a fair bit of searching along the road which runs by the side of the reservoir. We soon spotted Scotch Argus and estimated approaching 200 were seen during the day, but equally exciting was the confirmation that Northern Brown Argus are indeed there, with just two being sighted along with some scrappy bits of Rock Rose. The local pair of Ospreys also put in an appearance.



Dingy Shell (Edrington Fox Covert)

National Moth Night was on 21st May and two events were arranged. One was an evening with the local SWT group in their Duns Castle reserve. Three light traps (2x125W MV + 1x15W actinic) were set up at different locations before people arrived around 9.30 pm; to make the evening more enjoyable barbecued sausages and salmon steaks were also provided. This turned out to be a good ploy because despite the cool, breezy and increasingly damp evening, nearly 20 people came along and stayed the course until the rain got the better of us and we packed up around midnight. A total of 20 different species was recorded and of these, eleven were new records for the NT75 square (or at least they had not been seen there in the previous half century). Amongst the highlights were a Clouded Silver and an Iron Prominent. As well as these, other moths which delighted the attendees were Early Thorn, Pale Prominent, Nut-tree Tussock, Brimstone Moth and the most abundant species, the Scalloped Hazel.

The second NMN event was blighted by atrocious wet and windy weather across at Plora Wood near Innerleithen. Nevertheless, a few hardy souls did appear, but no moths were actually caught in the traps, or attracted to sugar, though three species were netted by torchlight: Early Thorn, Scalloped Hazel and the appropriately named Water Carpet. Reuben Singleton who'd organised the evening had taken the



Iron Prominent (Stot Cleugh)

precaution of collecting some moths the previous night and these were also shown to people.

Butterfly and Moth Highlights

Some of the butterfly highlights were exploited during field trips, such as the consolidation in the Borders of the Small Skipper, which is now reported from the central Borders area well away from the eastern, coastal parts where it now thrives. New sites have been discovered for both Green Hairstreak and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, which gives us some hope for the future fortunes of these scarce and somewhat threatened species. Another site with breeding Small Blues was found near the main one at the coast in 2011 – only a few individuals, but again suggesting that there might be more resilience and adaptability than was thought for this species. Both Wall and Speckled Wood were recorded in Peeblesshire, probably for the first time ever.

The butterfly which remains a major concern is the Large Heath, which was only recorded from a very small number of sites, while some searches at previous sites proved negative. Its status is unclear and further survey work is very much needed.

For moths the picture continues to be one of discovery or rediscovery in most parts of the Borders, driven by the momentum of a keen group of moth recorders but also helped and encouraged by the wider community of enthusiastic and knowledgeable people across Scotland. We are very fortunate to have these experts who are so generous with their time and are willing to share what they know with everyone else. Amongst the numerous exciting finds, some not seen for many years, some new for the Borders, some possibly for Scotland, are Maple Pug, Oak-tree Pug, V-Pug, Lime-speck Pug, Angle-barred Pug, Ash Pug, Sword-grass, Drinker, Dingy Shell, White-line Dart, Golden-rod Brindle and September Thorn. Southerly winds in the autumn brought in good numbers of some migrant species including Vestal, Rusty-dot Pearl and Small Mottled Willow. An initiative from Jeff Waddell was to lend out moth traps to members of the Borders Organic Group to increase records from under-recorded areas; one of the successes from this was the discovery of the scarce Butterbur at a new site.

The Wider Conservation Picture

Most of the people who contribute records of butterflies and moths have little or no influence on their conservation or the management of the habitats which they require. So it is important to engage with the many agencies and groups which set broader and higher level policies and plans so that they are aware of what Butterfly Conservation considers to be the priorities for this region and they know the key sites which must be taken account of in relation to any developments. The main group we interact with is the Scottish Borders Local Biodiversity Partnership, which brings together many organisations, including Borders Biodiversity Officers, Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA, Tweed Forum, Forestry Commission Scotland, RSPB, National Trust for Scotland, The Wildlife Information Centre and Borders Forest Trust. This provides an excellent channel for passing on information and allows us to get involved with the work of other groups to the advantage of all.

