

Allt Mhuic field trip for Chequered Skipper June 2nd 2013.

by Pete Moore.

The weather forecast was not looking good for butterflies but nine folk met up at BC's Allt Mhuic butterfly reserve on the north shore of Loch Arkaig. It was 10 years to the day since Allt Mhuic was officially opened as a reserve. Participants had travelled from Inverness, Aviemore, Drumadrochit, Onich and Connel.

Since it was cool and cloudy, we started off by going through three moth traps that had been run the night before. Twenty species were recorded, including such beauties as The Herald, Lunar Thorn and Birch Mocha.

We then started to walk the reserve's waymarked two mile trail. Although overcast, we soon notched up Orange Tip and Green Hairstreak butterflies, along with a few micro-moths, including the wonderfully named *Nematopogon swammerdamella*. This little moth has antennae as long as its name!

We stopped for lunch at the highest point of the trail, the clouds cleared, the sun shone and the temperature rose. We started to feel much more hopeful of seeing our target species – Chequered Skipper. Odonata were on the wing, with Large Red Damselfly, Golden-ringed Dragonfly and Four-spotted Chaser. Ewan was working hard to flush out small moths but Chequered Skipper remained elusive. But then a cry went up – Audrey had found her first ever Chequered Skipper! We managed to find another three or four altogether, along with some nice moths such as Beautiful Yellow Underwing, Speckled Yellow and Small Purple-barred.

After an overcast and unpromising start to the day, we definitely ended on a high note with sunshine and our target species in the bag. Species lists below.

In the moth traps:

brown silver-line
nut-tree tussock
scalloped hazel
herald
dark brocade
flame shoulder
barred umber
lesser swallow prominent
Anania fuscalis
clouded drab
lunar thorn
small phoenix
birch mocha
pale-shouldered brocade
early thorn
water carpet
shears

Ancylis myrtillana
broom
Udea decrepitalis

On the walk:

Chequered Skipper
Green Hairstreak
Green-veined White
Speckled Wood
Orange Tip

Beautiful Yellow Underwing
Brown Silver-line
Common Heath
Small Purple-barred
Speckled Yellow
Crambus lathoniellus
Anania fuscalis
Nematopogon swammerdamella
Pyrausta despicata
Pyrausta purpuralis
Falseuncaria ruficiliana
Ancylis uncella
Capua vulgana
Lozotaenia forsterana
Northern Eggar larva

Odonata:

Large Red Damselfly
Four-Spotted Chaser
Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Other insects:

Green Tiger Beetle
Red-breasted Carrion Beetle