

SPRING NEWS BULLETIN - 2026

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 important 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. 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/events?field_branches_target_id=139

Please visit the East Scotland webpage for full details on events listings, or by following us on [Facebook](#).

Monday 27th April 7pm – 8pm: An Introduction to the Borderlands Project – online via Zoom

Event description: An introduction to our Borderlands project, focusing on the **Northern Brown Argus** and species-rich grasslands. Borderlands is [our flagship project](#) in the south of Scotland, which aims to restore species-rich grassland for the rare Northern Brown Argus butterfly and other wildlife.

Booking: If you would like to attend, please email **Apithanny Bourne** and she will send you the meeting

link. abourne@butterfly-conservation.org



Saturday 2nd May 0930 – 1100am - Moth Morning at Cocksburn Reservoir (Stirling)

Come along to this moth morning at **Cocksburn Reservoir** near Stirling and Bridge of Allan. Full details and booking information can be found on the organisers' Eventbrite page - [click here to book](#).

Contact: Helen Rountree atHelen.Rountree@forestryandland.gov.scot

Tuesday 5th May at 7pm: [for approx 1 hour]: Northern Brown Argus Surveys free online training session

Booking: Registration is essential. Please register [here](#) For more information on our **Northern Brown Argus** surveys please see [this link](#) Join us to learn about the Northern Brown Argus butterfly and how you can help by carrying out surveys for it To help encourage surveys in 2026 we will be offering a free zoom training workshop followed by some optional field workshops. No prior experience is needed! **Contact: David Hill on dhill@butterfly-conservation.org**

Sunday 10th May 2026: Field trip to Glencorse Reservoir, Pentland Hills

This is a field trip to look for **Green Hairstreaks** at Glencorse Reservoir, two miles west of Glencorse, in the Pentland Hills. **Meet at the Visitor centre** there (grid ref. NT570632) at 10.30am.

Contact: Richard Buckland, e: r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk; t: 077111453605).

Wednesday 13th May 10am to 3pm: Pearl-bordered Fritillary training workshop and search at Loch Katrine near Callander

Location: Loch Katrine (near Callander). Full location details will be sent to anyone who books. **Booking** is essential. [Click here to visit our booking form](#). Join us for a day at Loch Katrine to learn about the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and take part in searches for the species. If you are unable to attend but would still like to take part in surveys here, contact Anthony on amcccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org

Friday 22nd May: Pearl-bordered Fritillary training and search at Killin

Join us at Killin to join the hunt for the elusive **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** butterfly.

Contact: Anthony McCluskey on amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org

Locations and times: This event will be entirely **field-based**. We will meet at a site in Killin (exact location sent to anyone who registers to attend). **Book** is essential. [Click here to book your place.](#) This event will be led by Anthony McCluskey, Conservation Manager with Butterfly Conservation.

Saturday 23rd May: Pearl-bordered Fritillary training workshop & search at Dunkeld

Join us at Dunkeld to join the hunt for the elusive **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** butterfly.

Locations and times: Indoor learning session 10am-11pm at **Loch of the Lowes SWT reserve**. Following this we will go to nearby **Newtyle Hill** to look for the Fritillary. **Booking** is essential. [Click here to book your place.](#) **Contact:** Anthony McCluskey on amccluskey@butterfly-conservation.org

Sunday, 31st May 2026: Field trip to Leithen Water to see Northern Brown Argus

Field trip to Leithen Water (near Innerleithen) to see **Northern Brown Argus**. Leithen Water is a tributary of the River Tweed, rising in the Moorfoot Hills. The meeting place is at the junction of **Leithen Water and Glentress Burn**, (grid ref. NT328424), at 10.30am.

Contact: R. Buckland, email: r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk; t: 07711453605.

Friday 5th June 10am - 2pm: Bracken control work party at Thornielee

Location and timings - Meet at the Thornielee Car Park, [on Galashiels Rd, Walkerburn - on the north side of the road, ½ mile west of Thornylee village] which is a short walk from our work site. What3words: ///smuggled.knots.throwaway Meet at **10am** and finish around 2pm (although you are welcome to leave early, if needed) This is a bracken control work party to support the **Northern Brown Argus** butterfly at Thornielee. **Bookings** - Please email **Apithanny Bourne** to let us know if you plan to come along. abourne@butterfly-conservation.org

12th June, 10am to 4pm: Northern Brown Argus training workshop, Kirkandrews

Location: Kirkandrews Kirk. What3words location: ///undertook.paying.lottery An event organiser will be in touch to coordinate a nearby meeting point from which onward travel will be arranged. **Timings:** Please arrive for a **10am** start. The morning session will last approximately 2 hours. Learn how to identify and record **Northern Brown Argus** on this full-day workshop. **Booking:** places are limited. Booking is essential. To book a place, please email **Apithanny Bourne** at abourne@butterfly-conservation.org

Sunday, 14th June, 10.30am: Field trip to Easter Drumclair to see Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary

Join us for a Field trip to **Easter Drumclair (near Limerigg)**, to see **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**. The path is easy walking and should be suitable for wheel-chair users. Meet at the end of the path at Limerigg, grid ref. NS857708, at **10.30am**.

Contact: R.Buckland at r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk: t: 07711453605

Wednesday 17th June 11.30am - 1pm: Northern Brown Argus training workshop, Selkirk Deer Park

Meet at the **Selkirk Deer Park (car park on A7)** at **11.30am** and finish around 1pm. What3words: ///consoled.leopard.dull Join us to learn how to identify and record the **Northern Brown Argus** butterfly - one of Scotland's rarest and most threatened species. **Booking-**please email **Apithanny Bourne** at abourne@butterfly-conservation.org (Please note that we have had to change the date of this event from the 16th to 17th June - apologies for any inconvenience).

