



Macro-moths of the East Neuk

S.T. Buckland

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I have included images of the species that I have been able to photograph in and around the East Neuk. My thanks go to Nigel Voaden for identifying the more difficult species.

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Angle shades

Common across a range of habitats and through most of the year. Autumn numbers are boosted by immigrants.





Annulet

In Scotland, this species is mostly coastal and quite rare. These were at Kinraig Point in early August 2024.





Anomalous

A rare species in Fife. This worn one was at Fleecefaulds in late August 2023, and is the first one recorded in the area covered here.





Antler moth

A common species with antler-like markings, often seen feeding on flowers such as ragwort during the day.





Autumnal rustic

A common autumn species of open country.





Barred chestnut

A locally-distributed species of broadleaved woodland and moorland. The one above was at Keil's Den, while the one below was at Bankhead Moss.





Barred red

A fairly common species where conifers grow.





Barred straw

Common in a variety of lowland habitats.





Barred yellow

A pretty species that can be fairly common where wild roses grow.





Beautiful carpet

A scarce woodland species. The one above was at Magus Muir in late July 2024, and the one below was at Fleecefaulds in late July 2023.





Beautiful golden Y

A fairly common species in a range of habitats.





Black rustic

A common autumn species of open habitats.





Blair's shoulder-knot

Not a native of Britain, this species first arrived in Scotland in 2001. Its caterpillars feed on cypresses, so that it is most likely to occur in gardens and parks. This one was at Lower Kilminning in early October 2023.





Blue-bordered carpet

A scarce species in Fife, occurring mostly in damp woodland. The one above and below was at Keil's Den, while the one on the right was at Bankhead Moss.





Bordered white

Common where pines grow.





Brick

An autumn species of broad-leaved woodland, not numerous in Fife. Those above and below were at Lower Kilminning, while the one on the right was at Keil's Den.





Bright-line brown-eye

A summer species that occurs in a wide range of habitats.





Brimstone moth

A common woodland species.





Brindled pug

A common spring species where oaks grow. This one was at Keil's Den.





Broad-bordered yellow underwing

Common in broadleaved woodland.





Broken-barred carpet

A scarce species in Fife, occurring mostly in deciduous woodland. These were at Bankhead Moss in May.





Brown-line bright-eye

A common species of grassland habitats.





Brown rustic

A common species of broadleaved woodland, and occurs in a range of other habitats.





Brown silver-line

A common species of early summer, wherever bracken occurs. The one above was unusually early, at Keil's Den in mid-April.





Brown-spot pinion

A declining autumn species, but still quite common in Fife.





Buff ermine

A widespread species in the UK that is mostly absent from eastern Scotland. This was one of three at Dumbarrie Links in early June 2025.





Buff footman

This species is a recent arrival in Fife, spreading from the south. These were at Bankhead moss.





Buff-tip

This moth of open woodland is uncommon in Fife. When at rest, it looks like a broken birch twig. These were at Fleecefaulds in early June 2023.





Bulrush wainscot

A locally-distributed species, occurring where bulrushes grow. It also sometimes occurs well away from its food plant.





Burnished brass

A common species, especially anywhere that nettles grow.





Campion

A relatively scarce species in Fife, occurring where red, white or bladder campion, or ragged robin, grows. The one above was one of several at Dumbarrie Links in early June 2025, while the one below was at Bankhead Moss in late June 2024.





Canary-shouldered thorn

A common woodland species in autumn.





Centre-barred sallow

A common autumn species where ashes grow.





Chestnut

Chestnuts overwinter as adults and are usually seen in autumn and early spring.





Chevron

A fairly common species, mostly on moorland and heathland. This one was at Bankhead Moss in late August 2024.





