



# Winter Newsletter

December 2011

## **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from everyone at Butterfly Conservation**

Contributions to our newsletters are always welcome – please contact Shona at [sgreig@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:sgreig@butterfly-conservation.org) or the postal address below. If you do not wish to receive our newsletter in the future, simply reply to this message with the word 'unsubscribe' in the title – thank you.

**Scotland Team (Paul Kirkland, Tom Prescott and Shona Greig)**  
**Butterfly Conservation Scotland**  
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**Email: [scotland@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:scotland@butterfly-conservation.org)**  
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### **VOLUNTEERING MATTERS WITH BCS!**

#### **Outstanding Volunteer Award**

We would like to congratulate Mark Cubitt on receiving Butterfly Conservation's Outstanding Volunteer Award – he was nominated for the award by East Branch for his excellent contribution.

#### **Volunteer Hours**

Thank you to everyone who sends in their volunteer hours to the Stirling office. It is really important for us to be able to quantify volunteer input so we can show funders how cost effective we are as an organisation. Most types of butterfly and moth related activities can be included. Some examples would be: targeted butterfly and moth recording, butterfly and moth survey and monitoring work, butterfly transects, record verification/data input, branch activities, meetings, conservation work parties, fieldtrips, events, educational visits, newsletters etc.

A timesheet has been sent out with this newsletter. Please fill in and return your completed timesheet (ideally at the end of every quarter, ie. end March, June, Sept and Dec) by email or post to Shona at the address above. Many thanks.

#### **Volunteer Handbook**

If you are new to our work then our Volunteer Handbook is here to help you get started. Or maybe you need to know where to get a butterfly net or who to send your records to? It's all in our recently-updated Volunteer Handbook which can be found on our website – just follow this link to our Volunteering webpages [http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/downloads/92/get\\_involved\\_.html](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/downloads/92/get_involved_.html)

The Handbook is primarily aimed at new volunteers in Scotland, who may not have previously carried out fieldwork, but want to get involved with recording butterflies or moths. In this way we have not assumed prior knowledge and have tried to avoid jargon where possible. However, we hope it will be of use to all volunteers as an easy source of commonly used reference material. The Handbook complements the Society's Branch Handbook, used by those engaged in Branch Committee activities.

It is designed to be dipped into to answer common questions such as:  
What are the most important species of butterflies and moths in Scotland?  
What are the best ways of monitoring or surveying them?  
Which recording form should I use?  
Who should I send my data to, and in what form?  
Where can I seek help and advice?  
What sort of books and equipment do I need, and where can I buy them?

Good luck with your recording efforts - we look forward to hearing how you get on, and remember, if you can't find the answer here or you need more information, please get in touch.

### **Membership Update**

We are delighted to be able to tell you that our membership both at UK level and in Scotland continues to rise. Over the last 5 years, both Highland and SW Scotland Branches have seen their membership numbers increase by 63% and East Branch membership has grown by 72% over that time. The figures indicate that over the last year from September 2010 to September 2011, Highland Branch membership rose by 4%, SW Branch by 12% and East by 13%! Well done to everyone in spreading the word – we must be doing something right!

We had a lovely day back in October at our annual Scottish Member's Day, held at the SNH offices in Battleby, with a record turnout of over 100 people. We were able to welcome David Dennis, our new Chairman, as well as meet up with our members from across Scotland.

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

### **Scottish Recorder's Gathering - Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

The 2012 Scottish Recorders' Gathering for those interested in recording butterflies and moths will take place at the Battleby Conference Centre near Perth on Saturday 17th March. We are still putting the programme together and more details will follow in due course.

### **Workparty at Wester Moss, Stirling – Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2012**

We will meet at 10.30am at the outdoor mining museum car park (Grid Ref: NS NS 840 914/Postcode approx FK7 7GY) in Fallin on the A905 just past a small woodland on the right if you are driving from Stirling. The work will involve pulling up and/or cutting pine saplings that are invading the bog. It is quite light but very satisfying work, so do please come along for as much of the day as you can.

We also plan to put in dams to block drainage ditches to help maintain the water levels on the bog and protect its rare plants and fauna. Bring wellies, waterproofs

and old clothes, a hot drink and packed lunch and small bowsaws and/or loppers if you have them. We will be there whatever the weather until around 3pm.

Please email or phone in advance to let us know you are attending.

Contact Paul Kirkland [pkirkland@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:pkirkland@butterfly-conservation.org) 07770 732825

### **National Moth Night - 2012 and beyond**

National Moth Night 2012 will take place on **21st-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2012**. The theme will be the moths of brownfield habitats (such as old quarries, disused railway lines, reclaimed coal tips, gravel and clay workings etc.) and will include both daytime searches and the usual night-time recording. Further announcements will follow in *Atropos* magazine, E-moth newsletter and, of course, on the internet, but please make a note of the dates now.

**Moth Night 2013 will take place on 8th-10th August 2013  
and Moth Night 2014 will take place on 3rd-5th July 2014.**

### **National Insect Week – 25June–1July 2012**

Butterfly Conservation is once again a partner in this national initiative run by the Royal Entomological Society. See [www.nationalinsectweek.org.uk](http://www.nationalinsectweek.org.uk) for more information.

