

---

# SPRING 2025 NEWS BULLETIN

A very **warm** welcome to all new and existing members of East Scotland Butterfly Conservation. We hope you find this news bulletin a useful round-up of interesting articles, key dates for your diary and useful contacts. The East Branch committee hope you have had a successful Spring spotting butterflies and moths. Enjoy this update!

The branch's area covers the Scottish Borders, the Lothians, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire, Perth and Kinross, Fife, Angus, Banffshire and Aberdeenshire, with a diverse range of habitats including extensive areas of upland moorland, coastal habitats, wetlands, farmland, broad-leaved and coniferous woodland. We run events ourselves and support the events of other organisations too.

## Upcoming events

All of these events can be found on the BC events page here: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/in-your-area/east-scotland-branch> Please visit the East Scotland webpage for full details on events listings, or by following us on **Facebook**.

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May: 7pm – 8pm: Scottish surveys for Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Chequered Skipper butterflies - ONLINE event**

**Location:** Join us for this online event to find out how to take part in surveys for two of our most threatened butterflies. This online workshop will be run over Zoom, and volunteers will find out how to identify and record these butterflies with the



EAST  
SCOTLAND  
BUTTERFLY  
CONSERVATION

QUARTERLY E-NEWS

Photo by Iain Cowe

---

aim of taking part in surveys organised by BC staff. **[Click here to register your place.](#)**  
**Contact:** Anthony McCluskey on **[amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org)**

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May: 6pm – 7.45pm: Butterfly identification and recording [ONLINE workshop]**

**Location:** Join us for this online workshop to learn how to identify and record butterflies. This workshop will focus on the more common species, but will also cover some of the rarer species that can be encountered in different areas. **Booking:** book your free place by **[clicking here.](#)** This workshop will take place over **Zoom.**-**Contact:** Anthony McCluskey on **[amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org)**

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May: 10.30am: Green Hairstreak field trip – Glencorse Reservoir**

**Location:** A visit to Glencorse Reservoir to inspect the Green Hairstreak site at Kirk Burn we have been managing. We will be walking to the site. Meet at the **visitor centre at Flotterstone**, grid ref. NT232633, **at 10.30am.** **Contact:** Richard Buckland at **[r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk)** Mob; **07711453605.**

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May: 10am – 3pm: Pearl-bordered Fritillary workshop – Loch Katrine, near Callander**

**Location:** Loch Katrine [near Callander.] Join us at Loch Katrine - eastern shore near the Trossachs Pier. From there we will walk to the slopes of Ben Venue (approx 30 minute walk to site).

**Booking:** please book your space by using this **[booking form.](#)** Contact Anthony McCluskey on **[amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org)** if you need any other information.

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May: 10am – 1pm: Pearl-bordered Fritillary workshop – Killin [ near Loch Tay]**

**Location:** Fassiefern, Main Street, Killin. Join us at the town of Killin on the shores of Loch Tay to find out more about the Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly. **Booking: This event is almost fully booked. We are therefore inviting bookings only from people who are likely to undertake surveys for this species or who live in the Killin area.** please book your space by using this **[booking form.](#)** Contact Anthony McCluskey on **[amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org)** if you need any other information.

---

---

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May: 10.30am – 1.30pm: [with Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June as back-up] - In**

**Search of Dingy Skipper – Auchgourish, near Boat of Garten.**

**Meeting place:** Grid reference: **NH94671646** What3Words: **rising.fatigued.farmer** We will meet at the end of the junction of the forest track that heads south into the woodland. There is limited parking in adjacent pull ins or you can park nose-to-tail along the track itself. **Directions:** 1.6km (1mile) south of **Street of Kincardine on the B970** is a junction with a minor private road. Turn east along this private road and follow for 600m (0.4 miles) to the meeting place. **Approx duration:** Up to 3 hours (finishing about 1.30pm). Come and see the results of our winter management work for Dingy Skipper. **Please note: You must contact Pete a couple of days prior to 31<sup>st</sup> May to confirm if the event is taking place. If the weather forecast for that day is bad, the back-up date of 7<sup>th</sup> June will be used instead.** **Contact:** Pete Moore -

Email: [tonuptwitcher@gmail.com](mailto:tonuptwitcher@gmail.com) Mob: **07590 589533**