Edrington Mains field trip



Drinker (Lamberton, Ron McBeath)



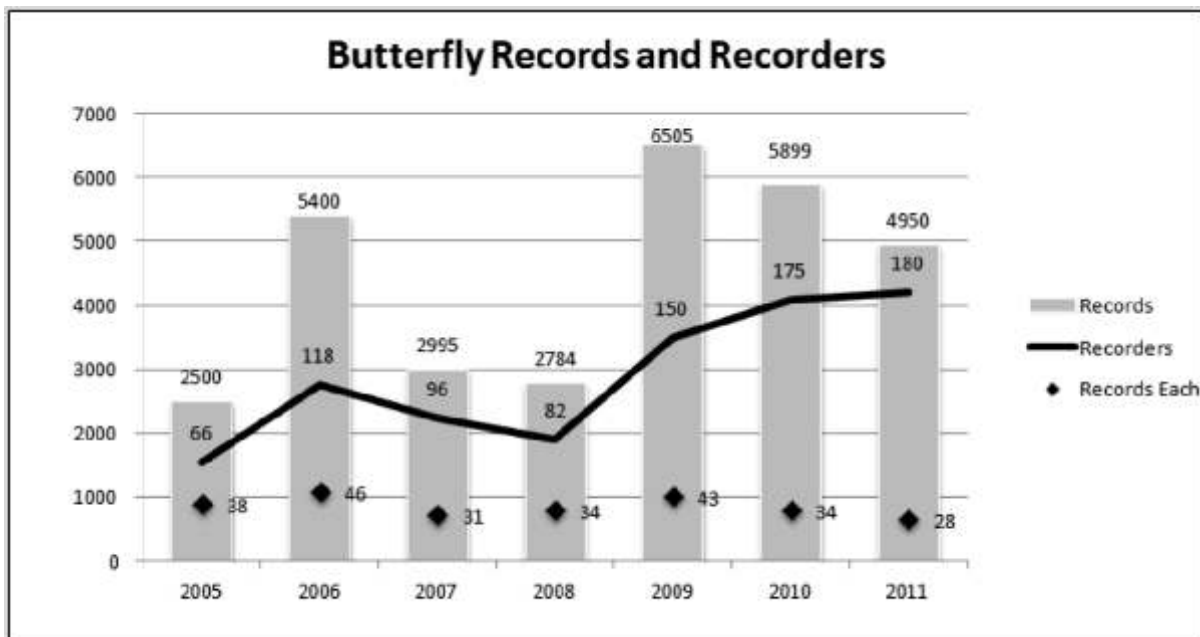
Golden-rod Brindle (Stot Cleugh)

Butterflies in 2011 Duncan Davidson

It has become traditional at this time to reflect on the previous year and ask “was it a good year for butterflies?” There have been many reports and anecdotes to suggest that it was a very poor year across the whole of the branch area. The mild spring gave hope for a good summer, despite the severe gales, but it turned out to be a cold, wet affair with little to recommend it. The year ended with a very mild October and November and many were rewarded with almost unprecedented late runs of Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell. On a personal level, I saw practically no butterflies in my garden; however I must say that I do not follow any of the great gardening advice that is available from our website. My only concession is to have a clutch of buddleia bushes at the end of the slabs, but even they only flowered for a few days last year and attracted nothing more than a couple of hoverflies. On the other hand, when I went looking for butterflies on some organised walks we found that the sites visited were teeming with life – even in the mist and rain. I wonder if others had similar experiences. I know of some who will probably look back on 2011 as a truly unforgettable year having seen a Camberwell Beauty for the first time.

In any case we must inevitably examine the statistics to get a comparison.

