



Borders Newsletter

Issue 18 Spring 2017

<http://eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/>
<https://www.facebook.com/EastScotlandButterflyConservation>

Welcome to the latest issue of our newsletter for Butterfly Conservation members and many other people living in the Scottish Borders and further afield. Please forward it to others who have an interest in butterflies & moths and who might like to read it and be kept in touch with our activities.

Barry Prater
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[All photos are by Barry Prater unless
otherwise stated]

Please write in with your articles and
views. The next issue will go out in
autumn 2017. Email to me at the
above address or by post to:
12 Barefoots Crescent
Eyemouth, Berwickshire
TD14 5BA



Butterfly Conservation in the Borders

As I write this, Spring has already made some encouraging attempts at starting and pretty much all the expected early butterflies have put in an appearance, sometimes in good numbers. One species to especially look out for is the Brimstone - but, I hear you say, we don't get the Brimstone in the Borders. However, this situation may be about to change because last June one was spotted in Selkirk by an experienced visitor from down south - it was a female like the one shown here. As is often the case, it is all too easy to think there's nothing special about seeing a familiar species when away from home and so the observer didn't take a picture. If you know of any Buckthorn trees (not really a native to Scotland) especially in the Selkirk area do keep an eye out during the next few months - there are two generations over the summer.



Brimstone (Steven Cheshire)

Butterfly surveys take place every year and tend to be concentrated on the species of most conservation concern for our area - the Small Blue, Northern Brown Argus, Large Heath, Green Hairstreak, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Scotch Argus. If you'd like to help with any of these do get in touch with me or Iain Cowe (details on last page) for more information.

Once again there is a super programme of outdoor events planned during the summer - see next page - and we benefit from linking up with other groups for some of these. You don't need to be an expert to join in, so make a pledge to come along to at least one of them. We are also hosting the annual Scottish Entomologists' Gathering in Eyemouth over the weekend of 9-11 June and get in touch with me if you're interesting in participating.

Make a note in your diary that it's the **Big Butterfly Count** over the three weeks Friday 14 July to Sunday 6 August. Please join in and submit your sightings and get your family, friends and neighbours to have go too. The Count is a great way to get people interested in butterflies and Butterfly Conservation and this link tells you all about it <http://www.bigbutterflycount.org/>.

Many thanks to all the contributors to this issue, which does have a mothy bias, possibly reflecting the increase seen recently in moth recording and the much greater number of moths which we have compared to butterflies. If you'd like to see more about butterflies then why not contribute an article for next time?

Barry Prater

Outdoor Events in the Borders and Lothians during 2017

All these daytime and evening events are aimed at introducing people to their local butterflies & moths and to help with identification, so beginners are very welcome. Whatever the weather on the day, they will be enjoyable and there will be plenty to see and learn. The details of some events are yet to be finalised, so either contact the person indicated or go to the Events page of the BC website.

Date	Event	Details	Contact
Sunday 21 May 2017	Glencourse Reservoir to check the Green Hairstreak colony there.	Meet at the Pentland Hills Regional Park's Visitor Centre car park just off the A702 at Flotterstone (NT229631) at 10.30am.	Richard Buckland 0131 332 0615 r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk
Saturday 27 May 2017	Berwickshire Coastal Walk. A joint trip with the <i>Edinburgh Natural History Society</i> .	Meet at 11:00am at the top of the Burnmouth Brae NT95406109. Have sensible footwear and clothing as well as a waterproof and packed lunch. On the day we will have options dependant on conditions to go south skirting Partanhall, Ross, Catcairn and Hilton Bay on the coastal path for Small Blue, Wall, Small Copper. A chance to see the more established Small Blue colonies at peak flight time. Also perhaps some very early emerged Northern Brown Argus dependant on spring conditions. Or to go north towards Eyemouth to see the newly discovered Small Blue colonies and maybe more on the day, a host of day-flying moths and flowering plants including Dew Moth & Ruby Tiger, Spring Squill & Early Purple Orchid and a search for the locally scarce micromoth <i>Pyrausta cingulata</i> .	1. Neville Crowther 01968 672089 Nevillecrowther@aol.com 2. Iain Cowe 01890 818314 07775 747838 orb@lammer.orangehome.co.uk
Saturday 17 June 2017	St. Abb's Head walk. An outing arranged by the <i>Scottish Wildlife Trust Central Borders Group</i> .	10:00am to about 5pm. A good time to see the breeding seabirds, butterflies, and flowers. An uphill and down dale walk of about 3 miles which includes a walk alongside Mire Loch. Bring a packed lunch. Meet at the car park at Northfield Farm (NT913673) at 11:30am OR at the Health Centre car park, Melrose (NT545341) at 10:00am to organise car share.	Jim Russell 01835 824898 or 07772 345248
Saturday 17 June to Sunday 18 June 2017	Ecological Restoration and Moths at Carrifran Wildwood	Meet at 9pm on 17 June at Carrifran Wildwood car park on the A708, 8 miles to the north-east of Moffat (NT159115) to assist with a survey assessing how moth populations have changed on the site since the Millennium. Carrifran Wildwood is a project showcasing ecological restoration on a large scale. Before 2000, it was a typical Southern Uplands glen grazed by sheep, but since then it has been transformed by the planting of over 500,000 native trees. Come along to learn more about the project, watch moth traps and sugaring in action, and hopefully encounter some spectacular hawkmoths. Participants should be prepared to stay on until midnight, or later if good conditions occur! However the trapped moths will be kept for inspection at 9am on the Sunday morning (18 June) at the same site. Bring warm clothing, waterproofs, midge repellent/midge nets and a torch.	Reuben Singleton reuben@tweedecology.co.uk 0778 3047398
Sunday 2 July 2017	Lugate Water	Target species for this site to the south of Stow are Northern Brown Argus and Dark Green Fritillary.	Richard Buckland (for more details) 0131 332 0615 r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk
Sunday 16 July 2017	Shielknowes	Target species: Large Heath and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Meet at entrance to the property (NS827719, 3km SW of Slamannan on the B803) at 10.30am.	Richard Buckland 0131 332 0615 r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk
July 2017	Berwickshire coastal butterflies	details to be confirmed	Iain Cowe 01890 818314 07775 747838 orb@lammer.orangehome.co.uk

