

Ayrshire Butterfly Report 2005

Nicola Macintyre
East Ayrshire Countryside Ranger Service

Introduction

Twenty-four species were recorded from throughout the county from January to December. Two species not recorded during 2004, Large Heath and Comma made a welcome return, but this was not a very good year for migrants and indeed no records were submitted for Clouded Yellow.

The first butterflies of the season were as expected the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock. The first Small Tortoiseshell was spotted on the 5th February and the first Peacock a month later on the 6th March.

March also saw the emergence of Small White on the 20th and Green-veined White on the 31st and by late April the other two 'Whites' were on the wing, Orange tip on the 19th and Large White on the 29th. With the exception of Orange tip which emerged around the same time as the previous year all other 'Whites' produced earlier records in comparison to 2004. Also around this time the first of the migrants, Red Admiral on the 31st March and Painted Lady on the 24th April, began to appear again earlier than the previous year.

Another early record compared to 2004 was the first sighting of Green Hairstreak on the 23rd April when 7 were reported at Changue. May saw the emergence of Wall and Small Heath on the 13th and 30th respectively. But by far the best month for sightings was June with the first records of Northern Brown Argus, Large Skipper and Common Blue on the 11th, Meadow Brown on the 12th, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary on the 22nd and Dark Green Fritillary and Grayling on the 25th. July provided the first records for Large Heath on the 2nd and Scotch Argus on the 22nd and the final species recorded in Ayrshire was a single sighting of a Comma in Prestwick on the 2nd September.

By September the year had ended for most species, only the Vanessids continued to be recorded throughout October and for one species into December. The final records for these butterflies are as follows: Painted Lady 13th October, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock 27th October and Red Admiral 14th November, although one was recorded attempting to hibernate in a shed in Irvine on the 14th December.

The 2006 Season

Any records of butterflies in Ayrshire this season will be gratefully received, especially of those species that were less frequently recorded during 2005. To submit a record please include the date, species name, number, location and if possible a 6-figured grid reference (if not a 4-figured reference will be acceptable). In addition, any comments on behaviour, habitat and weather would also be very welcome.

Please send any records to: Nicola Macintyre
East Ayrshire Countryside Ranger Service
Dean Castle Country Park

Dean Road
Kilmarnock
KA3 1XB
E-mail: nicola.macintyre@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

List of Contributors

Many thanks to the following contributors for providing records for the 2005 report:

P. Bailly, J. Black, A. Brown, W. Cambridge, J. Candish, I. Dalgleish, T. Daniels, J. Fergusson, S. Fisher, K. Futter, W. Gray, C. Gregory, N. Gregory, D. Guthrie, J. Halliday, T. Hastings, J. Hawell, R. Henderson, A. Hogg, J. Hoggarth, L. Kyle, F. McCann, J. McIlvean, M. McGinty, N. Macintyre, J. Mcowat, M. Moble, M. Murphy, G. Roberts, M. Ruggeri, G. Shaw, A. Simpson, F. Simpson, A. Scott-Martin, K. Waite, V. Wells, F. Westcott.

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Guide to content

Status = UK and Ayrshire status of each species has been included for comparison.
Flight period = Emergence / arrival times are given 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 2005 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 south-west of Scotland.

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

Flight period: June to 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: 2005 appeared to be a better year for this species in comparison to the previous two years. In all 10 records were submitted from throughout June and July. The first sightings occurred on the 11th June at Pinbain Burn, less than two weeks after the first UK sighting for 2005 which came from Wiltshire on the 30th May. 4 butterflies were recorded on the 23rd June at Pinbain Head and on the 25th June at Feoch Meadows SWT Reserve.

By July sightings had tailed off again with only two records submitted, both of single butterflies and the final record came from Arecleoch Forest on the 22nd July.

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

UK status: Common resident.

Ayrshire status: Moderately common resident/migrant.

Flight period: April to October (two generations).

