



Macro-moths of Carphin

S.T. Buckland

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I have included images of the species that I have been able to photograph on Carphin Farm. My thanks go to Nigel Voaden for identifying the more difficult species — and some of the less difficult ones! I'm also grateful to Stuart Paul, Briony Marcus, Ross Stuart and Billy Walker for welcoming me to Carphin, and giving me free access.

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Angle shades

A common moth that is relatively large and showy. Numbers are often boosted by migrants.





Anomalous

A widespread summer species in a range of habitats, although it is uncommon in Fife.





Antler moth

A common grassland species that can often be seen during the day feeding on flowers.





Autumnal rustic

A common species of open habitats, occurring in late summer and autumn.





Barred chestnut

A locally-distributed species of moorland and broadleaved woodland on acid soils. This worn individual was a few yards up the Norman's Law path from the western boundary of Carphin Farm in late August 2025.





Barred red

Common, especially in conifer plantations.



Barred straw

A common summer species where cleavers or other bedstraws grow.





Barred yellow

A fairly common species where dog-roses or other roses grow.





Beautiful golden Y

A fairly common species across a range of habitats.





Black rustic

A common autumn species.





Bordered white

A common species of pinewoods and conifer plantations.





Brick

A relatively scarce autumn species of broadleaved woodland.





Bright-line brown-eye

A common species in a range of habitats.





Brimstone moth

A common moth, especially where hawthorn or blackthorn grows.





Brindled green

A species associated with oak that is seldom recorded in Fife. This one was at Carphin in mid-August 2026.





Brindled pug

A spring species, appearing earlier in the year than most pugs. Associated with oak and hawthorn.





Broad-bordered yellow underwing

A common species in broad-leaved woodland.





Broom moth

A common species of open habitats.





Brown-line bright-eye

A common grassland species.





Brown rustic

Common in late spring and early summer across a range of habitats.





Brown silver-line

A common species where bracken occurs.





Brown-spot pinion

A fairly common but declining autumn species, occurring in a range of lowland habitats.





Buff ermine

Rarely recorded in eastern Scotland north of the Firth of Forth. This one was on Berry Brae in mid-June 2025.





Buff footman

A southern species that has been spreading northwards quite rapidly, and is now widespread in Fife.





Buff-tip

A large moth of open woodland that looks like a broken birch twig. It is becoming more common in Fife.





Bulrush wainscot

Relatively common in areas with bulrushes.





Burnished brass

A common species where nettles grow.





Canary-shouldered thorn

A common species in late summer and autumn, occurring mostly in broadleaved woodland.





Centre-barred swallow

A common species in late summer and autumn wherever mature ash trees are present.





Chestnut

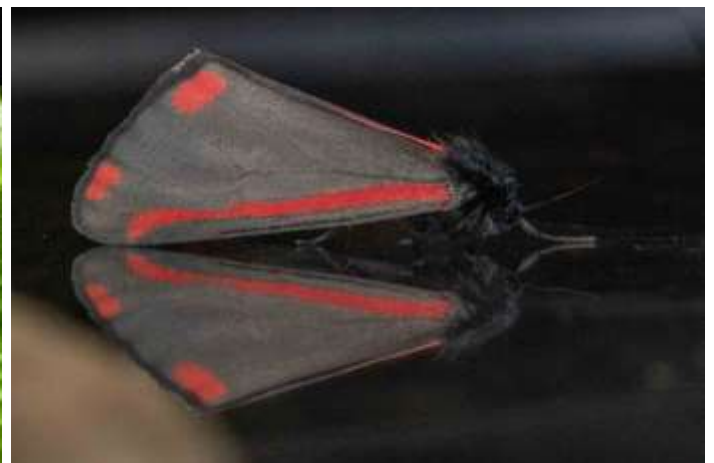
A common autumn species that overwinters as an adult and reappears in early spring. It can also be seen on mild nights through the winter.





Cinnabar

A common autumn species that overwinters as an adult and reappears in early spring. It can also be seen on mild days through the winter.





Clay

A fairly common grassland species.