Thursday 18th June 10am – 11am – Meadow Walk and talk at Dryburgh Abbey

Location and timings: Meet at **10am** outside the **visitors' hut at the Abbey**, which is a short walk from the car park. Car park What3words: ///indicates.blows.summer Join us for a walk and talk about the biodiversity and wildflowers of Dryburgh Abbey. **Booking-**Please let **Apithanny Bourne** know if you intend to come along: abourne@butterfly-conservation.org

Saturday 20th June 10am – 2pm: Field trip to St. Abbs Head for Northern Brown Argus and other butterflies

Our annual field trip to St. Abbs Head Nature Reserve for **Northern Brown Argus** and other butterflies. A special event to congratulate our Chair (Simon Saville) on completing the Kirkpatrick Way to raise money for our Northern Brown Argus project work. We'll meet at the picnic benches outside the cafe at **10am** for some celebratory coffee and cake, before heading off on our butterfly walk. **Location:** St. Abbs Head Nature Reserve car park, **What3words location:** `///ratty.showed.sublime` **Booking:** Please email **Apithanny Bourne** if you would like to attend, so we know to expect you and can contact you in the event of bad weather! abourne@butterfly-conservation.org

Saturday 4th July 10.30am – [tbc weather!] Discovering Edinburgh's White Letter Hairstreaks at Hermitage of Braid

Join us for a gentle stroll around the paths of the **Hermitage of Braid** to catch a glimpse of Edinburgh's latest butterfly arrival. The Hermitage of Braid is an area between the Braid Hills and Blackford Hill in Edinburgh. One of the new discoveries of the **White Letter Hairstreak** is what seems to be a well-established colony in the Hermitage of Braid. For more on the species see: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/white-letter-hairstreak>

Contact: Geoff Ballinger at chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk to let us know you are coming along. Detailed joining instructions will be provided by email a week or so before.

Saturday 18th July, 11.00 am - 12.30 pm: Butterfly and meadow walk, Bowden Common

Location and timings - Our meeting point is the shelter near to **pant well**. What3words: `///shuffles.nourished.enabling` Meet at **11am** on Saturday 18th July. We'll take a slow walk over the Common and finish around **12**. Join us for a walk and talk about the butterflies and wildflowers of Bowden Common, near the historic village of Bowden in the Scottish Borders, 3 miles from Melrose. **Booking** - Please let **Apithanny Bourne** know if you intend to come along: abourne@butterfly-conservation.org

Saturday 25th July at 5pm [tbc-weather!] An evening stroll with Purple Hairstreaks at Retreat Wood, Berwickshire

A summer evening stroll along estate tracks, in **Retreat Wood**, under the oak trees with **Purple Hairstreak** jousting overhead. estate tracks taken at an easy pace. For more on the species see: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/purple-hairstreak>

Contact: Geoff Ballinger at chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk to let us know you are coming along. Detailed joining instructions will be provided by email a week or so before.

Branch Chair's Report

As I write this in early April, with the temperature outside dropping into low single figures, and the rain lashing at the windows, the idea that sunny days watching butterflies might be a thing again anytime soon feels fairly remote. That said, the overwintering adult Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells have appeared in the occasional sunny periods in the garden over the last few weeks, and the usual Spring crew of Speckled Woods, Orange Tips, and Holly Blues are just starting to emerge locally.

The reason we know this, of course, is that the records are starting to appear on iRecord and pictures are being shared on 'East Scottish Butterflies' on Facebook. While many of you do record some or all of the butterflies you see, not everybody does, so I thought it would be worth thinking about how we both record and communicate our finds.

Butterfly Conservation is a data driven organisation, using the records of butterflies and moths gathered together by the various vice county and area recorders to help decide how the available nature recovery funds are spent in order to achieve maximum effect, and also to guide the efforts of government and other conservation organisations. This is of course entirely dependent on amateur volunteers like you and I submitting records into that funnel in the first place.

There are a wide range of ways to send in your records of course (see <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/recording-and-monitoring>), but the one I would like to emphasise is **iRecord**, either via their website or the convenient 'iRecord Butterflies' mobile app. All records entered there are checked and collated by the VC recorders and so feed the funnel, but it has a strong secondary benefit of being immediately visible to all other users of

iRecord via their website allowing interesting new finds *etc.* to be seen so other recorders can better optimise their efforts: <https://irecord.org.uk/>

A rather different form of communication and sharing is provided by '**East Scottish Butterflies**' on **Facebook**, and while I definitely appreciate that some of you have very reasonable reservations about Facebook as a whole, I find if I hold my nose, ignore the rest of it and just interact with the group that works pretty well.

On the plus side it is a grouping of over a thousand people with a strong interest in butterflies: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eastscottishbutterflies>

For those interested in moths there is also '**East Scottish Moths**': <https://www.facebook.com/groups/eastscottishmoths>

Personally, I try to record every butterfly and moth I see in iRecord, and for any where I get a nice photo or there is an interesting story to tell I also post about them on 'East Scottish Butterflies' or 'East Scottish Moths', and I would encourage everybody to do the same.

Written by Geoff Ballinger – Branch Chair

chair@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk

The Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey (WCBS)

This is my annual effort to recruit more surveyors to take part in this survey. This is a long-term survey (already some members have accrued 15 years of data). But unfortunately, members come and go, (move house or just lose interest) and so my army of surveyors needs more recruiting from time to time.

This new butterfly survey was started in order to establish how many butterflies there actually were 'out there' in the countryside in general, and hence this survey was set up using the methodology of the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which does the same thing for birds.

Here a surveyor goes to their allotted 1km square (selected by a computer in order to make it as arbitrary and non-biased as possible) and counts all the butterflies they see in an imaginary 5m square around them as they walk a transect. They note these down and send the data back to HQ in Wareham. With enough of these squares covered across the whole country it

is possible to work out the relative abundance of the commoner species of butterflies in the British Isles.

I am charged with operating this survey in our East Scotland branch and so far, we have had a pretty good response from members and have managed to get a good number of squares surveyed and hence managed to contribute significantly to this nationwide survey.

The squares I would like more surveyors for fall into two categories.

First, those that have been surveyed before, and hence have their transect routes already mapped out and where you would be taking on the routes that someone else has established and thus helping to continue an important dataset. **These are:**

Glenrothes (grid ref. NO2602):	Forthar farm, Freuchie (NO3006).
Kindrogan Wood, Pitlochry (NO0460):	Myreton of Claverhouse, Dundee (NO3936):
Charlton Golf Course, Batchrystie (NO4603);	Kirkliston, West Lothian (NT1174).
Coire Odhar, Glen Cochill (NN9140):	Crimond, Rattray Head (NK0457).
Manor Water, nr Peebles (NT1930).	Hallyne, nr Peebles, (NT1940).
Boondreigh Water, Lauder (NT5646).	West Binny, West Lothian (NT0372):
Craigmailing, nr Linlithgow (NS9972);	Cathlaw, nr Linlithgow (NS9872).
Comrie, (NN8623);	Catterloch, Banchory (NO7098).
Rathen, nr. Fraserburgh (NJ9961);	Crimond, nr. Rattray Head (NK0457).
Millhill, nr. Peterhead (NK0144).	Berefold, nr. Ellon (NJ9736).

The remaining squares are ones that have yet to be surveyed. This means that although you will be required to map out your own transects, it does mean that you can suit yourself on the actual transects routes.

