

# Ayrshire Butterfly Report 2004

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## **Introduction**

Although not as good a year weather-wise as 2003 a good number of records were submitted for this season, especially for the better known species. 23 species were recorded from throughout the county from January to October. Two species not recorded during 2003, Large Skipper and Green Hairstreak made a welcome return to the butterfly report with a few sightings of both coming in from the south of the county. Disappointingly no records were submitted for Large Heath and last years unusual sighting of a vagrant Comma was not repeated.

The first butterfly of the season was a very early Peacock sighted on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, followed nearly three weeks later by the Small Tortoiseshell on the 13<sup>th</sup> February. As both over-winter as adults it is not surprising that a period of good weather saw the early emergence of these species. By late April three of the four 'Whites' were on the wing, Green-veined White and Orange tip on the 25<sup>th</sup> and Small White on the 28<sup>th</sup> and also at this time the first migrants of the year were noted - 4 Red Admirals also on the 25<sup>th</sup>, all later records than the previous year.

May proved to be a good month for many butterfly species with 12 Green Hairstreaks recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> and on the 7<sup>th</sup> our first record of Large White, again as with the other 'whites' weeks later than the earliest sighting in 2003. Our other common migrant, the Painted Lady, was first spotted on the 12<sup>th</sup> and this month also saw the emergence of a number of other species: Small Copper on the 16<sup>th</sup>, Small Heath and Grayling on the 25<sup>th</sup> and Northern Brown Argus and Wall on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

June provided the first records for our summer butterflies: Meadow Brown on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Common Blue on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Ringlet on the 15<sup>th</sup>. No further species were recorded until mid-July when a Large Skipper was spotted at Pinbain Burn on the 11<sup>th</sup>, closely followed by Scotch Argus and Dark Green Fritillary both on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The last two species to be recorded in Ayrshire during 2004 were Purple Hairstreak which was recorded in its hundreds on the 31<sup>st</sup> July, providing good reason to suggest that this species had been on the wing for a number of weeks prior to this sighting, and a single record of a Clouded Yellow on the 7<sup>th</sup> August.

By mid September the season had finished for all but the Vanessids, but these were quick to follow with the final sightings submitted as follows: Small Tortoiseshell 23<sup>rd</sup> September, Painted Lady 24<sup>th</sup> September, Peacock and Red Admiral both on the 8<sup>th</sup> October.

## **The 2005 Season**

Any records of butterflies in Ayrshire this season will be gratefully received, especially of those species that were less frequently recorded during 2004. To submit a record please include the date, species name, number, locality and if possible a 6-figure grid reference (if not a 4-figure reference would be acceptable). In addition, any comments on behaviour, habitat and weather would also be very welcome.

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Status = UK and Ayrshire status of each species has been included for comparison.

Flight period = Emergence / arrival times given are for the UK unless otherwise stated.

Description = A short description has been provided for a few of the less familiar species.

Records = A summary of records submitted for each species in Ayrshire during the 2004 season.

## Butterfly Systematic List

### Large Skipper *Ochlodes venata*

**UK Status:** Widespread in England and Wales, but absent from Ireland, most offshore islands and only found in the low-lying areas of south-west Scotland.

**Ayrshire Status:** Local resident in southern Ayrshire. Species at the edge of its UK range.

**Flight period:** June – July (single generation).

**Description:** Although widespread in England and Wales and known to be expanding its range in the north-east, colonies continue to be lost throughout Britain.

**Records:** No records were submitted for this species during 2003 and only three during 2004. The first sighting occurred on the 11<sup>th</sup> July at Pinbain Burn, over a month later than the first UK sighting for 2004 which came from Pembrokeshire on the 21<sup>st</sup> May. The other two Ayrshire records came from Arechleoch Forest, Barr on the 19<sup>th</sup> July and Bennane Head on the 7<sup>th</sup> August all recording a single butterfly. All in all not a good year for this species but this may be due to under-recording.

### Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*

**UK status:** Regular migrant.

**Ayrshire status:** Scarce migrant.

**Flight period:** Can be found in Ayrshire from June to October (single generation, in exceptional years two generations).

**Description:** Although some of these butterflies are recorded every year in Britain and Ireland, this species is famous for its occasional mass immigrations, which are

known as 'Clouded Yellow Years' when tens of thousands migrate to this country during favourable conditions.

**Records:** As in 2003 only one record was submitted for this species in Ayrshire, an individual sighted at Ardmillan Caravan Park near Girvan on the 7<sup>th</sup> August. Again this sighting coincides with the peak emergence period for the offspring of summer breeding Clouded Yellows in the south.

