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East Scotland Branch Newsletter 17

Spring 2009





Cover Image

Small pearl-bordered Fritillary

(see article on the transect carried out at Auchtermuchty, by Kate Morison).

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Branch Report 2008

by Richard Buckland

Last year was a bit of a washout as far as butterflies were concerned but on the positive side, the branch had a record number of new members, so it was not all bad! In fact, we learnt at the Member's Day that our branch was the third fastest growing in the UK last year, which is very healthy indeed. We seem to be good at retaining the members who do join, so we must be recruiting the right people and providing them with the kind of activities they appreciate.

This report is also a bit of a novelty in that it is the first for a number of years where I am not asking for members to step up and take on any of the administration functions. This is because we have our new editor, Simon Pinder in place for this issue and I am confident that his first effort will find favour with members. We also have a new treasurer. Susan McKenzie has volunteered her services and as she is a qualified chartered accountant, I see no problems with her being able to carry out this job for the branch, and wish her well in the post.

Going in the opposite direction is Dan Baker. Dan was our first local organiser for Perthshire, a role in which he became a stalwart of the branch. He has run many excellent field trips over the years, often in conjunction with the Perthshire branch of SWT with which he is also very active. It is because of his other activities within BC, however, that he feels he has to step down from his local organiser role. Dan took on the job of Moths Recorder for Perthshire a year or so ago, and is trying to track down all the old moth records for the county which is a very arduous task. He reports on his efforts at recording Small Blues elsewhere in this newsletter (see page 10).

So there is a vacancy for the local organiser for Perthshire - there had to be a plea in here somewhere! If anyone would like to take this on then please let me know. The other local organisers have all done very well this year. Helen Rowe continues to run a comprehensive programme of events in Aberdeen in conjunction with the Aberdeen ranger service, where they run events to see butterflies, moths and bats (of which I hope there are not too many!). David Lampard is settling in and is running a series of events this year in conjunction with other Tayside conservation bodies. Duncan Davidson has kept the members in Fife informed with his brilliant local newsletters. Barry Prater has made a big impact in the Borders, producing his own excellent local newsletter. There is also an active moth group developing nicely in the Borders. For details of all events see the events page (page 30).

Head Office have written to remind us of the importance of general fundraising for BC, and we have included their leaflet on legacies with this newsletter to help with this effort. With reference to the Member's Day mentioned above, we had another enjoyable day this year, this time in Perth. SNH were their usual excellent hosts and we were able to welcome Maurice Avent, the new BC chairman and give him a real Scottish welcome to the post. The Society's new chairman Maurice Avent attended in an effort to see what we do up here, and so we were able to extend him a true Scottish



welcome to the post. Of even more importance, a team from the branch won the Kindrogan Cup (the prize for winning the lepidoptera competition), which brings us up to the Highland branch in terms of success in his event.

I would just like to draw your attention to my article on page 6, about a very important new BC monitoring project. This is where butterfly surveyors record butterflies at random locations in an effort to monitor butterflies in the wider countryside in order to obtain a true picture of butterfly abundance in the whole countryside (see article by John Woolliams and Reuben Singleton on page 8 for their experiences in the pilot project).

The branch has already been allocated it's random sites, which I have listed in the article. Somewhat counter-intuitively the sites we have been allocated by the computer are not spread at random over the whole branch, but are rather clustered. For example, there are a few in the northern Borders, western Borders, Perth area, Pitlochry area and North-east Aberdeenshire.

I have put our sites in the article referred to above so that members can see where they are and pick a site near where they live to survey. So if you would like to be involved in this project, let me know which site you would like to take on and I will do my best to make sure that it is allocated to you. This promises to be the next major survey project for Butterfly Conservation and so I hope lots of you will support it by taking part.

Head Office would like a 'Butterfly Champion' in every branch to act as the coordinator for the branch and liaise with the person running the project at HO (i.e., Katie Cruikshanks). If this appeals to you, then please get in touch with me and I will pass on your name to her.

Finally, the branch has had a very generous offer from Mark Cubitt to organise a website. Mark is a relatively new member who is mainly interested in moths. Mark and I were thinking that it would be nice to have a branch logo on the home page of this website, so if anyone would like to try their hand at designing one, please send your design to Mark. His email address is: mark@mgc.me.uk.

His postal address is 12 Burgh Mills Lane, Linlithgow, EH48 7TA. Mark writes about the website and your role in helping to maintain it on page 13. Mark has put a lot of time and effort, not to mention ingenuity into setting this up and I think he has done a brilliant job. So check it out at: www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk

Finally, I would just like to remind members that BC is still surveying for the Millennium project and we plan to produce another update in 2010, detailing the changes in the 2005-2009 period. This will require us to keep on recording until then. So please keep those records coming in, and happy butterflying for the coming season!



Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey

by Richard Buckland

Butterfly Conservation is about to embark on a new survey – the Wider Countryside Survey. This is being modelled on the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Breeding Birds Survey (BBS). As many of you will already know, the BTO carries out a lot of survey work. So why did it feel the need to start a new one? Surely it would just mean more work for it's members. The thing is, different surveys tell you different things. The work the BTO puts into it's atlas tells them about bird distribution. Although they now try to incorporate some information on population levels in their most recent atlases, they obviously felt the need to put in place a firm basis for establishing population levels over the UK as a whole and devised a survey to obtain that data.

For many years Butterfly Conservation, in conjunction with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (formerly the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology) have carried out butterfly transects in the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) as a means of assessing butterfly population levels. However, this survey is limited by the sites which are chosen to carry out the transects. As these tend to be 'wildlife sites' such as nature reserves and SSSIs, it does not tell us about the number of butterflies out there in the general countryside and it is in an effort to gauge the butterfly population levels in the general countryside that this new survey has been organised and can be thought of as an extension of the very successful BMS.

The new survey again involves members carrying out butterfly transects – but now at the random sites picked out by a computer. Members will be asked to record the butterflies at their site on at least two occasions during the summer and noting all the butterflies seen. Detailed instructions will be given out to all participants.

A pilot project has been run over the last few summers to check out the suitability and operational convenience of the new survey. In fact, we have some of the guinea-pigs in our branch. John Woolliams and Reuben Singleton report on their experiences in this issue of the newsletter (see page 8).

Remember the Butterflies

by Caitlin Sneddon

Bright and **B**ecoming
High **U**p in the skies
Tangible and **T**ranquil
See how **T**hey fly
Enthralling, **E**xciting
I will always **R**emember
The butterflies **F**lying
The **L**ast day of September
Yes, I will always
remember that last day
of September.



Katie Cruikshanks at Head Office is running this survey and has already given me the 20 random squares allocated to the branch and so if you would like to take part in this ground-breaking survey, then please let me know as soon as possible and I will allocate our squares to the members nearest to them. The sites are as follows:

Northern Borders

Spartleton, nr. Whiteadder Reservoir (NT6565); (landranger map no. 67).

Ecclaw, nr. Abbey St Bathans (NT7568). (map 67).

Linthill, nr. Eyemouth (NT9263 (map 67).

Western Borders

Craig Hill, nr. Ettrick (NT2515), (map 79).

Craik Forest, s of Ettrick (NT2710) (map 79).

Tweedmuir, Upper Tweed (NT0923) (map 72).

Perth area

Strelitz Wood, Perth (NO1737) (map 53).

River Isla, nr. Ratray (NO2444) (map 53).

Forest of Alyth, nr. Ratray (NO1957) (map 53).

Coire Odhar, nr. Muthill (NN8414) (map 58).



Two nr Pitlochry

Kindrogan Wood, nr. Pitlochry (NO0460) (map 43).

Dunfallandy Hill, nr. Pitlochry (NN9355) (map 52).

Tayside

West Bradieston Wood, nr. Laurencekirk (NO7368) (map 45).

Aberdeenshire

Rathen, nr. Fraserburgh (NJ9961) (map 30).

Berefold, nr. Ellon (NJ9736) (map 30).

Crimond, nr. Ratray Head (NK0457) (map 30).