Nether Careston, nr Brechin (NO5258).	Lomond Hill, Loch Leven (NO2306).
Brechin Castle (NO5959):	Carn Gorm (NN6350):
Cauldwells, New Byth (NJ7956).	Dunbennan, Huntley (NO5040):
Linthill, nr. Eyemouth (NT9263).	Lodge Hill, nr. Craik For. (NT3808).
Craig Hill, nr. Ettrick (NT2515).	Craik Forest (NT2710).
Quickningair Hill, Craik For. (NT2607):	Douglas Burn, Yarrow valley (NT2628).
White Law, St Mary's Loch (NT2823):	Fliskmillan Hill, Firth of Tay (NO2920).

All that is required of the surveyor is that they mark out two transect routes in their square (following the guidance notes) and walk them twice a year, once in July and then again in August. Being chosen at random, means that some squares may not look very exciting as far as butterflies are concerned. That is the nature of a random survey. But some members have

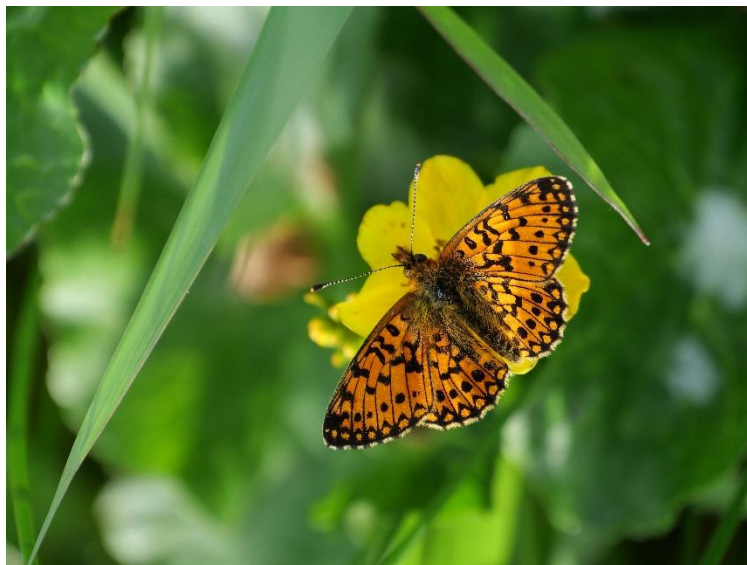
been pleasantly surprised by the butterflies they have managed to record. So don't be put off by the way these squares look on a map, they may be little gems!

If you would like to attempt one of these squares, then please get in touch at r.buckland@blueyonder.co.uk Or my mobile, 07711453605. Many thanks.

Written by Richard Buckland

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary – Borders Project

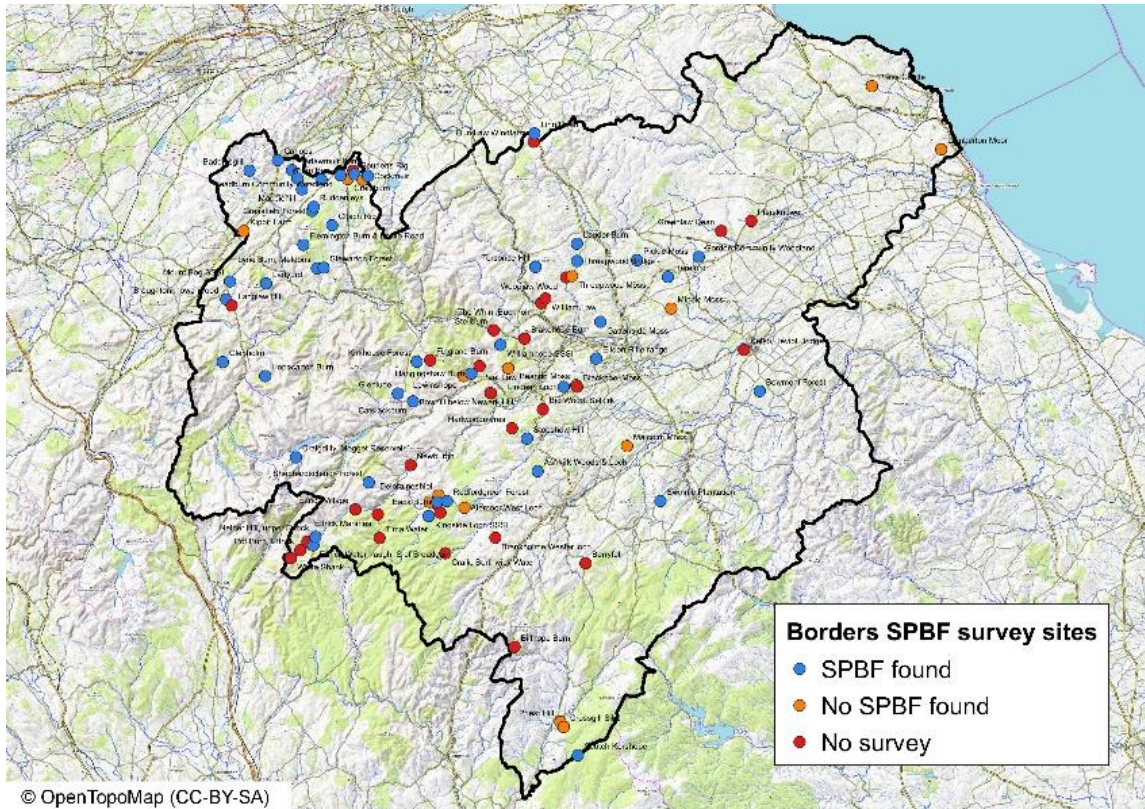
The **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** was once a common sight across many countryside habitats in Britain, but it's suffered a 72% decline in England since 1976 and is now extinct in several vice-counties.



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary-Cockmuir, June 2025 (Credit: Kay Goodall)

Fortunately, we have somewhat happier news here in East Scotland. Only twenty years ago, the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary had been thought a very scarce species in the **Scottish Borders**. Aware that this picture was incomplete, in 2022 Barry Prater and David Hill began a survey across the Borders to map the presence of the butterfly and the health of its habitat.

Their project began with just four sites. By 2025, a team of volunteers had visited over sixty – and found the butterfly in forty of these.



SPBF in the Borders – Jan 2026 (prepared by David Hill)

Although we're delighted that Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries have been found in far greater numbers than had been hoped, they're living in colonies that are small and often isolated: we can't take their success for granted. Hence, the survey results are shared with Forestry & Land Scotland and the Scottish Borders Planning & Biodiversity team, who work with landowners and users to protect the colonies. Barry is now stepping down from his role and is handing over to Kay Goodall to continue co-ordinating with David. Butterfly Conservation Scotland would like to take this opportunity to thank Barry for his magnificent work.