Cloaked minor

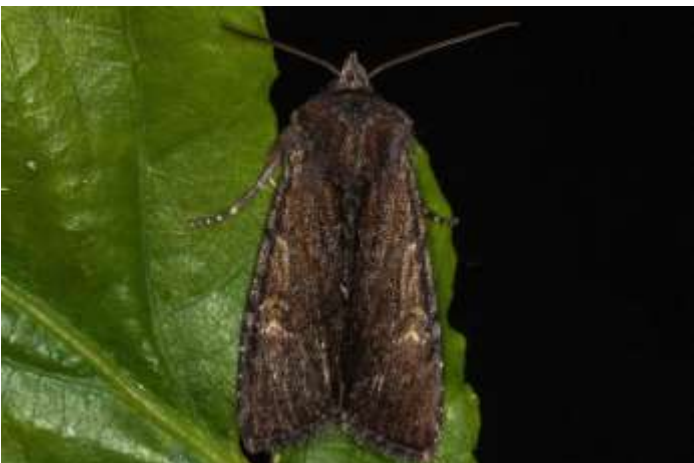
A locally-distributed grassland species that occurs mostly at or near the coast. These were at Carphin in early July 2023, late July 2025 and late July 2026.





Clouded-bordered brindle

A common grassland species in late spring and early summer.





Clouded drab

A common spring species, most numerous in woodland.





Clouded silver

A species of woodland and hedgerows that has been increasing its range in Scotland.





Common carpet

A common species, often occurring in gardens.





Common footman

A species that is spreading northwards. In Fife, it occurs mostly at or near the coast. However, they now seem to be fairly common at Carphin.





Common marbled carpet

A common summer species with widely-varying markings, occurring across a wide range of habitats.





Common pug

A widely-distributed species of late spring and early summer.





Common quaker

A common spring species in lowland habitats, and can be very numerous in woodland or other areas with trees and shrubs.





Common rustic / lesser common rustic

Two species that cannot be separated from photos. They are common in grassland habitats.





Common swift

Fife is close to the northern limit of this species' distribution in Britain. It is mostly a grass-land species.





Common wainscot

A fairly common grassland species in Fife.





Common white wave

A common woodland species.





Confused

Rarely seen in Fife, I recorded four in mid-July 2025, one by the path between Black Craig and Berry Brae, and the other three just off Carphin estate, by the path up to Norman's Law.





Convolvulus hawk-moth

This huge moth is a scarce migrant. This one was on the crag east of Norman's Law, about 200m west of the boundary to Carphin estate, in early September 2025.





Copper underwing

Very similar to Svensson's copper underwing, and like it, this is a southern species that has spread northwards into Fife.





Coxcomb prominent

A fairly common woodland species that also occurs in gardens.



Dark arches

A common summer species of grassland habitats.





Dark chestnut

Recorded in late autumn and into winter, the dark chestnut is a southern species that is spreading north in Scotland. It is still very scarce in Fife. This one was on Berry Brae in early November 2025.





Dark marbled carpet

A fairly common summer species of woodland and moorland.





Dark spinach

Formerly a common species, the dark spinach has experienced a large decline in recent decades. It is not often recorded in Fife. This one was at Carphin in early August 2026, and may be a migrant.





Dark sword-grass

A scarce migrant species. This one was on Berry Brae in early September 2025.





December moth

A common moth of late autumn and early winter, most numerous in broadleaved woodland.





Devon carpet

A scarce species which has been spreading north, reaching Fife recently. This one was flying in daylight next to Homely Pond at Carphin in mid-August 2026.





Dingy shell

Associated with alder, this is a very rare moth in Fife. This one was at Carphin in mid-June 2026.





Dotted border

A common species of late winter and spring, mostly in woodland habitats.





Dotted clay

A common species in a variety of habitats.





Double square-spot

A common summer species in a wide range of habitats.





Double-striped pug

A common species in a range of habitats.





Dun-bar

A common woodland species.





Dusky brocade

Widespread in grassy habitats.





Dwarf pug

Most often in areas with introduced conifers. The flight season is mostly May and June.





Early thorn

A common spring species, especially in deciduous woodland.





Early tooth-striped

A fairly common spring species of broadleaved woodland, especially in damp woodland.





Ear moth

Although mostly a coastal species in Fife, a few occur at Carphin.





Elephant hawk-moth

A large, attractive moth that is relatively common.





Engrailed

A common species, especially in broadleaved woodland.





Feathered thorn

A fairly common autumn species occurring mostly in broadleaved woodland.





Flame

A common species in a range of habitats in Scotland.





Flame carpet

A common species in a range of habitats.





Flame shoulder

A common species across a wide range of habitats.





Flounced rustic

A common species of late summer in grassy habitats.





Foxglove pug

This species occurs in late spring and summer where foxgloves grow.





Garden tiger

Still a common species, though declining. Below right is one of its “woolly bear” caterpillars.





Ghost moth

A fairly common grassland species. The one above is a female, while the one below is a male, which is much smaller. Males perform a ghost-like dance, swinging back and forth like a pendulum.





Gold spangle

A northern species that is scarce in Fife. This one was at Carphin in late July 2025.