Records: Our largest white butterfly this species was recorded throughout Ayrshire, and as it does not form colonies all records submitted were of single-figured counts. The earliest sighting of the year, in Ayrshire, was recorded on the 29th April at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock, nearly a month later than the first UK sighting on the 31st March from Suffolk.

There was a steady submission of records throughout the flight period with no discernable difference between the two generations. The spring generation from April to the end of June was recorded in ones, twos and occasionally threes from a number of locations: 3 at Pow Burn, near Prestwick Airport on the 30th April, 2 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 30th May and single counts at Pinbain Burn on the 11th June, Knockentiber on the 17th June and Loch Braden on the 22nd June. The largest count of the spring generation was a record of 5 individuals at Culzean Shore on the 6th June.

Regular sightings continued to be submitted throughout July with numbers peaking at the end of the month when 6 butterflies were recorded from south-west Prestwick on the 27th. Sightings continued throughout August and early September with the final record of the season of one butterfly coming from south-west Prestwick on the 15th September, the same date and location as the previous year.

Small White *Pieris rapae*

UK status: Common resident.

Ayrshire status: Common resident and migrant.

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

Records: As with the Large White this species was recorded throughout the county, mainly in parks and gardens where the food plant of its caterpillars, brassicas and crucifers are more likely to be found.

The first Ayrshire record came from Kilmarnock where a single butterfly was spotted on the 20th March, only one week later than the first UK sighting on the 13th March from Somerset. Both the first UK and Ayrshire records are earlier than those of the previous year, but whilst the UK record is only 4 days earlier, the Ayrshire sighting is 5 1/2 weeks earlier.

After the first sighting no further records were submitted until the 19th April when two butterflies were spotted in Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock. From then on the season took off, with regular sightings throughout late April, May and June, but first generation numbers remained low with no doubled-figured counts.

Second generation counts displayed slightly higher numbers, however, the highest counts were recorded near the end of August with 10 individuals sighted at Dalry Community Woods on the 21st and 10 at Sourlie SWT Reserve on the 22nd. The final record of the season was fairly early with a single individual observed in Galston on the 11th September around the same time as the final record of the previous two years.

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

UK status: Common resident.

Ayrshire status: Resident and abundant in suitable habitat.

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

Records: The first county record came from Prestwick Airport on the 31st March, less than two weeks after the first UK records on the 18th March from Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. Both records were much earlier than the previous year's first sightings when the first UK record was made on the 3rd April and the first Ayrshire record on the 25th April.

Peak numbers were not as high as previous years, but double-figured counts were recorded during both the first and second generation flight periods. By early May first generation numbers had begun to increase to double-figured counts: on the 10th May 10 were recorded in Knockentiber and 13 at Eglinton Country Park, 23 were recorded at Pinbain Burn on the 13th May, and 20 at Lagafater Lodge on the 14th. Numbers increased throughout June reaching a peak on the 11th at Allantonplains Wood when 145 individuals were recorded. Double-figured counts continued throughout the rest of June: c30 at Knockencorsan, near Largs on the 18th, 32 and 24+ at Loch Braden on the 22nd and 25th respectively.

Thereafter, numbers diminished until the second generation took to the wing and by the 10th July sightings of 10+ from Corsehouse Reservoir and 20 from Allantonplains Wood were recorded. Other double-figured counts came on the 22nd July: 10+ at Arecleoch forest, 14 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock and 20+ at Shallochwreck Burn/Currarie Port. August also produced a number of notable sightings including 16 from Eglinton Country Park on the 14th and 14 near Fenwick on the 22nd, but by late August sightings had tailed off and the final record of the season came on the 8th September from The Roundel at Largs.

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: Not quite as good a year for this species as no double-figured counts were made during 2005, but the number of records submitted remained stable. The first record of the season came from two locations, Knockentiber and an area near Shewalton Sandpits on the 19th April. This was over three weeks later than the first UK record on the 28th March from Somerset, but in keeping with the Scottish flight period.