### **Scottish Birdfair – 19/20 May, 2012, Hopetoun House, Edinburgh**

See [www.scottishbirdfair.org.uk](http://www.scottishbirdfair.org.uk) for more information.

### **Save Our Butterflies Week – 19-27 May 2012**

A week long series of events to promote BC's conservation work and encourage the public to visit our reserves and other selected, non-BC, butterfly-rich sites.

### **Big Butterfly Count 2012 – 14July-5<sup>th</sup> August**

After the great success of this year's Big Butterfly Count, in which over 34,000 people participated, the dates have been set for next year's event. The website will be open for submission of Count sightings from 1 July through to 31 August as usual. Many thanks to everyone who helped to promote the Big Butterfly Count this year.

Don't forget to check out your local Branch website for up-to-date lists of fieldtrips, events etc:

**South West Scotland** – [www.southwestscotland-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.southwestscotland-butterflies.org.uk)

**Highlands & Islands** - [www.highland-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.highland-butterflies.org.uk)

**East Scotland** - [www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](http://www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk)

## **BRANCH NEWS**

### **East Branch**

The East Branch committee has started work on developing its forward strategy which will be aligned with BC's overall future direction as outlined in the 2020 Vision statement. Central to the discussions is the revision of the branch's Regional Action Plan, which will guide much of the survey, monitoring and conservation work of the branch over the next few years. There will be many opportunities for volunteers (whether BC members or not) to take part in the programme being developed, which will include the fairly straightforward checking of known sites for some of our

important butterflies as well more challenging searches, especially where the rarer moths are concerned.

We now have a Facebook page - please have a look at it and say you 'like' it; that way you'll get immediate updates on what's new or planned on a day-to-day basis whenever you access your Facebook page. The branch website will continue to be the central core of information concerning the branch, but Facebook will allow easy communication amongst as many people who are signed up and is good for much of the more informal and ephemeral bits and pieces which people want to talk about.

One of the key aspirations of the 2020 Vision is to engage much more with younger people, hopefully encouraging them to join, but mainly to develop a new generation of enthusiasts who will want to do surveys and conservation work. Having a presence on Facebook is perhaps a small step in this direction, but the branch needs someone who can help us do this effectively at a local level - a Youth Officer for want of a more catchy title. Are you, or do you know someone who could be the Mark Zuckerberg we are looking for? Don't hold back! There's an exciting new path to tread and it's an ideal opportunity for a younger person to make a real contribution to the future of the branch.

Finally, the programme of butterfly field trips, moth evenings, etc across the branch is now being put together. If you have any suggestions for interesting sites which we could visit please talk to your local organiser for the branch (contact details are on the website).

**Barry Prater – East Branch Chairman**

### **East Branch Butterflies**

Despite the many anecdotes about our poor summer, it is too early to say how our butterflies have been affected this year. Although I have started collating records, I am sure that there are many more to come – so if you haven't already submitted 2011 records (many thanks again to those who have) please send them in soon. You will have seen recent press reports about the state of the UK's butterflies and it is only through your records that we can get a true and accurate picture of this sort.

The East of Scotland Branch has been involved in a few conservation activities in the last while. A couple of the most recent have been to do with Northern Brown Argus in Fife and Small Blue in Angus.

### **Northern Brown Argus in Fife**

Northern Brown Argus was first recorded in Fife at Flisk in 1835, as cited in both George Thomson's 1980 *Butterflies of Scotland* and in Anne-Marie Smout's and Pete Kinnear's 1993 *The Butterflies of Fife – A Provisional Atlas*. Both publications show just two active locations in Fife: Kincaig Point near Earslferry and Kinghorn. Sadly, the last record from Kinghorn was in 1998 and the butterfly might be lost from there as well. The larval food-plant is Rockrose, *Helianthemum camaecistus* and in 2007, I checked many of the recorded Rockrose sites in Fife for evidence of Northern Brown Argus. I found none at Kinghorn, but discovered a colony at a locally known but unreported site on the south facing crags of the Binn above Burntisland. This site and Kincaig Point now appear to be the only two remaining



locations in Fife where the butterfly can be found.

Earlier this year, Scottish Natural Heritage had expressed concern that the Kincaig site, part of the larger Firth of Forth SSSI, might be getting overgrown by encroaching bracken, scrub and rank grass growth, and so it was that Tom Prescott and I found ourselves visiting the site with SNH's Elspeth Christie on a clear sunny day in November. Although I had recorded Northern Brown Argus from the edges of the Coastal Path on a number of occasions, I hadn't been aware of the vast areas of Rockrose on the slopes below the path. Tom ventured the opinion that this was the largest expanse of Rockrose he had seen anywhere! So far, so good...but although the bracken seemed to be confined to the lower slopes, we did see evidence of scrub and rank coarse grass and some areas did appear to be in danger of getting choked. Tom is now writing a short report for SNH and as in so many cases, grazing is likely to be at the top of the list of recommendations. The site is too steep and inaccessible to consider cattle, but there might be other options to explore. It is hoped that SNH will go forward and create a site management plan, and if so, the branch will be closely involved in this. Incidentally, this visit was in mid-November and we found some patches of Rockrose, Wild Thyme, Bloody Cranesbill and Mayweed in full flower! No wonder our butterflies are getting confused.