Clola, nr. Peterhead (NK0144) (map30).

Plus a few outliers:

Roslin mineworks, Loanhead (NT2764) (map 66).

Milne Graden, nr. Coldstream (NT8544) (map 74).

Ditcher Law, nr. Lauder (NT5156) (map 73).

As I pointed out in the branch report, Katie Cruikshanks at head office would ideally like someone from the branch to take charge of the project within the branch. So if this appeals to you then please get in touch with me and I will forward your name to her. And it would save me from having to take on another role!



The Moor Butterflies the Merrier

by Rohn Wooliams/Reuben Singleton (Peebles)

This is a story with a message: it is important to know what is out there and sometimes the answers can be surprising! The following is written in two parts, the first was written by John for the local Butterfly Conservation Newsletter in which he describes the experiences of participating in the Wider Countryside Monitoring Scheme, whilst the second part written by Reuben places the data collected within the Scheme in the context of the developments that are happening in our countryside.

John

Among the many good reasons for my joining Butterfly Conservation was the realisation that I could take part in the national monitoring of butterfly populations. For me, the future of our biodiversity and habitats can only be secured by establishing schemes of national scope, documenting where we are now so that we can be more readily aware of where we are heading. National schemes need many recorders, so even a novice like me can make useful contributions with just a little help and support. So I was delighted when I was given the opportunity to sign up for the Wider Countryside Monitoring Scheme organised by Butterfly Conservation. In this scheme volunteers are allocated a 1 km by 1 km OS grid square, i.e. one square on a 1:50,000 Landranger map. The volunteer is expected to walk two transects of 1 km, on two occasions during the summer. I was allocated a square that did not excite me; Spurlens Rig (NT2554) at the northern tip of Peeblesshire contained a small Sitka spruce plantation on the edge of an upland sheep moor at a less than butterfly friendly 280m above sea level (920 feet in old money). My friend, Reuben, who knows his invertebrates, suggested a number of species that may be present, but I thought the subtext was not too encouraging!

So it was that I decided to have a go on a rare sunny Sunday morning in July. I had planned my transects, one along the plantation boundary and one parallel to it in open pasture but I had had no time to walk the route beforehand, and so was very unprepared. I parked some 500m away and walked towards the start of the first transect on a track through some rough pasture and did not see a single butterfly! I found the spruce plantation and then tried to find the starting point that I had planned which was in the open pasture. This is where my total lack of preparation was made obvious to me: what I thought to be fences on the map, I found to be ditches! Without GPS there was no way I would be able to pace out the 100m sections that were required for counting purposes, hopping from one tussock to another in the middle of a peat bog. In coming to this conclusion, I had begun walking alongside the plantation edge and as I did so, I became astounded by the abundance and diversity of the butterflies that I found there! What to do? After some thinking, I decided to walk along the plantation edge trying to identify and count the butterflies surrounding me. After an hour, I had identified 6 species, none of which I had knowingly seen before and only 2 of which could I put a name to at the time – yes, I am a novice! Happily I had made one vital bit of preparation; I had taken my camera and was able to take pictures that were just good enough for identification when I arrived home, one of the marvels



of digital photography. The two species I could identify at the time were Ringlet, of which there were hundreds, and a single Green-veined White, sitting proudly on top of a thistle. From the photos, I identified the Common Blue, which was found where the heather was mixed in with the pasture, and the Small Heath competing with the Ringlet in numbers. However the other two species I identified from the photos were more surprising, a number of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and several Large Heath –both of these are priority species for UK conservation action. Of course I could have been mistaken, but I asked Reuben to take a look, and a couple of weekends later he confirmed all these species and added two more, Meadow Brown and Dark Green Fritillary.

So an outing squeezed into a busy weekend, which had started out as a potential disaster, turned into one of the highlights of my summer! I saw butterflies in an abundance I had never seen before, species I had never seen before, in a habitat that I had not understood before despite having lived beside it for many years, and I had identified a site of conservation interest that was unknown before my visit! For me, it emphasises the vital importance of the Wider Countryside Monitoring Scheme – getting to know what is out there.

Reuben

John alerted me that he had encountered some interesting butterflies whilst undertaking a random 1km square survey for Butterfly Conservation near Leadburn in Peeblesshire. Amongst the species he had seen were large heath and small pearl-bordered fritillary, both of which are scarce in the Borders but with meta-populations previously known within a couple of miles. I eventually found a couple of hours to visit the site on the hottest day of the year, 27th July, and what a sight it was. Not since my childhood on the limestone hills of the Cotswolds have I seen so many butterflies; hundreds of common blue, small heath and meadow brown and amongst these some rarities for the Borders; small pearl bordered fritillaries (16), large heath (4), and dark green fritillary (3). Even the moths got a look in with wood tiger, red necked footman and six spot burnet present in numbers.

There is a wind farm planned for the site but I view this as an opportunity to secure favourable conservation management for a significant period rather than as a threat providing the relevant authorities work hard to secure appropriate planning conditions. Both Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Borders Council have been informed of the importance of the area for invertebrates and we will continue to monitor the progress of the application with interest.



Small Blue Survey

by Dan Baker

A Small Blue survey has been carried out along the Angus coast for the last three years. In 2006 a BC group surveyed Barry Buddon and found good numbers in a well-established colony. In 2007 a combined BC and SWT group surveyed Seaton cliffs again finding more than 40 individual butterflies.

2008 has seen a survey from Seaton cliffs to Auchmithie. A new upgraded path along the cliff-top has been laid all the way along this stretch of coast. The works caused some disruption to vegetation but the good news is that it has helped to disperse kidney vetch seed along the pathway. Already, small patches of KV are appearing along the sheltered landward side of the path and are sufficiently frequent to allow Small Blue colonisation in a good year. This bodes well for the expansion of the species along this section of coast. However, there are patches of bracken which may expand and smother other vegetation.

At Auchmithie, the picture is not so good. Alongside the path leading down to the harbour are good semi-sheltered patches of KV which have been surveyed for the last three years without success. It is unlikely that there is Small Blue at Auchmithie. The cliff-top to the south of the village is overrun by bracken and provides no opportunity for KV expansion. There are KV patches on the cliff face, too exposed for SB to survive, then a long area southwards without signs of colonisation.

To the north of Auchmithie the cliff-top is inaccessible (privately owned) and though there are some KV patches on the cliff face in semi-sheltered places no SB could be seen using binoculars from the beach.

In conclusion, Auchmithie, though having suitable habitat and vegetation, is isolated and does not seem possible to (re)colonise for SB. Further south a few good summers are needed for the core colonies at Barry Buddon and Seaton cliffs to expand their range.

My Local Patch

by Barry Prater

We only moved north of the border to Eyemouth in August 2007; recently one of our neighbours commented that we'd now had the chance to see the area in all seasons, to which I replied wryly "Yes, apart from summer". It's true that the weather last year was poor for butterflies and perhaps for moths too, but the local patch philosophy means repeated visits to the same site and this will pay dividends eventually despite the weather.

My local patch is Blaikie Heugh, a small part of the Burnmouth Coast SSSI and just a couple of km south from Eyemouth with grid reference NT954626. You can deviate from the Berwickshire Coastal Path here down from its high point for about 100m to



a sheltered cliff-top area with gorse, rough grass, exposed rock and some instability leading to bare patches of ground. Although it faces east it gets a fair bit of sun during the day (when it's shining, that is). We found this spot within our first fortnight and immediately realised its value for Lepidoptera, not least because we came across a Wall, which has only recently expanded its range to include the SE Scotland coast.

Since that first visit there have been many more and the species list is very interesting for what is such a small piece of land. The butterflies include Small Copper, Small Heath, Grayling and Northern Brown Argus. I did some timed counts for this last species during June and July 2008 and confirmed that the colony appears to be in good health – one problem with the counts is that the main area of cliff slope which is covered with Common Rock-rose (the larval foodplant) is inaccessible due to its steepness unless you are into mountaineering. So seeing even small numbers was a good sign.