Regular sightings were made throughout the rest of April and May, but by late May records had dwindled to single sightings and only four records were submitted during June. The most notable records include 8 at Auchincruive on the 23rd April, 4 at Trabboch Loch on the 29th, 4 at Pow Burn, near Prestwick Airport on the 30th, 4 on the River Irvine near Dreghorn on the 12th May and 3 at Auchalton Meadows SWT Reserve on the 21st May. The final record of the season came from Shalloch on the

17th June. All in all, this species experienced a poor season in comparison to the previous year.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

UK status: Resident and widespread throughout England and Wales, more local resident in Scotland.

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: Rarely seen in large numbers, this species holds its wings closed when at rest displaying the green underside with its faint white 'streak'. It is found over a variety of habitats but is most strongly associated with scrub and shrub where the food plants of its caterpillars are most likely to be found.

Records: 2005 proved to be a better year for records than previous years. The season began late April when 7 individuals were recorded at Changue on the 23rd, only two weeks later than the first UK sighting on the 11th from Surrey.

May proved to be the best month for this species with 5 recorded at Fairlie Glen on the 12th, however at Lagafater Lodge on the 14th 54 were counted in four separate areas and so it is estimated that 'hundreds' were on the wing that day. The final record of the season came from Changue Forest on the 21st May when 5 individuals were sighted.

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: Easily overlooked species as the adults spend most of their time in the canopy of oak trees. These butterflies are not highly mobile and a whole colony may be restricted to just one tree.

Records: A very poor year for this species with only three records submitted throughout the season and all single-figured counts. Two individual recorders submitted the first Ayrshire record for the 22nd July of three butterflies at Shallochwreck Burn, nearly a month later than the first UK sighting on the 25th June from Oxfordshire. The final record of the season was made on the 14th August again from Shallochwreck Burn.

In comparison to 2004 when this species was recorded in its hundreds at Shallochwreck Burn these records are very disappointing.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

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

Ayrshire status: Resident

Flight period: May to 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 during warm summers).

Records: The first Ayrshire record came from Pinbain Burn on the 13th May around the same time as the previous year and just over six weeks later than the first UK sighting, recorded on the 26th March from Devon.

Sightings continued for the first generation throughout the rest of May and June, all counts of one or two individuals, the exception coming from Eglinton Country Park on the 10th June when 4 butterflies were recorded.

Second generation records began on the 17th July when 2 were recorded at Turnberry Point and numbers reached a peak late July when 10+ were recorded at Shewalton Sandpits and the Royal Troon golf course on the 22nd and 24th respectively. A steady submission of records continued throughout August from across the county but by late August, early September numbers had tailed off and the season finished with a single sighting south-west of Prestwick on the 14th 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: Many local races have been described for this species. In Scotland, most individuals are of the race *artaxerxes* and have a characteristic white spot in the middle of the forewing.

Records: The earliest UK record for this species came from Durham on the 9th June, just two days before the first Ayrshire record of a single butterfly at Pinbain Burn. Again Pinbain Burn proved to be a stronghold for this species in Ayrshire with a further six records submitted from this area during the season: 4 recorded on the 13th June, 5 on the 20th, 7 on the 23rd, 4 on the 25th and 6 on the 9th July, ending the season early with 'several' recorded on the 11th.

The only record not to come from Pinbain Burn was of 5 individuals flying at Bennane Head on the 9th 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: The season started with a single butterfly sighted at Pinbain Burn on the 11th June, nearly 5 weeks later than the first UK record from Somerset on the 5th May, but in keeping with the varying emergence times for this species in different parts of the country.