At Whim Bog, June 2024 (Credit: Kay Goodall)

The search is far from complete: almost certainly, many remain undiscovered. If you're interested in practical conservation, this is an excellent chance for you to contribute. From burnside paths to scrubby bogs to the edges of conifer plantations, the Borders continues to provide a home for this lovely little butterfly. Peak survey time is mid-June to mid-July and it flies in sunshine, so a trip to find it can be a delightful summer day out in some beautiful, remote places.



Do get in touch if you're interested in helping with surveys this summer. All participants choose the site(s) they would like to visit. Please use the contact form on the [Branch Welcome Page](#).



Written by Kay Goodall

Big Butterfly Count: 17th July to 9th August

It's never too early to publicise this event! **Friday 17th July - Sunday 9th August.** Following hot on the heels of the first-ever **vote to find Britain's Favourite Butterfly**, keen citizen scientists are encouraged to get out for the **Big Butterfly Count** and see what they can spot.



Small White - photo by Ann Collier

The 17th annual [Big Butterfly Count](#) is back and better than ever. It will run from **Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August.** Will the nation's favourite species, the **Small White**, reign supreme in this year's Count? Or will it have to share the summer top spot with another?

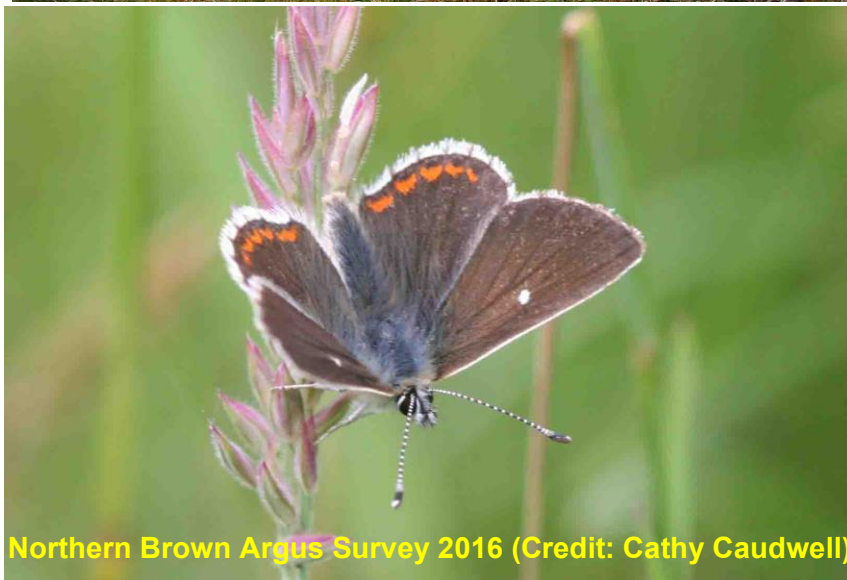
Butterfly Conservation - press release

Participants are asked to spend 15 minutes spotting and recording butterflies in gardens, parks, or countryside to help track species decline and environmental health.

How to Participate: Download the free [Big Butterfly Count app](#) or use the ID chart from the website to record species during the 15-minute window in sunny, calm weather

News from East Perthshire – March 2026

Here are the details of 2 upcoming Events in East Perthshire for 2026: **Thursday 16th July 2026: 10.30am-3pm - Northern Brown Argus Survey at Lundie Craigs.**



Join us for a walk in the Sidlaws, learn how to recognize and count the eggs and adults of the **Northern Brown Argus** butterfly and see a variety of butterflies, moths and other wildlife. Please note that there is a walk of approx. 3km in each direction and that the area where we do the counts is steeply sloping. All welcome! Meet 10.30 am at the small car-park on the S. side of the road at **Tullybaccart**, about 11km north of Dundee on the A923 Dundee - Coupar Angus road. OSGR NO 2636 3598 what3words arriving.slept.reception. Please contact Glyn Edwards glynedwards19@yahoo.com or Cathy Caudwell c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk so that we know how many to expect.

Beginners Moth Trapping Sessions: For an introduction to mothing and moth trapping in our local area (between Dundee and Perth) please get in touch as dates are yet to be confirmed. c.m.caudwell@dundee.ac.uk.

Written by Cathy Caudwell

BC moth trap summaries – March 2026

The Phenoweb Project at the Pass of Killiecrankie, North Perthshire

Here at the National Trust for Scotland, North Perthshire Ranger Service, we are always grateful for collaboration with experts which allows us to improve our biological monitoring. One example of this is the **Phenoweb project** conducted at Killiecrankie [running up and down the A9 mostly] by scientists from the University of Edinburgh, which examines the effects of climate on phenology and trophic interactions across woodland food webs.



Phenoweb bluetit (Credit: The Phenoweb Project)

More information can be found at:

<https://phenoweb.org>



Researchers have monitored blue tit nest boxes at 44 sites from the north to the south of Scotland over the last 12 years and have recently begun sampling and genetically analysing the droppings in the nest boxes. This has provided a new source of data relating to the food species for these birds - moths, flies and other invertebrates – which can now be added to our records.



Phenoweb caterpillar (Credit: The Phenoweb Project)

We were particularly interested to see the elusive **Purple Hairstreak** butterfly hiding amongst all these moths and have redoubled our efforts to find eggs on windfall oak twigs in winter months!

Species include:

<i>Agriopis aurantiaria</i>	scarce umber
<i>Agriopis leucophaearia</i>	spring usher
<i>Agriopis marginaria</i>	dotted border
<i>Allophyes oxyacanthae</i>	green-brindled crescent
<i>Anorthoa munda</i>	twin-spotted quaker
<i>Biston strataria</i>	oak beauty
<i>Campaea margaritaria</i>	light emerald
<i>Deileptenia ribeata</i>	satin beauty
<i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>	engrailed
<i>Epirrita christyi</i>	pale November
<i>Epirrita dilutata</i>	November moth
<i>Erannis defoliaria</i>	mottled umber
<i>Eupithecia abbreviata</i>	brindled pug
<i>Eupsilia transversa</i>	satellite moth
<i>Favonius quercus</i>	purple hairstreak
<i>Operophtera brumata</i>	winter moth
<i>Orthosia cerasi</i>	common quaker
<i>Orthosia cruda</i>	small quaker
<i>Orthosia gothica</i>	Hebrew character moth
<i>Pandemis cerasana</i>	barred fruit-tree tortrix pale brindled beauty
<i>Phigalia pilosaria</i>	
<i>Udea prunalis</i>	dusky pearl
<i>Ypsolopha parenthesella</i>	white-shouldered ochre
<i>Ypsolopha sequella</i>	pied rabbit moth
<i>Ypsolopha ustella</i>	varied ochre

Use of Butterfly Conservation loan moth trap for home education in Highland Perthshire

A year ago, I was lucky enough to be loaned a moth trap from Butterfly Conservation – East Scotland Branch. I was excited to get started recording visitors to my garden, but I had no idea that it would transform the dullest of mornings into Christmas Day for me and my son. Angus is autistic and has ADHD; he finds calm and regulation in the natural world. He has been my enthusiastic companion through this year of discovery, and nothing gets him out of bed faster than the lure of the moth trap and what we might discover inside!