There are also moths here, including the Dew Moth, which has only been recorded recently in perhaps a dozen 10km squares across the UK, so is very rare. It's a striking little moth with black-spotted yellow wings and intensely black body, legs and antennae; it is also active by day so can be readily seen where it occurs. Commoner species include Yellow Shell, Shaded Broad-bar and Six-spot Burnet, along with several carpet species. The variety is surprising for such a small site and makes all visits filled with anticipation.

The narrow strip running along the coast from Berwick northwards to St Abbs and beyond is rich in wildlife and some of it has little management either by sheep grazing or other interventions but the habitats seem fairly stable. For butterflies it is a relatively isolated but important refuge from which species might be able to expand their ranges if the corridors inland were in place and more welcoming. It also has iconic birds such as Peregrine and Raven and there are thriving Kittiwake and auk colonies nearby.

Gardening Scotland

by Shona Greig

This year Scotland's largest gardening show Gardening Scotland will be held at The Royal Highland Centre near Edinburgh from 29th – 31st May. Butterfly Conservation will be taking a stand as part of the Living Garden and our theme this year will be about the benefits of growing your own food. The showgarden will be an exciting, interactive allotment-style garden and our partner stands are well worth a look covering everything from butterflies to bumblebees and selling bracken and wool compost to organic soap.

We need volunteers to help man the stand so please do get in touch if you can help out for either a morning or afternoon on any of the above days. The other part of the day you will be available to get out and about and enjoy the rest of the Show. Volunteers will of course be admitted to the Show free of charge and travel expenses will be paid. If you can spare a little time it will be much appreciated. Please contact Shona on 01786 447753 or email sgreig@butterfly-conservation.org



2008 Butterflies

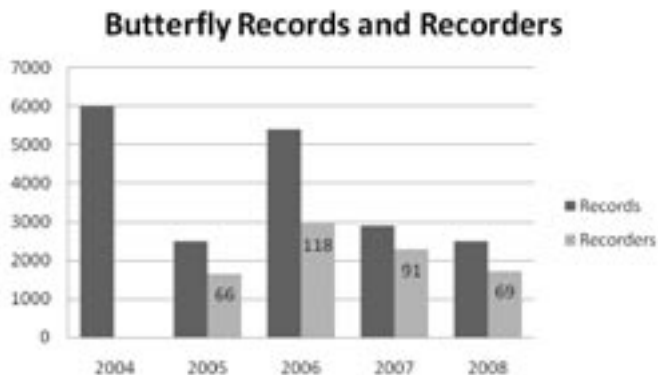
by Duncan Davidson

This time last year, I posed the question “Was 2007 a poor butterfly year?” I feel that I now have to ask the same question of 2008.

My impression is that 2008 was even wetter, colder and less butterfly-friendly than 2007 and I certainly cannot recall a year when I saw fewer butterflies in my garden. Although I have not yet received everyone’s records for 2008 (a fair assumption since there are still some 2007 records trickling in) I can make some comparisons from the data available.

Purely from a volume perspective, the East of Scotland database now has 5400 records for 2006 compared to 2900 for 2007 and 2500 for 2008. So in fact 2008 looks roughly comparable to 2007 with both years falling well short of 2006. Is this because 2007 and 2008 have been very poor or is it because 2006 was a bumper year and we have now reverted to normal conditions? I was not the recorder in 2005, but my predecessor lodged just over 2500 records for that year as well. 2004? Around 6000 records. Was that also a bumper year?

I suspect that there are too many variables to draw conclusions from these figures alone. For example, the records for 2005 were submitted by 66 recorders while the numbers for subsequent years were 118, 91 and 69 respectively. The chart below shows these numbers and the apparent correlation between the number of records and the number of recorders who submitted them.



We probably need a statistician to make sense of it all!

The early part of the year was most memorable for almost constant cold east winds and most of July and August were just wet. I hardly saw a butterfly until mid-August and when I asked for some year highs and lows from other regions round the branch, the response “The lows are too numerous to mention” was fairly typical.



However, as always, these things are subjective and just like the previous year, there were a good number of highlights some of which are incremental to those of 2007:

- The continuing success of Holly Blue in the Scottish Borders and the Lothians, including a record of a mating pair in Kelso and an unconfirmed sighting in the Bo'ness area.
- The inexorable northerly expansion of Comma with more records in 2008 than in all previous years put together, including one in Lumphanan, north of Deeside.
- Consolidation of Small Blue and Small Skipper colonies in the south and Speckled Wood in Deeside.

Add to these the first Large Skipper seen in the Lothians and it is easy to see how some recorders will be very satisfied with their year. There have also been a number of new transects set up during 2008 and I know that the one at the Clune area of Lochore Meadows in Fife, for example, has been a great success, with good numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Large White, Green-veined White, Common Blue, Small Copper, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Small Heath.

So just as in 2007, the success or otherwise of 2008 as a butterfly year depends on who you ask!

East Scotland Branch Web Site

by Mark Cubitt (email: webmaster@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk)

We are very pleased to announce that the branch now has its very own web site: <http://eastscotlandbutterflies.org.uk/>. The site is very much based on Butterfly Conservation's house style for branch sites. Hopefully it has its own character though.

The web site has two objectives:

- To encourage new observers to enjoy and start recording butterflies and moths, and of course consider joining Butterfly Conservation
- To provide a resource for existing branch members

Most branch web sites have a branch logo on each page, but we don't have one. The logos are typically line drawings like the Highland Branch one shown here. Perhaps we have some budding artists within the branch who would like to submit some possible logos that we could use. I'm sure that the Branch Committee would welcome the opportunity to select the most appropriate entry!

If you have any other suggestions or, more importantly, contributions for the site then please let us know. I look forward to hearing from you.



Fife Events 2008

by Duncan Davidson

On the 7th of June, National Moth Night, a moth trapping evening was carried out at Falkland Palace. This was arranged through the Fife Ranger Service and was combined with a fascinating bat talk by Fife bat experts who had with them some actual bats from their sanctuary. It was a warm almost muggy night and we ended up with 31 different moth species including the first county record of Least Black Arches.

On the 13th of June another moth evening was arranged at Auchtermuchty Common, again in conjunction with the Fife Ranger Service, with a walk round the common the following morning to see what butterflies might be around. This was another successful event with 27 different species identified including day flying Chimney Sweeper, Yellow Shell and Latticed Heath. The morning's walk was tempered slightly by the complete lack of butterflies but those present enjoyed hearing about the various bees that we saw.

The Fife Rangers again came up trumps with a joint moth and butterfly event at Lochore Meadows on the 19th July. A number of light traps had been run overnight on the Clune, an area of unimproved grass and marsh on the south shore of the loch, and the contents of the traps were recorded as part of the family day. It was pretty wet during the night and the resulting 22 species constituted a good result. The most impressive amongst them was a single Poplar Hawk-moth. In the afternoon, a short butterfly walk was taken along the loch-side. There were lots of Ringlet some Meadow Brown and a couple of Common Blue.

On the 20th of July, we had an outing to Tentsmuir NNR. Only a small group (do three people constitute a group?) attended the event, but we were rewarded with some sunshine and saw Common Blue, Ringlet, Small Heath, Green-veined White and Meadow Brown butterflies. We also saw good numbers of our target species - Dark Green Fritillary and Grayling. As well as all these butterflies, we saw some impressive large green grasshoppers, Latticed Heath, Common Carpet and many Six-spot Burnet moths and a Red Swordgrass caterpillar ambling across a path. There were also a number of Cinnabar caterpillars on the ragwort.

On the 2nd of August a combined BC and RSPB moth trapping event took place at Vane Farm visitor centre. On Sunday the 3rd of August we opened the traps in sustained torrential rain and recorded a total of 22 species, including the first county record of Slender Brindle.

