Butterflies are beautiful insects and a joy to observe as well as identify. This guide will help you identify all 30 species that occur in the Highlands. It also provides a table so you can easily see what species are "on the wing" at any given time. We hope this leaflet will encourage you to help record the Highlands’ important butterfly populations.
The Gaelic word for butterfly, *dealan-dè*, literally means fire of God. Butterflies were once held sacred and thought to be angels of God that came to bear the souls of the dead to heaven. If one is seen in or near the house where a person is dead or dying, the omen is good, and the friends rejoice.

If one is not seen, a substitute is made by the optical illusion of rapidly twirling a fire-pointed stick, creating a glowing fiery line; a *dealan-dè*. Other Gaelic words for butterfly are *dealbhàn-dè* and *dearbhad an-dè*.

Unfortunately there appear to be few Gaelic names for individual species of butterfly. All of those given in this leaflet are translations of their English name.

**Recording butterflies**  
*A’ claradh dhealan-dè*

**What? Dè?**  
Butterfly recording comprises monitoring and surveying. Monitoring is used to collect information about changes to individual populations or sites over time, normally annually. Surveying is concerned with collecting distribution data and requires visits to several sites to gain a true picture of butterfly distributions. However, if surveys are repeated (e.g. five years later) this could be regarded as monitoring! Remember to take a notebook and pencil into the field to record your sightings. Binoculars and a butterfly net can also be useful.

**Where? Càite?**  
Most butterflies prefer sheltered sunny locations with plenty of nectar. Several are specialists and will only be found in, or near to, their niche habitat. Other species, particularly the larger and more mobile species e.g. Red Admiral and Painted Lady, can be seen almost anywhere.

**How? Ciamar?**  
To record butterflies you need to provide the following information: species name, how many you saw, location name, grid reference from an Ordnance Survey map, date, and your contact details. Butterfly records should be sent to your local butterfly recorder (see below) who verifies and collates them before they appear as dots in distribution maps.

**Want to get involved? Airson cuideachaidh?**  
There are significant gaps in our knowledge of the current distribution and changes in Highland’s butterfly populations. Everyone can contribute and we really do need your butterfly sightings. The local butterfly recorder covering Highland is: David Barbour, 74 Blarmore Avenue, Inverness, IV3 8QU  
Tel: 07896 783245  
Email: dbfis@btinternet.com

Alternatively you can complete and return the Freepost recording form inside the back cover of this leaflet.
### Quick guide to flight periods

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1 Dunnet Bay  Bàgh Dhunaid
Sandy beach with extensive dune system & adjacent plantation bordered by native trees. Located at north end of bay 5 miles east of Thurso Inbhir Theòrsa on A836 between Castletown Bail’ a’ Chaisteil & Dunnet village. Car park, visitor centre, toilets & ranger base at ND219705 but forest car park at ND220699 (both OS map 12) is closer to the butterflies. Tel: 01847 821531. Common Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Meadow Brown, Small Blue (dunes only) & Speckled Wood.

2 Glencanisp Gleann Conaigs near Lochinver Loch an Inbhir
Single-track road leading through deciduous woodland & wetland onto open moorland. Park in Lochinver behind Tourist Information Centre at NC094225 & walk south turning left after 300 yards along road towards Glencanisp Lodge. There’s also a small car park along track at NC106219 (both OS map 15). Common Blue, Dark Green & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Large Heath, Speckled Wood & Argent & Sable moth.

3 Tornapress Treabhar nam Preas and Rassall Ashwood Coill’ uminninn Rasall National Nature Reserve
Native woodland at Rassall and moorland and burnside at Tornapress where the Allt Mor crosses the main road. Both are located 6-7 miles north of Lochcarron (OS map 24) Roadside parking, interpretive panel and woodland walk. Tel: 01445 760254. Visit: www.snh.gov.uk and www.nnr-scotland.org.uk Common Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Scotch Argus & Speckled Wood.

4 Kinloch Forest Coille Ceannloch Skye An t-Eilean Sgiathanach
Kinloch Forest has a mixture of native ash/oakwood remnants within a conifer matrix & with fantastic views across the Sound of Sleat An Linne Shìleòchain. Turn south off A850 (Kyleakin Caol Acainn to Portree Portrìgh road) at Skulamus Sculamus along the A851. After four miles, Kinloch is signposted. Follow the signs along the forest road to the FCS car park at NG704160 (OS map 32).Tel: 01397 366322. Visit: www.forestry.gov.uk 15 species of butterfly including Dark Green & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper & Speckled Wood.