Saturday 22 July 2017	Aberlady Bay. A joint outing with the <i>Edinburgh Natural History Society</i> .	The target species are Small Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary. Meet at the car park at the wooden bridge over the burn at the Aberlady Local Nature Reserve (NT472806) at 10.30am.	Richard Buckland 0131 332 0615 r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk
Sunday 30 July 2017	Moths at Paxton House	Starting at 10.30am we will walk through the grounds at Paxton House (NT932520, TD15 1SZ) to discover the moths attracted to light traps put out over the previous night and perhaps see some flying butterflies if the sun shines. Some of the paths through the woods are steep. This will be followed by some fun moth related craft activities in the education room, finishing around 12.30pm. Booking with Paxton House is advisable – places are limited. Children must be accompanied. There is a small charge of £1 per child and £2 per adult. There is a café which can provide lunch.	1. Hermione Hoffmann at Paxton House to book your place on 01289 386909 or Hermione@paxtonhouse.com 2. Barry Prater 018907 52037 barry@prater.myzen.co.uk
Saturday 5 August 2017	Eildon Hills walk. An outing arranged by the <i>Scottish Wildlife Trust Central Borders Group</i> .	Full day event, meeting at 10:30am finish 3-4pm. Packed lunch. Quite steep in places but will take it at a slow pace. However only suitable for moderately fit people. Meet at Melrose Health Centre car park (NT545341) at 10:15am or at walk start at 10:30am – “cemetery” road at the Rhymer’s stone (NT 564335). We’ll slowly ascend Hill North, then visit Mid Hill and Little Hill before a low level route back to the start. Birds, plants, insects (esp. butterflies and moths), a little geology and archaeology and fantastic views.	Malcolm Lindsay 01896 753425 or 07563 515854
Friday 18 August 2017	Moths @ Harestanes	Harestanes (NT641244) is by the A68, 6km north of Jedburgh. The event will run from 8:15 to 10:15pm. Late summer is the perfect time to see beautiful moths of all kinds. Gather round the light and discover the secrets of the night. Ages 8+, under-16s must be with an adult. Adult £4, Child £3. No dogs. Booking: Essential.	1. to book contact Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre, Ancrum, JEDBURGH TD8 6UQ 01835 830306 harestanes@liveborders1.org.uk www.liveborders.org.uk/harestanes 2. Barry Prater 018907 52037 barry@prater.myzen.co.uk
Saturday 26 August 2017	St Abbs Science Day	Details to be finalised but this will take place at the Ebba Centre in St Abbs and we will be there along with other wildlife and conservation groups to show and tell people about butterflies & moths.	Sarah Barnard ebbacentre@btconnect.com
summer or autumn 2017	Moths at Burnmouth	Date and details to be confirmed	1. Iain Cowe 01890 818314 07775 747838 orb@lammer.orangehome.co.uk 2. Barry Prater 018907 52037 barry@prater.myzen.co.uk
Friday 13 October 2017	National Moth Night 2017 @ Harestanes	Harestanes (NT641244) is by the A68, 6km north of Jedburgh. The event will run from 6:30 to 8:30pm. Ivy is the theme of this year’s national celebration of moths and recording. Come along and discover the beauty of these night-time creatures. Ages 8+, under-16s must be with an adult. Adult £4, Child £3. No dogs. Booking: Essential.	1. to book contact Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre, Ancrum, JEDBURGH TD8 6UQ 01835 830306 harestanes@liveborders1.org.uk www.liveborders.org.uk/harestanes 2. Barry Prater 018907 52037 barry@prater.myzen.co.uk