The final event of the year was again arranged through the Fife Rangers – another moth trapping event, this time at Balmerino Abbey, with kind permission from the National Trust for Scotland. On the evening of 12 September, three traps were set up round the grounds of the abbey in near perfect conditions. A well-attended bat walk took place as the traps were prepared, and a number of bats were observed taking advantage of the calm, midge-friendly setting. However, the rain started at about 9pm



and continued relentlessly throughout the night and all next morning. We were probably lucky to get the 19 species that we did. These included a lot of Red-green Carpet, Common Marbled Carpet and Setaceous Hebrew Character, a few Lunar Underwing, Spruce Carpet and Rosy Rustic and single examples of Dun-bar, Mouse Moth, Angle Shades, Black Rustic, Oak Nycteoline and Silver Y.

Borders Field Trips 2008 Report

by Richard Buckland

The first trip of mine in the Borders was to a site in the Yarrow valley. Two members turned up at the designated time and we set off for the burn I had identified as a potential site for Northern Brown Argus (NBA). The day was rather uninviting for butterfly spotting, as it was rather cold and blustery with a series of showers passing over. The first site we looked at did not have any NBA flying, or eggs on the rock rose. I had seen another potential site in the next valley and so we went on and checked that after a quick lunch. As luck would have it, the sun came out as we approached the site and we were lucky enough to see a single adult on the wing and a few eggs on the rock rose.

My second field trip was to have been a walk to Toxside Moss for Large Heath in conjunction with the Edinburgh Natural History Society. Unfortunately, this was a victim of the dreadful weather in midsummer. So their field trip secretary and I resolved to try again the following year, the details of which appear on the events page.

My final trip was to another site in the Yarrow valley, where I had identified a new NBA site (for me) earlier in the year., when I saw about six adults on the wing. I was therefore very confident that we would see NBA, but strangely, we did not see a single adult, nor any eggs, which was even more strange. We did, however, see a couple of Dark Green Fritillaries which was the other target species. The lack of much evidence of NBA was very unnerving as, up to now, it has been a very reliable and predictable species for me. If they are present at a site, you always see eggs on the rock rose later in the flying period, once the eggs have had time to develop within the females. But on this occasion, only one egg was found. Had the colony been wiped out before the few adults that had emerged had had time to mate and lay eggs? Had the eggs been washed off the rock rose in the stormy summer rains? What could have happened? I will go back to this colony this year to check that it is still there.

I may be able to do this on the occasion of another field trip I have organised to the Yarrow Valley this year. This time it is to the original one I wanted to check last year, when we went to check an adjacent valley instead. There are just so many NBA colonies in that area! Do come along.



Some Thoughts from the Scottish Borders

by Barry Prater

If you look carefully at some of the maps in the Millennium Atlas and its sequel The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland, you'll see that the Borders area has fewer butterfly species per 10km square than most of the southern half of Scotland and that a large part of it has no habitat specialists. These are the butterflies that use larval foodplants which have restricted distributions and/or have other particular environmental requirements; they are often associated with semi-natural and fragmented habitats. Examples are Northern Brown Argus and Large Heath. George Thomson, in his 1980 book *The Butterflies of Scotland* analysed the change with time in the number of species across Scotland and he showed that SE Scotland has suffered the greatest proportional loss in the country. He put this down mainly to a retreat of species southwards in response to a then deteriorating climate, but I think there are other factors. Parts of the Borders, especially Berwickshire, were at the forefront of the agricultural improvement era which began in the late seventeenth century and led to the intensive farming which we now see across lowland areas. Couple these influences with huge changes in the types and management of our woodlands and it's not surprising that many butterfly species, especially the habitat specialists, have declined or disappeared.

Despite the negative impacts on butterflies of current approaches to land use, we still have important species here, including habitat specialists. The Grayling seems OK but limited in its range to the coastal strip, where one colony of Small Blue also survives (there should be more as Kidney Vetch, its larval foodplant, occurs in some excellent patches elsewhere). Northern Brown Argus and Dark Green Fritillary are fairly widespread and the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary is still hanging on in a few spots. Suitable areas of habitat in or near forestry plantations can provide just the right conditions for several of these species so it's not all bad news. There is even good news as one of our members, John Woolliams, found Small Pearl-bordered and Dark Green Fritillary, together with Large Heath while carrying out survey work in what appeared to be an unpromising 1km square as part of BC's Wider Countryside Monitoring Scheme.

For our moths the picture is less well defined, despite a good collection of historical data and several keen moth recorders in the area. However, that is about to change following the establishment of the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) which forms part of the wider Moths Count project (see www.mothscount.org). Over the years 2007-2011 a comprehensive database containing both historical and modern-day macro-moth records is being built up and distribution maps of species will be published. County Moth Recorders across the Scottish Borders have been very active recently in supplying records to the NMRS, but there is still much scope for more moth recording and such data provide the bedrock for any conservation activities. We also need to understand the habitat requirements of moths much better if we are to implement measures to help them.



During summer 2009 a project will be launched to discover the current distribution of the Cinnabar moth in the Borders, along the lines of the successful Peacock and Orange-tip postcard surveys carried out by BC Scotland. The Cinnabar appears to have a surprising distribution, occurring on the coast of Northumberland and East Lothian, but being almost absent from the Berwickshire coast and with very few inland records despite its larval foodplant, Common Ragwort, being widespread. So look out for more publicity on this project and especially look out for the Cinnabar and its caterpillars later in the year!

Butterfly Conservation's work in Scotland

by Paul Kirkland

Species Action Project

Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) have teamed up to help some of Scotland's rarest butterflies and moths. This new project focuses on four species (three butterflies and a moth); Marsh Fritillary, Chequered Skipper, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Slender Scotch Burnet moth, and builds on previous work.

In many cases the focus will be on landscapes rather than individual isolated sites as the project aims to link existing colonies to create networks of sites, allowing adults to move more readily between colonies making these populations more robust and sustainable. The project will focus on Scotland's ten Butterfly Survival Zones which have been designated as being some of the most important landscapes for butterflies and moths in Scotland.

It will also help the Scottish Government deliver its commitment to biodiversity as three of the species (Marsh Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Slender Scotch Burnet) are included on Species Action Framework (SAF, led by SNH), launched last year to provide targeted action for 32 priority species in Scotland. Whilst the two woodland butterflies, (Chequered Skipper and Pearl-bordered Fritillary), are priorities in the Scottish Forestry Strategy (led by FCS) that aims to help protect and enhance biodiversity.

These key species face a number of issues. The fate of Marsh Fritillary is linked to the future of farming and crofting in the remote and marginal areas that the species occurs. Many Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Chequered Skipper sites have deteriorated as regenerating trees and rank vegetation have developed. Whilst for Slender Scotch Burnet bracken and scrub encroachment has severely reduced the area of suitable habitat.

To date work has focused on working with landowners and their advisors to access funding through Scotland's new Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) to enhance their land for these key species. This has resulted in the production of site specific grazing or woodland plans.



Butterfly Conservation Scotland would like to thank SNH and FCS for part funding this exciting new project. We are also indebted to the co-operation and enthusiasm of all landowners and the many volunteers who survey and monitor these important colonies.

Other activities

Our core grant from SNH helps us carry out a range of other activities such as:

- co-ordinating monitoring and surveys for other UKBAP butterflies and moths,
- organising meetings for BC members and volunteers,
- working on policy and media issues,
- and raising the profile of Lepidoptera and of BCS.

Thus each autumn we now put on a Members' Day to celebrate what we have achieved during the year, and as a chance for members across Scotland to met up. In the spring we have a Recorders Gathering to provide feedback for those helping with surveys and monitoring, and look at priorities for the year ahead.

Much time is spent with other NGOs working on policy issues for agriculture, forestry and planning, in helping implement the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, and influencing debates on energy and transport.

In recent years we have run an annual postcard survey to encourage the public to record a common and (hopefully!) unmistakable butterfly and raise our profile. Following on with very successful surveys of Orange-tips and Peacocks in the north and west, in 2009 we are running a Scotland-wide survey for the Small Tortoiseshell.

We also attend Scotland's biggest Garden Show (just outside Edinburgh) each year, and are now also working with Edinburgh Butterfly and Insect World to develop a butterfly garden.