**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June: 7pm – 8pm: Northern Brown Argus surveys ONLINE workshop -**

**Location:** Join us for this free Zoom training workshop online event to find out how to take part in surveys for the Northern Brown Argus. **Contact:** David Hill at [dhill@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:dhill@butterfly-conservation.org) - volunteers will find out how to identify and record Northern Brown Argus with the aim of taking part in surveys organised by BC staff. **[Click here to register your place.](#)**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June: 3pm – 4pm: Large Heath butterfly online training workshop**

**Northern**

**Location:** Zoom online workshop to inform those who are working or advising on peatland conservation in Scotland about the Large Heath butterfly, how to find it and report sightings. **Contact:** David Hill at [dhill@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:dhill@butterfly-conservation.org) **Booking:** The workshop is free; however, booking is essential. **To book a place on the workshop please click [here](#)**

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> June: 10.30am: Northern Brown Argus field trip – Williamhope Glen**

**Location:** Willimhope Glen is a picturesque glen with a good population of Northern Brown Argus. There is also the possibility of seeing Dark Green Fritillary. **Meet** at the **Glenkinnon car park** just off the A707 Peebles to Selkirk road, at 10.30am. (Grid ref. NT438348) and what 3words "///speedy.wooden.fidelity". If staying for the whole time, a packed lunch is advisable, As are stout footwear and waterproof clothing. **Contact:** Richard Buckland at [r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk)

---

---

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June: 10.30am: Field trip to see Large Heath at Leadburn Community woodland, near Penicuik**

**Location:** A trip to Leadburn Community woodland to see Large Heath. This is an area next to Auchencorth Moss with considerable areas of cotton grass (the caterpillar food plant). Meet at the car park at the site, just off the A703 Peebles road at grid ref. NT24520, at 10.30am. **Contact:** Richard Buckland at [r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July: time tbc: Dark Bordered Beauty moth monitoring – Insh Marshes, nr Kingussie**

**Meeting place:** RSPB Insh Marshes car park, 2 miles out of Kingussie on the B970 (past Ruthven Barracks). NN775998 (OS map 35 – Kingussie).

What3words: *lorry.sized.vipers* Come and join us as we look through live-catch moth traps. There should be plenty of species to see in the traps, some of which will be nationally scarce, but Dark Bordered Beauty moth is expected to be star of the show. There's no need to contact the leader beforehand – just turn up on the day. **What's needed:** Packed lunch and midge repellent (just in case). **Approx duration:** To lunchtime and possibly beyond. **Contact:** Pete Moore on Mob **07590 589533** email [tonuptwitcher@gmail.com](mailto:tonuptwitcher@gmail.com)

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July: 10.00am – 3-4pm: Alpine Coffee Moth Field Workshop – Glen Doll, Angus**

**Meeting place:** at the **Glen Doll car park** (grid reference is NO283761). It's a 5 km walk from the car park to the site at Corrie Sharroch in Glen Doll. [The first hour of the walk is on good Land Rover tracks but the last section is on rough, steep ground in the mountains off a path so require a high level of fitness.] The Highland Nymph *Callisto coffeella* (affectionately nicknamed the Alpine Coffee moth for the cappuccino-coloured forewings) is one of our rarest micro-moth species in the UK and the only true montane willow specialist moth. **To register:** Please contact Patrick Cook via email [pcook@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:pcook@butterfly-conservation.org)

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August: 5.30pm – 8.30pm: An evening stroll with Purple Hairstreaks – Retreat Wood, Berwickshire**

**Location:** A summer evening stroll along estate tracks under the oak trees with Purple Hairstreak jousting overhead, at Retreat Wood in Berwickshire. **Contact:** Geoff Ballinger at [chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk) Please contact Geoff by email at <mailto:chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk> to let us know you are coming along.

---

---

**Detailed joining instructions** will be provided by email the week before. This event will involve up to 3 miles of walking on good estate tracks taken at an easy pace. Given the nature of Scotland's summer weather, it may be necessary to reschedule the walk at that stage and the fallback date would be **Saturday 9th August**. For more on the species see: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/purple-hairstreak>

## Aberdeenshire upcoming events

In Aberdeenshire, BC East Scotland Branch is partnering with various organisations to organise events through spring and summer, others may be added later - contact [helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) to be added to local mailing list for updates:

### Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May - Muir of Dinnet NNR Bioblitz

Various walks and drop-in sessions are scheduled for the day including:

- 10:00 - 11:00 - Moth Morning. Join Aberdeenshire Council ranger and local moth expert Helen Rowe to identify and admire various moth species that have been caught overnight. Event will be held at the Burn O' Vat visitor centre. **Booking is essential.**
- 11:00 – 12:00 – Moth Morning continued (drop-in session). **Book to join** at 1000 to join in the moth trap opening, identification and introduction to moths or drop in at 1100 to view the catch before we release them afterwards.