Gold spot

This species is sparsely distributed in Fife, occurring mostly in or around wet habitats.





Gold swift

A locally-distributed species associated with bracken.



Golden-rod pug

A common species, first appearing in late April or May.





Green arches

A fairly scarce species of broadleaved woodland.





Green-brindled crescent

A common autumn species of broadleaved woodland.





Green carpet

A common summer species across a range of habitats.





Grey dagger

A relatively scarce species in Fife, most often occurring in broadleaved woodland.





Grey pine carpet

A common species where pines grow.





Grey pug

A common species in a range of habitats.



Heart and club

A variable species, occurring in open, dry habitats. It is relatively scarce in Scotland. The one above and below left was on the estate in early June 2025, while the one below right was there in mid-June 2026.





Heart and dart

A common species across a wide range of habitats.





Heath rustic

A locally-distributed species of heath and moorland. These were on Black Craig.





Hebrew character

A spring moth that is common and often abundant.





Hedge rustic

A scarce grassland species that has seen large declines in recent decades. These were at Black Craig and just off Carphin Farm on the east slope of Norman's Law.





Herald

A fairly common species where willows or poplars grow.





Ingrailed clay

A common species with variable markings. It occurs mostly on moorland.





Iron prominent

Occurs in broadleaved woodland and heathland where birches or alders grow.





July belle

A locally-distributed species, mostly on heathland and moorland. Its flight season is July and August. The one below left was in mid-October, indicating a second generation, which is rare in the UK.





Knot grass

A widespread species of open habitats that is seldom numerous.





Large ear

A locally-distributed species of wet, acid moorland. This one was on Black Craig in early September 2025.



Large emerald

A fairly common species where birches, alders or hazels grow.





Large wainscot

A locally-distributed and mostly coastal species where reeds grow. The ones above and below right were near one of the wildlife ponds (Nancy's Pond) in September 2025, while the one below left was on Berry Brae in late September 2026.





Large yellow underwing

A common summer species, often flushed from grass during the day.





Latticed heath

A sparsely distributed species in Fife. The foodplants of the caterpillars are clovers and related plants.





Least black arches

A woodland species that used to be rare in Scotland, but is now widespread.



Lempke's gold spot

This species is closely related to the gold spot, and is the more common of the two. It occurs mostly in damp habitats.





Lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing

A common species in a range of habitats.





Lesser swallow prominent

A common species where birches grow.





Lesser yellow underwing

A variable species, common across a range of habitats.





Light arches

A common grassland species though much less numerous than the dark arches.





Light emerald

A common summer species in broadleaved woodland.





Lime-speck pug

Mostly a coastal species in Fife, these were at Carphin in July 2025 and 2026.





Lunar thorn

A species of late spring and early summer, occurring mostly in open woodland.





Lunar underwing

A common autumn species in grassland habitats.





Lychnis

A common species where red or white champions grow.





Map-winged swift

A species that is widespread and fairly common in Fife.





Marbled minor

This species cannot usually be separated from two rarer species from photos, so the identity of these is not certain. The species is in decline, but still appears to be quite common in Fife.





March moth

A common species in spring, most numerous in open woodland.





Merveille du jour

A relatively scarce autumn species of broadleaved woodland.





Middle-barred minor

A common summer species, often seen in daylight on flowers.





Miller

A locally-distributed summer species, associated with a range of deciduous trees.





Mother Shipton

Not a common moth in Scotland. The ones above and below left were at Black Craig, while the one bottom right was in Valefield.





Mottled beauty

A common woodland species.





Mottled grey

A widespread spring species of moorland and other open non-agricultural habitats, though seldom numerous.





Mottled rustic

A relatively scarce moth in Fife, it occurs in a range of lowland habitats.





Mouse moth

A common species across a range of habitats.





Muslin footman

A sparsely-distributed species.





Narrow-bordered five-spot burnet

This species is a recent arrival to Fife. It first appeared in the south-west, then spread along the coast of the Firth of Forth. To find one amongst the six-spot burnets at Carphin was a surprise. The photo was taken on 14 July 2026.



Narrow-winged pug

Common on heathland and moorland.





Northern spinach

A common species of moorland and heathland, occurring where bilberry grows.





Northern winter moth

This late autumn and early winter species is similar to winter moth, but paler and usually larger. It is fairly widespread in Scotland, but not often recorded in Fife. This one was on moorland, by the path to Norman's Law, in early November 2025.





November moth

A very common moth of late autumn, especially in broadleaved woodland.





Nut-tree tussock

A common species of broadleaved woodland.





