



## Fife Group Newsletter July 2009

It seems that the poor start to the year did not continue through late June and early July. From all accounts this has been a rather productive period and some of the highlights are mentioned below. It has also been a good time for migrants with a number of Hummingbird Hawk-moths being seen as well as the expected numbers of Painted Lady.

As a result of requests from the previous two newsletters I am pleased to say that a number of butterfly colonies have been “re-discovered” - for example Green Hairstreak in Glenduckie, NO21 and Common Blue in Elie, NT59 – and I look forward to hearing of more successful gap-filling as records come in. Continuing on this theme, it is surprising to note that there are a number of areas where some of our commonest species have not been recorded for quite a few years. This month I have picked out Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Small Heath for attention. More details below.

### Recent Butterflies

There have been lots of **Painted Lady** sightings as we might expect. For example 22 at Lochore Meadows, 25 round Kincaig, 28 on the coastal walk to Ardross and a handful at Birnie Loch and Auchtermuchty Common.

Only a couple of **Comma** records have been reported. I believe these will be the last of last year's brood and we can look forward to the new generation appearing later in the summer. I haven't heard of any caterpillars unfortunately – if anyone has seen one, do let me know!

It has been a great few weeks for Fritillaries. Plenty **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** at Tentsmuir, Earls Hall Muir, Lockshaw Moss, Lochore Meadows and Auchtermuchty Common. A couple of new colonies have also been reported from Craighuscar and on St Serf's Island in Loch Leven. **Dark Green Fritillaries** are also doing well – 17 seen at Cocklemill near Kincaig, for example, and numbers confirmed from Auchtermuchty Common. I had intended having a Dark Green Fritillary day at Tentsmuir – a repeat of a similar outing last year - but unfortunately I have run out of time to organise this. Maybe next year....

Other butterflies out in numbers include **Common Blue** (33 at Cocklemill, 20+ at Birnie Loch), **Meadow Brown**, **Ringlet**, **Small Heath** and the ubiquitous whites.

**Northern Brown Argus** have been flying at Kincaig since mid-June with 47 counted on 29 June.

Despite large numbers of Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Heath there are a few sites from where they have not been reported for some years. As in previous months I ask that if you are looking for a day out, please make a special effort to visit some of these sites and see if we can confirm that the butterflies haven't actually become extinct in these areas.

10k Square	Species	Site	GridRef
NO10	Meadow Brown	Lomond Hills	NO1706
	Meadow Brown	Lomond Hills	NO1906
	Ringlet	Burnside	NO158085
	Ringlet	Lappie	NO175074
	Ringlet	Lomond Hills	NO1806
	Ringlet	Pitlochie	NO172096
NO31	Small Heath	Cunnoquhie Hill	NO305163
	Small Heath	Ladybank	NO3010
	Small Heath	Ladybank	NO3210
	Small Heath	Melville Lower Wood, Ladybank	NO300117
	Small Heath	Norman's Law	NO305199
	Small Heath	Norman's Law	NO3119
NO60	Meadow Brown	Fife Ness	NO6207
	Meadow Brown	Fife Ness	NO636093
	Meadow Brown	Kilminning	NO630085
	Meadow Brown	Kilminning	NO635091
	Meadow Brown	Wormiston	NO6109
NO61	Ringlet	Cambo Ness	NO609115
	Ringlet	Cambo Sands	NO603122
	Ringlet	Kingsbarns	NO602124
NT39	Meadow Brown	Dysart	NT306934
	Meadow Brown	nr Phantassie	NT311965
	Meadow Brown	Thornton	NT300982
	Meadow Brown	West Wemyss	NT327946
	Meadow Brown	Weymss Wood	NT317975
	Meadow Brown	Weymss Wood	NT325983
	Meadow Brown	Weymss Wood	NT328987
NT59	Meadow Brown	Elie-Ardross coast	NT502998

There have been a few unusual sightings elsewhere in the country. More Brimstone butterflies, this time from Edinburgh, a Zephyr Blue from Aberlady Bay and a Marsh Fritillary from Gore Glen near Edinburgh. As butterfly records coordinator for the east branch I cannot accept any of these unusual records without at least photographic evidence so it is worth bearing this in mind if you do see noteworthy or exotic species.

I am still not convinced that the Brimstone butterflies are correct, but never say never! I wonder if they might be bright examples of Swallow-tailed Moth though?

Fortunately the Zephyr Blue record was accompanied by a photo and I was able to assure a rather disappointed enthusiast that he had seen a female Common Blue.

The Marsh Fritillary is a highly unlikely mystery and without a photograph will remain so.

## Recent Moths

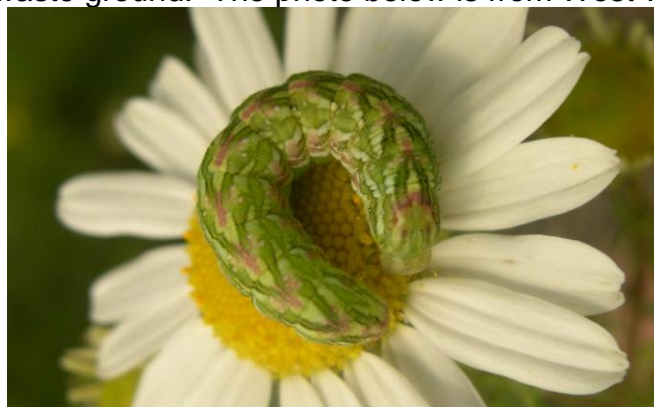
Species diversity is at its peak now, with 40, 50 or even 60 species possible in a trap in decent weather and habitat. My own garden trap has been dominated by Dark Arches, Double Square-spot, Heart and Dart and now Large Yellow Underwing with no more than 20 species at a time. But then my garden is not the best habitat. One night in West Wemyss resulted in 23 species and another in the grounds of Balmullo Primary School had 28 species. The children in Balmullo were very excited to see Poplar Hawk-moth, Elephant Hawk-moth and Small Elephant Hawk-moth all from their playground!