Progress with Moth Recording in the Borders

Barry Prater, Eyemouth

You'll probably be well aware that Butterfly Conservation is moving towards the final phase of putting together the first definitive atlas of the UK's larger moths (the macromoths). This can be seen as one of the main products of the National Moth Recording Scheme (NMRS) which was established in 2007. The NMRS gave a spur to existing moth recorders and, arguably an equally important output from the project, was drawing in new people who not only developed an interest in moths but became engrossed in discovering and recording them.

In the Borders we now have a total of around 147,500 moth records across the four Vice Counties, of which an astounding 106,000 (over 70%) date from 2000 or later. And while records per year stood at only the thousand mark in 2000, since 2010 there have been around 10,000 per year. The total number of species recorded is around 450, of which 405 have been seen since the turn of the century.

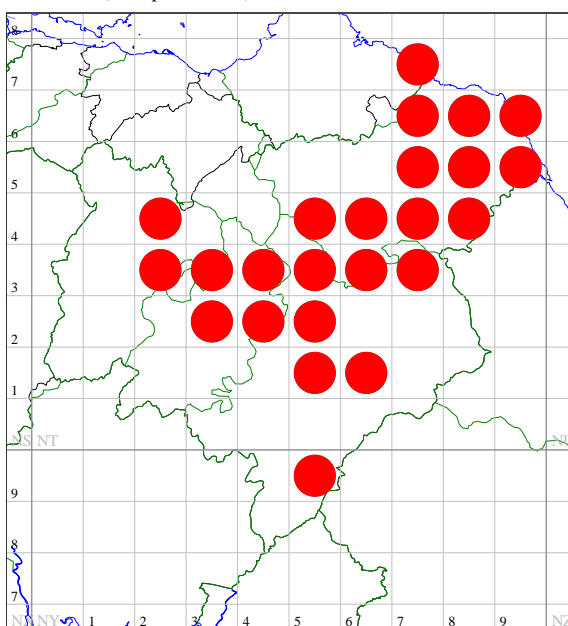
The moths atlas will have for each species a distribution map showing where it has been recorded down to the 10km square detail and one rather good measure of assessing progress with the recording survey is the number of species found in each 10km square. When the four VC Moth Recorders first analysed all the Borders moths records in November 2009, the sum of all the species recorded across all the 10km squares in the Borders (there are about 60 of these, some shared with adjacent Vice Counties) was 3903. Put another way, this was the sum of all the dots on the 10km distribution maps for all the species in the Borders. Now, in the space of just seven years the total has soared to 10,672. As the rise in the number of records suggests, much of this increase comes from recent intensive survey work; however, there has also been a lot of activity scouring the literature for early records and these have contributed much fascinating information, often indicating the former presence of species not recorded in recent years.

In the past, moth recording tended to be focused on a limited number of sites - often people's back gardens - and this led to a very uneven knowledge of moth distributions. So to give a more representative picture, strenuous efforts have been made to extend recording into the wider countryside, including some of the more remote areas of the Borders, and it is probably fair to say that we now have a good idea of the distributions of most macromoths here.

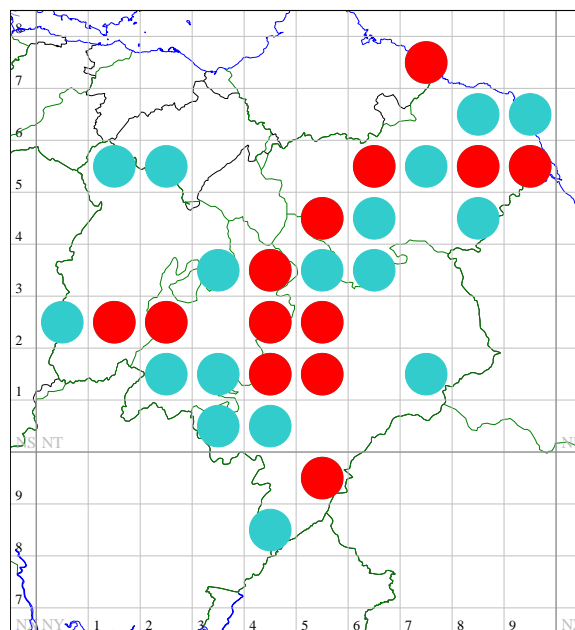
The huge amount of data which we have amassed lends itself to all sorts of analyses in both time and space. Here are just a few examples. On the maps below, covering just records from the Borders, red dots signify the species has been recorded from 2000 onwards and blue that records are all before 2000.

