

**DRUMOIG WILDLIFE NEWSLETTER NUMBER 14**  
**MAY/JUNE 2023**



Horse and riders on the West Sands at St. Andrews.

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**THE WEATHER ROUNDUP.**

From a rainfall point of view, what peculiar months May & June turned out to be! My May records are incomplete due to us being away for the last 2 weeks. We had 18.3 mm until the 18<sup>th</sup> but from what people tell me there was only one further day of moderate rainfall, so the likelihood is that we had less than an inch (<25mm).

June began with a long dry spell and a lot of parched-looking lawns. The first substantial rainfall was overnight on the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> but as we got up on the 19<sup>th</sup> you wouldn't have thought there had been much rain as the paths were already drying out – how wrong can you be – there had been 19.8mm overnight! This wasn't enough to bring us up to the monthly average, 37mm being the June total.

I recently had an e-mail from my lawn-care company about “hydrophobic soil”. In my day, “Hydrophobia” was a fancy name for rabies derived from the Greek and meaning “fear of water”. No, the soil doesn't become rabid but the lawn-care company went on to say “when there's little or no rainfall for a prolonged period of time, lawns can become stressed and start turning brown. When the rain finally returns, we expect it to help, however, there are occasions when the soil becomes excessively dry and repellent to water. The technical term for this is hydrophobic and the result is that moisture is unable to move down into the soil profile.

Hydrophobic soil causes pooling of surface water, which can be counterproductive as the water needs to get to the soil to benefit the grass plant.”

I have noticed these pools of water around the golf course after heavy rainfall and have been puzzled by it as I assumed that the course was based on sand (just like most of our gardens!). Naturally the lawn-care company has an answer to this – they can apply a wetting agent.....but I didn't enquire as to cost!

**GHOST MOTHS.**

I recently noticed this moth in my garden:



I trawled through a myriad of internet images and was unable to identify it. Fortunately, I knew a person who could, in the form of Christine Edwards. Christine was also stumped but she knew a man who could identify it and he told us it was a female Ghost Moth. There are over 2,500 species of moth in the UK and, like birds, the male and female versions may differ markedly so at least Christine & I had a decent excuse to cover our ignorance! The difference can be seen quite easily from this photo taken from the Wikipedia website:



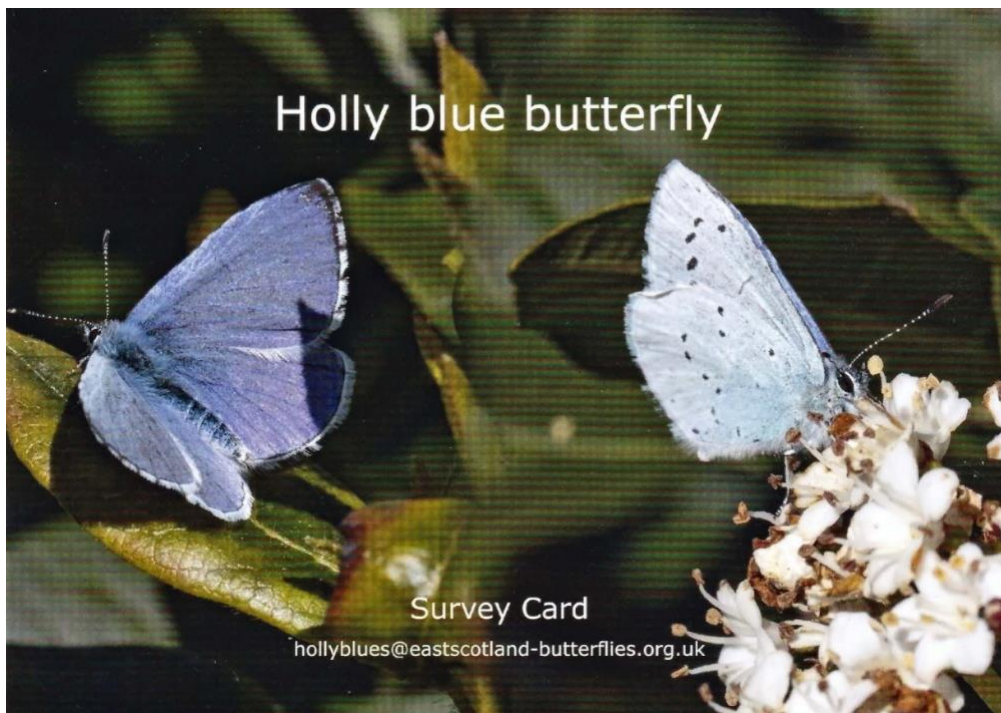
Female Ghost moth on the left, smaller male on the right – Wikipedia.

Apparently, Ghost Moths are fairly common and widespread. The males have pure white uppers as can be seen in the above photo, and dark underwings. I was then introduced to a new word for my vocabulary – “lek” – as far as moths are concerned, a lek is a gathering or congregation. Several males lek together at dusk and when they hover around, they look quite ghostly. They can usually be seen next to areas of long grass and the lekking lasts about 20 – 30 minutes. The female flies through the lek and grabs a male in passing. They then drop to the ground and mate! Fascinating!