There have been numbers of Hummingbird Hawk-moth reported – probably the best report was four at once feeding on Valerian in a St Andrews garden. I am not sure if the migration of these is in any way related to the influx of Painted Lady or the enormous numbers of the tiny migrant Diamond-back Moth but they are a welcome summer visitor in any case.

This month saw the first Fife record of Freyer's Pug, from Cupar. Freyer's Pug and Edinburgh Pug are listed as sub-species of *Eupithecia intricata*. Historically they have been geographically separated but now that their distribution overlaps, there is some debate about whether they really are distinct sub-species.

An exciting report from St Andrews was of a Broad-bordered Bee Hawk-moth. From a distribution point of view it is more likely to have been a Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth, but neither has been recorded in Fife before and without a photograph we will never know. Keep your eyes peeled for this day-flyer – and get a photo!

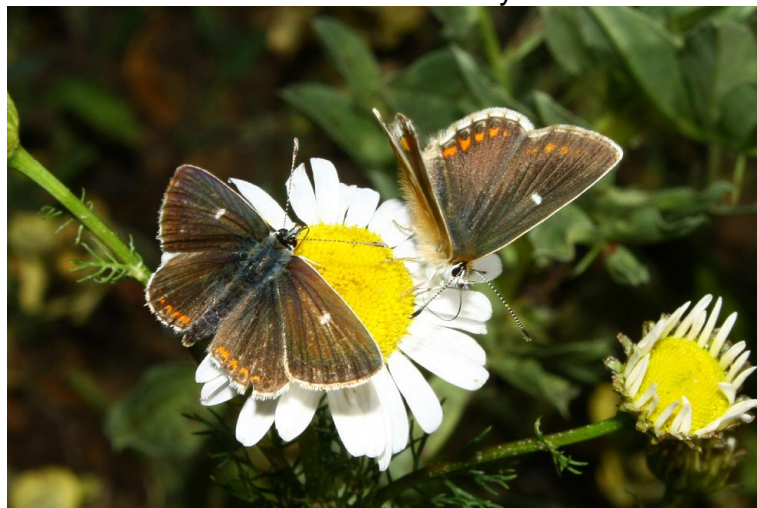
**Chamomile Shark** – In *The Nature Of Fife* (ed GB Corbet, 1998, Scottish Cultural Press) the Chamomile Shark is listed in the Fife inventory because of a single record at Balmuto in 1871. However, since 2004 it has been recorded from Dunfermline (my own garden trap), Anstruther, St Andrews and Largo. Larvae have also been seen on the islands in the Forth. The adult moth flies in April and May and the caterpillars feed during late June and through July into early August, feeding on the yellow flower heads of Mayweed. Last year I found caterpillars at the edge of a wheat field between Dunfermline and Rosyth. This year, I have made an effort to find larvae elsewhere and over the last couple of weeks, I have found caterpillars in West Wemyss, East Wemyss, Kincaig, Falkland, Dunfermline and in three separate locations near Linlithgow where I work. It is not clear to me if the species has always been here and has been under recorded, or if there has been a recent explosion. Whichever it is, I urge you to check every patch of Mayweed you see over the next few weeks so that we can get a better idea of its current distribution. Mayweed grows well on poor ground and can be found at the edge of arable fields, building sites and waste ground. The photo below is from West Wemyss.



## Event reports

**Lochore Meadows – 27 June** – Rain and wind meant that it would have been a challenge to see any butterflies. In the event there were four of us in attendance and we took shelter in the Ranger's office, had a cup of tea and exchanged stories of better days! The transect walk the following day recorded Green-veined White (8), Small Copper (8), Painted Lady (5), Meadow Brown (43), Ringlet (64), Small Heath (18) and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (11). Once again, what a difference a day makes.

**Kincraig Point – 5 July** – Due to some confusion over timing, we did the event in two shifts – one at 1230 and another at 2pm. The morning's torrential rain cleared on cue just after mid-day and the afternoon was glorious. Between four of us, we saw over 40 Northern Brown Argus. They were quite difficult to see initially but once we got our eye in they became obvious all the way along the footpath from the radio mast to Earlsferry Links. They were difficult to photograph as well but the picture below is one of several nice shots taken on the day, courtesy of Barry Forbes. We also saw Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large White and Latticed Heath. Near the car park we also saw Dark Green Fritillary and Cinnabar moth caterpillars.



There were a few clumps of Mayweed in a field beside the car park and a quick examination revealed the presence of the Chamomile Shark larvae mentioned above.

**Falkland Palace – 11/12 July** – This was a good evening with a few bats in attendance feasting on the resident moths. The threatened rain stayed away until around 4.30am and even the lights and noise from T in the Park didn't stop us from recording over 60 species. The highlights were Green Arches, Poplar Hawk-moth, Swallow Prominent, Garden Tiger, Broom Moth, Lempke's Gold Spot and Green Pug. If anyone would like a full list, please let me know.

## Events

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/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</b> <b>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

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