5 Sunart Oakwoods Coillean-daraich Shuaineir
These magnificent oakwoods lie on the north shore of Loch Sunart Loch Suaineir stretching between Strontian Sron an t-Sìthein and Glenborrodale Gleann Bhorrodaill. There are several sites along the A661 & B8007 including Forestry Commission’s Ardery Ard Aigh at NM747618. Tel: 01397 702184. Visit: www.forestry.gov.uk the RSPB’s Glenborrodale reserve at NM595615. Tel: 01463 715000. Visit www.rspb.org.uk & Arundle Àirigh Fhionntail National Nature Reserve at NM828634 (all OS map 40). Tel: 01397 704716. Visit www.nnr-scotland.org.uk Way-marked walks, interpretation, roadside parking & car parks. Chequered Skipper, Orange-tip, Purple & Green Hairstreak, Pearl-bordered & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

6 Allt Mhuic, Loch Arkaig Loch Arcaig Nature Reserve
A mosaic of open native woodland (mainly oak & birch) & moorland between two conifer plantations. Located 6 miles west of Clunes Na Cluainean along a single tracked road. Car park at NN121912 (OS map 34). Leaflet, waymarked trail & interpretation: www.butterfly-conservation.org Tel: 01786 447753. Chequered Skipper, Green Hairstreak, Scotch Argus, Pearl-bordered & Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary & Argent & Sable moth.

7 Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve

8 Polmally Pòth Mhàilidh, near Drumnadrochit Druim na Drochaid
Forest tracks through mixed coniferous & broadleaved woodland surrounding an area of wood pasture. Site is grazed to benefit the butterflies, please leave gates as found. Located 2 miles west of Drumnadrochit alongside A831 just west of junction with A833. Roadside parking at NH483305 (OS map 28). Visit: www.forestry.gov.uk Dingy Skipper, Orange-tip, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Scotch Argus, Small Copper & Speckled Wood.

9 Ardersier Common Fearann Àird nan Saor
Beach with shingle, sparse vegetation, scrub & woodland. Lies between Ardersier village & Fort George Dun Deòrsa on B9006. Car park at NH779557 (OS map 27), also footpaths. Common Blue, Dingy Skipper, Small Copper, Small Heath & Small Tortoiseshell with Grayling and Small Blue nearby.

10 Shandwick Seannduaid cliffs and dunes
Coastal dunes and low cliffs to north & south of Balintore Bail’ an Todhair, best area is to south of Shandwick Bay. Park at the harbour or just to the south at NH863754 (OS map 21). Walk south along the beach to end of village to path below cliffs or continue along shore to Well of Health Tobar na Slainte. Common Blue, Grayling, Northern Brown Argus, Small Blue & Small Copper.

11 Loch Fleet Loch Fleòid National Nature Reserve
Sand dunes, coastal heath & pinewoods on north shore of Loch Fleet. Access is from Golspie Goilspidh heading south via Ferry Road to the car park just before Littleferry An t-Aiseag Beag at NH806958 (OS map 21). Follow path to the east skirting around the plantation. Tel: SNH 01408 633602 or SWT 0131 312 7765. Visit: www.snh.org.uk or www.swt.org.uk Common Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Grayling, Green Hairstreak, Meadow Brown, Small Copper & Small Heath. Also Small Blues nearby at Dornoch Dornach Beach at approx NH805894 & NH805885.
SKIPPERS

1 Chequered Skipper
An Leumadair Breac
PS m 29mm - f 31mm
Following its extinction in England in 1976 the entire UK population of the Chequered Skipper now occurs on the mainland of western Scotland in Lochaber, Loch Abar and north Argyll. It is associated with the edges, or open spaces, within damp woodland dominated by the caterpillar's main foodplant purple moor-grass. In warm weather adults are extremely active and have a swift, darting flight. Look for them between mid-May and the end of June in sunny sheltered sites with plenty of nectar plants, especially bugle, bluebell and marsh thistle.

2 Dingy Skipper
An Leumadair Lachdann
PS 27 - 34mm
In sunshine this is an active butterfly, but in dull weather and at night it perches on the tops of dead flowerheads in a moth-like fashion. It can be found in places with bare ground and bird's-foot trefoil, the caterpillar's foodplant. However, it is only known from two or three sites in Highland including Ardersier, Poll Mhàilidh. It flies in May and June.

WHITES AND YELLOWS

3 Clouded Yellow
An Dealan-dè Glas
Bhuidhe Sgòthach
m 52 - 58mm, f 54 - 62mm
A migrant to the UK from the Continent, this butterfly is well-known for its mass immigrations when they arrive in huge numbers in "Clouded Yellow years". Less common in Scotland, but in good years may be seen between June and October.