Cinnabar

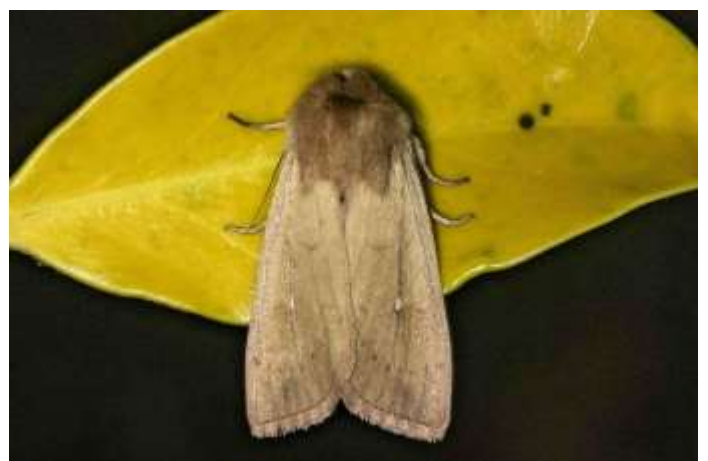
Rather locally-distributed in Fife, occurring where ragwort grows. The one above was at Magus Muir in late June 2024, while the one below was one of many at Dumbarrie Links in early June 2025.





Clay

A fairly common grassland species. These were at Keil's Den, Fleecefaulds and Dumbarrie Links.





Cloaked minor

Locally-distributed in Fife, with most records at or near the coast. These were at Kinraig Point.





Clouded border

A common woodland species.





Clouded-bordered brindle

A common species of broadleaved woodland.





Clouded drab

A common woodland species in spring. Its markings are variable.





Clouded silver

A woodland species that is expanding its range in Scotland.





Common carpet

A common summer species in a range of habitats.





Common footman

This species is becoming more common in Scotland. In Fife, it occurs mostly at or near the coast. These were at Keil's Den in mid-July (above) and Kinraig Point in early August.





Common lutestring

A sparsely distributed species in east Fife. These were at Bankhead Moss, where there are plenty of birches to provide food for the caterpillars.





Common marbled carpet

A variable species that is common in summer and autumn in a range of habitats.





Common pug

A common summer pug in a range of habitats.





Common quaker

A very common spring moth.





Common rustic / lesser common rustic

Two common grassland species with variable markings that cannot be separated from images.





Common swift

A common grassland species.





Common wainscot

Very similar to the more common smoky wainscot, but with white hind wings instead of smoky.





Common wave

A common species of damp woodland, especially where willows or poplars grow.





Common white wave

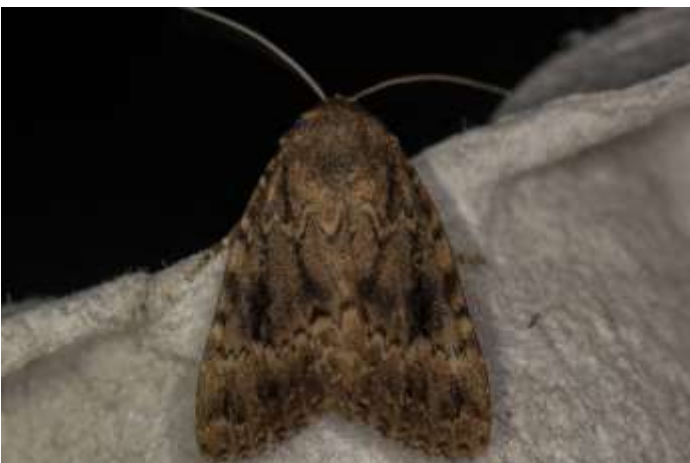
A common woodland species, especially where birches, alders or willows grow.





Copper underwing

As with the very similar Svensson's copper underwing, this is a southern species that has spread into Scotland, and is now fairly common in Fife.





Coxcomb prominent

A fairly common woodland species.





Currant pug

Occurs where wild hops or garden currants grow. These were at Fleecefaulds and Bank-head Moss.





Dark arches

A common species of grasslands, and wherever grasses grow.





Dark chestnut

A rare species in Fife, these were at Lower Kilminning in October 2023. They may have arrived from across the Firth of Forth.





Dark marbled carpet

A common species of woodland and moorland.





