



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

Welcome to Butterfly Conservation Scotland's Winter e-newsletter.

Contributions to our newsletters are always welcome – 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.

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#### **Volunteer Hours**

Please remember to let us have your volunteer hours. A timesheet has been sent out with this newsletter. Please return the completed timesheet by email or post to Shona at the address above. Many thanks.

#### **Records**

Now the nights are drawing in, please send any outstanding butterfly and moth records to your local Recorder.

#### **Death's Head Hawkmoth all at sea!**

This seems to have been quite a good year for the Death's Head Hawkmoth as news came in October of an interesting sighting of one (deceased) from the Buzzard offshore oil platform in the outer Moray Firth. It caused great interest amongst the riggers who were curious to know what it was. One of them very kindly sent the specimen to us when he came onshore and Tom brought it down to show at our Members' Day where lots of folk had a chance to see this quite spectacular migrant moth.

#### **Dates for your Diary**

##### **Scottish Recorders' Gathering – Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

The 2011 Scottish Recorders' Gathering for those involved in recording butterflies and moths will take place at the Battleby Conference Centre near

Perth on Saturday 26th March 2011. We are still putting the programme together and more details will follow in due course.

### **Scottish Members' Day – Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011**

The date for next year's Scottish Members' Day has been finalised and is to be the 1<sup>st</sup> October at Battleby Conference Centre, near Perth.

### **National Moth Night**

National Moth Night has become a national institution since it started in 1999. It has proved hugely successful with over 1000 sites returning records annually, hundreds of public events introducing newcomers to the wonders of moth recording, and massive media coverage raising awareness of the much-maligned moth. Many thanks to all those who have taken part and helped achieve this success.

Now the event has reached a crossroads. The cycle of repeated NMN events in different months of the year has been completed and, as the event has grown, so have the resources required to manage NMN, to the point that it is not sustainable in its present format. Atropos and Butterfly Conservation have agreed that there will be no National Moth Night in 2011. The time will be used instead to regroup, reconfigure and reinvigorate NMN in preparation for the 2012 event.

If you have suggestions for the future of NMN, we would be very glad to receive them via [views@nationalmothnight.info](mailto:views@nationalmothnight.info) Please be assured that your views will be considered, but we regret that we will not be able to respond individually to such emails.

National Moth Night will return in 2012 and a date will be announced in due course.

### **Atropos and Butterfly Conservation**

### **Scottish Members' Day 2010**

We held our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Scottish Members' Day at Battleby Conference Centre on 30<sup>th</sup> October and were delighted to have a record number of members coming along. A great day was had with lots of talks, workshops, Branch get-togethers and of course Toms' quiz! A special thanks must go to Nick Picozzi for ending the day so wonderfully with his "ghost story" (perfect for Hallowe'en). Maurice Avent, Butterfly Conservation's Chairman, welcomed Tom Delaney, our



Duncan receiving his Award from Maurice – Catherine Bertrand

1000<sup>th</sup> Scottish member and presented Duncan Davidson with a very well deserved Volunteer Award. We also heard the wonderful news that Roy Leverton has won a Lifetime Achievement Award and was to be presented with this at Butterfly Conservation's AGM in Cambridge in November. Congratulations to all.

## Highland Branch

### That Old Chestnut

Every year I get at least one phone call from a member of the public who asks about a butterfly they have found flying around in their home and what to do with it.

These normally turn out to be Small Tortoiseshell butterflies but there is always the chance of a Peacock or Red Admiral. I normally offer a standard response as follows:

Overwintering inside a home or building is natural behaviour for at least one of our butterflies. The species involved will normally be Small Tortoiseshell or just possibly Red Admiral or Peacock.



