



Fife & Clacks Group Newsletter April 2011

East Scotland Branch

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2011. We are well into April and things are waking up all over the country. In fact I have been taken by surprise with just how early some records have come in so far. We now have nearly 80 member households in the area which is a fantastic number of people showing interest in our butterflies and moths. However, I only have e-mail addresses for 37 of you which means I have to print and post 40-odd copies of this newsletter and any other communication. I fully understand that many folks don't have a computer, don't *want* a computer or just don't want e-mails. I also agree that there is no substitute for receiving a physical copy that can be held and touched rather than reading from a computer screen. However, if you have convenient e-mail facilities I ask you to consider changing from paper to electronic – let me know: my e-mail address is at the end of the newsletter. Even a small number of converts will help reduce the costs.

Here is a very short review of last year. There is still a lot of analysis to be done, but I can at least share some statistics.

Number of records submitted:

Species	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Small Tortoiseshell	123	115	82	206	325
Peacock	176	149	109	188	291
Small White	140	86	78	190	209
Large White	75	29	37	186	193
Green-veined White	103	74	61	139	182
Red Admiral	181	67	102	199	125
Ringlet	63	57	40	99	88
Meadow Brown	62	44	44	68	83
Small Copper	41	27	22	56	63
Orange-tip	45	54	25	64	59
Comma	5	13	22	32	54
Common Blue	28	14	31	37	40
Small Heath	41	31	18	32	33
Painted Lady	92	58	3	245	26
Dark Green Fritillary	25	11	17	20	15
Grayling	20	8	12	13	8
Green Hairstreak	3	3	2	3	6
Northern Brown Argus	2	4	9	2	2
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	8	7	4	9	2
Holly Blue		4			1
Large Heath					1
Grand Total (Clacks in brackets)	1233 (95)	855 (51)	718 (10)	1788 (29)	1806 (32)

This table shows *the number of different records* per species – not the quantity of each species. The order of species is based on a descending number of 2010 records. You can make up your own interpretations of the statistics, but one or two things can be highlighted.

- Small Tortoiseshell records in 2009 are skewed by the number of submissions as a result of our postcard survey. 109 postcards were received from our area in 2009, but only 17 in 2010, so perhaps the big 2010 jump in record numbers suggests a genuinely good year for Small Tortoiseshells – or heightened awareness of new recorders?
- Numbers of records fluctuate each year, but *generally* we can see a dip in 2007 and 2008, followed by increases in both 2009 and 2010. Notable exceptions are Small Heath, Dark Green Fritillary and Grayling.
- Comma has shown a steady increase year on year.
- Painted Lady obviously had a tremendous year in 2009 and fell below normal levels in 2010.
- Purely from the number of records submitted, 2010 was the best year in Fife out of the last five, but only the third best in Clacks!

New 10k squares – those in which a species was recorded for the first time in 2010:

NO00 - Comma, River Devon

NO50 - Dark Green Fritillary, Pittenweem

NT29 - Holly Blue, Kirkcaldy

NT59 - Green-veined White, Elie

NT59 - Small Heath, Elie

NT59 – Ringlet, Elie

If you have any specific queries about the records held in our database or if you want more general information, please just ask and I will do what I can.

Recent Butterflies

All of our hibernators have been out for some time. The first records I have for each are:

Small Tortoiseshell – 18 March, Leuchars. 22 March, near Newburgh. 23 March, Auchtermuchty.

Peacock – 23 March, Newburgh. 24 March, Leuchars.

Comma – 17 April, Newburgh.

Other sightings have included Red Admiral, Orange-tip, Green-veined White, Small White and Green Hairstreak. The Green Hairstreak are out and about in the area round Daiglen Burn and Wood Hill above Tillicoultry – no doubt elsewhere as well.

In addition to these, further south, there have been Large White, Speckled Wood and Holly Blue. We don't have Speckled Wood in Fife or Clacks, although I have heard of unverified reports from Townhill near Dunfermline.

Camberwell Beauty – on 21 April, a Camberwell Beauty was seen near Torryburn – a very exciting record. Camberwell Beauty is resident in parts of Scandinavia and mainland Europe. It appears in Britain most years in very small numbers but does not over-winter here. Most of the records come from the south east of England, although 2006 was a bumper migration year and we had one record from Fife that year along with others in Aberdeen. In 2007, one of our Fife members saw one in Invershin on the Dornoch Firth.