More info. & booking: [Muir of Dinnet Bioblitz! | Facebook](#)

[Muir\\_Dinnet@nature.scot](mailto:Muir_Dinnet@nature.scot)

### Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May - Greyhope Bay Bioblitz

Programme TBC at time of writing but it's hoped to include some moth and butterfly recording.

For more info. check: <https://www.greyhopebay.com/events>

### Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Monday 26<sup>th</sup> May

[The Deeside Nature Festival | Wild Discovery](#) including butterfly and moth events at Cambus O'May, Braemar and Ballater.

[Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service Events - 28 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite](#) including:

### Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May - Jewels of the Air – Butterflies & Moths walk, Cambus O'May

---

---

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July - Winged & Watery Wonders, Burnett Park, Banchory**

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July - Go Wild for Butterflies, Moths & More, Braemar**

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July - Marvellous Moths, Forvie NNR**

**+ August dates for events in Huntly & Alford TBC**

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August - Crathes Castle Garden Biodiversity Day**

Programme TBC at time of writing but some trapping and butterfly spotting is planned. For more info. check:

**[Crathes Castle, Garden & Estate Events - 9 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite](#)**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August - Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth caterpillar & Broken-belted Bumblebee survey workshop, Balmoral**

Joint event with Bumblebee Conservation Trust looking for species associated with Devil's-bit Scabious. Details TBC, but for more info. contact [annie.ives@bumblebeeconservation.org](mailto:annie.ives@bumblebeeconservation.org)

**Written by Helen Rowe**

[ Helen Rowe, Countryside Ranger (Marr), Ranger Service ]

## **New Branch Chair's intro**

This has been a period of change in the branch with Colin Whitehead stepping down as treasurer, and the committee would like to express their thanks for his many years of service. Ken Brown has stepped up to take this on in addition to his branch secretary role. Also, Apithanny Bourne has stepped back from her role as branch chair in order to take on a very exciting new role with the Borderlands project.

I have now joined the committee as chair and, being very much a newcomer at this stage, I am keen to hear about what is important to you about the branch, and also what it could do better. Looking beyond such local 'administrivia' we mustn't lose sight of the ongoing butterfly emergency declared by Butterfly Conservation nationally last year, and the rather shocking declines in butterfly numbers that decision was based on.

This has also been a tough few years for Butterfly Conservation, as they are subject to the same economic pressures as the rest of the world which has led to a need to reduce staff costs, and thus headcount. I am reassured to hear that the number of staff will remain above the pre-Covid levels but this reduction will inevitably lead to some disruption.

---

---

As individuals who care about butterflies and moths we mustn't despair, but rather persevere with positive actions like:

- record every butterfly or moth you come across, in iRecord or otherwise
- join the various Butterfly Conservation projects and habitat management work parties
- get involved on social media to help spread the word and increase wider public awareness
- consider leaving Butterfly Conservation a gift in your will to support their work

Fortunately, it isn't all doom and gloom and there are some positive news, in particular that the licence for use of the Cruiser SB neonicotinoid pesticide has not been granted for 2025, in response to pressure from Butterfly Conservation and others, which is great news for butterflies and pollinators generally. We also have a number of butterfly species which are expanding their known range in East Scotland, notably **Holly Blue** and **White Letter Hairstreak**, so there is plenty of opportunity to go out and see them in new places.

**Written by Geoff Ballinger – Branch Chair**

[chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk)



Geoff with carrier bags of oak twigs to check for **Purple Hairstreak** eggs!