Peacock - Jim Asher

They normally arrive in late August and can often be seen flying along checking eaves or doorways. This activity occurs during sunny conditions when they are inspecting buildings for suitable roosting sites to over-winter or hibernate in. You can think of your home as either a "Des Res" cave or even a hollow tree. The conditions would be very similar, sheltered from the wind and cool and dry but open enough to avoid falling prey to a spider. I do not know of any literature on spiders taking butterflies but this does not seem to be a problem for hibernating butterflies in exposed situations away from the normal spots chosen by spiders to spin their webs. Some may succumb to spiders but there will always be losses. I have often seen the remnant wings of butterflies caught in spider webs and even seen one eventually free itself after becoming entangled but these were not indoors.

If you have central heating they will probably want to move on, but if you have a cool dry room in the house then they can quite happily spend the winter hanging from a curtain or the ceiling. It is not unknown for butterflies to

temporarily awoken during the winter and move to a better spot if the circumstances demand. I think this is what sometimes happens when folks turn up the heating or put an extra log on the fire as a result of a cold snap or in anticipation of visitors expected for Christmas.

From personal experience of living in a large house with poorly heated bedrooms they simply hang about in a corner until released in the spring. Thankfully and sadly I now live in a centrally heated home so I never freeze but nor do I have any welcome visits from butterflies.

It is easy to help a butterfly disturbed from hibernation simply by gently moving it to a cool (unheated) room and let it be, care being taken to avoid damaging legs and wings. It is best to do this as soon as you find it so that it does not expend all its energy making the likelihood of a successful hibernation poor. If you do have central heating the next best option is to place it in a shed or garage where it can be sheltered, dry and out of the wind.

In the spring when the weather warms up towards the last week in March one may appear flapping against a window wanting to get out, just open the window a little and off it will go, though they may need a little direction.

**Jimmy McKellar (Highland Branch Chair)**

## **East Scotland**

### **News from the Borders**

#### Scotch Argus in Peeblesshire

John Woolliams and Reuben Singleton took up the challenge of seeking out the Scotch Argus in an area of Peeblesshire which had only one record in the past decade and their persistence paid off, with the discovery of thriving colonies in the upper reaches of the River Tweed. Alison McArthur also encountered good numbers in new areas further north while carrying out her Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey. Although a common species throughout much of western and northern Scotland, this butterfly thins out rapidly as one moves eastwards through the Borders; it has long been extinct in Berwickshire, where it was last recorded around 1900. It also appears to have a distribution which is shifting northwards and to higher elevations in response to climate change and as the colonies in the Borders are on the southern edge of its range they are therefore vulnerable and monitoring these populations is important.

### **Field Trips 2011**

Is there a little-known site near to you which you visit for its butterflies or moths? If there is, tell others about it - in this way it gets flagged up as potentially important. The process of identifying key Biodiversity Sites in the Borders is soon to start and we should feed into this those sites which have Lepidoptera of conservation concern or aggregates of particularly characteristic species for our area.

Your favourite spots may also make good venues for field trips next year. They don't need to have very rare species to be suitable, just a variety and

good numbers of butterflies so that less-experienced people who come along can learn identification skills. I am hoping to arrange trips at sites spread across the Borders during May-August 2011.

### **Some Autumn Moths in Berwickshire**

Probably the most exciting recent discovery has been the Pale Pinion, with a succession of records at one site and a new species for the Vice County. This moth, which until 1990 was limited to the southern half of England, is now found throughout northern England and much of southern Scotland, and it has been argued by Roy Leverton and Stephen Palmer that the spread here originates in part from Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man.



**Pale Pinion – Barry Prater**

Other little-recorded moths have been the Large Wainscot and the Bulrush Wainscot.



**Large Wainscot – Barry Prater**



**Bulrush Wainscot – Barry Prater**

Despite the increase this year in the number of active moth recorders, the Borders has many little-explored sites and habitats and there are lots of opportunities to make discoveries and plenty of dots to put on distribution maps. The East Scotland branch has moth traps which can be loaned out so that newcomers can have a go at recording - just get in touch if you're interested.