Below is a chart showing the number of records received each year and the number of recorders having submitted these records. A record is a report of a species on a particular date at a particular site – not the number of butterflies seen. For example a report from Dunfermline of 3 Red Admiral and 5 Small Tortoiseshell on 3 November is a total of two records, whereas 3 Red Admiral from Dunfermline on 3 November and 7 Red Admiral from Dunfermline on 5 November is also a total of two records. Clear?



We can see that (so far) in 2011, I have received 4,950 records from 180 different recorders. The record numbers aren't as good as 2009 or 2010, but are much better than 2007 and 2008. The number of recorders is at its highest level ever, which is great news - but I have added another figure to the chart that shows the average number of records submitted by each recorder. This shows that in 2011, each recorder reported fewer butterflies than in any other year.

Overleaf are some more statistics, this time showing the total numbers of each resident or common species across a number of years. I have excluded one-offs such as last year's only Camberwell Beauty, the migrant Clouded Yellow records and various stray Monarch and Swallow Tail from goodness knows where!

The table on the right shows an alarming reduction in the numbers of Whites reported for example, but some encouraging results for Purple Hairstreak and Small Blue. The aforementioned mild end to the year appears to have influenced the Red Admiral numbers but will they have survived? We have no hard evidence of Red Admiral successfully hibernating in the branch area and I should be interested to know of information to the contrary.

Species	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Small Skipper		1	2	2	19	160	149
Large Skipper		0	4		3	47	98
Large White	639	972	228	245	1587	1305	217
Small White	580	2413	628	717	2436	1538	216
Green-veined White	1969	2758	1296	1655	4124	3794	1186
Orange-tip	322	679	626	290	515	741	773
Green Hairstreak	64	216	339	38	136	213	87
Purple Hairstreak		2			10	10	31
Small Copper	562	703	579	199	866	596	365
Small Blue	20	136	58	65	113	87	125
Northern Brown Argus	408	281	188	332	406	499	224
Common Blue	949	1120	405	589	812	921	800
Holly Blue		10	25	17	10	21	7
Red Admiral	528	2015	385	871	1418	616	1340
Painted Lady	62	1191	430	21	4907	71	37
Small Tortoiseshell	963	1360	961	529	2709	2598	1437
Peacock	1697	3982	1817	2214	2669	3023	1309
Comma	11	94	99	128	189	329	235
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	452	729	276	238	384	516	394
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	394	268	88	63	167	11	9
Dark Green Fritillary	169	467	297	288	353	489	309
Speckled Wood	5	2	13	11	31	103	79
Wall	3	7	12	15	42	187	122
Mountain Ringlet	138	5	2	105	889		142
Scotch Argus	368	498	154	132	181	633	356
Grayling	119	401	216	187	256	374	394
Meadow Brown	1371	2851	1883	1140	2547	1979	1066
Small Heath	1572	3270	1068	1273	2166	2562	882
Large Heath	40	121	8	43	20	22	49
Ringlet	2804	4616	3213	2077	4515	3804	2127

Finally, here is a table that indicates expansion of species into new 10k squares. The first column is the number of 10k squares in the branch area where the butterfly has been recorded during the last 20 years, and the other columns are numbers from 2011.

The first thing that strikes me from the table is just how few of the total number of 10k squares were covered last year. Over the coming weeks, we hope to put information on-line to show where a species has not been recorded for some years, and encourage people to go to these locations and try to confirm whether the butterfly has truly been lost from there or has just not been visited. The second thing I notice is how nice to see the continued expansion of Comma, Speckled Wood and Wall.