### **Small Blue in Angus**

In 1994, SNH commissioned a comprehensive survey of actual and potential Small Blue sites in Angus. The report concluded that we should be concerned regarding the constant threat to inland sites particularly, and that all colonies should be regularly monitored. It also found that some earlier reported colonies were no longer present having been built upon or otherwise made extinct. There have been a number of "mini-surveys" in the intervening years and more recently the local council approved plans for a cycle path through Small Blue habitat, heightening concerns for the butterfly's well-being. As a result of these and other inputs, the Small Blue Butterfly Interest Group was formed and held its inaugural meeting in Dundee on 8 December. Representatives were present from Butterfly Conservation, the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, Leisure and Culture Dundee, Angus Rangers and the Tayside Coast and Estuaries Working Group. There should have been more people present, but if you remember that day, it was one of high winds, with both Forth and Tay bridges closed and certain train journeys between Edinburgh and Dundee aborted due to collisions with flying objects!

The meeting agreed aims and objectives, starting with the collation of Small Blue records and sites from all available sources, a list of sites to be surveyed during 2012 and 2013, and the formation of a five-year action plan with positive conservation activities in addition to site monitoring. Of course, the overall aim is to protect and augment existing colonies and increase Small Blue populations. The survey will be launched formally at the Tayside Recorders' Forum meeting next March, and meanwhile we are an integral part of the Interest Group and are involved in much of the preparatory work. We are now looking for volunteers to help with site surveys and if you are interested, please contact me or Barry Prater initially.



Small Blue (Iain Cowe)

**Duncan Davidson – East Scotland Butterfly Recorder**

### Notes from the Borders

Like other parts of the country the Borders experienced a lot of relatively warm weather during the autumn which prolonged the flight season of many butterflies, particularly the Vanessids and especially the Red Admiral. Late sightings of Speckled



Northern Brown Argus (Barry Prater)

Woods have been encouraging too and this species was recorded every month from May to October near the coast, presumably indicating two or three overlapping generations and suggesting that it has become well-established here. Also at the coast the Northern Brown Argus was on the wing for longer than usual, the last record being of a singleton on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Southerly winds were the cause of the period of mild weather and they also blew in numbers of migrant moths (not sure whether 'migrant' is good terminology for wind-assisted travel) including the Vestal (at least 3 sites), Rusty-dot Pearl (at least 4 sites), a Death's Head Hawkmoth and a Small Mottled Willow. There was also a very surprising visit of an adult Chamomile Shark to a coastal garden on 9<sup>th</sup> October - could it have been of continental origin from a second brood there?



Vestal (F & M Aungier)



*Orthopygia glaucinalis* (Barry Prater)

Regular moth-trapping has yielded some good records such as Butterbur, September Thorn (not recorded in the Borders since 1992), Pale November Moth, Northern Winter Moth and Pale Pinion (new for Peeblesshire). Amongst other interesting moth sightings was the Double-striped Tabby, *Orthopygia glaucinalis*, a micro which has perhaps only been recorded once before in Scotland. Hawkmoth larvae have been located too, including that of the striking Elephant Hawkmoth (see below).



Elephant Hawkmoth (Ron McBeath)

**Barry Prater – East Branch Chairman**

### Highland Branch

#### **Highland Notes**

In the last few years there has been an amazing increase in moth recording in the Highlands. Regional recorders now co-ordinate all those people interested and it is sometimes difficult to imagine what it was like before this change. For example when I went to Inverpolly NNR as warden in 1969 I put out a Robinson Moth trap in the garden which was close to a road and our house, but remote. The next morning there was a note on the trap that said something like “How remarkable to find a moth trap anywhere in the Highlands – can I come and see you tomorrow?” It was signed by Mark Young! There were of course BSBI cards for moths and last year someone rang me about the ones I had filled in for Inverpolly. Why was there no information on the cards about the time of year, how many moths and at what precise dates? There were none for one very good reason and that was the cards were designed solely to map on 10km squares the presence or absence of moth species for the planned Atlas from Monks Wood. A few years later the series, albeit not many, of Rothamsted Moth Traps were in place and there are still a few of these running now such as at Beinn Eighe NNR. I ran one from our garden in Strathnairn a few miles south of Inverness between 1987 and 1999. Now I have gone full circle as my Christmas present this year is a Skinner Moth Trap ( at around £300 the old Robinson Moth Traps are expensive, whereas the Skinner type is around £140 including some extras). The Skinner trap is fitted with a 125W mercury bulb. I discussed with the supplier the purchase of a black bulb but was told these were not as effective and less reliable. Interestingly the day the trap arrived there were two Winter Moths at the kitchen window that night and this set me wondering where the wingless females are sitting waiting for the males to find them!

**Ray Collier**

## South & West Branch

### 2011 Butterfly Records



The snow is falling once more as I write this in early December, and I suspect there won't be many more butterfly sightings this year.