Recent Moths

My mothing year started in January, trying to find Early Moth amongst the many hawthorn bushes around the local golf-course. This is a nationally common moth, but we have only a single record from Fife. My guess is that it is under recorded due to its early emergence - most of us are all still in hibernation ourselves at that time. The evenings I tried were very frosty and I failed to find any evidence of the moth. Others had similar experiences and so we still only have a single record from 1997.

There are a number of species associated with oak that have not been recorded in our area:

- Spring Usher flies from late January to early March
- Oak Beauty flies from late March to early April.
- Lunar Marbled Brown flies from late April through May.

I have been targeting all three species at Inzievar Wood near Oakley, where there are remnants of ancient oak woodland. More recently I have also been exploring the oaks in Balbirnie Park near Markinch and on Falkland estate. I was very pleased to catch a single Oak Beauty at Inzievar, but so far the other two have eluded us. There is still time to find the latter this year...



The usual moths for the time of year have all been out and about – Pale Brindled-beauty, Satellite, Chestnut, Dotted Border, March Moth, Common Quaker, Hebrew Character, Clouded Drab, Twin-spotted Quaker, Yellow Horned, Pine Beauty, Water Carpet, Double-striped Pug, Brindled Pug, Early Grey, Red Sword-grass, V-Pug and the list goes on.

Emperor Moth is on the wing right now and will continue all through May. The day- flying orange males can be seen in the sunshine on Benarty Hill, Vane Hill (on the RSPB reserve at Vane Farm), East and West Lomond, across the Ochils and practically anywhere else there is heather.



As well as the Oak Beauty mentioned earlier, there have been a further two moths recorded this year for the first time. A Pale Pinion was caught near Auchtertool and a Sword-grass was photographed by a bird-watcher at Morton Lochs. Not to be confused with the Red Sword-grass which is much more common and widespread.

Last year saw the first modern records of Scarce Prominent in our area, and they will be flying in birch woods throughout May. I should imagine they are probably widespread and are just waiting to be found.



Events

Our outing to Benarty Hill last year yielded no Green Hairstreak at all, even though the hill is covered in Blaeberry. There are not many perching points and not much shelter and so it possible that they do not reside on this hill. However, it will be fun looking and if the weather is right we should see Emperor Moths and other interesting things. I shall be away the whole of the previous week and so won't be available if you want to check if the event is washed out – but I shall be at the appointed meeting place regardless of weather and you can use your own judgement about the conditions!

In addition to the events below, Scottish Wildlife Trust have a number of other moth trapping sessions planned on their reserves throughout the year – Tim Brain has the details and he can be contacted on the number shown below.

Date	Event	Details	Contact
15 May	Benarty Hill to find Green Hairstreak	Meet at 2pm in the lay-by on the Ballingry-Kinross road, at grid reference NT166973.	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446
20 May	Moth trapping at Bankhead Moss	Meet at 9.00 pm. Contact Tim Brain for details.	Tim Brain 01577 840317
19 June	Wildflower and butterfly walk at Holl Meadows	Details to be confirmed. Contact Kate.	Kate Morison 07950 786245
17 July	Butterfly Walk at Holl Meadows	Meet at 2pm at the car park beside Holl Reservoir (NO224034). A great opportunity to see large numbers of Dark Green Fritillary.	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446
22/23 July	Moth Trapping in Devilla Forest	Meet 9pm on the Friday to see moths arriving at the traps and again at 10am on Saturday to check what was found overnight. Parking at NS966886.	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446
7 August	Butterfly Walk at Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve	Meet in Kinshaldy car park at 1.30pm. (NO498242).	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446
19 August	Moth Trapping at Falkland Palace	Details to be confirmed. Contact Kate.	Kate Morison 07950 786245
27/28 August	Moth Trapping at Vane Farm	Meet at 8pm on 27 Aug at the visitor centre for a short illustrated talk on local moths and butterflies, followed by a look at the moth traps to see what is arriving. Morning session at 10am to help identify and release what was caught overnight.	Duncan Davidson 01383 730446

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