Species	Total 10k squares	2011 10k squares	New squares in 2011
Small Skipper	13	4	1
Large Skipper	7	2	
Large White	225	38	1
Small White	199	39	1
Green-veined White	264	82	2
Orange-tip	201	65	2
Green Hairstreak	69	18	6
Purple Hairstreak	13	5	2
Small Copper	188	41	
Small Blue	18	3	
Northern Brown Argus	92	13	2
Common Blue	234	49	1
Holly Blue	12	3	2
Red Admiral	242	70	
Painted Lady	227	15	1
Small Tortoiseshell	258	81	2
Peacock	233	86	1
Comma	101	56	6
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	135	25	3
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	27	5	1
Dark Green Fritillary	171	37	2
Speckled Wood	34	11	4
Wall	11	8	3
Mountain Ringlet	18	7	
Scotch Argus	69	8	
Grayling	38	12	1
Meadow Brown	238	50	1
Small Heath	227	51	
Large Heath	60	5	
Ringlet	231	74	2

E-Conservation: Promoting butterfly conservation via social media Amanda Wilson

Conservation organisations throughout Britain are increasingly making use of social media sites as a method of promoting the work of their organisation. With this in mind, in November 2011 the East Scotland branch joined Facebook and the number of online supporters has been steadily increasing. Facebook allows users of the branch page to share photographs, assist with species identification and promote work party events. The page was particularly active this weekend, when volunteers were sharing photographs taken during a work party at Wester Moss Nature Reserve.

The branch has also successfully embarked on a Twitter mission, with its Twitter page gaining almost 100 'followers' in just two days! Twitter allows organisations to 'tweet' comments or photographs, which are consequently seen by anyone who decides to virtually 'follow' the organisation. So far the branches' 'followers' include the Scottish Natural Trust, Friends of the Earth Scotland, the University of Dundee, nature photographers and several other Butterfly Conservation branches including Suffolk and Gloucestershire. I am the recently appointed Youth Development Officer for the branch and will be starting a 'Moth Monday' scheme on Twitter. Every Monday I will be 'tweeting' a quiz question or a moth picture for 'followers' to puzzle over. It is hoped that this will keep the twitter page active and entertain its followers. If there is suitable interest in this scheme I may also begin a 'Fact Friday' so that butterflies can have their turn as well! The branch will also be using the twitter page to communicate with other Butterfly Conservation branches and to share interesting environmental news stories with its 'followers'. Over the next few months it is hoped that Facebook and Twitter will be swamped with moth and butterfly images and questions so that branch members can help each other identify unusual specimens and encourage the logging of sightings. By improving the branches' use of social media for communication it is hoped that branch volunteers will be able to engage with a wider audience, in line with Butterfly Conservation's 2020 Vision to raise awareness of butterflies and moths, particularly amongst young people.

To get involved with the branches' activities on Facebook and Twitter please visit the links below:

<https://www.facebook.com/EastScotlandButterflyConservation>

<https://twitter.com/#!/ButterflyConsES>



Report of Lothian Field Trips 2011 *Richard Buckland*

Auchencorth Moss 21 May

This was a repeat attempt at seeing Green Hairstreaks at this location. They had been recorded here about twenty years ago, and seldom since. As it is an under-recorded species, I thought it was necessary to record them again, especially as they were also found at a new site near Auchencorth, namely Spurlens Rig, a proposed site for another Wind farm in the area.

Last years visit was both cold and wet. As it turned out, this Spring was very warm and sunny. Alas this had long since vanished by the time the field trip came around. The outing was organised as a joint outing with the people from The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC), who asked me if they could use this as one of their outings, which they use for general wildlife recording.

As the day of the outing dawned the weather forecast was for rain to spread in by lunchtime and for it to be wet and windy after that. At the moss itself it was dry and windy as we started out. Fortunately, I had received intelligence before to the effect that Green Hairstreaks had been seen at a location where there are some trees and bushes to provide some shelter. As we arrived at this spot, some went one way round the area in question and the others went the other way round. My party thought we had done pretty well to spot two Hairstreaks, until the others coming the other way round announced they had seen hundreds. This was of interest to me, as the person who recorded them here twenty years ago had told me 'I stopped counting them once I reached a hundred!'. So I thought a hundred was possible, although unlikely. As it turned out there were a few dozen. Quite an exaggeration, but still a very healthy number on such an inclement day. The TWIC people enjoyed themselves investigating the various still water pools on the moss, so it was a very successful field trip all round!