**Barry Prater**  
**Borders Sub-Group**

### **SW Scotland Branch**

Our branch recently had its AGM. This was well attended and everyone was enthusiastic at the end to continue recording despite the time of year. A couple of volunteers have agreed to join the committee from our appeals at the meeting and we very much appreciate their willingness to join and look forward to working with them. There are still vacancies for treasurer, chair and anyone who would be interested to help out.

We are now at the time of year when events for 2011 are being organised. Would you like to arrange a butterfly walk in your local patch or help organise some walks to see some specific butterflies? How about looking for Green Hairstreaks or Pearl-bordered Fritillaries? We would like to help advertise your event on our website. All you need is a bit of enthusiasm and know where to walk at your site. The committee can help with the details of walks and how to run them.

The committee extended its warmest thanks to all the recorders and supporters of the branch and its activities. We hope 2011 will be a warmer and even more productive year than 2010. Happy New Year.

**Neil Gregory - Branch Chair**

### **Vice- County Moth Recorder Changes**

#### **VC88 Mid Perthshire - vacancy**

Dan Baker has sadly stood down as VC88 moth recorder as he is moving away from the VC next year so we are therefore looking for a replacement. If you would like to volunteer or find out more just get in touch with Tom ([tprescott@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:tprescott@butterfly-conservation.org) 01540 661469)

#### **VC106 East Ross – new recorders**

Margaret Currie and Andrew Scott have taken over as VC recorders. Their contact details are:

7 Balnatua, Culbokie, Dingwall, Ross-shire, IV7 8JQ

Email: [moths.vc106@btinternet.com](mailto:moths.vc106@btinternet.com)

Tel: 01349 877223

#### **Easter Ross Moth Checklist**

A 17-page checklist of the 364 macro-moths recorded in Easter Ross (VC106) from past to present has recently been published and is available upon receipt of a cheque for £2 made out to Brian Ballinger at the address below. For each species comments are given on frequency and national status.

Brian Ballinger, Upper Flat, Station House, Fearn Station, By Tain, Ross-shire, IV20 1RR.

You will find a list of all Scottish VC moth recorders on the Moths Count web site at [http://www.mothscount.org/text/57/county\\_moth\\_recorders.html](http://www.mothscount.org/text/57/county_moth_recorders.html)

### **Moths Blog**

In order to provide updates to his annotated checklist of the larger moths of Stirlingshire, West Perthshire and Dumbartonshire, John Knowler has set up a blog intended to inform all those who are interested of new and important records in the region.

The blog at <http://centralscotlandmoths.blogspot.com/> so far has 16 retrospective entries.

### **Transect Co-ordinators – can you help?**

At present we have transect co-ordinators for the following areas:

#### **Stirlingshire, Argyll & Bute**

Andrew Masterman  
Flat 1/3, 214 Calder Street, Glasgow, G42 7PE  
Tel: 0141 4231336  
Email: andrewmasterman@hotmail.com

#### **Dumfries & Galloway**

Andy Riches  
2 Craigiellands Village, Beattock, Nr Moffat, Dumfries-shire, DG10 9QZ  
Email: slioch69@aol.com

#### **East Lothian**

Nick Morgan  
East Lothian Council, Landscape & Countryside Division, Community Services, Block C, Haddington, East Lothian, EH41 3HA  
Tel: 01620 827671  
Email: nmorgan@eastlothian.gov.uk

#### **Clackmannanshire, Fife**

Duncan Davidson  
140 Pitcorthie Drive, Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 8BJ  
Tel: 01383 730446  
Email: duncan@dwwd.freereserve.co.uk

#### **Lanarkshire**

Louisa Maddison  
Flat 0/2, 9 Battlefield Gardens, Glasgow, G42 9JR  
Email: louisa.maddison@southlanarkshire.gsx.gov.uk

#### **Highland**

Hilary Quick  
Development Officer, Scottish Orienteering Association, National Orienteering Centre, Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, PH22 1QU  
Tel: 01479 861374  
Email: hilary@scottish-orienteering.org

## **Ayrshire, Renfrewshire**

Neil Gregory

32 Oldhall Road, Kilmacolm, Inverclyde, PA13 4RF

Tel: 01505 874275

Email: [droitwich@btinternet.com](mailto:droitwich@btinternet.com)

We would appreciate any assistance with areas that do not yet have co-ordinators – please contact Neil Gregory [droitwich@btinternet.com](mailto:droitwich@btinternet.com) if you can help with this.

