



## Fife Group Newsletter May 2009

Welcome to the first Fife Newsletter of 2009.

As I write this in early May I am watching a hail shower through my front window in Dunfermline. Not a very inspiring start to the season.

This is an important year in terms of our butterfly atlas. In 2000, Butterfly Conservation released *The Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland*, by Jim Asher et al that included distribution maps for all British species. In 2006 *The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* by Richard Fox et al updated the maps using records from 2000-2004 and highlighted changes in distribution. A further update is planned for next year using records from 2005-2009. There is a danger that species not recorded since 1999 or 2004 in any particular 10km square could be deemed lost from that area. However, the lack of a record might well be due to lack of recording effort rather than a genuine loss and this could result in a false picture being presented. Richard Buckland has asked me to draw up lists of such "gaps" for each of the branch regions and these are nearing completion. It is unfortunate that we are looking at this at the end of the cycle rather than the start, but that's where we are, and I'd appreciate any help in targeting these gaps as part of your planned or casual recording. I will issue full lists for Fife when they become available and the first of these appears later in this newsletter.

### Recent Butterflies

Despite the recent run of east winds and cold rain and hail, we have had a few decent days over the last few months and they were good enough to wake the hibernators and allow some of our early spring species to emerge.

Comma – First record I heard of this year was from Inchtute in Perthshire on 18 March. Fife records so far:

- 2 Apr - Elmwood, Cupar
- 3 Apr – Cabbagehall
- 17 Apr – Largoward
- 25 Apr – Markinch

These butterflies have just come out of hibernation and eggs will now have been laid, probably on Common Nettle but also possibly on Elm. The young caterpillars feed on the undersides of leaves but later move onto the uppersides. There were so many adults reported last year that they really must be breeding in Fife and it would be great to find caterpillars this year. If they are around they will be feeding from now till late June, early July.

Orange-tip – Again, the earliest record I have was from Inchtute on 11 April, shared with a sighting at Birnie Loch. First record last year was 19 April.

- 11 Apr – Birnie Loch
- 19 Apr – Birnie Loch
- 22 Apr – Tentsmuir
- 1 May – Dysart
- 2 May – Tentsmuir and Elie
- 8 May – Birnie Loch

Other species appearing recently have been Small Tortoiseshell (including two in Cupar on 17th March), Peacock of course (including one in Anstruther on 22 Feb!), Green-veined White, Small White and quite an early Large White on 2 May.

The Clune transect at Lochore Meadows started poorly with a blank first week in early April, but is picking up slowly with Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock reported later in April.

In Elie, a total of six species was seen in one day in May – Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. The first Small Copper report of the year came from Tentsmuir.

**Green Hairstreak** – as mentioned above there are a number of areas that have seemingly lost species over the last 5 or 10 years, but this might just be due to under recording. The Green Hairstreak season should have started by now and the following areas had colonies up to 1999, but there are no reports since. If anyone has a chance to have a look over the next two or three weeks, that would be great. The more the merrier.

10k Square	Site	GridRef
NO21	Ormiston hill	NO2316
NO21	East of Ormiston Hill	NO2417
NO21	Glenduckie	NO2819
NO21	Ayton Hill	NO298194
NS99	Bath Moor Plantation	NS968916
NS99	Bath Moor Plantation	NS968917
NS99	Bath Moor Plantation	NS968918
NS99	Dun Moss	NS980926
NS99	Lockshaw	NS985910
NS99	Cattlemoss	NS9991
NT19	Craigencrow	NT102953
NT19	Lochornie	NT104942
NT19	Blairadam Forest	NT104943
NT19	Lochornie	NT104944

### Recent Moths

I ventured to Tentsmuir a few times in February and March looking for Lunar Yellow Underwing larvae (unsuccessfully). The moth is known from only two areas in Scotland – Tentsmuir and Findhorn – and the larvae feed in the early dark on various grasses. They can supposedly be found by torchlight, but not by me.

There were the usual Common Quaker and Hebrew Characters reported from garden traps during April but the diversity is beginning to increase now.

Chamomile Shark, Red Swordgrass, Ruby Tiger, Puss Moth, Pale-shouldered Brocade, and Herald have variously been seen from Auchtertool, Cupar and St Andrews.

## Events

The first organised outing of the year is planned for Saturday 16 May to look for Green Hairstreak on East Lomond. This is not a “gap” site and the butterfly was seen here last year. If the weather is favourable there is a good chance to see this elusive butterfly. Meet at Craigmead car-park at 2pm.

Here is a full list of events currently planned - including some corrections to the list in the Branch Magazine. Note that times might still be subject to change so it is a good idea to contact the organiser beforehand.

Date	Event	Details	Contact
Sat. 16 May	East Lomond to look for Green Hairstreaks.	Meet at the Craigmead car park (NO227061) at 2.00pm	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446
Fri/Sat 5/6 June	Moth trapping at Cullaloe	Meet at car park (NT186871) at 9.30pm. on the 5th to see early moths, and again at 10am. on the 6th. to empty the traps	Tim Brain 07739 428224
Sun. 5 July	Kinraig Point to look for Northern Brown Argus	To be confirmed	Kate Morison 07950 786245
Sat/Sun 11/12 July - <b>WAS 22/23 AUGUST</b>	Moth trapping at Falkland Palace	Meet at palace gates at 8.30pm. on 11th. and again at 9.30am. on the 12th. to see the catch	Kate Morison 07950 786245
Sat/Sun. 15/16 August	Moth trapping at Auchtermuchty Common	Meet at car park (NO236134) at 8.00pm. on the 15th. to check early moths at the traps, and again at 9.30am. on the Sunday to see what was caught	Kate Morison 07950 786245
Sat/Sun 22/23 August - <b>WAS 30/31 MAY</b>	Moth trapping at Balmerino Abbey.	Meet at abbey (NO357246) at 9.00pm. on the 22nd to see moths at traps. Meet here again at 9.30 in morning of 23rd to see the catch	Kate Morison 07950 786245

I plan also to arrange a Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary outing and to make a repeat visit to Tentsmuir NNR to see Dark Green Fritillary and Grayling. Details to be confirmed.

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