



Butterflies of the Howe of Fife

S.T. Buckland

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I have included all species that I have been able to photograph in or near the Howe of Fife, which I believe includes all species that are regularly recorded there.

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Small skipper

This species recently arrived in Fife, occurring near the Forth bridges. This is the first one recorded in Fife that was away from that area. It was at Carphin on 14 July 2026.





Large white

The least common of the three 'cabbage whites'.





Small white

Common especially in farmland, but appreciably less common than the green-veined white.





Green-veined white

Common wherever there is suitable habitat.





Orange tip

A late spring and early summer species, common in grassland.





Green hairstreak

The green hairstreak has a very restricted distribution in Fife. The one above was by the track from Craigmead towards East Lomond in mid-May 2023. The one below was at Carphin in mid-May 2025.





Purple hairstreak

Adults typically fly high up in oak trees, and are difficult to photograph unless they land on vegetation low down. These images were taken with a telephoto lens.





Small copper

Small numbers occur at a number of locations in and around the Howe of Fife.





Northern brown argus

This species has a very restricted distribution in Fife. This one was on the east slope of Black Craig on the Carphin estate in mid-June 2025.





Common blue

Locally distributed in the Howe of Fife, but occurs where its food plant, bird's foot trefoil, is plentiful. These (male above, female below) were at Gaddon Loch.





Holly blue

The holly blue is a southern species that arrived in Fife in the early 2020s, and is now successfully colonising. These females were at Balmerino in mid-May 2024 (below) and late August 2025 (above).





Small pearl-bordered fritillary

This species is very scarce in the Howe of Fife. The one above and below right was at Auchtermuchty Common in early July 2022, while the one below left was on Lucklawhill in early July 2024.





Dark green fritillary

Uncommon in the Howe of Fife. The one on the right was at Carphin in early July 2024, while the others were at Gaddon Loch in early July 2019.





Red admiral

A common species especially in late summer.



Painted lady

A migrant species that sometimes arrives in Britain in large numbers. The above individual was at Edensmuir (Mountcastle), while the one below was at Gaddon Loch.





Small tortoiseshell

Common in suitable habitats.



Peacock

The peacock has spread north in recent years and is now one of the most common butterflies in Fife.



Comma

A distinctive species that has spread northwards into Fife. Occurs at Gaddon Loch and Cairnfield Muir.





Speckled wood

This species is currently colonising Fife. The one below right was at Heggie's Muir Wood by the Wilderness in mid-June 2022, while the others were at Carphin in early September 2024.





Wall brown

Another species currently colonising Fife. This one was on the east slope of Norman's Law in late August 2024.





Meadow brown

A common species of grassland.





Ringlet

Another common grassland species.





Small heath

Common on grassy slopes of the Lomond Hills. The above image was taken near the car park at the top of the road passing between East and West Lomond. The image below left shows one of several near Gaddon Loch in July 2019, and the one below right was one of several at Carphin in early July 2024.