### **Butterfly Year 2010 - First Comma at New Lanark Roof Garden**

The main highlight of 2010 for me was the arrival of the Comma for the first time in New Lanark's roof top garden on 30 August. Although this butterfly is now seen much further north and sometimes in the Clyde Valley Nature Reserve next door to New Lanark, this was the first time that a Comma had visited the Roof Garden itself. It fed contentedly for a while on the buddleia spikes along with a couple of Small Tortoiseshells.



### **Small Ermine invasion**

As happened in many other places this year, the bird cherry trees growing beside the lake at New Lanark were completely covered in the webs of the Small Ermine moth caterpillars. By mid July the adults had emerged, and the small bright white moths could be seen here and there resting on foliage even in bright sunlight. After that, the trees seemed to begin making a recovery and managed to produce some new leaves before autumn set in.

### **Painted Lady**

While there was nothing like last year's Painted Lady invasion, in mid June I came across a solitary individual nectaring on the big purple Allium heads in the New Lanark Roof Garden (photo below). Several Green-veined Whites also visited around the same time. Alliums are great for attracting different kinds of bees and hoverflies as well as butterflies and they are very easy to grow. Just plant the bulbs in the autumn for flowers the following spring. The bulbs will even grow in large containers and the seed heads look decorative well into the summer.



### **Ringlets**

On 2 July, while visiting an area of neglected ground in Stewart Street, Carluke (NS 842512) where I have seen Ringlets in the past, I found a pair mating, hidden deep in the long grasses where I almost trod on them! Unfortunately this particular site is near the town centre and is earmarked for development, so I don't expect this colony to survive for much longer. I'm glad I managed to get this photo.



Also I was very pleased to find a Ringlet at another site on the edge of Carluke (NS 855512) where I used to see Ringlets in the past but have seen none in recent years. Stonedyke Road is lined with beautiful old mixed hedges with brambles and grass verges where the butterfly was flitting around. It was very pale brown in colour, perhaps a female. This sighting was in mid-August which I thought was quite late for a Ringlet.

### **Tortoiseshells and Peacocks**

In July several Small Tortoiseshells were seen in the Clyde Valley Nature Reserve and four arrived in the New Lanark Roof Garden on 22 July. September brought more fresh-looking specimens. Are their numbers starting to recover? I hope so.

On one sunny afternoon in late August there were also four Peacock butterflies sunning themselves on the roof garden walls. However, this year Red Admirals were much scarcer with only one making an appearance.

## “Small Game Hunting”

*Small Game Hunting* was the title of a talk and slide show given by Dr Jim Black from Kilmarnock to Carlisle Camera Club on 12 November. It included many of his stunning butterfly photographs and his enthusiastic talk made everyone want to give it a try. A great evening to finish the butterfly year with!

**Liz Young**

## 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 250 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>>*

Despite a poor autumn, the GMS has recorded a big increase in moth numbers in Scotland's gardens in 2010, with an average of 1230 individuals compared to 794 last year. The Top 20 in terms of abundance are listed below (species in bold are those that have moved either into or out of the charts; figures in brackets show the average number per garden in the preceding or following year for those that are not in both columns). The Common Rustic / Lesser Common Rustic were added to the GMS list as an aggregate in 2010, so figures are not available for 2009, but of the other



commonest species, all occurred in greater numbers, with the exception of Hebrew Character which showed a slight decrease.