---

---

## New staff join Butterfly Conservation Scotland

In February this year BC Scotland were delighted to welcome two new members to the team. **Apithanny Bourne** joined as Species-rich Grassland Project Officer working in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. Apithanny will be well known to many of our volunteers and supporters as for many years she has been the chair of our East of Scotland branch as well as a trustee of BC. Apithanny says:

*“Species-rich grasslands are my passion and I have spent both my career and PhD research focusing on this wonderful habitat. I have been involved with mapping our remaining grasslands, restoring them with different management techniques, botanical surveying and even monitoring meadows using drones. Having been involved with Butterfly Conservation for over a decade (as volunteer, branch chair and trustee), I am now looking forward to becoming a staff Member!”*

Our second new starter is **Mhairi Hume** who has joined as a Biological Recording Trainee for one year as part of the Species on the Edge programme. Mhairi is based in Oban and will be focussing on species such as Marsh Fritillary and Transparent Burnet. Mhairi says:

*“I’m most excited about learning new skills in identification and monitoring. Most of my experience working in conservation has been through monitoring. Since studying Conservation Biology at university, I have worked with the Scottish Wildlife Trust surveying squirrels in Aberdeen, and with the RSPB surveying birds in Orkney. I do also really enjoy practical management, and I stay involved with this as a volunteer. I love learning but I have not yet been able to delve into the world of butterflies and moths until now, so I’m excited to get started.”*

**Written by Apithanny Bourne**

## Scottish Entomological Gathering (SEG) 2025 – Mar Lodge

This year’s Scottish Entomological Gathering will be taking place at Mar Lodge by Braemar from **Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd June 2025**. The gathering will be a joint event with the Coleopterists Society. National Trust for Scotland will be our hosts and we will have access to facilities at the lodge as a base for the weekend.

For those who have not heard of or attended a SEG before - they are a gathering of Scottish entomologists who meet up over a weekend once a year and get out in the field and record invertebrates. They are obviously also very enjoyable and sociable as well as being

---

---

informative with many of the great and good of Scottish entomology in attendance. SEG has been held annually since 1981 with the venue changing each year.

If you are interested in attending or want to hear about future SEGs then please let the SEG organisers know (see below) so we can send you more details and add you to the SEG distribution list.

Written by David Hill & Tom Prescott - [scottishentogathering@gmail.com](mailto:scottishentogathering@gmail.com)

## Purple Progress 2021 - 2025

When Gail and I were first introduced to the **Purple Hairstreak** by Chris Stamp in 2021 there were no modern records for the Lothians and Borders, and the most recent hints were from a naturalist's notebook from Bowhill in Selkirkshire in the 1950s. Fortunately this has turned out to be more about the stealthy nature of this lovely little butterfly, and they are out there to be found if you look hard enough. For those of us south of the Forth it is no longer necessary to drive to Fife to see them.



Adult Purple Hairstreak in mature oak tree (Credit: Geoff Ballinger)

The adults fly from approximately mid-July until the end of August, and are most often seen chasing and jousting high in the W-SW facing canopy of mature oak trees in the evening sun from 6.30pm onwards. Individuals can sometimes be seen lower down and earlier in the day but that is much less common.

---

---

Between 2021 and 2023 we found a series of PH colonies in West Lothian from Falkirk in the West to Dalmeny Park in the East to bring them tantalisingly close to the leafy suburbs of West Edinburgh. We also found them deep in the Borders amongst the magnificent parkland oak at Harestanes, though it took as three full seasons to get our first photographs there emphasising how challenging the species can be. Finally, we followed them around the end of the Lammermuirs from Abbey Saint Bathans in Berwickshire to Pressmennan Wood in East Lothian.



The helpfully diagnostic very distinctive eggs are laid tucked under or between the terminal oak buds, and remain there all winter before hatching in March.

We had been finding and photographing eggs at known colonies previously, but in late autumn 2023 we heard of two new records where eggs had been found on windfall oak miles from any known purple hairstreak colony, by Apithanny Bourne in Lauderdale and Sheila Sim in Duns. This inspired us to go and do some serious egging.