4 Large White
An Dealan-dè Geal Mòr
m 58mm, f 63mm
Our largest white butterfly and a strong flier. The caterpillars feed on brassicas such as cabbages and are therefore disliked by gardeners. Differs from the Small White by its larger size, darker black wing tips which extend further down the edge of the wing, and bolder spots. Flies May - September.

5 Small White
An Dealan-dè Geal Beag
38 - 57mm
The caterpillars feed on brassicas, but they cause less damage than those of the Large White. Easily confused with the more common Green-veined White which is similar in size, but it lacks the "green veins" on the underside of the wing. The scarcest of the "Whites" in the Highlands. Flies mid-April to early October.

6 Green-veined White
Dealan-dè nan Cuislean Uaine
40 - 52mm
The most common of the whites, this species feeds on wild crucifers and is not a garden pest. The green veins on the underside of the wing distinguish this from other white butterflies, but they can fade with wear and are less distinct in second generation butterflies. Flies April to June and again in July to mid-September.

7 Orange-tip
Am Bàrr-ruadh
40 - 52mm
The caterpillars feed on wild crucifers such as cuckoo flower and garlic mustard. Males are unmistakable with their bright orange wing-tips, but females have no orange so could be confused with Small or Green-veined Whites. However, Orange-tips have more rounded wing tips and distinctive mottled green undersides that can also be seen faintly from above through the upperwing. Flies from mid-April till end of June.

HAIRSTREAKS, COPPERS AND BLUES

8 Green Hairstreak
An Stiallach Uaine
27 - 34mm
Despite the bright green appearance of this small butterfly, which always sits with its wings closed, it can be difficult to spot. It prefers warm, sheltered sites in open birch woodland, moorland and edges or clearings of conifer plantations where its caterpillar’s main foodplant, blueberry, is found. Flies from mid-April to mid-June.

9 Purple Hairstreak
An Stiallach Corcurach
m 33 - 40mm, f 31 - 38mm
A striking butterfly, but difficult to see, as it feeds on honeydew in the canopy of oak and other trees. They are best looked for in late afternoon or early evening on warm days when they can be seen by scanning the tops of oak trees with binoculars. Occasionally they fly down from the canopy to nectar on flowers. The caterpillars feed only on oak. Only known in the Highlands from the Sunart Oakwoods Coilltean-daraich Shuaineirt. Flies from mid-July to end of August.

10 Small Copper
An t-Umhach Beag
m 26 - 36mm, f 30 - 40mm
This dainty butterfly is a wide-spread species found in a range of habitats. Its caterpillars feed on common and sheep’s sorrel. On the wing from May to September, but is rarely seen in large numbers.

Codes
PS Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)
Wing spans
m = male, f = female
11 Small Blue
An Gorman Beag
PS 18 - 27mm
The smallest butterfly in the UK, this dusky-coloured species is often overlooked. Mostly known from coastal sites on the east coast north to Dornoch Dornach with isolated colonies at Dunnet Bay Bàgh Dhunaid on the north coast. Also found at a few inland sites in Badenoch and Strathspey Bàideanach is Srath Spé. It is only found where kidney vetch (the caterpillar foodplant) grows. It is similar to the commoner day-flying Chimney Sweeper moth, but Small Blues have a white border that extends all around the edge of the wing. Flies from mid-May to end of July.

12 Northern Brown Argus
Argus Donn Tuathach
PS 26 - 35mm
The northern equivalent to the Brown Argus, this small butterfly can be easily identified by the gleaming white spot on each forewing. Flies in June, July and August, but it can also be surveyed by searching for its white eggs laid conspicuously on the upper side of the leaves of its foodplant, rock-rose, from early July.

13 Common Blue
An Gorman
29 - 36mm
A widespread butterfly found in a variety of grassy habitats from sea level to mountainsides, almost anywhere that its caterpillar’s foodplant, bird’s-foot trefoil, occurs. The brightly-coloured males are conspicuous, but females are browner, often with little or no blue. In Scotland it usually has one generation a year, the adults flying from June to early September.

14 Comma
An Carnag
50 - 64mm
A very distinctive butterfly that has spread north in recent years re-colonising Scotland and now beginning to be seen more regularly in the Highlands. The caterpillars feed on elm and nettles. The adults may be seen between April and October.

15 Red Admiral
An t-Admiral Dearg
m 64 - 72mm, f 70 - 78mm
A familiar and distinctive garden butterfly that migrates to the UK every year from southern Europe and North Africa. It can breed in Scotland and can very occasionally survive our winter. The major influx starts in late May and is reinforced until August, with adults being seen until early November. The caterpillars feed on stinging nettles.