Sightings continued throughout June, reaching peak numbers early July when 19 were recorded at Gales Marsh SWT Reserve on the 2nd and on the 9th July 26 butterflies were recorded again at Gales Marsh SWT Reserve, 46 at Barony Pit, near

Auchinleck, 1 in south-west Prestwick, 7 at Bennane Head and 4 at Pinbain Burn. Double-figure counts were still being submitted by late July, 25+ at Arecleoch Forest and 12 at Shallochwreck Burn/Currarie Port on the 22nd and a further 12 at Gales Marsh on the 24th, but numbers were no where near as high as the previous year. By early August sightings had tailed off and the final record of the season came from Sourlie SWT Reserve when 3 were spotted on the 22nd August.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

UK status: Regular and widespread migrant.

Ayrshire status: Regular migrant.

Flight period: April to November (single generation).

Records: The season started early in Ayrshire with 2 butterflies recorded at Prestwick Airport on the 31st March. Again the first UK sighting was very early and came from Kent on the 1st January, providing further evidence of this species' ability to over-winter in the south of England. The second record was not submitted till late April when 1 was spotted at Changue on the 23rd and from then on there were sporadic sightings until mid June when the season really got underway. Regular sightings were recorded throughout July, August and September from across the county, but all were single-figured counts. A slight increase in numbers was noted early September with 6 recorded in south-west Prestwick, on the 2nd and 7 in the same location on the 5th. Sightings slowed down during October and only three records were submitted for November, the last one being from Ayr Road in Prestwick on the 14th. However, a late record was submitted of a single butterfly hibernating in a shed in Irvine on the 14th December, whether this individual was able to survive the winter or not this far north is unknown.

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: 2005 proved to be a very poor year for this species. The first record of the season came from Glen Afton on the 24th April, nearly three weeks earlier than the first Ayrshire sighting for 2004 and over two months later than the first UK 2005 sighting from Glasgow on the 17th February. Few records were submitted during May and June with the majority of sightings being made in July, 4 were recorded in a garden in Newmilns on the 22nd and 2 at Fardlehill in Kilmarnock on the same day. No sightings were received for August and by September only two individuals were recorded both on Whinfield Road, Prestwick on the 3rd and 4th of the month. The season ended with a record of a single individual from Kilmarnock on the 13th October.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

UK status: Widespread, common and resident.

Ayrshire status: Common resident – over-winters as an adult.

Flight period: March to October (single generation).

Records: This familiar butterfly was one of the most recorded species in Ayrshire during 2005. The first Ayrshire record came from Kilmarnock on the 5th February, only a month later than the first UK records from Somerset and Surrey on the 3rd January. However, it was not until March that sightings began to increase and by April numbers began to pick up. 7 were recorded from Rankinston and 30 along the River Irvine near Dreghorn on the 2nd April, 8 along the Knockentiber/Springside disused railway line on the 21st and 13 again in Rankinston on the 25th. Thereafter numbers and sightings began to decrease and it was not until early July, when the new generation began to emerge that count numbers began to rise. 17 were recorded at the Barony Pit near Auchinleck on the 9th, 23 at Fardlehill, Kilmarnock and 10 at Arcleoch forest on the 22nd, 16 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock, 16 in Newmilns and 14 on Craufurdland Estate on the 31st. By mid August numbers had fallen again to sightings of ones and twos, continuing through September into October with the last record of the season coming from south-west Prestwick on the 27th.

Peacock *Inachis io*

UK status: Widespread and common.

Ayrshire status: Resident – over-winters as an adult.

Flight period: March to September (single generation).

Records: By far the majority of the records received during 2005 were for this species. The first Ayrshire sighting for this butterfly came from Gala Lane on the 6th March. Whereas, the first UK sighting for 2005 was recorded two months earlier on the 2nd January in Suffolk.

The season really took off in March with regular sightings from throughout the county. Numbers began to rise and by late April double-figured counts were recorded, 12 on the Knockentiber/Springside disused railway line on the 21st, 16 in Rankinston on the 22nd, 35 in Changue Forest on the 23rd and 15 at Glen Afton on the 24th.