The first active butterfly of the year recorded in the SW Scotland was a Red Admiral. It flew into an office in Helensburgh on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January while there was still snow on the ground! It seems likely that it was disturbed during hibernation and was seeking a new refuge. There have been an increasing number of reports of Red Admirals over-wintering in

the UK in recent years, and interestingly it has been our earliest recorded butterfly species for two years running!

Spring started well with some lovely warm sunny days in March and April. Consequently, species such as Orange-tips, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and Green



Male Orange-tip (Scott Shanks)

Hairstreaks that are active in early spring appear to have had a good year. The warm spring also led to many species emerging earlier than in previous years. There were fantastic numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillary records recorded at Mabie Forest at the end of April (one report of 500+ and one of 350+ individuals seen on single visits). It'll be interesting to see the transect data from Mabie this year! Holly Blues had a remarkable first brood this year (in April), with 10 times as many records and photographs received (mainly from around Ayr) than in 2010!

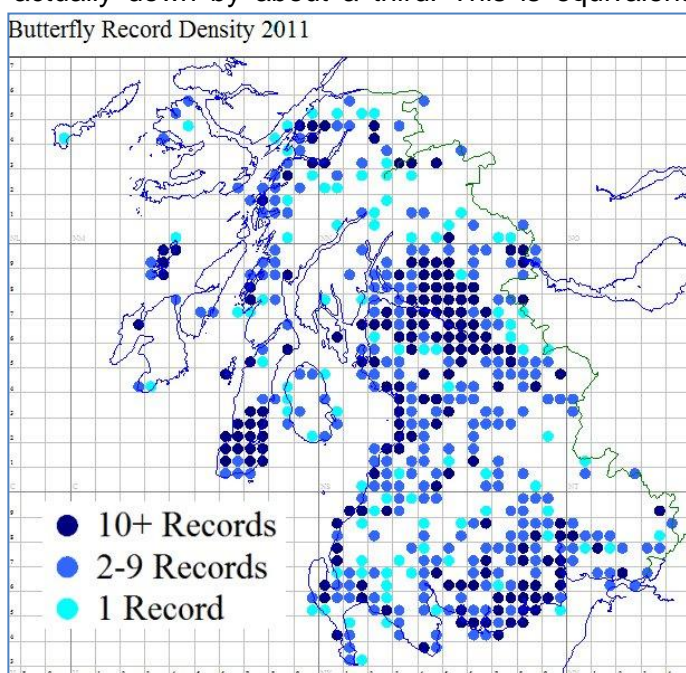
The weather took a turn for the worse in May and June, with ferocious gales and cold, wet and overcast days. The storms that battered the west of Scotland in May had a devastating effect on coastal vegetation and stripped leaves from trees. I've heard from a ranger in Renfrewshire who was monitoring blue tit and great tit nest boxes at that time. She observed that many young birds close to fledging were found starved in the nest following the gales, apparently because the adults couldn't find any caterpillars in the surrounding trees! Butterfly records sharply fell at this point and I don't think I saw a single butterfly for about 3 weeks, suggesting that the majority of butterflies on the wing had perished.

Records of Chequered Skipper appear to be down this year compared to last year. This is likely due to fewer visitors to Glasdrum NNR and other key sites for the species in Argyll during the wet and windy May/June. It will be interesting to see if this has an effect on CS numbers in 2012.

July and August were a bit better, with some decent sunny days. The **Big Butterfly Count** this year was a great success, despite poor weather in the first few days. Just

under 700 records (2,172 individual butterflies and 206 moths) were submitted in south west Scotland, which is absolutely fantastic! This included 26 species of butterfly and 2 moth species (Six-spot Burnets and Silver Y)! Interestingly many people added additional records into the comments box of the online form. This included sightings of Orange-tips (20) from earlier in the year! The top 10 most abundant species were Ringlets (377), Small Whites (366), Meadow Browns (332) and Small Tortoiseshell (315), Green-veined White (175), Large White (121), Peacock (100), Red Admiral (95), Common Blue (95) and Small Heath (59). Exciting records included 4 Holly Blues (from around Ayr), 6 Commas, 1 Clouded Yellow (with photograph), 24 Purple Hairstreak, 13 Dark-green Fritillaries, 1 Essex Skipper (from known site at Birkshaw Forest, D&G), 1 Large Skipper and 1 Wall.

So far, this year I have received about 700 more records than at the same date in 2010, (which you'll note is roughly equivalent to the number of records received from the Big Butterfly Count!), however, the number of individual butterflies recorded is actually down by about a third! This is equivalent to 15,000 less butterflies seen!



There should be a significant number of records still to come in from recorders, and it will be interesting to see whether the trend continues.

October and November were particularly mild with some late Peacock and Red Admiral records until the middle of November.

Many thanks to those who have already sent in their 2011 records. Every record is useful, including 'common' species and it's great to hear what you've seen during the year.