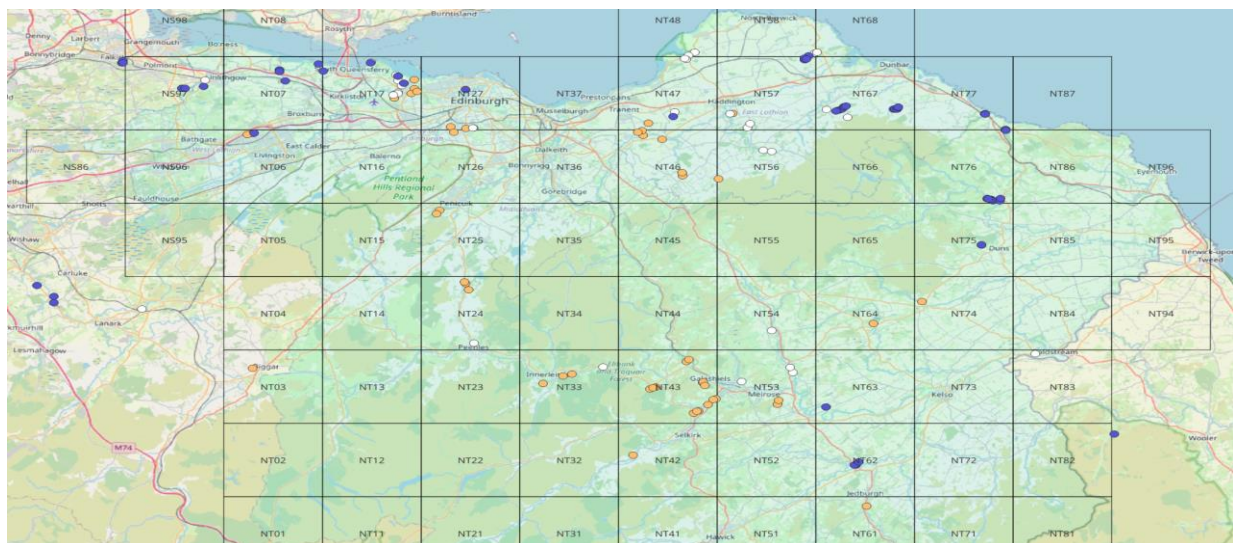
Observing that finding eggs on windfall oak twigs is a bit of a numbers game even when they are present, we developed a somewhat 'industrial' technique involving gathering a few well stuffed carrier bags of windfall oak twigs from a likely site, and then going through them under a spotlight and with magnification through the long winter evenings.

---

---

We applied this in early 2024 to find new sites around Butterdean, Aberlady, Tynninghame, and Yester etc. in East Lothian; and along the River Almond and into Cammo on the west side of Edinburgh. Most surprisingly we collected twigs from a fallen oak tree in the Hermitage of Braid in south Edinburgh and found an egg there!

Over last winter we tried to continue this further west in East Lothian but were unsuccessful in a succession of apparently very suitable sites. Similarly, we had no luck to the east of the River Almond on the west of Edinburgh. We had more success in the Borders with egg finds around Peebles, Earlston, Tweedbank and Coldstream etc., but also a run of negative results upstream from Galashiels. We also repeated our surprising Hermitage of Braids result finding three eggs this time.



<https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>

### Distribution map – screenshot - (Credit: Geoff Ballinger)

**The distribution map** above shows a combination of definite adult sightings (purple) and egg finds (white) in the region or immediately adjacent from various contributors on iRecord and otherwise. I have also included negatives where we picked up reasonable windfall oak twigs but failed to find any eggs over the last two winters (orange), but those should be taken with a large pinch of salt since we may well have just been unlucky on that day.

While it is important not to put too much weight on the negative results due to lack of certainty there are a number of areas where our apparent rate of finding eggs drops off sharply. For example, in East Lothian we have found nothing in NT46 west of Yester or south of Butterdean despite multiple attempts in great oak around Pencaitland and Humbie. On the west side of

---

---

Edinburgh they seem to stop more or less on the line of the River Almond. Are these edges to their distribution or just artefacts?

Another interesting observation is that there are a number of sites where eggs have been found but no adults seen when visiting again in summer in apparently good conditions, for example at the Hermitage of Braids in Edinburgh and Luffness in East Lothian. This could be explained by the extremely stealthy habits of the species on one hand, but it has also been suggested that the females might be travelling considerable distances unobserved and distributing eggs far from established colonies.

To try to answer these, and find the other sites that likely remain out there somewhere, we need more data. To get that we need more people to go out looking for both the adults in summer and eggs over winter and then putting the results into iRecord.

They tend to be found at sites with a long history of oak in the area over the centuries, either pedunculate or sessile it really doesn't matter. Remnant fragments of native oakwood as well as long established estates where the oak has been protected from the demands of wars and for pit props have proved productive. Remember at most sites the adults really don't fly much before 6.30pm so there isn't much point in looking earlier.