Oak beauty

A scarce species in Fife, with most records coming from the south-west of the county, where oak is more plentiful. These were at Carphin in late March 2025.





Orange sallow

A locally-distributed species of late summer and early autumn, occurring where lime trees grow.





Orange swift

A locally-distributed species in Fife. Female below right, the others are males.





Pale brindled beauty

A common species of late winter and early spring, mostly in deciduous woodland.





Pale pinion

An autumn species of broadleaved woodland that re-emerges from hibernation in spring. It is a locally-distributed southern species that has spread northwards in recent decades.





Pale prominent

A fairly common species where poplars or willows grow.





Pale-shouldered brocade

A widely-distributed species of late spring and early summer.





Peach blossom

A relatively scarce species in Fife, occurring where brambles grow.





Pebble prominent

A fairly common species in areas with willows or poplars.





Peppered moth

A common species of woodland, parks and gardens.





Pine beauty

A fairly common species where pines occur.





Pink-barred swallow

A common autumn species where willows or poplars grow.





Plain golden Y

A fairly common species across a range of habitats.





Poplar hawk-moth

The most common hawk-moth in Fife, occurring where poplars, willows or sallows grow.





Purple bar

A common summer species wherever bedstraws grow.





Red chestnut

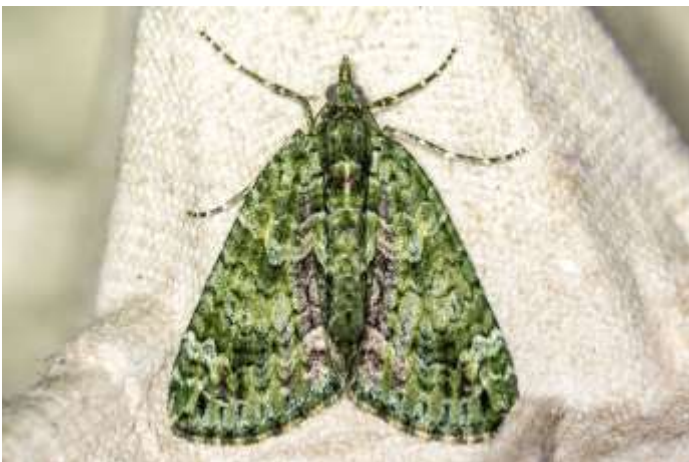
A spring species, occurring mostly in broadleaved woodland.





Red-green carpet

A common species, especially in broad-leaved woodland.





Red-line quaker

A common autumn species where willows grow.





Riband wave

Common across a variety of habitats.





Rivulet

Common wherever red champions grow.





Rosy minor

A locally-distributed grassland species in Scotland.





Rosy rustic

A common species across a range of habitats.





Ruby tiger

A fairly common species of open habitats.





Rustic

A common species that is difficult to separate from the appropriately-named uncertain.





Rustic shoulder-knot

A common species of grassland habitats.





Sallow kitten

A scarce species in Fife. It can occur where willows or poplars grow.





Sandy carpet

A common species where champions grow, though it is seldom numerous.





Satellite

A common species, especially of broadleaved woodland, that appears in autumn and again in spring after hibernation. It can also be found during mild winter weather.





Satin beauty

A woodland species that has increased its range in Scotland in recent decades.





Scallop shell

An uncommon species in Scotland. It is associated with willows, aspen and bilberry. This one was on Berry Brae in late June 2025.





Scalloped hazel

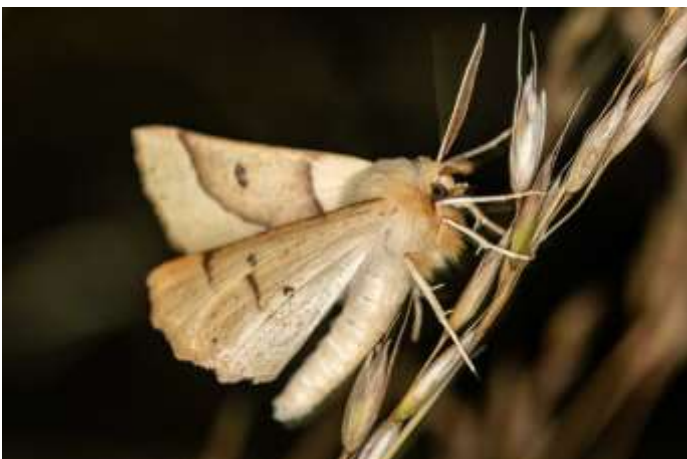
A common woodland species of late spring and early summer.





Scalloped oak

A fairly common species, mainly in woodland.