It is noticeable that of the seven geometrid moths in the top 20 in 2009, only Common Marbled Carpet remained in 2010, with Spruce Carpet in particular being far scarcer than last year, losing its status as the commonest autumn moth to the Yellow-line Quaker.

Yellow-line Quaker – Heather Young

2010		2009	
	Average / garden		Average / garden
All moths	1229.6	All moths	793.9
Large Yellow Underwing	168.3	Large Yellow Underwing	91.1
Bird-cherry Ermine	122.3	Hebrew Character	48.6
<b>Common Rustic agg.</b>	58.8 (n/a)	Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	44.7
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	56.3	Common Quaker	38.6

Dark Arches	53.8	Bird-cherry Ermine	30.9
Hebrew Character	43.4	<b>Spruce Carpet</b>	28.8 (4.8)
Common Quaker	42.2	Lesser Yellow Underwing	26.6
Lesser Yellow Underwing	37.6	Dotted Clay	24.3
Dotted Clay	33.3	Dark Arches	21.0
Antler Moth	25.9	Clouded Drab	14.5
Clouded Drab	23.2	Common Marbled Carpet	12.5
<b>Agriphila tristella</b>	22.6 (2.4)	Antler Moth	12.0
<b>Heart &amp; Dart</b>	19.3 (4.0)	<b>Dark Marbled Carpet</b>	10.5 (5.7)
<b>Chestnut</b>	16.8 (7.5)	Rosy Rustic	9.7
Rosy Rustic	16.6	<b>Smoky Wainscot</b>	9.6 (7.4)
<b>Double Square-spot</b>	14.9 (6.1)	<b>Red-green Carpet</b>	9.1 (2.6)
<b>Silver Y</b>	13.6 (5.4)	<b>Beautiful Golden Y</b>	8.9 (8.5)
Common Marbled Carpet	12.8	<b>Light Emerald</b>	8.7 (5.4)
<b>Yellow-line Quaker</b>	10.7 (7.9)	<b>July Highflyer</b>	8.6 (8.3)
<b>Brimstone Moth</b>	9.8 (5.6/7.3)		
<b>Clouded-bordered Brindle</b>			
		<b>Mottled Beauty</b>	8.1 (7.3)

All results have not yet been returned, but once the final figures are available, we will be able to pick out the biggest winners and losers this year, and start to chart the fortunes of our common garden moths into 2011 and beyond.

If you would like to take part in the GMS in 2011, please get in touch (contact details are on the web-site). Some of us are continuing to trap on a weekly basis (although the early onset of ice and snow has ensured an empty trap for me since mid-November), and it will be interesting to see what effect two consecutive chilly winters will have on early season moths. Certainly last year did not seem to trouble some species that overwinter as adults, such as the Chestnut, but others did not fare so well, like Red-green Carpet.

Best wishes for the festive season.

**Heather Young**  
**GMS Co-ordinator, Scotland**

### Highland Notes

One of the many attractions with looking at butterflies is the decision, sooner or later, to try and photograph them. My own amateurish efforts over the years have had only modest success. Problems with depth of field, speed, shadows have all played their part but this year was different. It came about from photographing red deer! I always religiously used a tripod with the telephoto lens and, when I could remember, even a cable release. Setting the camera at 400 ASA seemed to work. Then one day absentmindedly I forgot the tripod and cable release. So as an experiment I upgraded the camera to

1,600 ASA to try and avoid even my old age camera shake. The results were not exhibition standard but acceptable, to me anyway. Then one day in the garden I thought about trying it with butterflies. Pundits told me it was not possible but the results were acceptable for me. The camera is a Canon digital EOS 300D and I put on a 170-500 mm lens PLUS a single extension tube of 31 mm. Using 1,600 ASA avoids the camera shake and the lens means I can work at around two feet which avoids shadows. No tripod and no cable release. It seems, against all the odds, to work, as the painted lady on a teasel indicates! Roll on next summer.

**Ray Collier**



Painted Lady – Ray Collier