Ghost Moths usually fly between June and August. The female lays between 200 to 1,600 eggs over 4 days. The young larvae feed on plant rootlets and have a long gestation period – over 2 to 3 years. As they get larger, they can cause significant damage to crops which include strawberries, lettuce and chrysanthemum plants and also in forest nurseries.

### **HOLLY BLUES.**

I was recently in the Larick Centre in Tayport and noticed the following card on display:



I had never heard of a Holly Blue and looked it up on the internet. There were various comments about it – it is the national butterfly of Finland; it is commonest in the south and Midlands & rarer further north; the caterpillar is green; and “absent from Scotland except as a rare vagrant”.

So why were people doing a survey of a rare butterfly: was it a local initiative or Scotland-wide?

I contacted the organiser, Wendy Irons, who filled in all the gaps. Here’s what she had to say:-

“Holly Blues have recently moved north and there are colonies in the Edinburgh area. In August 2022 both myself and my friend in Wormit, reported a sighting of a Holly Blue in our gardens. This prompted Chris Stamp to carry out a survey in Wormit earlier this year, sighting



a few in Wormit and Newport. We then decided to carry out a public survey to find out how widespread the butterfly is in this area. At the last count we have had 43 sightings in the Wormit, Newport and Tayport area, thanks to the public supporting our survey. The butterfly has also been spotted in Strathkinnes and at Kilmining near Crail outwith the scope of our survey.

Holly Blues can generally be seen near holly and ivy flying high up, but may also be seen basking in the sun or nectaring in gardens. It can be distinguished from the Common Blue by examination of the underwing. A second brood of Holly Blue will come on the wing in early August so we're likely to get more sightings then. We are also informally surveying Dundee as we expect they will soon be spotted there too."

Both Wendy and Chris are Butterfly Conservation volunteers.

So, keep your eyes open, especially in early August and if you see one, take part in the survey using the following format:-



Your name:

Contact details (in case of questions):

Date seen:

Number seen:

Photographed (Y/N)?:

Location seen (Address with postcode, or 6-digit OS grid reference, or what3words reference):

What was the butterfly doing? (Please mention any plants/flowers it was using):

You can photograph your completed card and email to [hollyblues@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk](mailto:hollyblues@eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk) along with a photo of the butterfly if possible, or drop it in to 9 Kilmany Road, Wormit. Thank you!

Wendy has asked that, if you see a blue butterfly, please try to photograph it as it helps to differentiate it from the Common Blue butterfly, and also to note the habitat and what the butterfly was doing.

### **BITS AND BOBS.**

1. Steve Norrie reported that he had heard the skylarks on the meadow to the south of Forgan Drive, which is really good news considering the adjacent building works.
2. Sally Byers reported that she had seen a Cinnabar Moth in her garden. This is not surprising as there is usually a number of ragwort plants along the verge leading towards Craigie Hill, although this year there don't seem to be too many. There was an article in newsletter number 3 (July/August 2021) which gives quite a few

details. This can be accessed via the DRA website ([drumoig.weebly.com](http://drumoig.weebly.com) >more>wildlife forum>newsletters).



Cinnabar Moth.



Cinnabar Moth caterpillar on Ragwort plant.

3. The rhododendrons below the hotel/clubhouse have been striking this year although they are now past their best.



4. Froglets obviously have a hidden highway across Pickletillum Avenue as hundreds have been seen recently marching/hopping along!





5. The footpath from the bottom of Craigie Hill to the Pickletillum bus stop has finally been installed.



5. We seem to be surrounded by vicious crows and equally unfriendly magpies. Here is a picture of a magpie attacking our bird feeder. You can see the plastic cover on the rear bird feeder has been pecked by the magpies.





## DRUMOIG ART DISPLAY.



Thanks to Lil & Dave Smith and Jim & Jean Mitchinson, an art display by Drumoig residents was held in Jim's garage on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June. There were 14 exhibitors with over 50 artworks on display and the standard was extremely high. 49 Drumoig residents attended on a lovely summer afternoon and convivial hospitality was enjoyed in Jim & Jean's garden. Although there was a good turnout, the non-attenders definitely missed a great afternoon.



The event was sponsored by the DRA. Many thanks to all contributors.



## **THE NEW DEVELOPMENT.**

As I write this, the news seems to be that the keys to the final 2 houses will be handed over on 30<sup>th</sup> June. There has certainly been a flurry of activity in the last week with new road signs, hedging, trees and turf all being planted. I have heard that the roadworks, site clearance and the play park should be completed by the middle of August.

Alec Burden has been busy with his drone and has sent me some stunning aerial photos of the new development some of which are shown below:



An overview of the new development.



The new development south of Drumoig Way along Pickletillum Avenue.





The new development to the north of Drumoig Way/ Forgan Drive.



The new houses on Drumoig Way as you enter the Drumoig community.

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As always, many thanks to our contributors but **this newsletter will not happen unless you, the members, contribute. Please, please, please send me any observations, comments or photographs – there's always something of interest happening around Drumoig!**

A special welcome to our new residents.

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