### Scott Shanks - SW Scotland Chairman and Butterfly Recorder

#### SW Scotland Branch News

The branch committee has had a busy year running over 32 events including butterfly walks, moth nights, practical conservation days, school visits and talks to other conservation organisations. We attended 11 public events and shows including 2 days at the Glasgow Show, The Pollok Family Day and 2 days at Big on the Beach (in Irvine). The Dumfries & Galloway subgroup is really active and members have attended a number of events this year including the Garden Wildlife Festival at Threave Gardens, Castle Douglas. We had our very successful butterfly and day-flying moth identification workshop in May, which we hope to repeat in 2012. We also ran 2 transect training days in the spring, which led to a number of new butterfly survey transects being set up this year.

In October, one of the highlights of the year was the SW Scotland branch winning the magnificent Kindrogan Cup! The winning team from the branch consisted of Heather Young, Jo Davis, Stella Armstrong, Gerry Mercer and Scott Donaldson. Good work

guys! I had the honour of collecting the finely crafted trophy from Barry Prater, the Chair of East Scotland Branch (the 2010 winners).



SW Chairman Scott Shanks, collecting the Kindrogan Cup (Ronald Maclean)

We were lucky to have the BTCV/Butterfly Conservation Natural Communities Apprentice Alex Hogg and Natural Talent Raised-Bog Apprentice Daisy Shepperd running some events in the branch area this year, with work parties and a bioblitz at Butterfly Conservation's newest reserve Wester Moss. Alex also visited a number of community groups to give talks and run butterfly-themed activities. We hope to build on this great work during 2012. We would like to thank Alex and Daisy for all their hard work and wish them both all the best for the future.

After all the hard work, it's really encouraging to see that the branch membership has increased by 12% this year! Fantastic!

Two new members, Stephanie Holbein and Paul Mapplebeck have expressed an interest in joining the branch committee and we hope to welcome them officially at the branch AGM. If you would like to join the committee or help with events during the year, please do get in touch.

**The SW Scotland Branch Autumn Members' Meeting and AGM** has been postponed until **Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2012**. It will start at 2pm. This year it will be held at the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre, which is just a few minutes' walk from Blantyre train station. There is parking and good public transport links.

In addition to the AGM, there will be fantastic illustrated talks on 'Adventures with Neotropical Butterflies' by Marianne Ward and 'Newly-arrived Moth Species in Central Scotland' by John Knowler, plus home-made cakes, refreshments and a chance to chat and make new friends. If you have ideas for projects, surveys or good places where we could run butterfly walks let us know. Non-members are welcome too.

The next edition of the SW Scotland Branch Newsletter 'On the Spot', will be out early in 2012, but there is still plenty of space for any short articles, observations or photographs that you would like to submit.

**Please send in your South West Scotland butterfly and moth records to:**

- ▶ **All SW Scotland Butterflies:** Scott Shanks, Flat 1-2, 113 Haugh Road, Yorkhill, Glasgow, G3 8TX. E-mail: [scottshanks01@msn.com](mailto:scottshanks01@msn.com)
  - ▶ **Moths VC 72, 73 & 74: Dumfries-shire, Kirkcudbrightshire & Wigtownshire,** Keith Naylor, c/o Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre, 7 Church Crescent, Dumfries, DG1 1DF. Email: [mothrecorder@dgerc.org.uk](mailto:mothrecorder@dgerc.org.uk)
  - ▶ **Moths VC75, 76 & 100: Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, Little Cumbrae & Great Cumbrae,** Neil Gregory, 32 Oldhall Drive, Kilmacolm, PA13 4RF. Tel: 01505 874275. Email: [droitwich@btinternet.com](mailto:droitwich@btinternet.com)
  - ▶ **Moths VC77: Lanarkshire & Glasgow,** Richard Weddle, Glasgow Museum Resource Centre, 200 Woodhead Road, South Nitshill Industrial Estate, Glasgow, G53 7NN. Email: [richard.weddle@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:richard.weddle@tiscali.co.uk)
  - ▶ **Moths VC86, 87 & 99: Dumbartonshire, Stirlingshire, West Perthshire (with Clackmannanshire),** John Knowler, 3 Balfleurs Street, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 8HW. Email: [john.knowler@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.knowler@ntlworld.com)
  - ▶ **Moths VC98: Argyll Main,** Andrew Masterman, Flat 1/3, 214 Calder Street Glasgow, G42 7PE. Tel: 0141 4231336. Email: [andrewmasterman@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewmasterman@hotmail.com)
  - ▶ **Moths VC100: Isle of Bute & Inchmarnock,** Glyn Colis, Seasgar, Ascog, Isle of Bute, PA20 9ET. Email: [glyn@butemuseum.org](mailto:glyn@butemuseum.org)
  - ▶ **Moths VC100: Arran, Holy Isle & Pladda,** Kate Sampson, Senior Ranger NTS, Brodick Country Park, Isle of Arran, KA27 8HY. Tel: 01770 302462. Email: [ksampson@nts.org.uk](mailto:ksampson@nts.org.uk)
  - ▶ **Moths VC101: Kintyre,** Helen Bibby, Gowanlea, Kilduskland Road, Ardrishaig, Argyll, PA30 8EH. Email: [gowanlea4@btinternet.com](mailto:gowanlea4@btinternet.com)
  - ▶ **Moths VC102: South Ebudes,** John Armitage, Airigh Sgallaidh, Portnahaven, Isle of Islay, Argyll, PA47 7SZ. Email: [jsa@orquest.plus.com](mailto:jsa@orquest.plus.com)
  - ▶ **Moths & Butterflies VC103: Mid Ebudes,** Alan Skeates, Dunellen, Craignure, Isle of Mull, Argyll, PA65 6AY. Email: [alanskeates@btinternet.com](mailto:alanskeates@btinternet.com)
- Scott Shanks - SW Scotland Chairman and Butterfly Recorder**