Shona Greig, Tom Prescott & Paul Kirkland (and a cast of hundreds of volunteers)



Muchty Common Butterfly Transect 2008

by Kate Morison

The April - September 2008 Butterfly Records for the Common have just been collated. Here's a brief outline of some of the results:

A team of 7 volunteers completed 20 recorded counts and recorded 389 butterflies despite the cold easterly winds and generally rotten summer – well done ! Thirteen species were recorded this year, 2 less than the usual 15 – no Common blues or Painted ladies were recorded.

Ringlets were the most recorded butterfly with 329 records from June and July. Meadow Brown and Small Heath numbers were fairly steady. The caterpillars of these 3 species feed on grasses so there's no shortage of food for them on the Common.

Species	2008	2007
Large White	6	28
Small White	9	20
Green-veined White	4	15
Orange-tip	4	6
Small Copper	33	2
Common Blue	0	2
Small Tortoiseshell	5	10
Red Admiral	1	5
Painted Lady	0	3
Peacock	35	53
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	2	13
Dark Green Fritillary	6	2
Meadow Brown	32	13
Small Heath	14	32
Ringlet	223	57
Total	389	329
Chimneysweep Moth	39	57
Number Of Counts	20	19

Peacocks and Small Coppers did better this year than last year, each coming in 2 waves at the beginning and end of summer.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary numbers were down slightly, but Dark Green Fritillary numbers went up from 2 to 6.



Numbers of Small Tortoiseshell and White butterflies were down, mirroring national trends. The Common Blue is also declining nationally. Having said that, there was a field of brassicas next to the common in 2007 which no doubt helped the whites along that year!

Well done to Jean for recording the only Red Admiral of the year on the 29th September!

So, winners and losers all round. However, results are very weather dependent so it would be wrong to try to predict trends from results based on 2 years of very unpredictable weather !

One to look out for in 2009 will be the Comma butterfly which hasn't been recorded on the Common yet but was spotted locally in Pitmedden Forest in August 2008.

Thanks again to all volunteers for your hard work and dedication. Let's hope for a glorious summer in 2009. There will be another training session for volunteers on Sunday 29th March at 1pm. New volunteers are always welcome.

For more information on last year's results or to enquire about volunteering call Kate on 07950 786245.

All results from the Butterfly Count are passed on to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme www.ukbms.org.

Butterfly World

A new native butterfly and moth garden is being created at Edinburgh's Butterfly & Insect World.

The programme is part funded by the Scottish Government and the European Community Tyne Esk LEADER programme 2007-2013.

The garden will be developed in conjunction with Butterfly Conservation Scotland. The project aims to create examples of gardens that could attract native butterflies and moths and demonstrate to visitors how they can attract them to their own outside spaces.



News from the North East

by Helen Rowe

Over the past year, Butterfly Conservation supporters 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 2008, many in partnership with other organisations. A Priority Butterflies workshop at Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve (Scottish Natural Heritage) and Cambus O' May Forest (Forestry Commission Scotland) was organised by the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre and led by myself as an Aberdeenshire Council Ranger and NE contact for the BC East Scotland branch. The participants helped to do a Pearl-bordered Fritillary timed count and went away with enthusiasm and knowledge to record or pass on information to others.

Several public moth (and bat) nights/mornings and a number of butterfly (and dragonfly) walks were held at nature reserves, community woodlands and other local wildlife sites across Aberdeenshire, some as part of community festivals and one for Save our Butterflies Week. Many were organised by Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service, including joint events with Aberdeen City Council, Forestry Commission Scotland and Balmoral Estate Ranger Services. These were generally well attended and though the poor summer weather reduced the number of moths/butterflies seen on some occasions, people of all ages were able to see species at close range and appreciate their intricate patterns of scales used for camouflage or warning colouration.

Over the past year, I have also had requests from a range of local groups to give butterfly and moth walks and talks, including primary schools and SWRIs, which have provided further opportunities to promote the work of Butterfly Conservation. Highlights included discovering with Aboyne Primary School children the contents of a moth trap set up in the Bell Wood community woodland, which included the spectacular Peppered Moth, Buff-tip and much less common Clouded Buff. One pupil even persuaded her father to get a moth trap so they could start recording moths in their garden!

BC Scotland coordinated Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species work such as on-going monitoring and management of Dark Bordered Beauty moth sites by land managers and local volunteers. Pearl-bordered Fritillary surveys continued on Deeside, including finding colonies at new sites. Also noteworthy is that the Speckled Wood appears to be expanding its range in Aberdeenshire, with records of individuals from Aboyne and Banchory in 2008.

Similar activities are planned for 2009 – at the time of writing dates have been set for some events as set out in the events section, but look out for more information on the new East Scotland branch website and forthcoming national email/printed newsletters. Alternatively, to find out more about what's happening in the area contact: Helen Rowe – email: helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or tel: 013398 85751



Wanted - More Garden Moth recorders in Scotland!

by Dave Grundy



The Garden Moth Scheme (GMS) has been running now for five years in the West Midlands Region with 60 gardens taking part across six counties. Intentionally there was no fan-fare to announce the start of the scheme, as we wanted to keep it quiet while we worked out a recording system that was effective. We now have a GMS that works and want to expand it to a national scheme.

In 2007 & 2008 this process of expansion started and has already been a great success. We now have GMS in Wales with 30 gardens (GMS Cymru), South East England with 30 gardens, East of England with 30 gardens and SW England with 20 gardens. As well as this we have quite a few additional recorders across the country from the Isle of Wight to Scotland. In 2008 we will have close to 200 GMS recorders and we are hoping for another big expansion in 2009.

So do you want to join in for 2009? If so, let us know – you will be very welcome, we are particularly keen on recorders from Scotland joining this year. In 2008 we have 5 recorders from Scotland, but in 2009 we would like to see a big increase.

What do you need to do to take part? You just need to count the numbers of common moths you see in your moth trap, for one night every week from March to November (and you are probably doing that already). The list of moths consists of about 200 species, common in your area and those that are difficult to identify are intentionally left out. This means that the GMS is open to recorders of all abilities – you don't have to be an expert, just get yourself a moth trap and field guide and you will be welcome! This is a rapidly expanding garden moth-recording scheme that measures the fortunes of our common moths. And to make it even more attractive to recorders the GMS now has its own popular website, chat-site, regular newsletter, annual report and meeting.

So what have been the results of the five years of West Midlands GMS? We have found that some moths including Dot Moth and Garden Carpet are in decline while others such as Common Footman and Blair's Shoulder-knot are increasing. Preliminary results for 2008 are already quantifying just how bad a second wet summer has been for moths. But are these just short-term changes and is this reflected across the whole country? To answer these questions we need more moth recorders throughout the British Isles. If you count moths in your back garden and want to make a real difference to the future of moths and our environment then get in touch with us to sign up for the 2009 recording season.

So, get in touch straight away if you want to join the GMS from Scotland – your records will be really valuable.

Dave Grundy, 5, Melrose Avenue, Woodfield Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B12 8TG. Tel: 0121-446-5446, Email: dgcountryside@btinternet.com



Alva Glen and wind farms

by Heather Young

Last spring I decided to combine my enjoyment of the outdoors, desire to improve my fitness, and love of butterflies, moths and other six-legged creatures, by walking a Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transect around Alva Glen in Clackmannanshire (NS884975), on the southern edge of the Ochil Hills. While I recorded all butterfly and moth species seen, I was particularly interested in the population of northern brown argus butterflies at the northern end of the glen. This is a United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Clackmannanshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) priority species, and is restricted to areas that support its larval food plant, common rock rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*).

A small member of the 'blues', the Scottish race sports a distinctive pair of small white spots on its upper wings, distinguishing it from the female common blue which can be otherwise superficially similar (the male common blue is much more blue!).