16 Painted Lady
A’ Bhean-usal Bhreac
m 58 - 70mm, f 62 - 74mm
Another migrant, this species is unable to over-winter in any part of the UK and re-colonises each year from mainland Europe, sometimes in spectacular numbers (such as in 1995, 2003 and 2009). They can often be seen congregating in areas with thistles, which serve as both a foodplant for the caterpillars and a nectar source for the adults. The peak of immigration usually occurs in June, and adults can be seen until October.

17 Small Tortoiseshell
Slige an t-Stigeanaich Bheag
m 45 - 55mm, f 52 - 62mm
This well-known butterfly can be seen in any month of the year in almost any habitat. It is familiar in gardens and feeds on stinging nettles as a caterpillar. It over-winters as an adult and is one of the first butterflies to emerge in the spring. Adults are regularly found in houses, sheds and outbuildings seeking hibernation sites.

18 Peacock
A’ Pheucag
m 63 - 68mm, f 67 - 75mm
An unmistakable butterfly that feeds on nettles as a caterpillar. It is steadily spreading north and west in the Highlands and is frequently found in gardens. Often one of the first butterflies to be seen in the spring, having over-wintered as an adult. Their offspring can be seen from July to September, usually in much larger numbers.

19 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary
An Neamhnaideach Beag
PS m 35 - 41mm, f 38 - 44mm
This species occurs in sunny, damp, grassy habitats, woodland clearings and moorlands. The caterpillars feed on marsh violet. It can be confused with the much rarer Pearl-bordered Fritillary or the Dark Green Fritillary (see below). Flies from late May to early August.

20 Pearl-bordered Fritillary
An Neamhnaideach Mòr
PS m 38 - 46mm, f 43 - 47mm
Can be distinguished from the much more common Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary by close observation of the underside of the hindwing: it has a smaller central spot, two (not seven) white central cells and all cells have a much paler border compared to the black border of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. In addition, this species has more specific habitat requirements, only being found in dry glades, on south-facing slopes with bracken. It flies earlier in the season (early May to end of June) and its main foodplant is common dog violet.
21 Dark Green Fritillary
An Dealan-dè Glas-uaine
58 - 68mm
This is a large butterfly that feeds on violets as a caterpillar. It is widespread and is often found in flower-rich habitats with patches of scrub. It can be confused with the other three fritillaries in the area but is a more powerful flier, is much larger and has a green background to the underside of its hindwing. Flies from mid-June to end of August.

22 Marsh Fritillary
Dealan-dè nam Boglaichean
PS m 30 - 42mm, f 40 - 50mm
Restricted in Scotland to Argyll and the Argyll Islands but recently found near Arisaig Arasaig. It occurs in damp grassland or moorland where its caterpillar’s sole foodplant (devil’s-bit scabious) grows in abundant patches. Populations exhibit periods of boom and bust over 5-7 year cycles. Caterpillars live communally within a conspicuous and protective silken web. Adults are on the wing from end of May to early July. The checkerboard pattern of oranges, creams, browns and blacks make the Marsh Fritillary more distinctive and colourful than Highland’s other three Fritillaries.

BROWNS
23 Speckled Wood
Dealan-dè Breac na Coille
m 46 - 52mm, f 48 - 56mm
A butterfly of shady woodlands. Males are often seen perched in sunlit spots ready to defend their territory or intercept females. The caterpillars feed on various grasses. Common in Easter Ross Rois an Ear and the west coast. Has now spread out from these areas, even reaching the north coast. Flies late April to the end of September.

24 Mountain Ringlet
Fàineag a’ Mhonaich
PS m 28 - 36mm, f 28 - 38mm
Our only true montane butterfly, this species is usually found above 350m, normally on south-facing slopes where the caterpillars feed on mat grass. It only flies in bright sunshine, but can be disturbed from the ground in quite dull weather. In the Highlands it is known from Ben Nevis Beinn Nibheis and Creag Meagaich. It is similar to the larger and brighter Scotch Argus, but does not have white eyespots. Flies from late June to early August.

25 Scotch Argus
An t-Argus Albannach
m 44 - 48mm, f 46 - 52mm
The Scotch Argus breeds in tall, damp grassland where the caterpillars feed on a variety of grasses. In sunshine males can be very active, but cloudy weather can cause them to stop flying completely. It flies late in the season, from early July to early September.