Midlothian is a particular area of interest with a combination of some fantastic old and even ancient oak, the potential historic influence of the coalfield, and no records yet despite a number of people going out looking over the years.

**Written by Geoff (& Gail) Ballinger**

## Help record moths at Aberlady Bay local nature reserve

This year, on the last weekend of each month, there will be a moth recording session at Aberlady Bay local nature reserve in East Lothian. Everyone welcome. Join us if you can!

**Dates are weekends: 26/27<sup>th</sup> April; 24/25<sup>th</sup> May; 28/29<sup>th</sup> June; 26/27 July; 30<sup>th</sup> /31<sup>st</sup> August.**

The aim is to learn more about the moths that live on the reserve and to add more moth-ers into independent moth recording with mobile (battery-powered) traps on the reserve and elsewhere.

---



On the Saturday evening, we will set traps around the reserve and, weather/season permitting try dusking or luring moths to sugar. On Sunday morning (early) we will check the traps and count the moths before releasing them. Please get in touch with Katty ([kattybaird@gmail.com](mailto:kattybaird@gmail.com)) if you'd like to come along to these sessions and a time and meeting place will be confirmed. No kit required, but you are welcome to bring your own traps, and there will be some to borrow.

those that prefer a Sunday morning lie-in, turn up at the **Volunteer Hub** on the reserve (Grid Ref: **NT46718167**), approx. 10 mins walk from the reserve carpark) on the Sunday morning from 9.30am to see the morning's mothy highlights and go through any remaining traps. No booking necessary. Moth traps will be followed by a walk around the reserve to record other invertebrate groups, with different specialists coming along to lend their expertise during the year. This will start at the volunteer hub at 11am.

These events will be a great opportunity to learn more about moths and moth recording, meet others interested in moths, and try your hand at mobile moth trapping (the very best way to see a range of species!). At the same time, we will be contributing important records to the reserve, helping inform management plans and conservation actions.

Everyone welcome, from the experienced old-timers, to those completely new to the world of moths. Get in touch with Katty ([kattybaird@gmail.com](mailto:kattybaird@gmail.com)) if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!

---



Fox moth – (Credit: Katty Baird)



Elephant Hawk-moth –  
(Credit: Katty Baird)

NB: Parking at the reserve is limited, please consider car share or active travel or park in the village.

Written by Katty Baird

## News from East Perthshire

### Northern Brown Argus Survey Day 2025 at Lundie Craigs - Thursday 17th July, 10.30 am

Join us for our annual **Northern Brown Argus** survey at Lundie Craigs. We will survey for this priority species by searching for and counting the eggs. No problem if you have not been before, we can show you how to recognize the eggs and adult butterflies. We will also be looking out for other *Lepidoptera*, species often seen include the **Dark Green Fritillary**, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Small Heath** and **Common Blue**. The event will be led by Glyn Edwards and Cathy Caudwell of the East of Scotland Branch. Beginner and experienced surveyors all welcome.

**Meet at NO263360, the Tullybaccart car park**, which is on the left side of the A923 Dundee-Coupar Angus road as you head north (about 10 km from Dundee). Please ring or email so we know to expect you. The walk to and from the site will be approximately 2.5 to 3 km along a rough track. We will carry out the survey on a steeply sloping vegetated hillside. Remember to bring good outdoor gear including waterproofs and a packed lunch. A hand lens would also be useful. We expect to return about 3 pm.

---

---

Contacts: Cathy Caudwell [c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk) (tel. **01828 686709**) or Glyn Edwards [perthshirebutterflies@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:perthshirebutterflies@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk)

### **Other Events**

We intend to have a stand and moths to display (jointly with the Dundee Nats' Society) at Guardswell Farm Markets on some of the following dates: Wednesday 14th May, Wednesday 11th June, Wednesday 9th July, Wednesday 6th August, Wednesday 10th September. The market is on from 3-7 pm on these days but for dates when we will be there, please get in touch. [c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk) Other events to be confirmed. Please get in touch. For further details of the venue: <https://www.guardswell.co.uk>