Dark sword-grass

A migrant moth from southern Europe in small numbers, mostly coastal. The one above was at Fleecefaulds in mid-August 2023, while those below and on the right were at Lower Kilminning in late October 2022 and early October 2023 respectively.





December moth

A common species in late autumn and early winter.





Devon carpet

A southern species of damp woodlands, which first arrived at the south coast of Fife in 2022. The one above was at Magus Muir in late May 2024, whilst the one below was at Bankhead Moss in mid-May 2025. Magus Muir is only the second location in Fife at which the species has been recorded.





Dotted border

A common early spring species, most numerous in woodland.





Dotted carpet

A locally-distributed species of mature woodland. This one was at Bankhead Moss in mid-August 2024.





Dotted clay

A common summer species in a range of habitats.





Dotted rustic

A scarce species, recorded mostly at or near the coast in Fife. This one was at Kilminning in early September 2024.





Double lobed

This species has expanded its range, but is still very scarce in Fife. The worn individual below was at Bankhead moss in early August 2023, while the one above was at Mgus Muir in late July 2024.





Double square-spot

A common species occurring in a range of habitats.





Double-striped pug

A small pug that is common across a range of habitats.





Dun-bar

A common species, especially in woodland.





Dusky brocade

A common grassland species.





Dwarf pug

A fairly common pug, mostly associated with conifer plantations.





Ear moth

A common coastal species, but less often recorded inland in Fife. This one was at Bankhead Moss in early August 2024. It is somewhat intermediate between ear moth and large ear, so the identification is uncertain.





Early grey

A spring species, occurring mostly in woodland. Relatively scarce in east Fife.





Early moth

These two were at Keil's Den in late January 2023. This is only the second record of this species in Fife.





Early thorn

This attractive moth is common in woodland in late spring.





Early tooth-striped

A fairly common spring species, mostly of broadleaved woodland.





Elephant hawk-moth

This large, showy moth is quite common, especially where willowherb grows.





Engrailed

A fairly common woodland species, mostly of spring and early summer.





Fan-foot

A fairly common species of broadleaved woodland, where the caterpillars feed on dead or dying leaves.





Feathered thorn

A common autumn species of broadleaved woodland.





Flame

A fairly common species across a range of habitats.





Flame carpet

A common species across a range of habitats.





Flame shoulder

A common species across a range of habitats.





Flounced rustic

Common in grassy habitats.





Foxglove pug

A common pug in areas where foxgloves grow.





Garden carpet

Common in a range of habitats.





Garden dart

This species is declining rapidly, and is a rare species in Fife. The one below left was at Fleecefaulds in late August 2023. The others were at Cambo Gardens in late July 2025.





Garden tiger

Common in open habitats.





Ghost moth

A fairly common grassland species. Female above, male below.





Gold spangle

A scarce species in Fife, occurring on moorland, upland pasture and woodland. This one was at Fleecefaulds in late July 2023.





Gold swift

A locally-distributed species, but can be quite abundant where it occurs. It is often associated with bracken.





Golden-rod pug

A fairly common species that occurs in a range of habitats.





Grass rivulet

A locally-distributed grassland species.





Green arches

A large, impressive species of broadleaved woodland.





Green-brindled crescent

A common autumn species of broadleaved woodland and hedgerows, wherever hawthorns grow.





Green carpet

A common species that occurs in a range of habitats. The faded individual bottom left was at Keil's Den in early October.





Green silver-lines

An unmistakable species of broadleaved woodland which is scarce in Fife. This adult was at Magus Muir in mid-June 2024, while the caterpillar was at Bankhead Moss in mid-September 2024..





Grey chi

A declining species which is now quite scarce in Fife. This one was at Cambo Gardens in August 2025.





Grey dagger

A fairly common species across a range of habitats.





Grey pine carpet

A common species where conifers grow.





Grey pug

A common species that occurs in a range of habitats.





Heart and club

A relatively scarce species in Fife that is becoming more common. The one above was one of several at Dumbarrie Links, and the one below at Keil's Den.