### **Large White *Pieris brassicae***

**UK status:** Common resident.

**Ayrshire status:** Moderately common resident / migrant.

**Fight period:** April – October (two generations).

**Records:** This large, mobile butterfly was recorded throughout Ayrshire mainly in parks and gardens, which is not surprising given that most adults are spotted near their breeding areas in gardens and fields where brassicas are grown.

The earliest record submitted was of a spring adult near Prestwick Station on the 7<sup>th</sup> May, three weeks later than the previous year and five weeks after the first 2004 UK sighting in Buckinghamshire on the 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Throughout May and June this species was recorded in ones and twos from a number of locations: Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May, Pinbain Burn, Lendalfoot on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, Auchincruive on the 5<sup>th</sup> June Kilmaurs on the 12<sup>th</sup> June and the cycle track at Southhook Potteries in Kilmarnock on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

A marked increase in numbers and sightings from mid July onwards indicated that the second generation was on the wing. Again counts remained quite low, the exceptions being from the cycle track at Southhook Potteries on the 4<sup>th</sup> August when 12 individuals were recorded and near Prestwick Station on the 14<sup>th</sup> August when 6 were recorded.

From the second half of August to mid September numbers tailed off again, although there were still several reports coming in from throughout the county. The final report of the season was, as in the previous year, fairly early with 2 observed from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 17<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Small White *Pieris rapae***

**UK status:** Common resident.

**Ayrshire status:** Common resident and migrant.

**Flight period:** April – October (two generations, occasionally three).

**Records:** Displaying a similar distribution to the Large White with records coming in mainly from parks and gardens throughout Ayrshire the first sighting for this species came from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 28<sup>th</sup> April. This first record was two weeks later than the previous year's and six weeks later than the first 2004 UK sighting from Suffolk on the 17<sup>th</sup> March.

First generation numbers were very low and sightings sparse. However, by July as the second generation emerged records started to improve. Double figured counts were recorded from the cycle track at Southhook Potteries; 12 on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, 16 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August and 10 on the 25<sup>th</sup> August, and from Portencross on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August where another 10 were sighted. The final record of the season came from Prestwick where two were spotted on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, a week later than the previous year.

### **Green-veined White *Pieris napi***

**UK status:** Common resident.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident and abundant in suitable habitat.

**Flight period:** April – September (two generations, three in good years).

**Records:** The first county record for this species came from Hunterston on the 25<sup>th</sup> April where 3 individuals were sighted. This is three weeks later than the earliest Ayrshire record from the previous year and also three weeks later than 2004's first UK record from Bedfordshire on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April.

A widespread and common butterfly, records were submitted from throughout Ayrshire and in areas of good habitat numbers were substantial. Unlike the previous year first generation numbers exceeded the second generation by a fair margin, with peak numbers on the wing during May. 612 recorded at Common Loch near Auchinleck on the 12<sup>th</sup> May, 100+ on Horse Island Ardrossan on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 150+ at Kilkerran on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 100+ at Allanton Plains, Darvel on the 30<sup>th</sup>, 113 at Gorsebraehead near Galston on the 31<sup>st</sup> and 40+ at Shallochwreck Burn also on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Few sightings were submitted for June, although one good count of 50 did come in from Eldrick Hill on the 1<sup>st</sup>, but by mid July numbers started to pick up again as the second generation took to the wing. Notable records of 86 from Changue on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, 36 from Shallochwreck Burn on the 31<sup>st</sup> July, 39 from the River Irvine in Galston on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, 42 at Skares also on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 10 from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 23 near Prestwick Station on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The final record of the season came from Knockdolian Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup> August where 2 individuals were recorded bringing the season to an end earlier than expected for this species.

### **Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines***

**UK Status:** Common resident, range expanding.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident and possible migrant.

**Flight period:** Mid-April to early July, but in Scotland the flight period is on average 2 weeks later (single generation).

**Records:** More than double the records were submitted this year for this species in comparison to the previous year and double figured counts were recorded from seven locations. The earliest sighting came from Kilwinning where 4 were recorded on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, one week later than the previous season's record and a month later than the first 2004 UK sighting from Pembrokeshire on the 29<sup>th</sup> March.