Monynut Water, July 10

After the weather had put paid to my outing to Easter Inch moss on June 19, I was full of apprehension as July 10 came round and the weather forecast was again poor. In fact it was still overcast as I pulled in to the venue, in the Lammermuir foothills. But it was fairly warm and dry, so I started on the walk, despite the fact that no-one else had turned up. As luck would have it, after a few minutes, the sun came out. and it turned out to be a very pleasant walk along a river valley unknown to me until then. The surprise came at the far end of the walk, when I chanced upon a fairly substantial colony of Dark Green Fritillaries, unrecorded until then. There were a few other species at this site, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell and Small Heath, although there was no sign of the Northern Brown Argus that I had hoped to find. So, although not entirely successful, what had begun as a dubious tour of duty turned into a very enjoyable walk.

Report of Perthshire Field Trips 2011 *Lesley McCabe*

Drummond Hill, 13th August

It was cloudy, but dry, as Eric & I arrived at the car park.

As the weather forecast had been poor, it wasn't a total surprise when no-one else arrived, but we set off along the path our two selves anyway. The sun peeked through briefly and two Speckled Wood Butterflies spiralled up into the canopy. The sun gave way to dark cloud, and nothing was flying as we walked along, then in a clearing we found a perched Speckled Wood and a rather tatty Ringlet. Returning, it brightened a little and we saw four more Speckled Woods flying along the path. So the Speckled Wood butterflies are still doing well at Drummond Hill.

Flanders Moss, 9th July

Despite a dreadful weather forecast, sixteen of us met up at 9 am in the SNH car park with Stephen, the SNH Ranger.

It was cloudy, but dry as we set off to the moth traps first. After following the path and boardwalk

initially Stephen soon led us 'off piste' across the moss and over ditches (hence the warning about waterproof footwear!) to an open area. He confessed to not being very good on moths but had set up both a Robinson trap and a Heath Trap that had good hauls of moths that were soon being identified by the gathered throng and passed round. We had Poplar Hawkmoth, Scalloped Hook Tip, Garden Tigers, Dark and Silvery Arches, Swallow Prominent, True Lovers Knot, Pale Tussock, Cockscomb Prominent, 4-dotted Footman, Iron Prominent, Map-winged Swift, Narrow-winged Pug, Northern Eggar and Large Yellow Underwing.

We regrouped at the car park, helping Stephen bring back the traps, where we were joined by another 4 people and set off on our Butterfly walk round the boardwalk. A Large Emerald moth was soon spotted, then the first views of our target species the Large Heath, initially hiding in the grasses, then flying for us all to see. As the sun came out we enjoyed some Large Red Damselflies and 4-spot Chasers as well as a few more Large Heaths and decided that luckily the weather forecasters had been wrong. Nearing the car park we saw Ringlets flying, and Stephen pointed out some Mason Wasp nests on an old metal post as the outing concluded.

Many thanks to Stephen for setting the moth traps and leading the walks and to both Stirling SWT and BC (SW Scotland) for helping boost our numbers. I'm sure everyone thought as I did that we'd had a really good morning.

Our Butterfly Records and the National Biodiversity Network Gateway *Duncan Davidson*

All the butterfly records that are submitted to me by recorders and then collated, verified and validated are used to populate an East of Scotland database. Each year, the records are sent to Butterfly Conservation Head Office, where they add to the national database of the Butterflies for the New Millennium recording scheme. As well as then being used to publish trend information on distribution and abundance, including updates to the Millennium Atlas of Butterflies, the records are periodically made publicly available via the National Biodiversity Network (www.nbn.org.uk).