Heart and dart

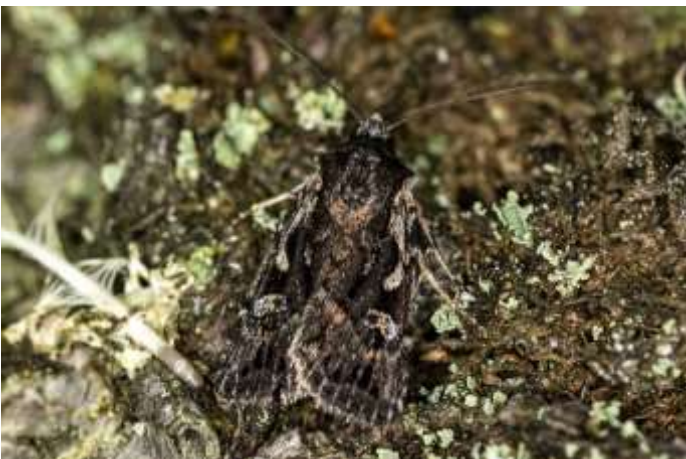
Common in a very wide range of habitats.





Heath rustic

A locally-distributed species of acid heathland and moorland with heather.





Hebrew character

A very common spring species across a wide range of habitats.





Herald

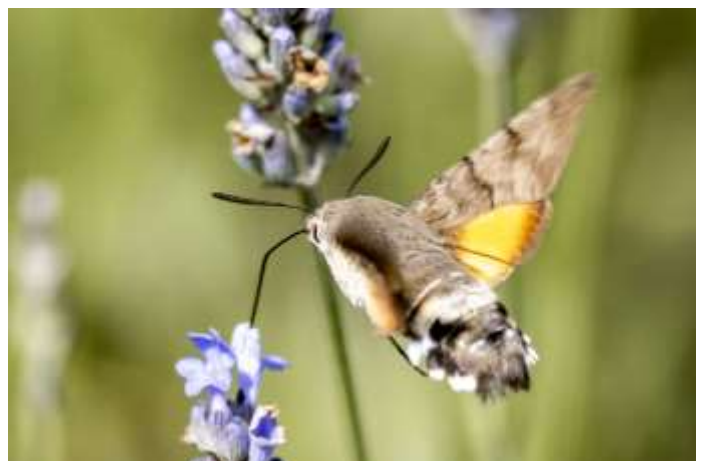
Occurs in small numbers where willows or poplars grow. The one above and below left was hibernating in St Fillan's Cave at Pittenweem. The one below right was one of around 50 hibernating in Kinkell Cave east of St Andrews.





Hummingbird hawk-moth

A scarce migrant to the East Neuk from southern Europe and northern Africa. These were at Balcomie in mid-September 2022.





Ingrailed clay

A fairly common and very variable species of woodland and moorland.





Iron prominent

A woodland species of late spring and early summer that is becoming more common.





July highflyer

Common in a range of habitats.





Knot grass

A species of open habitats that is fairly scarce in Fife.





Large emerald

A fairly common and impressive woodland species.





Large wainscot

A locally-distributed species that occurs mostly in or near reedbeds. This one was at Cambo Gardens in mid-September 2025.





Large yellow underwing

A large, variable and very common grassland species.





Latticed heath

This species is widely-distributed but not especially common in Fife.





Least black arches

A woodland species of late spring and early summer that is becoming more common.





Least yellow underwing

An uncommon moth in Fife. These were at Kinraig Point in early August 2024.





Lempke's gold spot

A locally-distributed species of damp habitats. These were at Bankhead Moss in July 2023 and 2024.





Lesser broad-bordered yellow underwing

Common and sometimes abundant across a range of habitats.





Lesser swallow prominent

A fairly common species where birch trees grow.





Lesser yellow underwing

This variable species is common across a range of habitats.





Light arches

A fairly common species of grassland habitats.





Light emerald

A common species, especially in broadleaved woodland.





Lime-speck pug

A sparsely-distributed species in Fife, occurring in a range of open habitats.