Thereafter numbers began to dwindle until late July when sightings of first generation butterflies began to emerge. Good numbers were recorded throughout August and early September – 30 at Hunterston on the 14th August, 37 at Eglinton Country Park also on the 14th, 23 at Loch Braden on the 20th, 20 at Dalry Community Woods on the 21st 10 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock on the 22nd 17 south-west Prestwick on the 2nd September and another 17 in Galston on the 4th. Numbers began to decrease from then on and the final record came from The Roundel, Largs on the 27th October.

Comma *Polygonia c-album*

UK status: Common resident in England and Wales.

Ayrshire status: Vagrant.

Flight period: Late March to October (two generations).

Description: Widespread in southern Britain this species is now expanding its range and records of vagrants have been submitted from Scotland indicating the possibility of colonisation.

Records: A single record was submitted for this species, backed up with photographic evidence, from Prestwick on the 2nd September.

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*

UK status: Resident, but has declined in England.

Ayrshire status: Resident, under-recorded. A 'Species of Conservation Concern' in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

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

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

Records: A better recording year for this species than the previous two years, the first sighting of the season came in from two sites on the 22nd June where 4 butterflies were recorded at Allanton Plains and 6 at Loch Braden. As expected for this species the first Ayrshire sighting was over a month later than the first UK record, which came from Devon on the 11th May.

Sightings continued throughout the rest of June and into early July with a number of double-figured counts: 14 at Loch Braden and 13 at Feoch Meadows SWT Reserve on the 25th June and 24 again at Loch Braden and 24 at Allantonplains Wood on the 10th July. The season finished slightly earlier than expected with the final record of 4 individuals on the Eldrick Hills on the 12th 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: Rarely found in great numbers this species is widely distributed throughout Britain and Ireland, but has undergone local declines in many regions most notably in central and eastern England.

Records: The first Ayrshire record for 2005 came from Feoch Meadows SWT Reserve on the 25th June, almost a month later than the earliest UK record from Devon on the 31st May.

Only two other records were submitted for this species, but numbers were higher than in 2004. 10+ were recorded in Arecleoch Forest on the 22nd and the last record to be submitted was of 6 on the Royal Troon golf course on the 26th. All in all a poor recording year.

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: Its delicately patterned undersides provide good camouflage when this butterfly is resting against stony or sandy surfaces. Despite possible under-recording in Ayrshire the absence of recent records in central and southern England is thought to represent a genuine decline of the species in these areas.

Records: The first UK record for this species occurred slightly earlier than expected on the 18th April in Cornwall. Right on time, the first Ayrshire sightings were recorded at Pinbain Burn (6) and Kennedy's Pass (1) on the 13th May. More sightings were made of first generation butterflies with the majority of records coming from Pinbain Burn, 8 on the 14th May, 6 on the 21st and 6 on the 3rd June. Thereafter numbers and sightings declined until early August when the second generation were on the wing, all recorded at Pinbain Burn, 4 on the 6th August, 27 on the 8th and the final record of the season, 7 on the 14th.

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 season started with 2 reported at Arecleoch Forest on the 22nd July, only 10 days later than the first UK sighting from Cumbria on the 12th July. Numbers began to increase early August and by the 9th 62 were reported at Auldraigoch, 'many' were recorded on the Straiton to Bargrennan Road and 47 at Loch Braden on the 14th and the final records to be submitted came in on the 20th August where 19 were recorded south of Dalmellington and 11 were sighted on the road to Loch Doon.

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: Appears to be declining and is classified as a 'Medium Priority Species' in the south-west region by Butterfly Conservation. In spite of this classification an important inland site, near Kilmarnock was lost during 2005 to development.

Records: Both the first UK sighting and the first Ayrshire record were early for this butterfly with this species recorded in Hampshire on the 10th June and at Pinbain Burn on the 25th June.