These fascinating creatures have provided hours of learning and joy through the seasons. May and June provided a bounty of treasures, from the spectacular **Poplar hawk-moth** (*Laothoe populi*) and the masters of camouflage that are the **buff-tip** (*Phalera bucephala*) and the **pale prominent** (*Pterostoma palpina*), to the super-smart **clouded border** (*Lomaspilis marginata*) and **peppered moths** (*Biston betularia*).



Poplar hawk-moth (*Laothoe populi*) with Angus (Credit: Ruth Alexander)

Imagine our delight when we found out we could continue to use the moth trap all year round!

December moths (*Poecilocampa populi*) and **scarce umbers** (*Agriopsis aurantiaria*) are just a couple of the visitors we've had in the colder months. All these species have been lovingly photographed and uploaded to **iRecord** - which Angus now has on his own phone, as he becomes part of the next generation of wildlife recorders...

Written by Ruth Alexander

Midlothian Purple Hairstreak

One of the more surprising apparent gaps in the range of the **Purple Hairstreak** butterfly has been the North and South Esk valleys in Midlothian, and in fact all of Midlothian south of the Edinburgh bypass and east of the Pentlands. This is despite the presence of good numbers of ancient oaks in Dalkeith Country Park which would seem to be an ideal environment for them to have survived and thrived over the centuries, and generally good oak in many other places. Over recent years several recorders have attempted to find them there, and we had also previously tried the grounds of Penicuik House on several occasions, but without success.



**Egg on windfall oak buds, from the North Esk by Penicuik 2025
(Credit: Geoff Ballinger)**

One possible rationalisation for how this “gap” came about is the intensive coal mining and associated industries that occurred in the Midlothian coalfield, and associated air quality issues, during which period Edinburgh was often described as “*Auld Reekie*”. This has strong parallels to the situation in Epping Forest north of London reported by Corke (1999), where most of the honeydew and sap feeding species of butterfly (including Purple Hairstreak, White Letter Hairstreak and Speckled Wood) were lost by the late 19th century, and only reappeared in the second half of the 20th century over the decade or so after the clean air act of 1956.

With recent finds in adjacent areas of East Lothian and Edinburgh it did seem unlikely that Midlothian was entirely unoccupied so, inspired by the impressive flurry of new egg finds across south Edinburgh over the previous few months by Kay Goodall, and once the weather finally broke in mid-February, we spent a week intensively egg hunting around the Esks to see if we could find them somewhere.

We started out on the South Esk, in the leafy environs of Temple, just south of the extensive woodland around Arniston House. Here we didn’t even need to gather windfall since Gail managed to spot an egg *in-situ* on a low branch, and so could get unusually instant gratification!



**Gail in the moment of finding an '*in-situ*' egg, on an oaky edge by Temple
(Credit: Geoff Ballinger)**

On the second day we visited Gore Glen, a little further downstream on the South Esk, and gathered several bags of windfall twigs from various locations along the western flank of the wood beyond Trotter's Bridge. After a few evenings of sorting through the twigs we found an egg in two of those bags.

The next day we turned our attention to the North Esk. We parked at Springfield Mill and first explored the steep wooded bank running west between the Esk and the Bilston Burn where we found an egg amongst the windfall we collected under the oaks at the top of the bank. After that we walked the other way along the Esk, and up into the magnificently dilapidated policies of the now ruined Mavisbank House (<https://www.mavisbank.org.uk/>), which we were previously entirely unaware of. It is a wonderful site to explore with plenty of large old oaks likely dating back to when the grounds were laid out around 1748, many deeply buried in decades of overgrowth. Pleasingly we also turned up an egg in the windfall we gathered under those oaks.



Huge old oak trees in the overgrown Mavisbank Policies (Credit: Geoff Ballinger)

On our final day we explored much further up the North Esk at Penicuik, starting at Beeslack Wood and then following it south. We had high hopes for the windfall twigs we picked up at Beeslack Wood since there was plenty of oak and it felt pretty promising in general, but unfortunately nothing was found in those bags.

We were just getting started and poking around in the leaf litter at Beeslack when a gent who was out running stopped to ask if we were looking for Purple Hairstreak eggs. Now that was remarkably specific (we do often just get asked what an earth we are doing!) and it turns out while more a birder he is a member of East Scottish Butterflies. While chatting he suggested we go and take a look at his own small oakwood a little way south along the cycleway, and gave us directions. We found his wood which is on a steep bank above the Esk and spent a happy hour slithering around the slope gathering windfall, and when we got home, we found three eggs in that bag which was nice.

Aberdeenshire News

Several events organised with/by partners and survey opportunities are coming up in Aberdeen(shire) and there is something for everyone to get involved with.

Events

Saturday 2nd May, Aboyne: Spring moths morning for all (with possibility of seeing Kentish Glory). [Magnificent Moths in Bellwood Tickets, Saturday, May 2 from 9 am to 11 am | Eventbrite](#)

Friday 22nd - Saturday 23rd May, Greyhope Bay, Aberdeen: Bioblitz (to include moth trapping & butterfly recording, details TBC but will appear here):
<https://www.greyhopebay.com/events>

Thursday 2nd - Friday 3rd July, Deeside: Mountain moths workshop to search for Scottish specialities. <https://wild-discovery.com/identification-workshops#moths>

Friday 14th August, Aberdeen: Bioblitz with guided wildlife walks planned across the city including moth event. Everyone is also encouraged to get involved by recording the wildlife they see in their own gardens or local greenspaces. More info. to follow via [North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership \(NESBiP\)](#)

More summer events to come & most butterfly/moth-specific ones will be listed in [Events | Butterfly Conservation](#) or contact Helen Rowe helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to be added to BC Aberdeenshire area mailing list for occasional updates re local events & surveys.