Northern brown argus on
bird's foot trefoil
© Scott Shanks

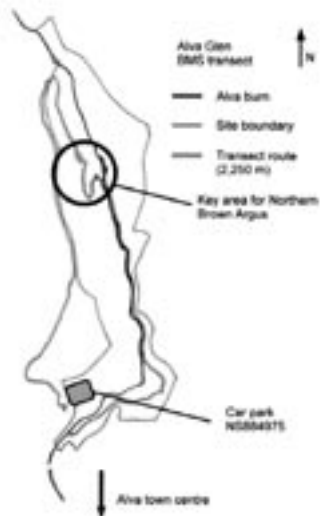


Northern brown argus
showing white spots on wings
© Scott Shanks



Female common blues can
be quite brown
© Ramsay Young

The transect was walked once a week from the beginning of April to the end of September, with the exception of one week in April and three in late August / early September when the weather failed to meet minimum BMS requirements.



The route started at the lower entrance to a small area of parkland known as MacArthur Braes, and followed the main pathway along the glen to the waterfall, initially at high level through a narrow gorge, then a pleasant walk alongside the burn to the dam. The path then climbs steeply out of the glen, with several seats along the zig-zag path to pause for breath and admire the view of the Forth estuary. After passing through the gate at the top, I walked back along the outside of the sheep fence to the steep descent through the gorse (Pate Road) above the golf course, finishing at the metal stile near the car park.

Very little butterfly activity occurs until the glen starts to open out after crossing the last of the footbridges, as there is so much shade in the lower part of the glen.



Further up the path, before it leaves the burn to climb out of the glen, you may see butterflies drinking from puddles, or nectaring on the many wildflowers that grow alongside in the sheltered sunny areas. Speckled yellows (a day-flying brown and yellow moth) were abundant in this area, as well as on the climb to the top of the zig-zag path, during late May and early June.

The vast majority of my butterfly and moth sightings were made between the first seat after climbing up from the dam, and the top of the zig-zag path, as this slope is south-facing, has scattered gorse scrub for shelter, bare ground (the path) for basking, and is composed of flower-rich, lightly-grazed grassland (sheep have been excluded from the glen for some years, although roe deer can still be seen inside the fence). It is in this area that the common rock rose grows on the rocky outcrops alongside the path, and where you are most likely to see northern brown argus, from mid-June to the end of July. Ringlets were abundant on these grassy slopes in July (a butterfly that seems to be expanding its range in Scotland), as were chimney sweepers (a day-flying black moth with white wing-tips) and the magnificent six-spot burnet moths with their bright red and black warning colouration. Small coppers (a tiny, bright orange, feisty little butterfly) were common here, and indeed throughout the transect in two generations – May / June and again from the end of July.



Six-spot burnet moths
© Scott Shanks



Blueberry bumblebee
© BBCT

Many people walking in the glen turn back at this point (if they manage to climb this far!), however the section between the top of the zig-zag path and the sheep fence at the northern end of the glen, is well worth a visit, as it is here that the regenerating heather and bilberry support the presence of one of our most beautiful bumblebees, the blueberry bumblebee, *Bombus monticola*. This is another BAP priority species, and although it is not rare in Scotland, it clearly benefits from the exclusion of sheep,

as it is seldom encountered out on the open, more heavily-grazed moorland nearby. Indeed the presence of this bumblebee has prompted me to register the same transect around Alva Glen with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust for 2009, and take part in their pilot scheme to monitor bumblebee numbers in a similar fashion to the BMS, but counting bumblebees once a month between March and October.

Another BAP priority butterfly, the small heath, is commonly seen throughout the summer on all the grassy sections of the transect, even outside the sheep fence, and seems to prefer a more heavily-grazed sward. Again, this species is not uncommon in Scotland, but has undergone serious decline in other parts of the UK.



Small heath
© Heather Young

All of the butterflies and day-flying moths encountered on



my visits to Alva Glen are listed in Table 1, below, in decreasing order of abundance, along with the best time to look for them, and their larval food plants – it is the presence of a wide variety of these, along with an abundance of nectar sources, that make the glen so attractive to insects. My original intention was to include a section through the waste ground at the entrance to the glen, but having found that the site is earmarked for housing development (the same exact route must be walked for several years to provide enough data for population trends to be assessed), butterflies and moths on the profusion of buddleia bushes were recorded as casual sightings. There were many peacocks, small tortoiseshells, red admirals, and large and small whites, as well as a single comma (another species spreading further into Scotland), a dark green fritillary, and a lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing moth, perhaps tempted into nectaring in the middle of the afternoon by the extremely unpredictable weather!

Table 1.
Butterflies and moths recorded in Alva Glen in 2008, in decreasing order of abundance.

Species	Flight period (Alva Glen 2008)	Main larval food plants
Ringlet	Late June/ July	Grasses
Small heath	End May – mid August	Grasses
Speckled yellow*	Mid May – mid June	Wood sage
Small copper	May / June and again from end of July	Sorrels
Chimney sweeper*	Mid June – end July	Pignut
6-spot burnet*	Mid July – mid August	Bird's foot trefoil
Meadow brown	July / August	Grasses
Northern brown argus	Mid June – end July	Common rock rose
Peacock	April / May then from late July	Nettles
Green-veined white	May / June	Cuckoo flower / garlic mustard
Orange tip	Late April – early June	Cuckoo flower / garlic mustard
Small white	June / July	Brassicas
Large white	July / August	Brassicas
Small tortoiseshell	April / May then from late July	Nettles
Common blue	June / July	Bird's foot trefoil
Dark green fritillary	July / August	Violets
Red admiral	From late July	Nettles
Comma**	Late July	Nettles / wych elm?
Lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing**	Late July	Wide range
*day-flying moths		
**single specimen on buddleia on waste ground at entrance to glen		

After a few years of weekly walks around the glen, not only will we have a better picture of the status of the resident butterfly populations, but I should also be considerably fitter!



For further information on bumblebees see the Bumblebee Conservation Trust web-site at: <http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk>



Small copper sharing a meal with a male field cuckoo bumblebee *Bombus campestris*.
© Ramsay Young

But what does all this have to do with wind farms? Well, in the course of investigating the possibility of the presence of other populations of northern brown argus in the area, I found that a historical record exists a little to the north and east of Alva Glen, which just happens to be on a potential route for the electricity grid connection for the consented Burnfoot Hill wind farm (this route was rejected on the grounds that it would leave an unsightly scar on the face of the Ochils, but may still be re-visited). The local biodiversity officer has assured me that the northern brown argus will be taken into account, and I have offered to take a walk up there in the spring to see if there are patches of common rock

rose in the vicinity, or whether this was likely to be a single individual blown a little off course at the end of the summer. This leads me, in slightly convoluted fashion, onto the subject of the potential contribution that onshore wind farm developments can make to the conservation of biodiversity in Scotland, over and above any perceived benefits of clean, green energy from renewable sources. A far more immediate, direct positive impact can be made by the incorporation of a habitat management plan (HMP) into the development, and this is something that has become almost universal in recent years. In fact recent scoping opinions (feedback on what should be taken into account in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process) by the Scottish Government have stated that "*a commitment to maintain and / or enhance the biodiversity potential of the overall area is expected*".

The quality of baseline ecological information provided (in terms of up-to-date, site-specific surveys across a wide range of taxonomic groups), and the quality of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for wind farms have both improved significantly over the last 15 years – this was the subject of the research project for my own Masters degree last year, but an example of the practical benefits of detailed surveys being undertaken in areas not generally visited has been the discovery of previously unknown colonies of marsh fritillary in County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland (Butterfly, Summer 2008, p.19).

Actual land-take by turbines and tracks is low, typically only 1 – 2% of the site area, and these can often be 'micro-sited' to avoid important habitat patches. This leaves large areas that could be designated for habitat creation, restoration or enhancement, and there is an opportunity, during the often-lengthy consultation process, to influence the direction taken in the preparation of the HMP. Much damage has been caused to upland areas of Scotland by the large-scale creation of commercial forestry plantations, and over-grazing by sheep and deer, and many of the HMP's proposed to date involve



fairly general habitat restoration. The blanket bog Habitat Action Plan (HAP) for the Scottish Borders acknowledges the potential role wind farm developers can play in achieving targets for biodiversity conservation, and BAP species are often prioritised both in the initial EclA, and the creation of specific HMP's. Creation of 'woodland edge' and 'forest habitat networks' primarily aimed at black grouse or red squirrel conservation, can also benefit many of our butterflies and moths, and efforts to improve conditions for upland waders generally involve boosting numbers of invertebrates as food for the birds!