Regular sightings were recorded throughout May and into early June. Notable counts included 22 at Northraig Reservoir and 30 at Eglinton Country Park on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 15+ near the River Irvine in Galston on the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14 at Common Loch near Auchinleck on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 12 at Shewalton Sandpits on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 40 at Collennan on the 16<sup>th</sup> May. The season closed very early with one sighting from Drumburle on the 8<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi***

**UK Status:** Resident and widespread throughout England and Wales, more local resident in Scotland. Thought to be an under-recorded species.

**Ayrshire Status:** Local resident, under-recorded species.

**Flight period:** Mid-April to June, but in Scotland the flight period is generally up to a month later (single generation).

**Description:** Although widespread over much of Britain and Ireland, colonies have been lost in several areas. Can be found over a range of habitats, but breeding sites are

usually scrub and shrub habitats. The only hairstreak to over-winter as pupae and therefore, the earliest to emerge in spring.

**Records:** No records were submitted for 2003, however three were received for this species in 2004. The first count of 12 butterflies was at Changue on the 1<sup>st</sup> May, two weeks later than the first UK sighting which came from Buckinghamshire on the 16<sup>th</sup> April, in line with differing emergence times throughout Britain.

Although this species does not colonise in large numbers, records for 2004 were still quite disappointing. Green Hairstreaks were recorded as 'present' at Craigdow on the 14<sup>th</sup> May and a single individual was sighted on Fairlie Moor on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May, but no further records were submitted for this season.

### **Purple Hairstreak *Neozephyrus quercus***

**UK Status:** Resident and widespread over southern England and Wales, range expanding.

**Ayrshire Status:** Scarce resident, under-recorded species.

**Flight period:** July to early September (single generation).

**Description:** As Purple Hairstreaks are restricted to Oak trees it is no surprise to find that this species over-winters as larvae hatching in early spring to coincide with the Oak coming into leaf.

**Records:** This season got off to a cracking start with two records submitted for the 31<sup>st</sup> July – 3 butterflies were recorded in Garry Wood, Finnarts Bay, but on the same day this species was recorded in its hundreds at Shallochwrek Burn and Currarie Point. This was over six weeks later than the first UK record on the 12<sup>th</sup> June from Norfolk.

Unfortunately only a further 3 records were submitted, all single figure counts: 9 at Currarie on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 8 at Shallochwrek Burn on the 21<sup>st</sup> and the final record from Garry Wood, Finnarts Bay of one individual on the 30<sup>th</sup> August.

The high numbers recorded on the 31<sup>st</sup> July may indicate that this butterfly had already been on the wing for some time and that potential recording opportunities earlier in the month may have been missed.

### **Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas***

**UK Status:** Common and widespread resident throughout Britain found in a variety of habitat.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident.

**Flight period:** May – September, but in Scotland emergence is on average one month later (two generations in northern England and Scotland, but sometimes three and exceptionally four may occur in the south in warm summers).

**Records:** The first record came from Collennan on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, two weeks before the earliest Ayrshire record for 2003 and eight weeks later than the first 2004 UK sighting, recorded in Nottinghamshire on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, which is very early for this species. Sightings continued for the first generation throughout the rest of May to early June.

Second generation records began on the 18<sup>th</sup> July when 4 were recorded at Gales Dunes. Records were submitted from across the county from mid July to early September and numbers were certainly higher than the previous season. Most records submitted were of one or two butterflies, however 10 were recorded at Kennedy's Pass on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 12 at Shallochwrek Glen on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 16 at Knockdolian

Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The season finished with a single sighting near Prestwick on the 10<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes***

**UK Status:** Scarce resident. 'Priority Species' in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident on the coast in southern Ayrshire. Under-recorded.

**Flight period:** June to mid-August (single generation).

**Description:** Occurring in small, scattered colonies, its stronghold is across southern and eastern Scotland and the far north of England. It has however, suffered a decline in northern England, which now appears to have slowed probably thanks to conservation measures.

**Records:** The earliest record for this species in Ayrshire during 2004 was also the earliest UK record, when 6 were recorded at Pinbain Burn, Lendalfoot on the 27<sup>th</sup> May. This was the only location in Ayrshire where this species was recorded with a further three single figured counts submitted for the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 11<sup>th</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus***

**UK Status:** Common resident.

**Ayrshire Status:** Locally common resident.

**Flight period:** In Scotland and northern England – June to September (single generation). Elsewhere – May to September (two generations).

**Records:** On the wing earlier than the previous season the first record for this species came from Gales Marsh SWT reserve on the 5<sup>th</sup> June. This however was six weeks later than the first UK sighting for 2004 which came from Hertfordshire on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, aptly displaying the differing emergence times throughout the UK.