Surveys - NTS NE Ranger Service are looking for **butterfly transect** volunteer(s) at **Drum Castle Estate** to help count butterflies once a week from April to September on a lovely, easily accessed route through the gardens and woodland: [Site details | UKBMS](#). The transect is shared between a few volunteers so no need for a weekly commitment but people in the local area who have some flexibility about days they can be available are ideal to be able to go out when weather is suitable. Training can be given if required. If you are interested, please contact Ranger, Roddy Hamilton: rhamilton@nts.org.uk

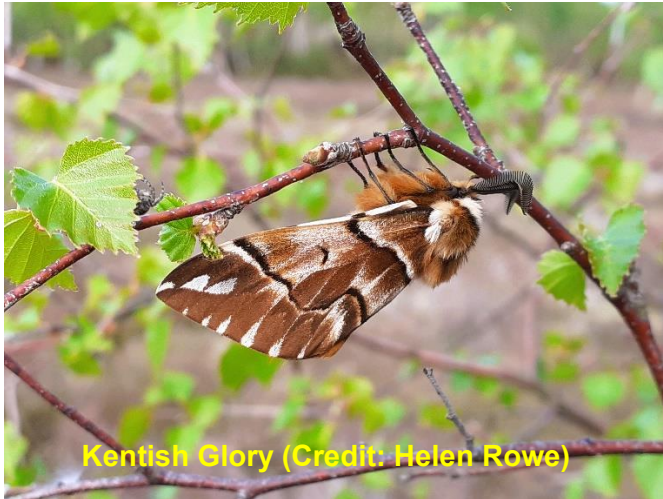
Kentish Glory moth surveys continue this year & the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project is coordinating most of these. For more information see:

[Kentish Glory | Butterfly Conservation](#)

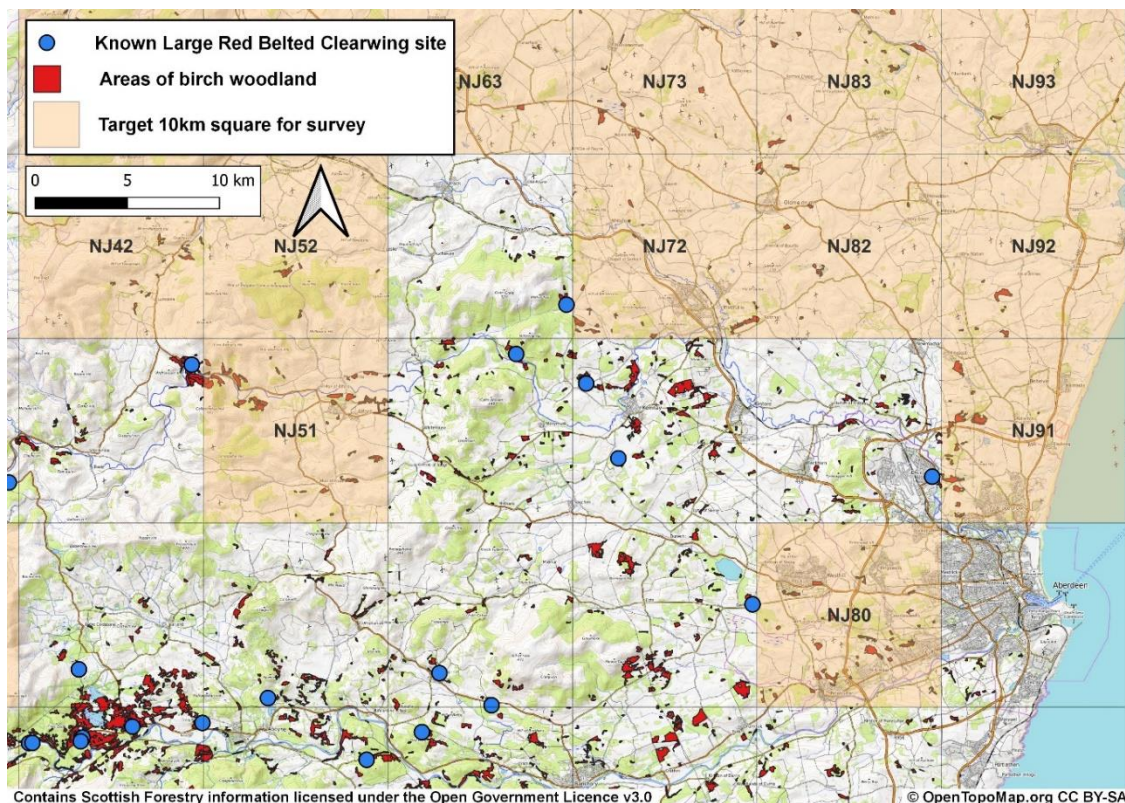
[Kentish Glory | Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms](#)

RIC [Project Newsletter - Spring 2026](#)

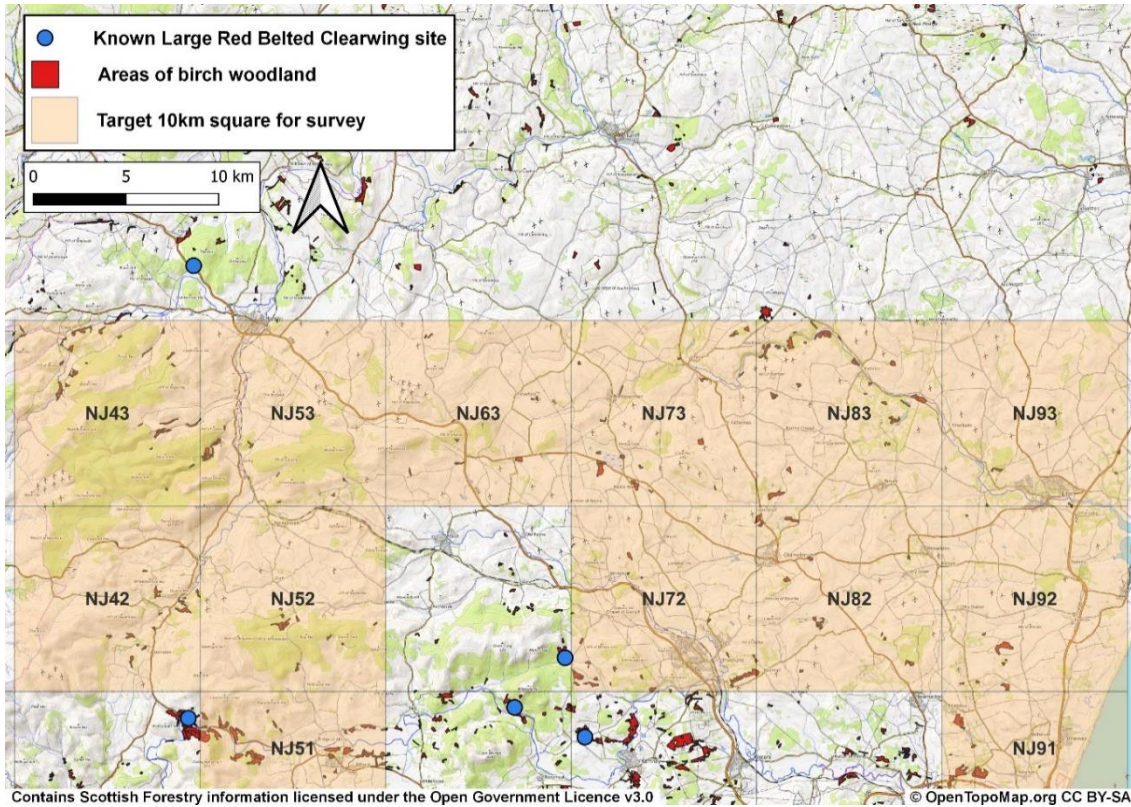
[Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms: Permission to contact](#) - use this link to sign up for Deeside surveys for **Kentish Glory** in spring/summer &/or **Dark Bordered Beauty** in summer (to sign up to help in other areas see newsletter - 3rd link above or you can choose map squares to survey for Kentish Glory via 2nd link above).