### **Focus on Upland Moths**

With arable land being increasingly cultivated, "enriched" and sprayed on the steeply sloping, ground adjacent to many of the Sidlaw hilltops, species rich grassland and heather and blaeberry moorland are threatened habitats. These areas have historically been home to some interesting and special moorland moths and butterflies. These include the **Small Dark Yellow Underwing** and the **Beautiful Yellow Underwing**. In addition, **Emperor moth**, **Fox moth** and other formerly common species are no longer much recorded. Both intensification of agriculture, management for grouse and habitat fragmentation are likely to have been detrimental to the prevalence of these upland species. May I therefore encourage recorders in our area to take a walk on moorland or species rich grassland and record the moths that you see there? Who knows, you may be lucky and come across the SDYU or BYU, for which there are details below. Even if you don't see these, your records of other species are valuable. The **Common Heath** and the **Five-spot Burnet moth**, among others, are rarely recorded and these could be helpful indicators of quality habitat.

The information reproduced below is from a poster displayed at the Perth Spring Gathering on 22<sup>nd</sup> March:

### **The Small Dark Yellow Underwing, *Coranarta cordigera* in the Sidlaw Hills**

There are historical records of this UK BAP priority species in the Sidlaws, as well as a more recent record from Fife. The specimen below was collected in the Angus Sidlaws by Kenneth Tod in 1944. Tod made a study of it, concluding that at this site the larval food plant was Blaeberry, *Vaccinium myrtillus*, rather than the usual Bearberry.

---



**Small Dark Yellow Underwing (Credit: Cathy Caudwell-courtesy of Dundee University Museum Services)**

**Search for the SDYU!**

**Where?** We don't know! It was originally reported from the Angus Sidlaws to the North of Dundee – the question is, could it still be hiding there or elsewhere in the Perthshire or Angus Sidlaws? You can help by having a day out in the Sidlaws and checking out suitable sites with Blaeberry present, between around 200-600m in height.

**When?** Adults fly from Late April and throughout May. Larvae feed nocturnally on Blaeberry between Late May and July.

**How?** Choose a good day - this is a little (ca. 25mm) day-flying moth which flies fast in the sun, visiting flowers in the afternoon. It has also been seen resting on fence posts or rocks in cooler weather.

**Record it:** Get a decent photograph for confirmation and enter it on iRecord and/or alert the appropriate County Moth Recorder. Also remember to record the other moths and butterflies that you see.

The **Beautiful Yellow Underwing** *Anarta myrtilli*

There are no recent records of **Beautiful Yellow Underwing** from the Sidlaws, and only a handful from further North in the VC, although this moth was recorded from the Kinfauns area in the 1900s. So even if you do not find the SDYU, records of this and other day-flying moorland moths would be exciting and particularly welcome. The BYU is on the wing between

---

---

May and July and it has larvae which may be found in August and September feeding on Heather and Erica spp.

For further info contact: [c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk)

Written by Cathy Caudwell

## Moths in the Borders Hills

Early July in even-numbered years is a special time for some special moth recorders and a special moth! That's when, after 2 years in the earlier stages, the entire adult population of **Northern Darts** *Xestia alpicola* emerge to mate high up in the Tweedsmuir Hills.

So, the evening of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024 saw me and Teyl de Bordes laden with 4 moth traps climbing carefully up to a 750m summit ridge. It was where we had first found these rare moths in 2014 - a totally unexpected new record for the Southern Uplands. We had returned every second year since then. It was, of course, our 4x4 vehicle which did the careful climbing! A vehicle and a track reaching well into the hills is a huge asset when trying to locate this montane species.

We spent most of a cool night enveloped in swirling wet mist but a clear dawn morning found us admiring 11 Northern Darts in a total catch of 50 moths.



We now know of another two sites in the Borders where Northern Darts breed. One is only a few miles from the Tweedsmuir site and some 100m lower. The following

---

---

night tireless Teyl with a new companion, Kaiden Wilson, searched that site. The night was warm and still and two Northern Darts were found amidst 420 moths (the lack of light pollution in the hills can lead to large catches) which included upland specialist species - **Grey Mountain Carpet** *Entephria caesiata*, **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe decoloraria*, **Northern Arches** *Apamea exulis*, **Northern Spinach** *Eulithis populata* and **Dark Tussock** *Dicallomera fascelina* - and millions of midges! The third site is on The Cheviot where, amazingly, the adult Northern Darts are to be found in odd-numbered years!! It's quite possible that there are other Borders sites still to be found.