The main emergence occurred in late June with 30+ recorded at Shewalton Sandpits on the 20<sup>th</sup> June and continued throughout July into early August. Double and even triple figured counts were recorded from the following locations: 30+ sighted at Gales Marsh SWT reserve on the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 109 in the same location on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 23 at Changue on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 20+ at Kennedy's Pass on the 7<sup>th</sup> August.

Records tailed off after the second week in August and the final sighting of the season came from Bentfield, Prestwick when one was spotted on the 6<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta***

**UK Status:** Regular and widespread migrant.

**Ayrshire Status:** Regular migrant.

**Flight period:** April – November (single generation).

**Records:** This species did not appear to be as numerous as it was during the previous season. The first sighting of 4 Red Admirals came from Eglinton Country Park on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, nearly three weeks later than the first Ayrshire sighting of 2003.

Incidentally the first UK record for 2004 came from Hampshire on the 5<sup>th</sup> January, providing evidence that this species may be able to over-winter in the far south of England.

The second record was not submitted until the 30<sup>th</sup> May when 2 were recorded at Loudoun Hill in Darvel and from early June through to early October the majority of sightings consisted of single figure counts. Numbers began to increase by early September when 20+ were recorded at Tunskeen on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 11 near Prestwick Station again on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 50+ on the trunk of a single Oak tree in Culzean Country Park on the 14<sup>th</sup>. After this numbers began to dwindle again and by the beginning of October only individual sightings were being made. Final records came from Dean Castle

Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 7<sup>th</sup>, Woodroad Park in Cumnock on the 8<sup>th</sup> and Girdle Toll, Irvine also on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui***

**UK Status:** Regular migrant, sometimes occurring in very large numbers.

**Ayrshire Status:** Irregular migrant.

**Flight period:** April to October (single generation, but may produce several broods if weather favourable).

**Records:** The first 2004 sighting for this species in Ayrshire came from Common Loch near Auchinleck on the 12<sup>th</sup> May, later than expected and although there were a good number of records, 2004 was not an exceptional year for this species. The first UK record for 2004 came from Cornwall on the 18<sup>th</sup> January.

Few records were submitted in May, by June however sightings began to pick up as immigration reached its peak. 6 were recorded on the Knockentiber disused railway line on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 9 in the same area on the 15<sup>th</sup>, but by far the majority of records were of one or two individuals.

Only two records were submitted for July but by August records increased again as further immigrants joined the offspring of the earlier arrivals. Records continued throughout August to the end of September, mainly single figured counts, however, 15 were recorded at Portencross on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 14 at Knockdolian Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 12 near Prestwick Station on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. Final records came from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September and Hurlford on the 24<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae***

**UK Status:** Widespread, common and resident.

**Ayrshire Status:** Common resident – over-winters.

**Flight period:** March – October (single generation)

**Records:** Recorded earlier in Ayrshire in 2004 compared with the previous season, the first sighting came from Prestwick on the 13<sup>th</sup> February. The first UK sighting for 2004 came from Dorset on the 4<sup>th</sup> January.

The next Ayrshire record came from Balnowlart on the 27<sup>th</sup> March and it was not until April that sightings became regular. However it was only in July when the new generation began to emerge that count numbers began to rise. 12 were recorded beside the River Irvine in Galston on the 29<sup>th</sup> July, but August proved to be the best month with 30+ recorded on the Knockentiber disused railway line on the 14<sup>th</sup> August and 10 sighted in Stewarton on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Numbers fell after mid August continuing in ones and twos through to late September. The final record of the season came from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

### **Peacock *Inachis io***

**UK Status:** Widespread and common.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident – over-winters.

**Flight period:** March - September (single generation)

**Records:** As one of the few butterfly species to over-winter as an adult, Peacocks generally emerge from hibernation in March, however the first Ayrshire sighting for 2004 came from Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 25<sup>th</sup> January when an unusually warm spell of weather caused one to emerge early. The first UK sighting for 2004 was recorded three weeks earlier on the 4<sup>th</sup> January.