The Butterfly was named by the Scottish public in the top ten of 'species' worthy of conservation effort, and they tend to show a more rapid response to environmental change than plants or birds, so there is good reason to promote more specific measures to enhance habitat for butterflies in appropriate locations. Methodology for monitoring the success, or otherwise, of HMP's for butterflies is well-established (transects or timed counts), and requires little expertise to carry out. Precedents have also been set whereby, if the actual site is inappropriate for habitat enhancement, developers have offered to commit funds to assist in conservation or research at nearby nature reserves.

So if you hear whispers of a wind farm in your back yard, by all means raise awareness of butterflies and moths you feel may be endangered by the development, but also consider the possibilities for suggesting positive measures that could be taken in the process.

Moth-trapping from a beginners perspective

by Heather Young

It all started one fine sunny afternoon a couple of years ago – I was out recording small pearl-bordered fritillaries when I noticed clouds of black 'butterflies' flying around the tops of willow trees around the edge of the heath, next to a large area of recently-felled conifer plantation, but didn't have a clue what they might be. I eventually came across one that had come to ground – a strange-looking creature with velvety-black wings, a red collar, and a bright yellow abdomen. On returning home and searching the internet, I decided it was a Red-necked Footman, and wasn't supposed to be here in central Scotland. My butterfly man put me in touch with the county moth recorder, who assured me that they are here, but like many moths are under-recorded. So I bought a book, and started recording any moths I came across during the day – I can't resist a black hole! One thing led to another, and the knowledge that many more moths are around at night than I would ever see during the day, started me thinking about trapping.

A little daunted by the array (and expense) of equipment available, I asked for advice from my branch committee, and got more than I bargained for – the loan of a Heath trap for the summer! I had to source a battery for it, and opted for a sealed lead acid type designed for use in a model boat – battery plus charger (with red light to indicate when charging is complete) obtained over the internet for a little under £30.



Fortunately, being mid-March and still quite chilly, things started slowly. Just one or two moths in the trap at any one time for the first few weeks – a Chestnut, a few Hebrew Characters, a Common Quaker, a Clouded Drab – all of a similar size and shape, and, having at first been very wary of opening the trap in case its contents redistributed themselves around my conservatory, all very docile and easy to examine at close quarters. In fact one Hebrew Character gave such a convincing performance while playing dead that it almost ended up on the bird table!



Hebrew Character
© Heather Young

So, imagine my surprise one morning in May, when I opened the trap and my first Early Thorn made a bold bid for freedom, and had to be retrieved from the rafters. As the pace picked up, and more moths arrived, I soon found that the easiest thing to do was to take a quick digital photograph of everything and identify them on the computer later in the day. Numbers peaked in mid-August with 33 moths of 14 species, and I now appreciate why I was advised to start with a small 6W actinic Heath trap, and not a Robinson with a 125W MV lamp – a fellow beginner in Aboyne started trapping at the end of July and tallied 3,705 individuals of 109 species, with an average of 75 moths a night!

Most of my moths were of the common, ubiquitous variety – the closest I came to glory was a 'Great Oak Beauty', never recorded in Scotland (it was a Willow Beauty really – I get carried away sometimes). Fortunately, Butterfly Conservation equip all their county moth recorders with a standard-issue bubble-bursting pin, a tub of ego salve, and a reference book of pacificatory statements and motivational phrases.

When days started to shorten, and the nights became too long for my little boat battery to last the night, my thoughts turned to upgrading my equipment. I still didn't want to spend a fortune, so decided to make my own Skinner trap. The internet has lots of examples of home-made traps, some with detailed plans and instructions – I found an old plastic storage box in the garage which had roughly the right dimensions, and set about converting it into the best DIY Skinner ever!

The handles were at just the right height for the light-board (a piece of skirting board), two t-shaped electrical conduits were bolted on to support the perspex sheets, and the internal surfaces were made more moth-friendly by gluing on some cork floor tiles, the edges finished with silicon window sealant. The only things I had to purchase were a sheet of perspex (£9 but with plenty left over for more traps, or other ingenious devices), and a lighting system. I decided to stick with actinic for the time being (the same trap could be used with interchangeable boards), and sent off for a 40W mains-powered device (£40 with spare tube), although if you really want to keep costs down, a 15W bug-zapper would do fine. Extra insulating tape and a cut-down Coke® bottle,



held in place by a hi-tech rubber band, ensures that the business end remains dry, even in gale force winds and torrential rain (yes, I've tried it, and what's more so did a fine December moth (in November of course!)). A bit of chicken wire, or a few strips of wood in the bottom helps to keep the egg trays dry, as puddles collect despite drilled drainage holes, but really that's all there is to it.



My trap!
© Heather Young

Late autumn species, apart from several December moths, included Northern Winter Moth, several Spruce Carpets and a November / Pale November / Autumnal moth (these can only be reliably separated by dissection). As I write in mid-February, the milder weather recently has brought several Chestnuts and a Pale Brindled Beauty (my first) out of hiding, and I am very much looking forward to adding to my rather meagre garden list (45 species) over the course of 2009.

So the message is simple: a) you don't have to go to enormous expense to start moth-ing; b) there is plenty of help out there with identification difficulties – branch web-sites, internet chat rooms, and of course your county moth recorder; and c) it's a lot of fun! Go on, give it a try – every record is valuable – Moths Count!

With thanks to Glasgow & South-West Scotland branch committee, and particularly John Knowler for his patient support. No moths were harmed during the making of this article.



December Moth
© Heather Young



East Scotland Events 2009

Lothians and Borders events

1. Sun. 28 June, Yarrow Valley at Whitehope Burn for Northern Brown Argus. Meet at the triangle park at the junction of the road from the Ettrick valley with the main A708 Yarrow road (NT358277) at 10.30pm. (contact: Richard Buckland, 0131 332 0615).
2. Sat. 4 July. At Cockmuir in a joint meeeting with the Edin. Nat Hist. Soc. to see Large Heath. Meet at end of footpath to Toxside, 10.30 am. (NT264551). (contact: Richard Buckland, 0131 332 0615).
3. Sun. July 19. Piper's Knowe Quarry, Chirnside for Small and Large Skippers and maybe NBA as well. Meet at the entrance to Causeway bank Farm on the B6437 (NT878590) at 11.00am. (contact: Barry Prater, 018907 5237).

Fife events

1. Sat. 16 May. East Lomond to look for Green Hairstreaks. Meet at the Craigmead car park (NO227061) at 2.00pm. (contact: Duncan Davidson, 01383 730446).
2. Sat/Sun 30/31 May. Moth trapping at Balmerino Abbey. Meet at abbey (NO357246) at 9.00pm. on the 30th for walk to see moths at traps. Meet here again at 9.30 in morning of 31st to see the catch. (contact: Kate Morison, 07950 786245).
3. Fri/Sat 5/6 June. Moth trapping at Cullaloe. Meet at car park at NT186871 at 9.30pm. on the 5th to see early moths, and again at 10am. on the 6th. to empty the traps. (contact: Tim Brain, 07739 428224).
4. Sun 5 July. Kincaig Point to look for NBA. Time tba. (contact Kate Morison for all details).
5. Sat/Sun 15/16 August. Moth trapping at Auchtermuchty Common. Meet at car park at 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. (contact: Kate Morison, 07950 786245).
6. Sat/Sun 22/23 Aug. Moth trapping at Falkland Palace. Meet at palace gates at 7.30pm. on 19th. and again at 9.30am. on the 20th. to see the catch. (contact: Kate Morison, 07950 786245).

Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn and a torch could be a good idea on the moth trapping events. Times and arrangements might change depending on weather and other circumstances so it is best to confirm beforehand. Other events will be arranged throughout the year – details will be published when possible – or contact Duncan Davidson on 01383 730446, or email (see inside back cover).