## CONSERVATION UPDATES

### It's Goodbye from Alex

With some sadness I will be leaving Butterfly Conservation in mid December after a wonderful 10 months as a BTCV Natural Communities Apprentice. In January I will be starting a new position with BTCV in Dorset not far from Butterfly Conservation's Head Quarters and still hope to be involved with the organisation in one form or another.

I have learnt a great deal about lepidoptera and ways to engage communities this year. It hasn't always been easy and there are still areas where I wish more could have been achieved. However, overall the year has been hugely successful in reaching new people and communities, particular successes include giving talks to Hidden Gardens in Glasgow, working with the Medical Foundation at Cathkin Braes, Scotia Seeds open days and numerous visits to primary schools across Scotland.

I've also enjoyed butterfly monitoring, in particular my days spent in the Highlands and the Ochils.



Alex with his willow butterflies (Paul Kirkland)

Those of you who were able to attend the Members' Day at Battleby in October will know how grateful I am to members and volunteers who helped me over the last 10 months and I would like to take this opportunity to again express my gratitude. I have been astonished by the patience, generosity and knowledge of Butterfly Conservation members. Thanks to your help I have learned a huge amount about butterflies and moths and developed an interest I will possess for the rest of my life. I would also like to thank Shona, Tom and Paul for all their help this year, without which I would not have had the experience and confidence to succeed in a career in conservation.

**Alex Hogg, BTCV Natural Communities Apprentice**

### **Death's Head Hawkmoth makes the news**

In October, a local solicitor in Elgin discovered a Death's Head Hawkmoth, adjacent to a footpath on her way to work. She photographed the find and reported it to Highland Branch, and Mike Taylor the VC Recorder was able to add it to his records. It turned out to be the first record for Moray and only the fourth for mainland Highland and North-east Scotland since 2000. The local newspaper for Elgin, The Northern Scot, picked up the story and showed a photograph of the moth to scale, at 7.5cm!

### **Wester Moss reveals its secrets**

It's been a busy year at Wester Moss since it became our third reserve in Scotland. To celebrate the declaration of this urban reserve we held a 'people's opening' or 'Bioblitz' in July when locals were invited to come along and discover the real VIPs on their doorstep - the butterflies, moths, spiders and mosses that make it such an unusual and special wildlife haven.

Star turn was a Bog Sun Jumper Spider, newly discovered on the day by Daisy Shepperd, our BTCV Natural Talent Apprentice. Previously known from only three

other sites in the UK, it immediately brought home the importance of the site. It has since also been found by David Pryce, an entomologist from Perth Museum and Art Gallery, at Dunmore Moss, a nearby cut over raised bog. Large Heath of course also put in an appearance, the Moss having a good-sized colony.

Stirling University Nature Society was another wonderful find, and they have been regulars at the Moss since, helping at work parties and doing surveys, adding to the tally of moths found on the reserve, including Canary-shouldered Thorn and Lesser Treble-bar. Several patches of rare Bog Rosemary have been located, here near its northern limit.

Although fairly small at 30 hectares, the site is very accessible, and has been visited by several groups this year, including field trips from University conferences held for the UKBAP and the IUCN peat programme.

The reserve, jointly managed with the owners, Stirling Council, is in 'unfavourable condition' - in danger of drying out due to past attempts at drainage and scrub encroachment. A draft management plan has been prepared and we have already had three volunteer work parties pulling up invading pine.



**Martin Warren (BC's CEO) and David Dennis (our new Chairman) get to work**

With a landfill grant from the Clackmannanshire and Stirling Environment Trust we employed contractors to carefully treat birch scrub with herbicide, using the delightfully named 'Glove of Death' method!

Wester Moss is a partnership reserve with Stirling Council and the aim is to safeguard the Moss and also encourage local people to visit and enjoy its tranquillity, whether as dog walkers, joggers or nature-lovers. Alex Hogg, our BTCV Communities Participation Officer is busy devising ways of promoting the site locally.

Restoring bogs and preventing them drying out also contributes to combating climate change by encouraging their growth thereby locking up carbon. Although peatlands cover only a small portion of the Earth's surface, estimated at between 2% and 3%, they comprise perhaps up to one third of the World's terrestrial carbon. For more information go to [www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org](http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org)

**Paul Kirkland – Director (Scotland)**

### **Green Hairstreak Records – Tentsmuir**

Two Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (BMS) transects at Tentsmuir Point in North East Fife have been recorded since 2004. The two transects Tentsmuir Point North and South replaced an earlier route that was recorded up to 1996.