Lunar hornet moth

The larvae live in willow trunks for two years. The species has seldom been recorded in Fife. These males were at Cameron Reservoir and Bankhead Moss in early July 2023 and late June 2024 respectively.





Lunar thorn

A locally-distributed woodland species.





Lunar underwing

A common autumn species in grassland habitats.





Lychnis

Common wherever white or red campion grows.





Lyme grass

A nationally scarce species, occurring mostly at coastal sites on the east coast. This was one of several at Dumbarrie Links in early June 2025.





Map-winged swift

A common species in areas of Fife with bracken.





Marbled beauty

A locally-distributed species in Fife, occurring in areas with exposed stone (including buildings). Its caterpillars feed on lichens growing on rocks. This one was at Kinraig Point.





Marbled coronet

This species is scarce and mostly coastal in Fife, although the one above was at Fleecefaulds on 20 June 2023. The one below was one of several at Dumbarnie Links in early June 2025.





Marbled minor / tawny marbled minor / rufous minor

These three species cannot be reliably separated from photos. Marbled minor is the most common. These two moths are darker than most marbled minors and rufous minors, which increases the chance that they are tawny marbled minors.





March moth

A common early spring species, most numerous in woodland.





May highflyer

In Fife, a scarce species of damp woodland with alder trees. This one was at Bankhead Moss in late May 2024.



Merveille du jour

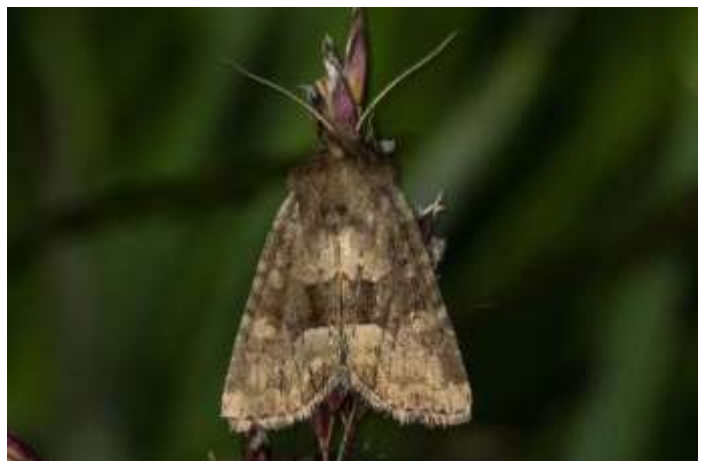
An autumn species that is sometimes common in broadleaved woodland with oaks. These were at Cambo Gardens in early October 2025.





Middle-barred minor

A common summer species of grasslands, often seen on flowerheads in daylight.





Miller

A scarce species in Fife, occurring where birches or alders grow.





Mottled beauty

A common species, especially in woodland.





Mottled grey

An early spring species, occurring in small numbers in mostly open habitats. This one was at Bankhead Moss in mid-March 2024.





Mottled pug

A local species of woodland and scrub in Fife. These were at Keil's Den in late May and early June, and Fleecefaulds in early June.





Mottled rustic

Occurs in a range of habitats. It is scarce in Fife. This one was at Keil's Den in early June.





Mouse moth

A common and widespread species. When threatened, it scuttles like a mouse, hence its name.





Muslin footman

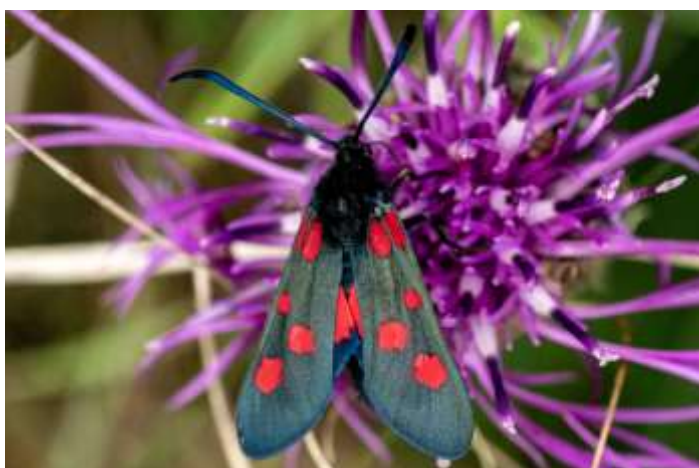
A scarce moth in Fife. These were at Magus Muir in mid-July 2024.