26 Grayling
A’ Ghlasag
PS m 51 - 56mm, f 54 - 62mm
A large, fast-flying coastal species that always rests with its wings closed. Very well camouflaged when at rest and most often encountered when flushed from stony/sandy ground on dunes, beaches and undercliffs. Adults are on the wing during July to the beginning of September.

27 Meadow Brown
Dealan-dè Donn an Ailein
m 40 - 50mm, f 42 - 60mm
One of the most common butterflies in the area, the Meadow Brown can be seen in many grassy habitats flying even in dull weather when most other butterflies are inactive. The caterpillar feeds on a variety of grasses. Males tend to be much darker than females, but the amount of orange on both is variable. The spotting pattern on the underside of the hindwing is also variable. Flies from mid-June to mid-September.

28 Ringlet
An Fhàineag
m 42 - 48mm, f 46 - 52mm
The Ringlet has a very dark, velvety appearance when newly emerged. Males tend to be smaller and darker than females with hardly any markings on the upperwings. The "ringlets" on the underwings vary in number and size and can be virtually absent. It favours tall grassland on damp, heavy soils, where the caterpillars feed on coarse grasses. Spreading north into the Highlands especially along the east coast. It flies, even in dull conditions, from mid-June to the latter part of August.

29 Small Heath
Dealan-dè Beag an Fhraoich
PS (research only) m 33mm, f 37mm
A bright but inconspicuous butterfly that flies only in sunny conditions and always keeps its wings closed at rest. It occurs on grasslands in dry, well-drained situations where the sward is short but sparse and there are fine-leaved grasses upon which the caterpillar feeds. In Scotland it only has one generation from mid-May to end of August.

30 Large Heath
Dealan-dè Mòr an Fhraoich
PS 35 - 40mm
The Large Heath is restricted to wet, boggy habitats where its main foodplant, hare’s-tail cottongrass grows. It always sits with its wings closed and can be distinguished from the Small Heath by its duller colour, larger size and spots on the hindwing. However, the spots are not always present. Flies from early June to early August.
Butterfly Recording Form

Please record your butterfly sightings below, tear off and return to Freepost address beneath. Alternatively, you could send your records to David Barbour, 74 Blarmore Avenue, Inverness, IV3 8QU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Species</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Place seen nearest village</th>
<th>Grid ref (if known)</th>
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Name
..........................................................................................................................

Address .................................................................................................................................
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Post Code .............................................. Tel .................................................................

The information you provide will be used solely by Butterfly Conservation, Biological Record Centres and Highland Council Countryside Rangers. If you do not wish to receive relevant information about our work in the future by post, please tick this box ☐

Please return completed forms to (no need for stamp)

Highland Biodiversity Officers
Development & Infrastructure Service
FREEPOST SCO 5568
INVERNESS
IV3 5BR

Butterfly Conservation Scotland
Saving butterflies, moths and their habitats
Why Not Join Butterfly Conservation?
*Nach tig sibh nur buill?*
Butterflies and moths are among the most threatened groups of wildlife in the UK. Without the support of our members we cannot continue our vital work to protect them. Our conservation projects restore natural habitats and create a healthy environment for butterflies, moths and all wildlife. As a member you will receive an informative welcome pack; our exclusive magazine *Butterfly* three times a year; plus membership of your local Branch.

For more details about Butterfly Conservation’s Highland branch contact:
**Mark Wynn**  
Tel: 01463 729977  
Email: markwynn@highland-butterflies.org.uk

Find out more about becoming a member at [www.butterfly-conservation.org/join](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/join) or call our Membership Team on 01929 406015.

Butterfly Conservation Scotland - What we do
*Gleidheadh Dealan-dè na h-Alba - na tha sinn a’ déanamh*
Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity that takes action to save butterflies, moths and our environment. We work closely with the Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, local communities and conservation partners to safeguard Scotland’s butterflies and moths, by:
- Advising landowners on managing land for butterflies and moths.
- Carrying out surveys of our most threatened species.
- Training volunteers to enable them to take action for butterflies and moths.
- Making recommendations to the Scottish Government on its environmental policies.
- Encouraging everyone to cherish butterflies and moths.

[www.butterfly-conservation.org/scotland](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/scotland)

[www.facebook.com/bcscotland](http://www.facebook.com/bcscotland)

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[www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

Map by Wendy Price. Photographs by: Alan Barnes, Andy Seely, David Whitaker, Ern Emmet, Jim Asher, Julie Stoneman, Martin Warren, Paul Kirkland, Paul Pugh, Tom Prescott, Sam Ellis, Steve Maskell and Tommy Archibald.

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