As the climate warms, our Northern Darts, at the southern limits of their European distribution, will have nowhere higher to go. Our biennial visits over 10 years have as yet shown no clear change in their prevalence but time, and ongoing monitoring, will tell.

Our uplands and hills are desperately under-recorded and new discoveries are certain to await energetic recorders looking for a challenge. It is perfectly possible to walk up to heights carrying a light actinic trap, but to avoid a double journey, a light weight tent would be useful for an overnight stay. Remember too that there are many day-flying macro and micro moth species up there. Recording these will certainly add to the joy of a day's hillwalking. Can you find the montane macro moth, **Broad-bordered White Underwing** *Anarta melanopa*? It flies at altitudes over 700m. It's only been recorded once in the Borders in the last 10 years! Or can you find the distinctive **Mountain Grass Moth** *Catoptria furcatellus*? It's present in Galloway and in the Lake District but not, as yet, discovered in the Borders.



**Broad-bordered White Underwing**  
**Dun Law (Credit: Malcolm Lindsay)**

So please do consider learning about our upland moth species and then go up to look for them. You 'll not regret it!

**Written by Malcolm Lindsay, Galashiels**

---

---

## Aberdeen Work Party Report

A group of keen volunteers plus ES Branch Aberdeen area organiser/county moth recorder & Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Helen Rowe, BC Scotland Head of Conservation Tom Prescott and Ellie Barrie, Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms Project Officer met for a work party at Inver on 26<sup>th</sup> March.



A few years ago, fenced exclosures were erected to protect an important moth and butterfly site from overgrazing by sheep. These include the **Dark Bordered Beauty** whose caterpillars only feed on young aspen suckers and **Northern Brown Argus** that relies on rock-rose as its foodplant. Aspen suckers inside the exclosures had since grown tall and thick, becoming less suitable for DBB moths and also shading out flower-rich grassland that supports NBA butterflies and many other species.

We left some aspen suckers to grow into trees that will eventually produce their own suckers to promote long-term habitat continuity but trimmed down and thinned out others to promote new leaf growth for caterpillars and open up areas to encourage wildflowers.

Thanks to everyone who joined in to make the day a success!

**Written by Helen Rowe**

---

---

## Big Butterfly Count: 18<sup>th</sup> July to 10<sup>th</sup> August



Join us from **Friday 18 July until Sunday 10 August** for the biggest citizen science survey of its kind and help us assess how well some of the UK's most common butterflies and day-flying moths are doing. All you have to do is **spend 15 minutes in a sunny spot in a wild space**; that could be your garden, balcony, patio or a local community area, and count how many butterflies or day-flying moths you see. Visit the website for more information and to sign up.

Last summer's Big Butterfly Count results were alarming. Overall, participants spotted just seven butterflies on average per 15-minute Count in 2024, a reduction of almost 50% on 2023's average of 12, and the lowest in the history of the Big Butterfly Count. It was also the worst summer in the Count's history for a number of popular species including **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Common Blue**.

Dr Richard Fox, Head of Science at Butterfly Conservation said: *"We need everyone, everywhere to get out for the Count this year and help us find out if last year's shocking results were a blip, or if they indicate a much greater issue. In total, just over 935,000 butterflies and day-flying moths were recorded across the UK from 12 July - 4 August in 2024, down almost 600,000, equivalent to more than a third of 2023's total, and 9,000 Counts were logged as seeing zero butterflies, the highest in the citizen science programme's history. This is very disturbing."*

For more information and to take part simply visit <https://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org> or download the free Big Butterfly Count app.

Who will top the Big Butterfly Count charts this year?

---

---

## Social Media

### Website

We have an excellent website packed with information – find out which moths are on the wing near you or how to submit your records. Visit us at <http://www.eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/>

### Facebook

Thanks to volunteers our Facebook page is kept up to date with beautiful photos and facts all year round. It's also the best place to stay informed on events occurring in the branch. You can find us under the username [@EastScotlandButterflyConservation](#) and why not join our [East Scottish Moths](#) or [East Scottish Butterflies](#) groups for ID help and discussion.

### Twitter and Instagram

We're present on Twitter and Instagram too, so if you prefer to use these platforms, give us a follow us at [@BCeastscotland](#). You can also view our news feed without having an account!

---

## Featured Photo



**Dog's Tooth moth – Aberlady Bay reeds - photo credit: Katy Baird**

**The next Newsletter will be published in  
November/December**

---