- **Pale Pinion** - there are 130 records of this moth, all since 2000; in fact it was first recorded in the Borders as recently as 2005. It has made a dramatic spread through the southern half of Scotland over recent years.
- **Puss Moth** - records (around 100) stretch back well into the 19th century, but it appears to have become generally much scarcer in recent years.
- **Red Carpet** - about 160 records of this predominantly upland/moorland species, but many recent gaps and it hasn't been recorded in Berwickshire since 1988 despite plenty of survey work in suitable habitats.
- **Scarce Silver Y** - over half of the 50 records of this moth have been since 2000 but again no records from Berwickshire since 1977.

Pale Pinion (*Lithophane socia*)



Puss Moth (*Cerura vinula*)





Pale Pinion

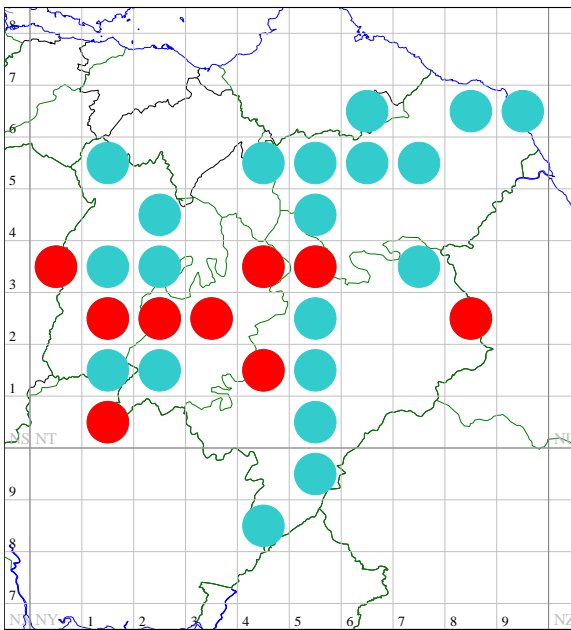


Puss Moth

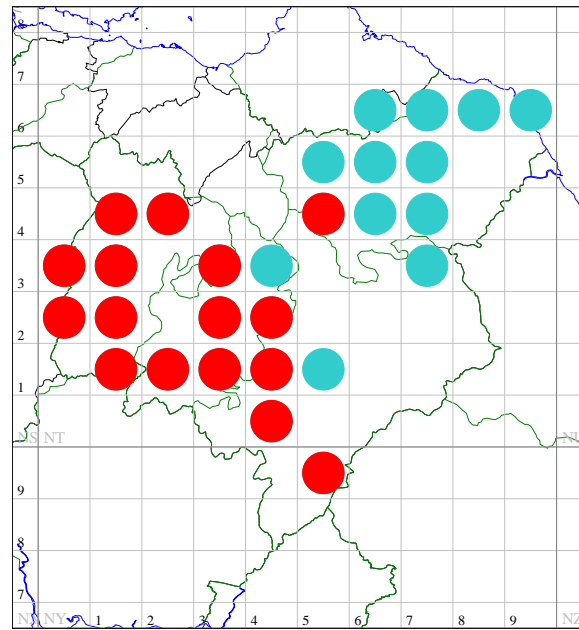


Puss Moth larva (Iain Cowe)

Red Carpet (*Xanthorhoe decoloraria*)



Scarce Silver Y (*Syngrapha interrogationis*)



Red Carpet (Paul Harris)



Scarce Silver Y



Orange Underwing (Iain Cowe)

There has already been one outstanding moth record this year. On 5 April Iain Cowe came across an Orange Underwing at Partanhall by Burnmouth. This represents the first Berwickshire record of this species and only the second site for it in the Borders (the other being in Roxburghshire). The moth is associated with birch trees and so how it came to be flying around at the coast with apparently no suitable trees nearby is a mystery. However, it's a super and inspiring find and suggests that scanning birch trees on sunny days in late March and April for this day-flying moth could be fruitful.