The season got underway in early July with 17 recorded at the marine construction yard near Hunterston on the 8th, 102 at Barony Pit near Auchinleck, 10+ at Bennane

Head and 50+ at Pinbain Burn on the 9th. Moorfield industrial estate, which has long been an inland stronghold for this species and has since been lost to development, provided records of 24 on the 10th July and 75+ on the 24th and other notable records came from Shallochwreck Burn/Currarie Port on the 22nd July when 17 were sighted and Pinbain Burn on the 6th August when 35 were recorded. Numbers and sightings decreased from this point on and only a further two records were submitted with the final record of the season of a single individual coming from Pinbain Burn on the 14th August, a couple of weeks earlier than expected.

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 the Knockentiber disused railway line on the 12th June, right on cue for this species and just over a week later than the previous year and the first 2005 UK record which came from Wiltshire on the 4th. By late June and early July numbers and sightings began to increase peaking mid July with counts of 100+ at the Barony Pit, Auchinleck, 50+ at Bennane Head, 40+ at Pinbain burn and 31 at Gales Marsh SWT Reserve all on the 9th and 30 at Allantonplains Wood and 20+ at Turnberry golf course on the 10th. Numbers remained high throughout July and early August with further double-figured counts coming from Arecleoch Forest (10+) on the 22nd, 50+ at the Royal Troon golf course on the 26th and counts of 60 from south-west Prestwick on the 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th July. Numbers began to decline early August, the only double-figured count of 13 to be submitted from Pinbain Burn on the 6th and the final record of the season came from south-west Prestwick of an individual sighted on the 14th September. All in all 2005 proved to be a better year for this species in comparison with the previous two years.

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: This species emerged right on cue with the first Ayrshire sightings of 3 at Dean Castle Country Park in Kilmarnock, 1 along the River Irvine near Dreghorn and 'a few' at the Abattoir roundabout near Kilmarnock on the 21st June. The first UK sighting occurred on the 10 June in Somerset, perhaps slightly early for this species. Thereafter regular sightings were made throughout June and July with numbers peaking mid July. 100+ were recorded at the Barony Pit near Auchinleck, 100+ at Bennane Head and 40+ at Pinbain Burn on the 9th and 60 were recorded at Allantonplains Wood on the 10th. Thereafter numbers began to decrease although sightings remained regular until the end of July when the season finished earlier than expected on the 31st with single sightings at Shallochwreck Burn and Finnarts Bay.

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 1980's and early 1990'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: The first UK record for this species was early, coming from Sussex on the 29th April, but the first Ayrshire record from Upper Glen App on the 30th May was right on time.

Numbers increased quickly with 24 sighted at Allantonplains Wood on the 11th June, peaking late June with 250+ at Penderry Hill/Carlock Hill on the 23rd. Numbers had decreased by early July but double-figured counts were still being recorded: 10 at Gailes Marsh SWT Reserve and 10+ at Barony Pit near Auchinleck on the 9th, 37 at Allantonplains Wood and 10 at Corsehouse Reservoir on the 10th and 25+ at the Royal Troon golf course on the 26th. Only one report was received for August on the 16th of 8 butterflies flying at Gailes Marsh SWT Reserve. In general this was a better year for Small Heath records than 2004 and 2003 and the early end to the season is more likely due to under-recording.

Large Heath *Coenonympha tullia*

UK status: Widespread and locally common in Scotland, Ireland and northern England.

Ayrshire status: Resident, under-recorded. A 'Species of conservation Concern' in the UK biodiversity Action Plan.

Flight period: Mid-June to early August (single generation).

Description: Restricted to wet, boggy habitats, the main food plant of the caterpillar is Hare's-tail Cottongrass. The adults always rest with wings closed, displaying a line of spots on the undersides, which vary depending on where in the country the butterfly is resident.

Records: Only three records were submitted for this species all during the month of July. The first came from Drumclog on the 2nd, almost a month later than the first UK record from Yorkshire on the 7th June. 8 were recorded at Corsehouse Reservoir on the 10th and 4 at Loch Dornal on the 11th. Although these are better records than the previous two years (in 2003 no records were submitted), numbers are still down in comparison to older records, but again this may be due to under-recording.