Up until now, the records shown on the NBN Gateway have been only at 2km resolution and include little additional information. In future, it is planned to show records at full capture resolution – that is, if you submit a record with a six-figure grid reference, then that grid reference will be shown on the NBN Gateway, unless we feel that the species or site is sensitive in some way and requires added protection. There is now a proposal under discussion to include recorder names along with the other publicly available data but that cannot happen without agreement from our recording community. Discussions are at a very early stage right now and I should welcome any feedback and opinion you might have on this proposal. Please contact me using the details shown against committee members.



Minutes of a Branch Committee Meeting held on 30 November 2011 in Perth *Barry Prater*

Present: Barry Prater (Branch Chairman), Richard Buckland (Membership Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Lothians Area Organiser), David Lampard (Tayside Area Organiser), Helen Rowe (Aberdeen Area Organiser), Duncan Davidson (Butterfly Recorder, Fife Area Organiser), Lesley McCabe (Perth Area Organiser).

Apologies: Susan McKenzie (Treasurer)

1. Declaration of Interests

None were declared. The Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy recently issued by BC Head Office was noted.

2. Introduction

Barry outlined his vision for the future of the branch:

- the branch's forward strategy should be aligned with that of BC nationally and support the programme of the BC Scotland team
- conservation of butterflies and moths should be the guiding light for all activities, recognising that conservation can be helped at various levels and in many different ways
- the branch membership needs to be developed in terms of numbers and activities
- more publicity for BC locally and for the branch within BC will have benefits
- a spending plan to support the forward programme needs to be developed.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and actions arising

The previous meeting had been held in February 2010 and the minutes from it were noted. The main actions which had been taken following this meeting were:

- A branch AGM had been arranged by Richard and was held during the Members Day in October 2010.
- Additional committee members had been sought through requests in newsletters and the branch website (which included an outline of the roles involved) but no-one had come forward.
- A considerable amount of moth-trapping equipment for use by branch members had been purchased (currently located in the Borders and Aberdeenshire).

4. Branch Strategy 2012 onwards

Prior to the meeting Barry had circulated a paper outlining his thoughts on the overall branch strategy, together with the BC 2020 Vision document, the Regional Action Plan (RAP) and a map showing Prime Areas for Lepidoptera (PALs) in Scotland. He explained that he was hoping for broad agreement on the main elements for the future but not to cover all the details at this time, although decisions were needed on some items.

The 2020 Vision of BC provided a framework for organising all the branch's activities and this was the approach being used by Hampshire and Isle of Wight branch. The current SNH grant to BC Scotland required a strong people-orientated approach to the work of BC, including engaging them in events at NNRs and SSSIs; the branch should aim to give support on this. The PALs map showed several areas within the branch and these could provide another focus for activities.

4.1 Surveys, Monitoring and Conservation

There was much discussion on the now outdated RAP. Some good progress had been made with survey and monitoring for butterflies, but little follow-up action on conservation. For moths the situation was



Northern Brown Argus



Mating Orange Tips, see orange tinge on male forewing



Female Common Blue



Male Common Blue

less clear as much of what had happened was not instigated by nor the results collated by the branch.

Richard said that he thought the existing butterfly species in the RAP should be retained. Barry thought that the top priorities should be the Small Blue, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Large Heath (this last especially in lowland areas). No clear conclusions were reached on which species should be priorities but all would send their views on butterflies and moths to Barry before Christmas. He would then work on the revised RAP so that it is available in time for next year's survey season. It should be publicised via the branch website.