Only two reports were submitted for March and sightings did not really pick up until mid April, peaking on the 1<sup>st</sup> May when 27 were recorded at Changue. Regular reports continued throughout May to early June and then dwindled until 31<sup>st</sup> July when sightings of first generation butterflies began to appear. Good numbers were recorded throughout August and early September – 10 at Kennedy’s Pass on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 13 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 30+ on the Knockentiber disused railway line on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 30+ in Patna plantation on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 38 at Changue on the 28<sup>th</sup>, 16 at Grange Terrace in Kilmarnock on the 4<sup>th</sup> September, 32 near Prestwick Station on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 40+ at Tuskeen also on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Numbers began to decrease from then on and the final record of the season came from Prestwick Station on the 8<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene***

**UK Status:** Resident but has declined in England. A “Species of Conservation Concern” in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident, under-recorded.

**Flight period:** Late May to July, generally emerges a month later in Scotland (single generation)

**Description:** Although widespread in Scotland and Wales this butterfly is now on the verge of extinction throughout southern-central England.

**Records:** Another poor recording year for this species, the first Ayrshire record was of a single individual at Tarfessock on the 13<sup>th</sup> June. This was, as expected, around a month later than the first UK record from Devon on the 14<sup>th</sup> May. Only three further records were submitted for this species, 2 at Feoch Meadows on the 19<sup>th</sup> June, one at Priesthill, Muirkirk on the 9<sup>th</sup> July and the another at Auchalton on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

### **Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja***

**UK Status:** Resident, most widespread of the fritillaries.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident and locally common, under-recorded species.

**Flight period:** Early June to Late August (single generation)

**Description:** Most widespread of the fritillaries, found throughout Britain and in Ireland where it is largely confined to the coast.

**Records:** In keeping with its regular flight period the first UK sighting occurred on the 6<sup>th</sup> June in Devon. However, the first Ayrshire sighting for 2004 was made around five weeks later on the 18<sup>th</sup> July when 5 were spotted at Gales Dunes.

Only four other records were submitted for this species, all recording single butterflies: two records from Arecleoch Forest, Barr on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, Craiggannochie, Pinwherry also on the 19<sup>th</sup> and Kennedy’s Pass on the 7<sup>th</sup> August.

All in all a poor year for this butterfly, however the general consensus amongst recorders is that this is an under-recorded species.

### **Wall *Lasiommata megera***

**UK Status:** Widespread and resident across England, Wales and Ireland, also found in southern Scotland, but mainly coastal.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident – local in southern areas, predominantly coastal, under-recorded species.

**Flight period:** Early May to September, although emergence is generally 2 weeks later in Scotland and northern England (two generations).

**Description:** Named after its habit of basking on walls and stony outcrops this species is widely distributed across England, Ireland and Wales, but has declined substantially in areas of central England and Northern Ireland.

**Records:** The first Ayrshire records of the season were submitted on the 27<sup>th</sup> May, over five weeks later than the first UK record from Suffolk on the 20<sup>th</sup> April. The 27<sup>th</sup> of May saw sightings coming in of 4 near Kennedy's Pass, 7 at Pinbain Burn, Lendalfoot and 2 north of Bennane Head. The largest count of first generation individuals also came from Pinbain Burn on the 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The second generation was on the wing by the end of July when 4 were spotted at Currarie Port on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Numbers began to peak by mid-August, when 20 were recorded at Pinbain Burn on the 20<sup>th</sup> and a further 20 at Shallochwrek Burn on the same day, and remained high to the end of the month when 27 were recorded at Knockdolian Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup> August. This count also provided our last record of the season, although this species was presumably on the wing well into September.

### **Scotch Argus *Erebia aethiops***

**UK Status:** Resident and widespread throughout Scotland, but absent from Ireland and Wales and only found in northern England.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident, abundant in the south. Recognised as a "Species of Regional Priority" by Butterfly Conservation.

**Flight period:** Late July to early September (single generation).

**Description:** South-west Scotland is recognised as holding 20% or more of the total UK population and for this reason this species is classified as a 'Medium Priority Species' in the South-west region by Butterfly Conservation.

**Records:** The first Ayrshire sighting for 2004 was also the first UK record for this species when 2 were spotted at High Changue, Barr on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, perhaps slightly earlier than expected.

Numbers steadily increased with 216 recorded on Kirsti's Trail and Devil's Trail at Changue on the 30<sup>th</sup> July. 140 were counted at Barwinnock on the 31<sup>st</sup> July and on 1<sup>st</sup> August this species was recorded in abundance at Bellsbank Forest, Glen Afton and Loch Doon along with a count of 80+ at Loch Bradan on the same day. Good numbers were still on the wing on the 11<sup>th</sup> August when counts of 42 at Eldrick Hill and 69 at Shalloch on Minnoch were recorded.