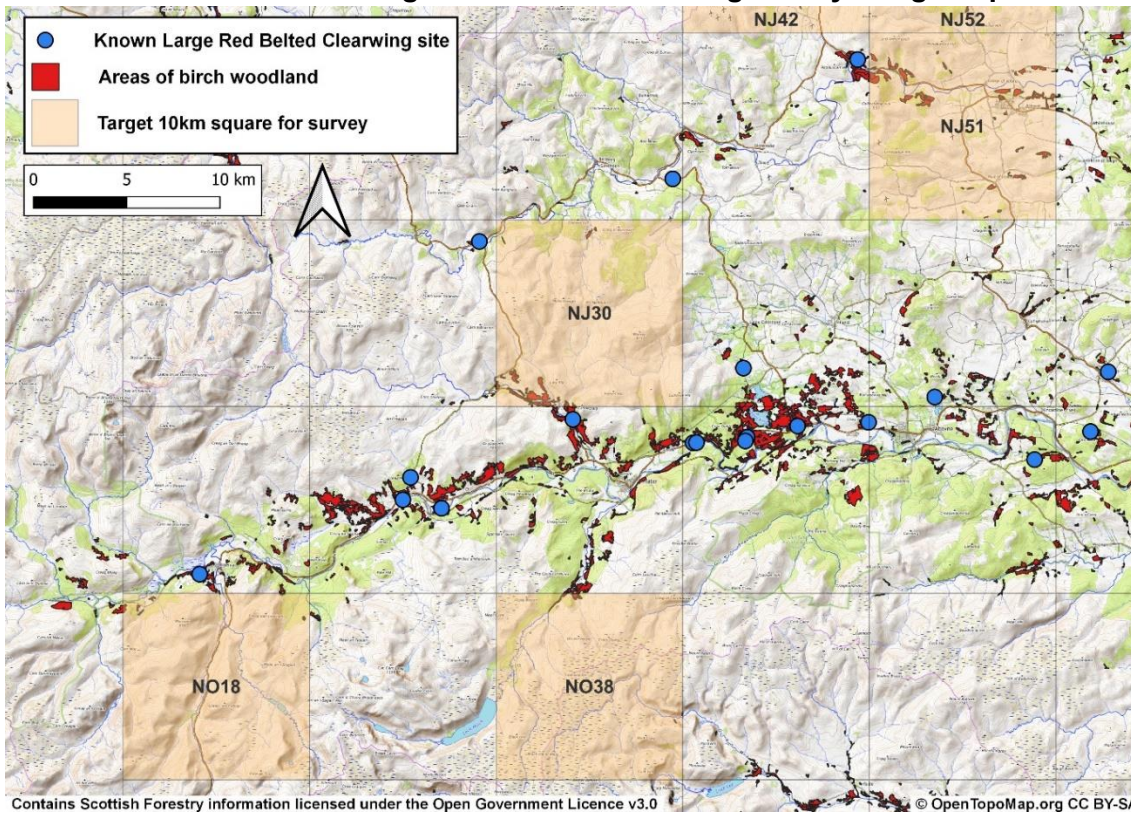
Surveys for **Clearwing moths** also continue in 2026, including **Large Red-belted Clearwing** that flies from mid-May in birch woods & which we know is quite widespread in Aberdeenshire but there are more squares to check - [see maps below](#).



Aberdeenshire East: Large Red-belted Clearwing survey - target squares



Aberdeenshire North: Large Red-belted Clearwing survey - target squares



Aberdeenshire West: Large Red-belted Clearwing survey - target squares

if you plan to try any of these squares it would be helpful to let me know to avoid duplicating effort: helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk For more info. see:

[Clearwing moths in Scotland | Butterfly Conservation](#)

Pheromone lures & traps to aid these surveys can be purchased here: [Pheromones — moth traps — ALS - Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies](#)

Written by **Helen Rowe** (Countryside Ranger (Marr) Ranger Service)

East Lothian Butterflies 2025



(Introduction: I coordinate the records from East Lothian Countryside Rangers and several volunteers, as well as being the Transect Coordinator for East Lothian. I am also involved in the Northern Brown Argus and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary surveys and I manage 17 acres of open woodland in the Scottish Borders that I have been improving for butterflies and wildlife in general. This is a roundup of the East Lothian records each year which I send out to the volunteers and East Lothian Countryside Rangers. Nick Morgan.)

2025 will be remembered as a lovely sunny year, particularly after all the rain the previous year. After a fairly benign winter we had a dry, sunny spring. However, there was often a wind, mostly easterlies, keeping the temperatures down. The summer continued in the same vein, with the occasionally showery day. However, the general lack of rain and the wind caused the

vegetation to dry up, particularly in coastal areas. From the end of September the weather became a lot cloudier and cooler. There was the odd lovely day, but butterfly numbers appeared to almost switch off in October!

The lovely weather wasn't necessarily good for butterflies. As the dry sunny weather continued, the vegetation dried up making the caterpillar food plants less palatable. Of course, there were winners and losers this year and, as ever, it is interesting to speculate why species did well or otherwise.