Low numbers of Green Hairstreak have been recorded along the route of the Tentsmuir Point North and South transects every year since 2004. Very low numbers in the last 5 years prompted me to look at all the data with the aim of trying to establish any trends in abundance.

### **Trends in Abundance at Tentsmuir**

The number of Green Hairstreak recorded each year remains low with very low numbers since 2007. Numbers recorded each year since 2004 are given in Table 1.

From Table 1 it is clear that the numbers seen in 2004 on the North transect and in 2005 on the South transect were high compared to other years. In 2006 on the South transect the numbers were also relatively high, compared to other years, perhaps as the result of a good season the previous year. Numbers on the Tentsmuir Point North transect have been very low over the period 2006-2011 with no obvious years of abundance. Access to data gathered both on and off transect from the South transect also shows decreasing numbers of Green Hairstreak.

**Table 1: Tentsmuir Point Records by Year 2004-2011**

<b>Year</b>	<b>North Transect Records on transect</b>	<b>South Transect Records on transect</b>	<b>South Transect Records on and off transect</b>
2004	13	0	4
2005	5	10	20
2006	2	9	9
2007	3	3	3
2008	1	1	1
2009	0	2	2
2010	0	1	2
2011	0	1	2

According to *The State of the UK's Butterflies 2011* the Green Hairstreak has increased its distribution over the last 10 years by 6%. Over the same time period, however, the population trend has been downwards by 27% (based on data from 512 transects).

### **Comparison with other Scottish sites**

Unfortunately, there are few other monitored sites in Scotland with Green Hairstreak data to compare with. For comparison I looked at data from two other BMS transects at Loch Garten and Arienas Wood. Records from these sites are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Green Hairstreak records. 2004-2010**

Year	Loch Garten	Arienas Wood
2004	16	14
2005	9	13
2006	7	11
2007	8	24
2008	31	4
2009	20	8
2010	22	15

Records for 2011 are not available yet from these sites. At Loch Garten most records were made in 2008 whereas at Arienas Wood most records were made in 2007. In comparison 2005 was the best year at Tentsmuir Point. These comparisons suggest that peak years for Green Hairstreak abundance do not occur at the same time at different sites. Total numbers at Loch Garten do not appear to have dropped significantly in the last few years, whereas the numbers at Arienas Wood dropped in 2008 but had recovered by 2010.

#### **More information**

Given the very low numbers of Green Hairstreak at Tentsmuir Point since 2007 I would be grateful for any other data that BC members might have. If anyone else has transect data from a site in east Scotland I would be very interested to see it.

With thanks to Duncan Davidson and the Tentsmuir transect walkers.

**Gillian Fyfe** [gillian.fyfe@tesco.net](mailto:gillian.fyfe@tesco.net)

#### **Update on the Garden Moth Scheme in Scotland**

*The Garden Moth Scheme (GMS) runs from early March to early November, with people recording the numbers of around 270 species of the more common moths in their gardens once a week throughout this period. Further information on the findings of the GMS for the whole of the UK and Ireland, both current and historical, is available in the form of annual reports and quarterly newsletters, which can be found in the Downloads section of the web-site: <<http://www.gardenmoths.org.uk>>*

As expected from preliminary results during the summer, Dark Arches has taken over the title of Scotland's commonest moth (at least of those on the GMS list) from the Large Yellow Underwing which had a poor year, down 48% on 2010. Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing and Lesser Yellow Underwing showed similar declines (down 43% and 42% respectively), and many other summer species like Dotted Clay and Heart & Dart were also less abundant. In contrast, Dark Arches showed a 177% increase in average numbers per garden over 2010, and 614% on 2009 figures.

Despite the cold winter, early spring species like Hebrew Character and Common Quaker did well (up 118% and 70% respectively), with the overwintering Chestnut continuing its success of last year (up 140%).

This short summary is based on the 20 sets of results that have been returned so far – a few more are still expected – so a more detailed analysis will be done at the end of the year for the GMS Annual Report. As the GMS grows in Scotland, there is no doubt that the figures are affected by factors such as trap type used and geographical location of new gardens entering the scheme, but eventually these will become less significant as the data builds up. This year for the first time we are able to include data from Shetland and South Uist – this brings down the averages for



Dark Arches – Scotland's  
commonest moth?

species such as Common Quaker and Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing that were not present in the 3 gardens involved, but boosts others, including Dark Arches, that are common there. True Lover's Knot and Small Wainscot were so abundant in South Uist that they made the overall top ten, as did Square-spot Rustic which although present in 12/20 of our gardens, is far more common in the northern half of the country.

Some of us are continuing to trap throughout the winter – some species hung on a bit longer than usual during the mild weather in November, but there has been little flying in the last week or two as winter starts to assert itself. If you would like to

take part in the GMS in 2012 (the new season begins in early March), please get in touch; everyone is welcome from beginners to seasoned trappers.