Thereafter numbers began to decrease and the final record of the season of 2 individuals came from Changue on the 28<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Grayling *Hipparchia semele***

**UK Status:** Resident and predominantly coastal, range declining in some areas.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident, fairly common in suitable coastal habitats and recognised as a "Species of Regional Priority" by Butterfly Conservation.

**Flight period:** Early July to mid September (single generation).

**Description:** This species appears to be declining and is classified as a 'Medium Priority Species' in the south-west region by Butterfly Conservation. Difficult to spot unless in flight as the wings are kept closed when at rest.

**Records:** A much better year for this species records-wise, a very early individual was recorded at the Barony Auchinleck on the 25<sup>th</sup> May. No further records were made until the 18<sup>th</sup> July when the season got underway with 61 counted at Moorfield in Kilmarnock and 3 at Gales Dunes.

Large numbers were flying around mid-July to early August with 24 recorded at Pinbain Burn on the 19<sup>th</sup> July and 18 at Currarie Port on the 31<sup>st</sup>, however Moorfield

proved to be the best site for this species with 94 counted on the 19<sup>th</sup> July and 148 on the 1<sup>st</sup> August. Numbers began to decrease from early August onwards and the final record of the season of 2 individuals came from Knockdolian Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina***

**UK Status:** Common and widespread resident.

**Ayrshire Status:** Common resident.

**Flight period:** Early June to September (single generation).

**Records:** The first Ayrshire record came from Galston on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June, right on cue for this species. This is over a week earlier than the first 2003 record and only 10 days later than the earliest UK sighting for 2004 which came from Co. Down on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

By late June / early July numbers started to increase peaking mid July with counts of 15 from Knockshinnoch Lagoons on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 10 at Allanton Plains, Darvel on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 72 at Gailes in Irvine also on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Double figure counts were also recorded from Changue on the 30<sup>th</sup> where 28 were sighted and at Barwinnock on the 31<sup>st</sup> with 25 counted.

Numbers dropped sharply from early August onwards and the final record of 2 individuals was submitted from Knockdolain Hill on the 30<sup>th</sup> August.

### **Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus***

**UK Status:** Widely distributed across England, Ireland, Wales and lowland Scotland.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident, locally common.

**Flight Period:** Late June to mid August (single generation).

**Records:** Although the first 2004 Ayrshire record came a week later than in 2003 it was still slightly early for this species as 5 were spotted at Knockentiber on the disused railway line on the 15<sup>th</sup> June. The first 2004 UK sighting was even earlier occurring on the 7<sup>th</sup> June in Hertfordshire.

Numbers were up on the previous season and in accordance with the life cycle of this species peak numbers were recorded during the last two weeks in July. 69 were sighted on Devil's Trail at Changue on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, 42 at Arecleoch Forest, Barr on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 88 at Craiggannochie, Pinwherry also on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 102 on Kirsti's Trail and Devil's Trail, Changue on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

The season finished earlier than expected as the final record came from Shallochwreck Burn on the 31<sup>st</sup> July.

### **Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus***

**UK Status:** One of the most widely distributed butterflies in Britain and Ireland, but many colonies are known to have disappeared since the late 80's / early 90's.

**Ayrshire Status:** Resident but possibly under-recorded

**Flight period:** Varies throughout Britain, generally early June to September (single generation in Scotland and northern England).

**Description:** Highly variable butterfly, emergence times and number of broods vary in different areas of the country. Occurring in colonies the males congregate in open grassy breeding areas, known as 'leks', to attract females.

**Records:** In accordance with the variable emergence times of this species the first Ayrshire record for 2004 of 1 butterfly from the Barony, Auchinleck on the 25<sup>th</sup> May occurred three weeks later than the first UK sighting from Sussex on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May. 12 were recorded at Moorfield on the 29<sup>th</sup> May and in the same location 4 were spotted on the 31<sup>st</sup>. From early June to mid-July only 6 records were submitted: 2

recorded at Auchencleary on the 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2 at the McAdam Monument, Muirkirk on the 21<sup>st</sup>, 8 at Priesthill Farm, Muirkirk on the 9<sup>th</sup> July and 5 at the same location on the 17<sup>th</sup> July. By far the largest count came from Gales in Irvine where 36 were spotted on the wing on the 17<sup>th</sup> July and the season ended very early on the 19<sup>th</sup> July when 1 was recorded at Arecleoch Forest, Barr.

This species is listed as 'stable' by Butterfly Conservation so it may be that the short season is down to under-recording more than anything else.