Hibernating Heralds – a winter counting moths in dark places

Katty Baird, North Berwick & Mark Cubitt, Linlithgow

(pictures by Katty Baird)



Herald

The discovery of over 70 Heralds hibernating in one place and a serendipitous encounter with a Tissue moth in East Lothian last November kick-started what has become an enjoyable and at times obsessive wintertime mothing adventure. Further searching of suitably dark places in the Lothians and Borders soon revealed a few more hibernating Tissues, which was very exciting! Meanwhile, with the Moths Atlas deadline of the end of 2016 fast approaching, we were adding many new Herald dots to 10km squares.



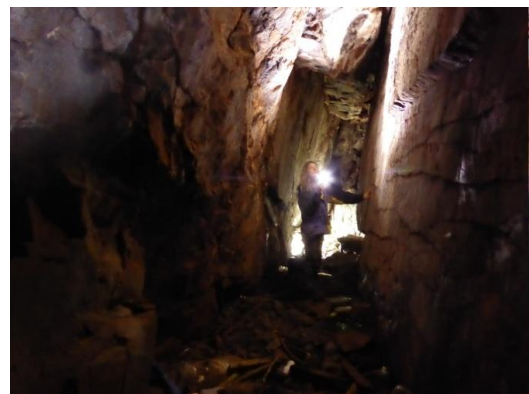
Tissue

In order to widen our geographical net and to encourage others to join in the hunt we launched the Hibernating Heralds project <https://www.facebook.com/hibernatingheralds/>, asking people across Scotland to check suitably dark places in their locality for hibernating moths and add their records to an iRecord activity. Since then, the project has reached out to many people and encouraged partnerships with bat groups, ranger services and other environmental groups. At the last count nearly 2,000 Heralds had been recorded across Scotland and over 180 sites checked; from field drains and pill boxes to coastal caves, castles and copper mines. The Borders region has been productive for both Heralds and Tissues. What follows is a flavour of our exploits in Berwickshire.

Coastal Caves – from Cove to St. Abb's



The Berwickshire coast is dotted with caves, many only accessible via steep descents at low tide or with skilled use of a kayak. Nevertheless we managed to check quite a few and found both Heralds and Tissues inside. The cave entrances are probably easy enough for a passing moth to locate and enter, but we can only speculate whether they 'know' to search along the rocky coastline at the base of the cliffs or end up chancing upon these places.



Penmanshiel Wood

This is predominantly a dense conifer plantation alongside the A1 and East Coast Mainline. I went in search of an underground WW2 bunker which sounded ideal for moths. The bunker remains elusive (any directions for next year gratefully received) but I did find a drainage tunnel passing under the railway track. Deafening if not disconcerting with an intercity train passing overhead, and home for 14 hibernating Heralds.



Whiteadder adit - Many places hold the remains of exploratory mining excavations, some of which are still accessible. We have spent much time gleaning information from the internet and even more time battling the undergrowth in contour-rich places in search of small openings. Not much larger than a fox's burrow (and arguably less obvious), a small trial in the Whiteadder valley is one such example. Entry required wriggling feet first through a passage littered with old bottles, buckets and cans before being able to regain a crouching position. Somehow 5 Heralds had also managed to locate this mine tunnel and find a way in. The nearby copper mine adit held a Tissue.



Peacocks also found at several sites



Grahamslaw Caves – manmade caves carved into sandstone cliffs near Kelso. Most were probably too light or open for moths, but a side passage off one cave contained a few Heralds.

As part of the survey we have been recording characteristics of the hibernation sites such as size, temperature and surrounding habitat. Analysis so far doesn't reveal many obvious trends, although it is clear that Heralds are more numerous and widespread in Scotland than previous light-trapping data had revealed. How these moths find these locations and why they choose certain sites remains a mystery. It will be interesting to see if the moths are found hibernating in the same places next autumn.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us with access or records so far, and to BC East Scotland for financial assistance with the purchase of temperature loggers.

[If you venture out next winter to look for Heralds, do make sure you check the guidance in the post pinned to the top of the Hibernating Heralds Facebook page before starting. There are hazards to be avoided and hibernation sites can be shared with bats which must not be disturbed]



Small Tortoiseshell by Apithanny Bourne. You can see more of Apithanny's wildlife drawings and how they support conservation at <http://www.twigsandfinches.co.uk/> and follow activities here <https://www.facebook.com/twigsandfinches/> .