Narrow-bordered five-spot burnet

This species arrived in Fife a few years ago, and has been spreading east along the Forth. The one below right was one of several that were the first to be recorded in the East Neuk, at Lower Kilminning on 11 July 2022. The others were at Dumbarnie Links in late June 2025.





Narrow-winged pug

This is mostly a species of heathland and moorland. The one above was at Bankhead Moss, but the one below was at Fleecefaulds, where there is none of its foodplant, heather.





Northern spinach

A species associated with bilberry, and usually found on moorland, heathland or upland woodland, this one was at Magus Muir in late July 2024.





Northern winter moth

A locally-distributed species in Fife, mostly associated with birches. This one was at Bank-head Moss in early November 2024.



November moth

A common autumn species, occurring in broadleaved woodland, hedgerows and gardens.





Nut-tree tussock

A common species of broadleaved woodland.





Oak beauty

An uncommon species in Fife, especially in east Fife. This one was near a patch of oaks in Keil's Den in mid-March 2023.





Oak nycteoline

Not often recorded in Fife, this one was at Keil's Den in late March 2023.





Oak-tree pug

A rare moth in Fife. This one was at Cambo Gardens in late May 2026.



Ochreous pug

Locally distributed in Fife, this species is associated with pines. These two were at Bank-head Moss in mid-May 2024.





Old lady

An unmistakable moth with very large wings. It is very sparsely distributed, occurring mostly in river valleys. This one was at Keil's Den in late August 2023.





Orange sallow

A scarce species of deciduous woodland in Fife. These were at Bankhead Moss in early September.





Orange swift

Fairly scarce in Fife. It occurs in areas with rough grass.





Pale brindled beauty

A common species of late winter and early spring. These were at Keil's Den in late January. The one below is the uncommon melanic form.





Pale November moth

A scarce species of broadleaved woodland, most numerous in late October. Very similar to the more common November moth. The male above was at Magus Muir. One of the females below was also there, while the other was at Bankhead Moss.





Pale pinion

A local spring species that is spreading north through Scotland. This one was at Keil's Den in late March 2023.





Pale prominent

A locally-distributed species, occurring where poplars grow.



Pale-shouldered brocade

A common woodland species.





Peach blossom

A scarce species in Fife. These were at Keil's Den in mid-June 2023. Although a big, showy moth (above), it is remarkably difficult to spot when it folds its wings around a twig (below).





Pearly underwing

A migrant moth that is rarely recorded in Fife. These were at Lower Kilminning, two on 27 October 2022 and two on 23 October 2023.





Pebble prominent

Occurs where willows or poplars grow.





Peppered moth

A fairly common species in woodland.





Phoenix

A scarce species in Fife, occurring in gardens and woodland. Its foodplants are black- and redcurrants and goose berries. This one was at Fleecefaulds.





Pine beauty

A spring species of pinewoods and plantations that is patchily distributed in Fife. This one was at Bankhead Moss at the end of March 2025.





Pine carpet

Appreciably less common than the grey pine carpet in Fife, occurring where pines grow. These were at Fleecefaulds and Bankhead Moss in September.





Pinion-streaked snout

A scarce species of damp habitats. The one above was at Fleecefaulds in late July 2023, and the one below at Bankhead Moss in late September 2023.





Pink-barred sawfly

A common autumn species, especially in broad-leaved woodland and marshes.





Plain golden Y

Fairly common across a range of habitats.





Poplar hawk-moth

The most widely-distributed and common hawk-moth in Fife. These were at Bankhead Moss.





Powdered quaker

A scarce species in Fife, occurring mostly in wet habitats. These were at Bankhead Moss in mid-April 2025.





Purple bar

A common species where bedstraws occur.