Many other aspects of survey and conservation work were covered with the following results:

- targeted survey work for the current BNM period would continue and Duncan agreed to sort out data to guide people; this would be a large task and it was thought best to have the data and guidance available online, probably through the branch website
- Richard agreed to continue to manage the WCBS activity in the branch area
- transects data would continue to be handled as before with some results being transmitted directly to Ian Middlebrook and some via Duncan, who pointed out that it was unsatisfactory for transects records to by-pass the local Butterfly Recorder and hence be unverified
- our many urban members would be encouraged to participate in survey work
- it was agreed that the branch should cover volunteers' fuel costs for travelling to carry out agreed survey work, etc. but this would be done on an 'as needed' basis rather than offering it in every case
- involvement with Local Biodiversity Partnerships should continue or be extended; currently we have inputs as follows:
 - Barry (Borders LBP)
 - David (Tayside LBP, covering Angus, Perth & Kinross and Dundee)
 - Richard (Edinburgh and the Lothians LBPs)
 - Helen (various - NE Scotland, Aberdeen, Cairngorms LBPs)

Duncan agreed to find out the situation in Fife to judge whether he should offer to get involved.

4.2 Outdoor Events

The branch has had a full programme of butterfly trips, moth evenings, etc. in recent years and it was agreed that this would continue, taking opportunities to hold these at NNRs & SSSIs and to arrange joint events with groups such as SWT, NTS and local natural history societies to get more attendees.

Contributions to various events organised by others were discussed with the following conclusions:

- National Moth Nights (21, 22 and 23 June) - can cover day-flying species and the focus is on brownfield sites - possibilities to be looked into, including perhaps Haddo House Bioblitz on 23 June
- National Insect Week (25 June - 1 July) - no discussion on this but there may be opportunities for events
- Plantlife event at Trinafour between Pitlochry and Dalwhinnie (27 June) – Lesley would contact Ron Youngman to see if he can help with this.

Two shows at which BC (Scotland and/or the branch) might have a presence were considered:

- Scottish Bird Fair (19-20 May, Hopetoun House) - BC HO had agreed to fund a small stand provided that volunteers who would push for new members could be there.
- Big Tent Festival (28-29 July, Falkland, Fife) - Duncan will check the situation with Paul Kirkland; he has offered to run a moth trap but it is not clear how this would fit into the event.

4.3 Branch Membership and Communications

Implementation of the requirements of the Branch Data Protection Guidelines (which had been circulated previously) was discussed. All committee members agreed to comply with these and Barry would inform HO; this would then allow HO to send through the email addresses held for branch members.

It was agreed that Richard, as Membership Secretary, would be the one person to hold a full set of branch emails and Barry would forward to him the guidance from HO on secure storage and encryption of files. Other committee members requiring access to these email addresses for specific purposes would get them from Richard.

There was general agreement that a move to distributing fewer paper copies of newsletters should be aimed for, but without alienating members who don't have access to the Internet. The next annual branch newsletter would be circulated on paper as usual, but with a clear message within it that recipients need to request to receive paper copies of subsequent issues. If this approach is adopted it may be necessary to revise it if there is serious adverse feedback from members.

4.4 Finances

Susan had suggested that around £2000 should be kept as the branch's financial reserves to cover items of regular expenditure which were straightforward to identify - newsletters, postage, etc. At present the branch had between £5000 and £6000 and so there was a considerable sum which could and should be used for the purposes of BC and the branch. The possibility of using some to assist other wildlife groups with projects of benefit to Lepidoptera was discussed and Duncan suggested contributing to the costs of fencing at Kincaig Point, Fife, which has a Northern Brown Argus colony up to perhaps £500. He would discuss this further with SNH, who would be expected to manage the project. Suggestions for additional appropriate spend would be put forward.

5. Branch Structure and Organisation

It was agreed that the current organisation based on local groups worked well and would continue.

The need for additional committee members for areas not presently covered was debated:

- Moths Officer - although role this might have been necessary in the past, following the major upsurge in moth recording for the NMRS it was felt that local and national communication and coordination on moths was good and no branch-wide position was now needed.
- Publicity Officer - the establishment of more and stronger links with the press at the local level should obviate the need for a branch publicity officer, but this situation may change.



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Comma



Speckled Wood