Tayside events

1. Sun 7 June at Lunan Bay to look for Small Blue. Meet at public car park at the dunes at Lunan (NT691518), 10.30 am. (contact: Richard Buckland, 0131 332 0615).

2. Tues. 16 June. A joint outing with Dundee Naturalist's Society to Scotia seeds, which specialises in making packs of seeds for a range of habitats and where the flowers should attract lots of insects. Moth traps will be set up on the evening of the 15th. The catch will be kept for viewing on the 16th. Meet at Scotia Seeds, Mavisbank, Farnell, Brechin, Angus DD9 6TR. (off A933 grid ref. NO599566). at 7.00pm. on the 16th. (Contact David Lampard 01382 489670).

3. Sat, 27 June. Glen Esk for a joint outing with the Dundee Nats. to see the general wildlife in this glen and its lochs, waterfalls and moorland. Meet at East gate lane at 8.30am. or the car park at Auchronie (NO427804). at 10.00am. (Contact David Lampard 01382 489670).

4. Sat. 18 July. Balkello Woodland, Auchterhouse hill and Ballrudderon hill, Angus. Explore the Sidlaws, Auchterhouse and Ballruddon hill. This site has a range of habitats including grassland, wetlands, pine plantation, moorland and disused quarries all within a few square kilometres. Meet at car park at the Balkello community woodland (NO364384) at 10.30am. (Contact: David Lampard 01382 489670).

5. Sun. 9 Aug. Barry Buddon, Angus. Annual joint groups outing, all day. The MoD training camp is open for one day of the year and includes a range of grassland wetland and woodland habitats, as well as Buddon Ness sand dunes. Meet at Monifieth football pitch car park, NO501322 at 10.00am. In Monifieth follow Marine Drive towards the caravan sites. Turn left as soon as you have gone under the railway line. (Contact David Lampard 01382 489670).

6. Sat/Sun 19/20 Sept. National Moth night. Trapping at Balgay Park. Meet at the Mills Observatory Balgay Park Dundee. Use the entrance at the junction of Ancrum Road and Glamis Road, and round to the observatory, NO377307 at 7.00pm. Reconvene at 10.00am the following morning to check the catch. This is a free family event with the Dundee City park rangers. (Contact David Lampard 01382 489670, or Dundee rangers on 01382 431848).

Aberdeenshire Events

Booking essential for all events - most free & open to adults & accompanied children, but check with event contact. Bring stout footwear, appropriate clothing for weather conditions & on moth night, sunglasses/wide-brimmed hat & torch recommended. General contact: Helen Rowe, South Marr Ranger, Aberdeenshire Council - email: helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or tel: 013398 85751

Moths on the Muir

Friday 24th April 8.00pm – late

Discover some of the spring-flying moths found on the Muir of Dinnet National Nature



Reserve, such as the rare and beautiful Kentish Glory and find out how to attract moths in your own garden. Event organised in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage & Cairngorms LBAP.

MEET: Burn O' Vat Visitor Centre, near Dinnet (Grid Ref: NO 429997)

CONTACT: Catriona Reid (SNH) on 01224 642863

Aberdeen Bat & Moth Night

Friday 29th May 9.00pm - late (date & time TBC)

Event organised in partnership with Aberdeen City Council Ranger Service.

MEET: Venue TBC

CONTACT: Aberdeen City Ranger Service on 01224 897400

Marvellous Moths & More Minibeasts

Saturday 20th June, 10.00am – 12noon

Discover the amazing moths caught in a live trap set up overnight, find out how to take part in Garden Moths Count and then hunt for other minibeasts in the Bell Wood. Event organised in partnership with Cairngorms LBAP.

MEET: Bell Wood Community Woodland car park, Aboyne (Grid Ref: NO 538986)

CONTACT: South Marr Ranger on 013398 85751

Braemar Gala Week

Saturday 4th – Friday 10th July

Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service will be leading some events exploring the natural and cultural heritage of the Braemar area for this annual festival, including a butterfly & bumblebee walk and bat & moth night.

CONTACT: Braemar Tourist Information Centre on 013397 41600,

braemar@visitscotland.com or visit www.braemarscotland.co.uk

Butterfly Bonanza

Thursday 23rd July, 10.30am – 12.30pm

Help the Balmoral and Aberdeenshire rangers identify and record the wonderful array of rare and beautiful butterflies in lower Glen Muick. Event organised in partnership with Balmoral Estate & Cairngorms LBAP.

MEET: Mill of Sterin, Glen Muick, near Ballater (Grid Ref: NO 349928)

CONTACT: Balmoral (Glen Muick) Ranger on 013397 55059

Jewels of the Air

Tuesday 28th July, 2.00pm – 4.30pm

Discover the variety of butterflies, moths, dragonflies and damselflies found at Aboyne Loch, with the chance of seeing an osprey fishing while enjoying a fine piece at the Lodge on the Loch afterwards. Cost: £3.75 (includes hot or cold drink, scone & tray bake). Event organised in partnership with Cairngorms LBAP.

MEET: Lodge on the Loch car park, Aboyne (Grid Ref: NJ 538000)

CONTACT: South Marr Ranger on 013398 85751



Buzzing Bees & Beautiful Butterflies of Inch

Saturday 8th August, 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Come along to Inch Meadows and meet some of the resident flying creatures. Find out more about what has been done to make the meadows a haven for wildlife and how you can help too.

MEET: Inch Meadows, off High St, Inch

CONTACT: North Marr & West Garioch Ranger on 01466 795087

Ballater Victoria Week Bat & Moth Night

Friday 14th August, 8.00pm – late

Get up close and personal with bats and moths and dispel all your fears of these intriguing animals. Event organised in partnership with Balmoral Estate & Cairngorms LBAP.

MEET: Spittal of Glen Muick Visitor Centre, near Ballater (Grid Ref: NO 307850)

CONTACT: Balmoral (Glen Muick) Ranger on 013397 55059

Night Watch

Saturday 29th August, 7.30pm - late

Celebrate European Bat Weekend with Rosy the Rustic Moth and Beldie the Buchan Bat by discovering some of Aden's night time creatures.

MEET: Aden Country Park Natural History Cabin (in overflow car park), near Mintlaw

CONTACT: Senior Ranger (North) on 01771 622857

Beautiful Bats & Magnificent Moths of Huntly

Friday 18th September, 7.00pm – 10.00pm

Join the rangers for a fun night out! As part of National Moth Weekend come out to the Meadows at Huntly and get up close to these fascinating night flying creatures.

MEET: Huntly Meadows car park, Riverside Drive, Huntly

CONTACT: North Marr & West Garioch Ranger on 01466 795087



Butterfly Conservation - East Of Scotland Branch Financial Report For 12 Months To 31 March 2008

Susan McKenzie (Treasurer)

Summary Of Activities During Year	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
Opening Balance At 1 April 2007	5,382.50	1,431.64	6,814.14
Net Surplus (Above)	2,810.00	1,162.63	3,972.63
Closing Balance At 31 March 2008	8,192.50	2,594.27	10,786.77

Breakdowns Of Receipts & Payments

Receipts	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
Grants	5,000.00	-	5,000.00
Subscriptions	-	1,371.00	1,371.00
Donations	-	70.00	70.00
Bank Interest	-	152.31	152.31
Other	-	11.80	11.80
Total	5,000.00	1,605.11	6,605.11

Payments

Restricted Fund	2,190.00	-	2,190.00
Conservation	-	300.00	300.00
Newsletter And Membership Costs	-	142.48	142.48
	2,190.00	442.48	2,632.48

Net Surplus During Year	2,810.00	1,162.63	3,972.63
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	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
Opening Balance At 1 April 2007	5,382.50	1,431.64	6,814.14
Receipts	5,000.00	1,605.11	6,605.11
Payments	(2,190.00)	(442.48)	(2,632.48)
Closing Balance At 31 March 2008	8,192.50	2,594.27	10,786.77



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Dew Moth



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