Purple clay

A fairly common species of broadleaved woodland and wooded heathland.





Red chestnut

In Fife, a scarce spring species of broadleaved woodland. The one above was at Bankhead Moss at the end of March 2025, and the one below was at Keil's Den in late March 2023.





Red-green carpet

A common autumn species, and again in spring, when it emerges from hibernation.





Red-line quaker

A common autumn species where willows grow.





Red-necked footman

A scarce woodland species in Fife. These adults were at Bankhead Moss in late June and early July 2023. The caterpillar was at Magus Muir in late September 2024.





Red sword-grass

A widely-distributed but scarce species of moorland, rough pasture and damp woodland. The one above was at Bankhead Moss in early April 2023, while the others were at Kilminning in late October 2022.





Riband wave

Common across a range of habitats.





Rivulet

A common species where red campion grows.





Rosy minor

Mostly a coastal species in Fife, occurring in grassland habitats. These were at Kinraig Point.





Rosy rustic

A common species of lowland habitats.





Ruby tiger

A fairly common species of open habitats.





Rustic

A common species in lowland habitats.





Rustic shoulder-knot

A fairly common species in habitats with grass.





Sallow

A fairly scarce species in Fife, occurring where sallows or poplars grow. It flies in late summer and early autumn. This one was at Blebo in late July.



Sandy carpet

A common species in a range of habitats.





Satellite

A common species in autumn and spring.





Satin beauty

This species is most common in conifer plantations, but also occurs in ancient broadleaved woodland. This male was at Bankhead Moss in mid-July.





Scallop shell

A species of damp woodland. On the edge of its range in Fife, and uncommon.





Scalloped hazel

A common woodland species of late spring and early summer.





Scalloped oak

A fairly common woodland species, not restricted to oak. This one was at Bankhead Moss.





Scarce bordered straw

A migrant from southern Europe and Africa. In most years, very few are recorded in the UK. The one above and below was at Cambo Gardens in early September 2025, while the one on the right was there one week later.





Scarce prominent

A species of mature birch woods that is not often encountered. The one bottom right was at Bankhead Moss in mid-May 2024, and was the first one recorded in east Fife. The other two were also at Bankhead Moss, in late April 2025.





Scarce umber

Despite its name, a common species of broadleaved woodland in late autumn and early winter.





Seraphim

A locally-distributed species, occurring where aspens or other poplars grow. This one was in the woodland just south of Cambo House in early May 2026.





Setaceous hebrew character

A common lowland species.





Shaded broad-bar

Common in grassy habitats, and often disturbed during the day.





Shoulder stripe

A common spring species of woodland and hedgerows where dog roses grow.





Shuttle-shaped dart

A southern species that has spread into Scotland, occurring in a range of habitats.





Silver-ground carpet

A common and often abundant species in a range of habitats. Often seen in daylight.





Silver Y

An abundant migrant moth, occurring in a wide range of habitats.





Single-dotted wave

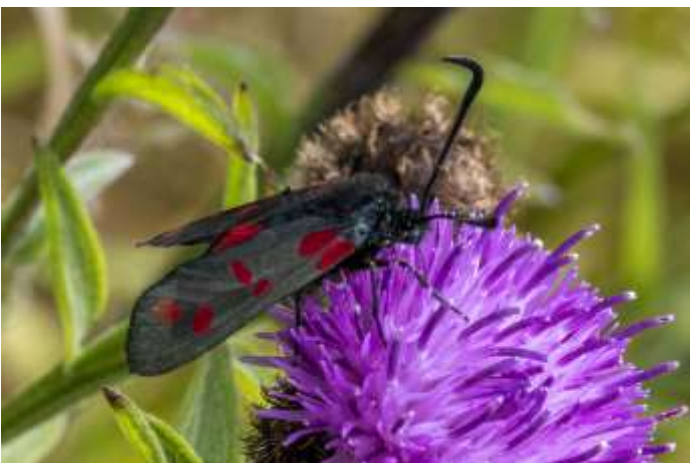
This species is close to the northern limit of its range in Fife. It occurs in woodland and damp habitats.