**Heather Young (GMS co-ordinator, Scotland)**

e-mail: heather.young@tiscali.co.uk

**Here are weblinks to take you straight to our Scottish Reserves:**

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/westermoss](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/westermoss)

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/mabieforest](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/mabieforest)

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/locharkaig](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/locharkaig)

## **BUTTERFLY & MOTH TALES**

### **Of Beer and Butterflies**

For the past 11 years our small garden outside Stirling has been planted and managed with wildlife in mind. A few years ago I stopped off at a wonderful herb nursery on the Black Isle and picked up a Hop plant (variety 'Goldings'). Being originally a 'Kentish Man', I have a great fondness for Hops, and the flowers were happily harvested for a friend brewing his own beer. Little did I think that this year I would be toasting the Hop for an entirely different reason.

This summer we spotted our first ever Comma in the garden. Surely the butterfly highlight of the year? Well, not quite! A short time later we saw it flutter around and into the Hop and later found a glorious green egg! The leaf base was marked with one of those 'pieces of string too short to be of use', to help keep an eye on the egg, and hopefully, a caterpillar.

Excitingly, a caterpillar did hatch after a couple of weeks, and we were able to track it until going on holiday. On returning, we were fortunate enough to find not just one but two chrysalids. After a long, somewhat fraught, wait I went out after work one evening on the off chance. There, suspended from a chrysalis, was a fresh adult Comma, which must have emerged during the day.

What a very welcome, exciting, and totally unexpected bonus from harbouring a humble Hop in our garden. A full account of the observations will be published in a

forthcoming issue of *Atropos*, the magazine devoted to butterflies, moths, dragonflies and damselflies of Britain and Ireland.

**Bob Dawson**

### **Beauly Primary School Bear Garden**

The photos speak for themselves really, but it all started with the bear who, in an earlier life, was a willow tree in the school grounds. When the tree had to be taken down the children wanted to keep some of it and so it became a bear.

However, as the picture shows, the bear was standing in an area of worn grass and very little else, how much better it would look surrounded by vegetation. So the Eco Group within the school decided the aim would be to plant up the plot with native plants hoping to attract lots of butterflies and bees.



**Before...**



**during...**



**and after!!!**

With help from many organisations and individuals, (including two volunteers from BC), the garden gradually became a reality. The children helped to put in the plants such as Thyme, Birds-foot Trefoil and Foxgloves, and they scattered the Scotia seed

mix of Cornflower, Corn Poppy, Corn Marigold, etc. during their school “Eco Day” in late June.

Butterflies like Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell soon appeared along with loads of bees and hoverflies. Next year BC volunteers will visit the school to help the children identify the different species that enjoyed the garden.

The bear of course was called Willow.

**Margaret Currie and Andy Scott**

### **Some butterfly news from New Lanark and Carlisle 2011**

#### **New Lanark Roof Garden Butterflies 2011**

Overall it wasn't a great year for butterflies, but mid-July brought a large influx of Small Tortoiseshells into New Lanark Roof Garden. After previous years' concerns about dwindling numbers of this species, it was good to see so many, including a mating pair, flying about in the sunshine on 14<sup>th</sup> July. This year they seemed to favour the flower heads of herbs, in particular, lavender, oregano and thyme.



Last winter took its toll on the buddleia and hebe shrubs which did not produce many strong flower spikes this year. Perhaps that's why the usual numbers did not materialise this summer. However, in the warm spell in mid-November, visitors to the Clyde Valley Reserve reported seeing a few Red Admirals fluttering around.

There were a few small Ermine moths around this year, but nothing like the numbers from 2010. I also came across one of the lovely, almost white Marbled Carpet moths camouflaged against the metal railing of the lade.



## **Butterfly News from Carluke 2011**

Early in July Ringlets appeared once again in the wasteground at the back of Kirk Road, Carluke. This neglected area has damp patches where Common Spotted Orchids and different kinds of grasses and rushes grow, and the Ringlets fly around in the long grass in warm, sheltered hollows. The area is near the town centre and has planning permission for flats, so this is perhaps the last year for the Ringlets. However, there are other colonies nearby on the northern edge of the town and in the Clyde Valley Nature Reserve.

During the summer I made several visits to the 'meadow' surrounding the new car park at Carluke train station. It was planted up by the developers of the site after they had removed trees, an old mixed hedge, grass banking and a field to make the car park. I did find several wild flowers growing happily, including viper's bugloss, vetches and thistles, but by far the commonest plant was clover, both red and white. While the clover areas were buzzing delightfully with lots of bees, I saw only two Large White butterflies and one Small White on all my visits.



In my garden in early August I found a Lacewing that unfortunately had flown into the bird bath and drowned. This gave me a chance to look at it close-up and see its unusual green body and beautiful translucent wings covered with a net-like pattern. Its orange eyes were amazing!

One highlight this year was finding a Plain Golden Y Moth resting on the glass door of the house on 6th July. At first I took it to be a Silver Y, but the colour didn't look quite right. It was a rich dark chestnut brown colour with gold markings that looked more like a squiggly letter i than y, and it was beautiful!

Recently, a friend at Carluke Camera Club showed me photographs of a Peacock and a Comma butterfly taken during the warm spell at the end of September near the rear entrance to Carluke Golf Course. This area used to be a special site for wild flowers, so I will add it to my list to look for butterflies there next year.

Hoping next year will be better for butterflies, but there is always something interesting happening in the insect world!

**Liz Young**