We had a couple of very early records. Firstly, a **Speckled Wood** that was seen on 15th January in Butterdean Wood. I can only assume that it had crawled into a nearby greenhouse as a caterpillar last autumn and was tricked into thinking that spring had arrived.



The next butterfly was a **Small Tortoiseshell**, which was seen near Seton Sands on 28th February. Maybe not such a surprise as they spend the winter hibernating as adult butterflies, so can make an appearance on a mild day. There was then a flurry of Small Tortoiseshells and **Peacocks** on 6th March. Both species had a fairly average year, but at least Small Tortoiseshells bounced back from last year's low numbers. There were a few **Red Admirals** seen in March, indicating that they may have survived the winter here. They went on to have an amazing year, with us recording about three times the average number.

The first **Comma** was seen on 15th March. They went on to have a great year, particularly later in the season, and I received the highest number of records since I started collating them in 2008. A few days later a **Painted Lady** was spotted in North Berwick. They also had a good year, with 220 records - a big improvement on last year's 14! Their numbers can be really variable. I would suggest the normal annual average is under 100 records, but the figures are skewed by the 2019 invasion when I received 5395 records!



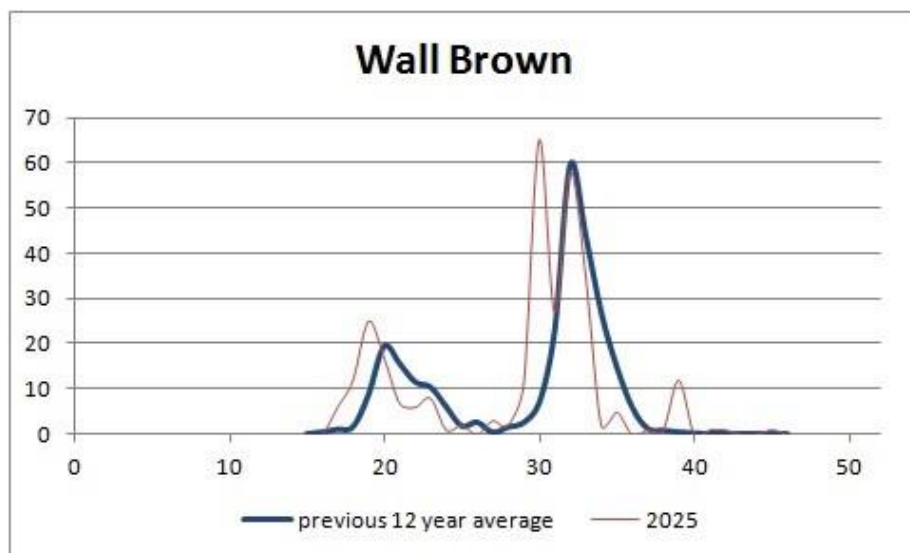
All **four white species** had an amazing year. For **Orange Tips**, **Green-veined Whites** and **Large Whites** it was by far the best year since I started recording the butterflies. **Small Whites** also had a fantastic year, way above average, but not quite as high a number as was seen in 2018.



Speckled Wood numbers picked up in April and they also had a very good year. I received records of 1608 of them, which is the second highest number since they reappeared in East Lothian in 2009.



Small Coppers had a fairly average year. The same could be said for **Wall Brown**. Their numbers look fairly average, but when you look at when they were seen, they were almost exactly two weeks early and there was a small third generation towards the end of September, with the last one being seen on 7th November.



For all of the winners in 2025, there have to be some losers! Unfortunately, **Holly Blue** numbers crashed even further than last year. This year we only recorded 22 in total. Way down on the 377 seen in 2023. I hope we are seeing the boom-and-bust pattern that is seen in England resulting from the effects of the parasitic wasps on the Holly Blue population. Only time will tell.



Small Heath numbers were down on their average and this year was the lowest count since I have been collating the records. Other species that didn't do so well were **Meadow Browns**. We only saw about two thirds of the normal numbers. And **Ringlets** were the same, although it was notable that some sites did better than others.



Dark Green Fritillary numbers were a little lower than average.

We recorded 41 **Large Skippers** in East Lothian in 2025. I am sure this must be the best year they have had here, but because we normally see so few I haven't added them to my spreadsheet. I'll sort that over the winter! **Small Skippers** had a better year than average, although they have only been seen in East Lothian since 2011. Their numbers peaked in 2021 and have fluctuated since then.





Common Blues did a little better than average.

So, it seems as though many of the grassland species didn't do so well in 2025. Could this be because they also tend to emerge later in the summer, by which time the vegetation had become very dry? This may have resulted in their caterpillars perishing. However, by the time the vegetation dried out the caterpillars would have been fairly well developed and forming chrysalises.

Could it be because of the easterly winds that hit most of the coastal sites? Many of our best grasslands are on coastal sites.

Of course, it maybe isn't as simple as that, because the butterflies we saw in 2025 would have been laid as eggs the previous year, when the weather was less favourable.



There were quite a number of other species seen, but they tend to be found in more remote sites, so were only recorded in small numbers. These included **Purple Hairstreak**, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Grayling**, **Northern Brown Argus** and **Green Hairstreak**.

There was great excitement when a **Clouded Yellow** was spotted at John Muir Country Park in August. Another was seen at Skateraw a couple of weeks later. A good number of them migrated over from the continent in 2025 and there were records from all over the UK.

So, on the whole, 2025 turned out to be a fantastic year for butterflies. Between the *ad hoc* records and the transects we recorded a grand total of 17,229 butterflies. One thing I always

wonder is if we have great weather are there really more butterflies, or are people out and about more and therefore seeing more butterflies!

To round the year off I have just received reports of three different Peacocks being spotted in Cockenzie and Prestonpans in the middle of December. This means that for the first time I can remember we had butterflies recorded in every month of the year! Maybe a sign of climate change?

Thank you very much to everyone who has contributed *ad hoc* records or walked a transect in 2025. All these records are very valuable. A single record of a common butterfly is every bit as important as a record of something rare. I send them all to Butterfly Conservation at the end of the season to help them track butterfly populations and understand the impacts of habitat loss and climate change. If anyone would like to help record butterflies next year, please get in touch with me at nmorgan@eastlothian.gov.uk

Written and all photos by Nick Morgan

Website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram



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](https://twitter.com/BCeastscotland). You can also view our news feed without having an account!

Featured Photo



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (Photo credit by Kay Goodall)

The next Newsletter will be published in Autumn 2026