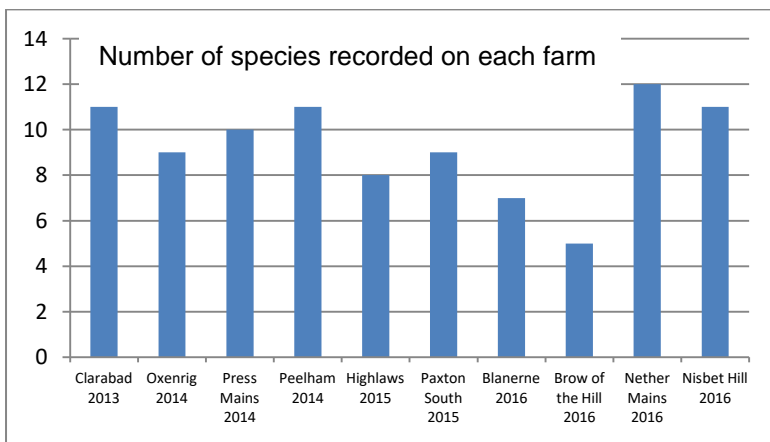
Berwickshire Arable Wildlife Project

Barry Prater, Eyemouth

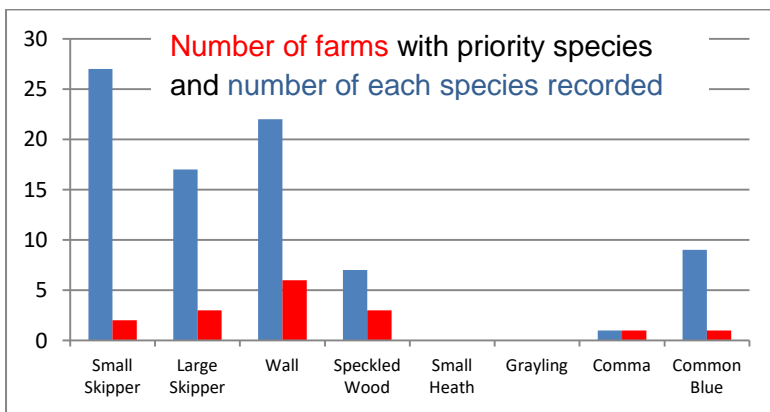
Back in 2013 the RSPB asked if Butterfly Conservation would like to join their project in Berwickshire which has the main aim of investigating whether agri-environment schemes on arable farms have benefits for wildlife - birds being the obvious priority group for study as so many farmland species have declined in recent decades. So we did get involved and from 2013 to 2016 ten arable farms have been surveyed for their butterflies, with a focus on the wide grass margins which now surround many arable fields. The work has been done by six volunteers who were to visit their farm up to five times from May to September and, although all followed a survey methodology, there would have been some variations in the way surveys were conducted and constraints such as weather conditions interfered with the survey programmes too. Michael Scott wrote about his experience of the survey in our last newsletter.

A considerable amount of data has accumulated over the past four years and it seemed sensible to see what this is telling us about butterflies on this set of arable farms. At the start of the surveys a group of 'priority' butterflies was identified. While some of these species are of conservation concern, others are of interest because they are expanding their distribution through the Borders at the moment.

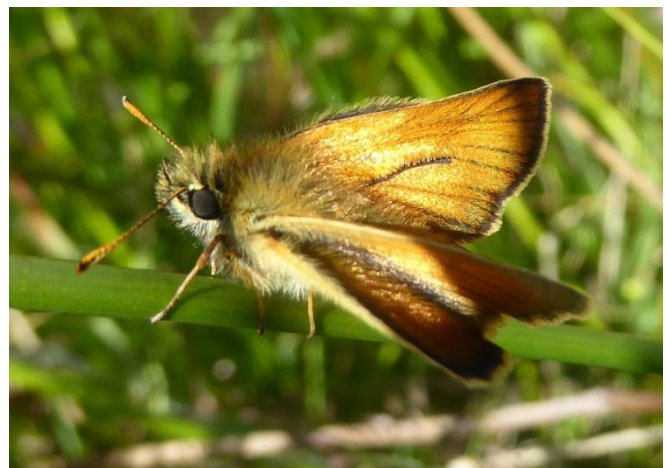
The following plots show some of the results of the surveys.