Six-spot burnet

A day-flying moth that occurs in areas with flowery grassland, especially at or near the coast.





Six-striped rustic

A common species of wet and damp habitats.





Slender brindle

A fairly common woodland species.





Slender pug

A scarce species in Fife, occurring where willows grow. This one was at Blebo in late July.



Small angle shades

A fairly common species of woodland, moorland and gardens.





Small clouded brindle

A relatively scarce species in Fife, occurring in damp habitats.





Small dotted buff

A species of wet grassland. Not numerous in the east of Fife. These were at Bankhead Moss.





Small dusty wave

This species is close to the edge of its range in Fife, and is fairly uncommon. This one was on a building in the west ern part of St Andrews in early July 2024.



Small fan-foot

A common species of broadleaved woodland.





Small fan-footed wave

A common species, mostly in broadleaved woodland.





Small phoenix

A common species where willowherbs grow, especially in woodland.





Small quaker

A woodland spring species that is towards the northern edge of its range. The one above was at Bankhead Moss, while the one below was at Keil's Den.





Small rivulet

Very similar to the rivulet. It is common, occurring in a range of habitats.





Small square-spot

A common summer species in a range of habitats.





Small wainscot

A locally-distributed species of damp habitats.





Smoky wainscot

A common grassland species.





Snout

A common species where nettles grow.





Spectacle

This species is not numerous in east Fife. The foodplant of its caterpillars is nettles. These were at Bankhead Moss.





Spruce carpet

A common species where conifers grow.





Square-spot rustic

A common grassland species.





Straw dot

A fairly common grassland species.





Streak

A locally-distributed species in Fife, occurring where broom grows. These were at Lower Kilminning.





Streamer

A common and attractive woodland species in spring.





Suspected

A scarce species. These rather worn individuals were at Bankhead Moss in mid-August 2023.





Svensson's copper underwing

A southern species that has spread into Scotland, and is now fairly common in Fife.





Swallow prominent

Fairly common where poplars or willows grow.





Swallow-tailed moth

A large, butterfly-like woodland species that is fairly common.





Tawny-barred angle

Common, occurring mostly in conifer plantations.





Tawny speckled pug

A fairly common species of grasslands, open woodland and coastal habitats.





Thyme pug

A rare species in Scotland. This one was at Kincaig Point in mid-June 2025.





True lover's knot

A common species where heathers grow.





Twin-spot carpet

A fairly common species occurring in a variety of habitats.





Twin-spotted quaker

A common species of woodland that has spread from the south through Scotland in recent years. These were at Keil's Den.





Uncertain

Very similar to the rustic, although it tends to be more strongly marked. These were at Kin-craig Point in late July.





V-pug

This species is becoming more common and widespread. It occurs in a variety of habitats.





Water carpet

A common spring species, occurring mostly in April and May. The one below is the dark form.





Welsh wave

A locally-distributed species of moorland and woodland. The above one was at Bankhead Moss in mid-July 2024, and the one below at Keil's Den in mid-July 2023.





White ermine

Common in a wide range of habitats.





White-line dart

Fairly common in suitable coastal and upland habitats.





White-pinion spotted

A southern species that has started to spread into Fife. This one was at Magus Muir in late May 2024, and is the first record from east Fife.





White-spotted pug

A scarce species in Fife which occurs in a range of lowland habitats. These were at Cambo Gardens in May 2026.





Willow beauty

The caterpillars of this species feed on a variety of trees and bushes, many of which are common in gardens, so this species is perhaps more likely to be encountered in towns and villages than in rural areas.





Winter moth

A widespread and common species of late autumn and early winter.





Yellow-barred brindle

A scarce species of broadleaved woodland. These were at Keil's Den and at Bankhead Moss.





Yellow horned

An early spring species that can be numerous in birch woodland. These were two of 29 recorded at Magus Muir in one evening in early March.





Yellow-line quaker

A common species of broad-leaved woodland, moorland and hedgerows.





Yellow shell

A common summer species across a range of habitats.