Scorched wing

A southern species that has spread in Scotland, but which is still very scarce, especially in Fife. The one above was at Carphin in mid-May 2025, while the one below was one of three recorded in late May 2026.





Scotch annulet

A mountain species. The colony at Black Craig and Berry Brae was first discovered in 2022. It is the only known colony in Fife. It extends onto the eastern slopes of Norman's Law, which is where the above moth was recorded in 2025.





Setaceous hebrew character

A common species, mostly in lowland habitats with rich herbaceous vegetation.





Shoulder stripe

A fairly common spring species, occurring mostly in open woodland. This one was at Carphin in early April 2026.



Shoulder-striped wainscot

A common summer species of grasslands.





Shuttle-shaped dart

A southern species that has spread rapidly northwards, and is now quite common in Fife.





Silver-ground carpet

A common summer species across a range of habitats. It can often be seen in daylight.





Silver Y

A common species, often seen nectaring during the day. Large numbers sometimes arrive from the continent.





Single-dotted wave

This species is close to the northern limit of its range in Fife, and is not numerous. These were recorded in June and July 2025.





Six-spot burnet

A day-flying species that occurs in meadows with bird's-foot trefoil. The image bottom right shows a cocoon on a heather stem.





Six-striped rustic

A common species, mostly in wet habitats.





Slender brindle

A southern species that has spread through Fife. Occurs mostly in woodland with grassy areas.





Slender pug

A fairly common species in areas of damp woodland with willow.



Small angle shades

Occurs in small numbers in woodland, moorland and gardens.





Small dotted buff

A common species in wet grasslands.





Small elephant hawk-moth

A locally-distributed species that occurs in grasslands with a short sward. This one was at Carphin in mid-June 2026.





Small fan-footed wave

A common species where willowherbs grow.





Small phoenix

A common species where willowherbs grow.





Small quaker

A widespread woodland species but seldom numerous.





Small rivulet

A common species in lowland habitats.





Small square-spot

A widespread and common species, especially in damp habitats.





Smoky wainscot

A very common grassland species in summer.





Snout

Common wherever nettles grow.





Spectacle

The caterpillars feed on nettles. Adults are sparsely distributed through Fife.





Spruce carpet

A common species where conifers grow.





Square-spot rustic

A very common grassland species with variable markings.





Straw dot

A common species of grasslands.





Streak

A fairly common autumn moth in areas where broom grows.





Streamer

A common spring species where dog roses grow.





Striped twin-spot carpet

This species is associated with bedstraw and rocky outcrops. This one was on the north-east slope of Berry Brae on 10 May 2025. It is only the second record of this species in Fife.



Suspected

A scarce species in Fife, associated with birch. This worn one was at Black Craig in mid-August 2023.





Svensson's copper underwing

A southern species that is spreading northwards through Scotland, and is now fairly common in woodland habitats in Fife.





Swallow prominent

Less common than the similar lesser swallow prominent. It occurs where poplars or sal-lows grow. This one was at Carphin in mid-August 2026.



Tawny speckled pug

A fairly common species where yarrow or sneezewort grows.





Triple-spotted clay

A rare species in east Scotland. It is a species of open, wet broadleaved woodland. The above two were at Black Craig in late July 2022, and the one below was at the same site in early July 2023.





True lover's knot

A common species of heather moorland.





Twin-spot carpet

A mostly southern spring species that has spread northwards, and is now widespread in broadleaved woodland through much of Scotland.





Twin-spotted quaker

A mostly southern spring species that has spread northwards, and is now widespread in broadleaved woodland through much of Scotland.





V-pug

A small pug that is quite common in a range of habitats.





Water carpet

A common spring species where bedstraws or cleavers grow.





White ermine

A common species across a range of habitats.





White-line dart

A scarce species away from the coast. This one was at Black Craig in late July 2022.





White-pinion spotted

A species that is spreading northwards, and has just started to reach Fife. This one was at Carphin at the end of May 2026. The species occurs in areas with blackthorn or hawthorn.





White-spotted pug

A locally-distributed species, mostly of woodland and hedgerows.



Willow beauty

This species is typically most common in towns. This one was at Carphin in mid-July 2025.



Winter moth

A widespread and common species that flies in late autumn and early winter. These are males; females are flightless.





Wood tiger

An uncommon species in Fife. This one was at Black Craig in late June 2021.



Wormwood pug

A fairly common species in a range of habitats.





Yellow horned

A common spring species where birches grow.





Yellow-line quaker

A common autumn species, especially in broadleaved woodland.





Yellow shell

A common species with several sub-species.