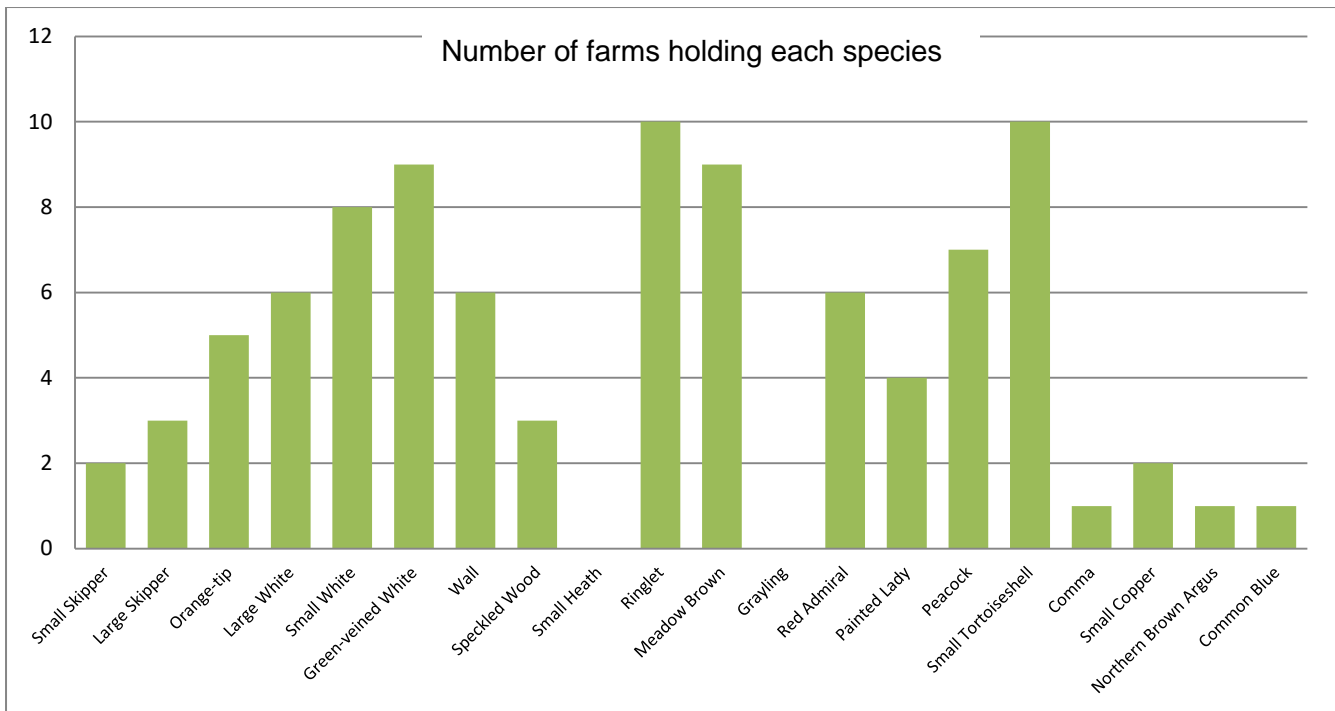
Most of the farms had 8 or more butterflies present and there appears to be a reasonable correlation between the number of species found and the estimated habitat quality (including how exposed or sheltered the site is).



Large Skipper



Small Skipper



Some tentative conclusions from the survey so far:

- arable farmland is largely neglected by butterfly observers, but there have been some very useful records of Small Skipper, Large Skipper and particularly of the Wall which is still showing serious declines in central England
- two of the priority species have not been recorded - Grayling and Small Heath - but their habitat requirements are probably not well met on arable farms
- grass margins do provide the necessary larval foodplants for several species, such as the two skippers and the browns, but numbers might be restricted because of the scarcity of nectar sources in many of the seed mixes used
- there is a need to give feedback and advice to farmers so that further improvements can be achieved
- some keen new survey volunteers recruited!

Thanks to all the other members of the survey team - Clare Tarnawska, Michael Scott, Roger Manning, Chris Duncan and Andrew Mossop.

Plant Communities for Butterflies and Moths Part 6: Oakwoods

Roger Manning, Sprouston

The Scottish Borders are home to large tracts of woodland but, despite all the tree cover, we lack the huge broadleaved forests which have survived in some other parts of Britain. Nevertheless, there are oak trees growing in parks, gardens and along the hedgerows of our farmlands where they have often been planted at spaced intervals. Additionally, they form a percentage of many local mixed deciduous woods but 'pure' stands are perhaps best admired at locations such as the Abbey St Bathans area.

Several types of oak tree are present in the Scottish Borders but most of those you will encounter are likely to be the Sessile (or Durmast) Oak (*Quercus petraea*). A lucky find would be the chance of discovery of Purple Hairstreak butterflies sunbathing high in the canopy. This is the only UK species whose caterpillars rely on oaks and it remains elusive in the Borders despite plenty of areas with apparently suitable habitat; it was last recorded on the Bowhill estate to the west of Selkirk in 1959 and there are attempts most years to try and find at various places. It's probable that some are overlooked due to their preference for spending much of the time at height, but it would be well to bear them in mind during July and August when they are on the wing. On a sunny afternoon take some binoculars, scan the treetops, be patient and suffer some back pain - it could be worth it.



Purple Hairstreak male



Purple Hairstreak female



Purple Hairstreak underside (all Jim Asher)

The list of possible moths associated with oaks is very lengthy and just some will be sketched out here. In the early months of the year there are several species which are reliant on oaks or at least commonly encountered there. Mottled Umbers (which will have been on the wing since October) can still be numerous throughout January but will soon be outnumbered by the Pale Brindled Beauty and the Dotted Border. On milder nights in February good numbers of Spring Usher can be light-trapped in oakwoods.



Spring Usher



Mottled UMBER male



Mottled UMBER female

For all of these species the female is flightless, a characteristic of quite a few moths which are adult during the coldest months - maybe a development to cope with the added weight of carrying eggs. Then as the year moves on a group of related moths, primarily of the *Orthosia* genus, appears, often in large numbers and these dominate light traps for some weeks. They are the Hebrew Character, Common Quaker, Clouded Drab, Twin-spotted Quaker and Small Quaker - this last being the one mostly associated with oaks. At this time of year the micromoth *Diurnea fagella* flies in good numbers and will often be found at rest on tree trunks near the light trap.



Twin-spotted Quaker



Diurnea fagella



Oak Beauty

Perhaps the one oakwoods moth which many people search for each spring in the Borders is the Oak Beauty, but most searches are unsuccessful, despite (again) there being plenty of good-looking habitat. After a thin scattering of records from 1955 to 1977, the only recent sightings have been from Riccarton Bar (2007) and Innerleithen (2014).

Only two members of the pug family use oaks - one of these is the Brindled Pug, a common a widespread species which has some lovely markings and lives up to its 'brindled' name. The Oak-tree Pug, despite its name, primarily uses hawthorns although oak is used as well; it only has a toe-hold in the Borders with just two records from the SE corner.



Brindled Pug



Oak-tree Pug (Iain Cowe)

Autumn brings out a another wide variety of moths in oakwoods, including the stunning Merveille du Jour, Feathered Thorn, Yellow-line Quaker and Oak Nycteoline. This last one is easily mistaken for a micromoth because of its size and appearance; it also comes in a rather bewildering variety of forms which can be confusing!



three different forms of Oak Nycteoline

Something like 18% of the Scottish Borders currently has tree cover, but the government announced a few years ago that its aim was to achieve 50% cover by 2050. In view of the fact that only a tiny proportion of the figure for existing cover refers to broadleaved trees (as compared to conifers) it is to be hoped that our native oak will feature prominently in the proposed increase. It is said that nationally oak trees act as foodplant for approximately 240 species of moths and it would be good to think of future generations benefitting from their greater presence.

If you've seen it, report it

Below are the people to whom you should send your sightings of moths or butterflies during 2017. If you come across something which you think is unusual or interesting then do get in touch quickly as others will like to hear about it, but you still need to send in records to the various people listed to make sure they get logged. **Increasingly, observers are recording their sightings using online systems such as iRecord or posting them on website or Facebook pages; none of these records will automatically get through to the County Recorders listed below. To guarantee that your sightings get noted you should continue to send them in to the County Recorders.**

You can also publicise your sightings through the forums on the branch website www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/ or on our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/EastScotlandButterflyConservation>

The work of County Recorders is made a little easier if records are sent in from time to time during the year rather than all together at the end.

The Borders County Moth Recorders:

Peeblesshire: Reuben Singleton, 5 Frankscroft, Peebles, Scottish Borders EH45 9DX
reuben@dukehaugh.free-online.co.uk Tel: 01721 723858

Selkirkshire: Malcolm Lindsay, Burn House, Mossilee Road, Galashiels TD1 1NF
malcandles46@talktalk.net Tel: 01896 753425

Roxburghshire: Jeff Waddell, 33 Eildon View, Dingleton, Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9RH
jeffwaddell11@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 01896 822089

Berwickshire: Barry Prater, 12 Barefoots Crescent, Eyemouth, Berwickshire TD14 5BA
barry@prater.myzen.co.uk Tel: 018907 52037

& the Borders Butterfly Recorder:

Iain Cowe, 6 Lammerview, Chirnside, Berwickshire TD11 3UW
bordersbutterflies@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk Tel: 01890 818314 or 07775 747838

There is guidance on submitting your butterfly and moth records on the branch website and also some recording forms which you can use - these help enormously when collating all the records.
