

## Scotland June 28<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2025



We decided to do some botanising and butterflying in mid-summer in Scotland with friend Tony. We hired Fechlin Cottage on the Dell Estate at Whitebridge for a cost of £1250 for the week. The house which sleeps 8 is very secluded, well-appointed and had plenty of room all of which suited us to the ground.

The weather was somewhat mixed but at the tail end of a rather dry period and several forest fires around Grantown and Lochindorb were concerning but didn't prevent us from doing anything we had planned to do.

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> July**

After leaving home in West Runton in Norfolk at 6:30am we picked up Tony in Trimingham at 7am. We headed off for Bamburgh in Northumberland with view to having lunch there at around 1pm. We didn't arrive until just after 2pm with delays and stops.

Although in a case of extreme botanising we saw several spikes of Thistle Broomrape we sussed out the site for a stop on the return journey South. The number of Pyramidal Orchids on the banks of the A1 was notable and we also saw a white variant.

At Bamburgh Tony noticed a series of Kelvin Helm-Holtz Clouds (also known as Asperitus Clouds).





From Stag Rocks the best finds was again by Tony of a Black throated Diver in full summer plumage. All other birds seen were as expected.

We then headed for Fortingall in Scotland via Dunkeld then Aberfeldy where we saw the Yew reputed to be the oldest living thing in Europe if not the world. (56.59791, -4.05144 – coordinates will take you to the car park which is shared with the local hotel) We also saw the three stone circles in a nearby field.



The Fortingall Yew





We arrived at Whitebridge when it was still light and had time for a very quick supper after we had unpacked at around 10pm.

### Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June

We kicked off the day around the cottage where Tony found some odd galls on Nettles.



Nettle Galls

After consulting friend James Emerson by text we discovered it to be *Puccinia urticata* which is caused by a rust fungus which has a two part life cycle in Nettles and Sedges. We also saw a couple of Ospreys pass the cottage as well as a flyover flock of distant geese which we decided were Canada's ... but one was quite small.

We moved on to the roadside area in Carrbridge (57.276773, -3.809973) having parked up we wandered into the woodland on the obvious path and eventually found thousands of Coral Root Orchids (mostly gone over) and Lesser Twyblades (not yet fully out) There was also surprisingly a small number of Creeping Ladies Tresses. Another surprise was an Arctic Starflower which is on its most Southerly limits.



Arctic Starflower – a surprise find.





Coral Root Orchid



Lesser Twyblade Orchid



Creeping Ladies Tresses Orchids were also a surprise at Carrbridge as they shouldn't really have been out yet.



We then went to a small pond at Abernethy Forest Boardwalk (57.25270, -3.71496) where we met Paul Freestone, whom I had met on Scillies, leading a Heatherlea tour. We saw several Northern Damselflies and a couple of Emerald Damselflies.



A pair of Northern Damselflies at the boardwalk

We also met a bearded guy who told us of another boardwalk, which we couldn't find, where White faced Darters were showing. We called at Loch Garten to ask regarding the boardwalks location. Plenty of Spotted Flycatchers and Willow Warblers in the Car Park and equipped with directions and an ice cream we made our way to where we thought the boardwalk was. As we were looking for it the bearded guy turned up and corrected



us. Result. (park at 57.23766, -3.68824 and the short boardwalk is just 50m into the heather – it has the local name of ‘The Firepit’)



Large Red Damselfly – Abernethy boardwalk



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary – Abernethy Boardwalk

As we were watching a White-faced Darter a couple turned up, one of my former customers Chris Upson who showed us not only some Creeping Ladies Tresses at the junction of the roads about 50m away but came along with us to a site a few miles away at Dell Lodge in Nethybridge. (park at 57.25905, -3.64065 and walk to 57.254438, -3.639688) Massive numbers of both Twin Flowers and Creeping ladies Tresses.

Returned to Whitebridge for a lovely meal Tania made.



Siskin – Loch Garten





Spotted Flycatcher – Loch Garten Car Park



It was pleasing to see Willow Warblers around the car park at Loch Garten. This is a species which is becoming scarcer in the South due to climate change



Twinflower – we were shown an area covered in this plant at Nethybridge and alongside it were many Creeping Ladies Tresses



## Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025

A drive up to Channory Point (57.57382, -4.09467) where the low tide was timed at 10:33am (high tide was 4:41pm) we arrived at 9:58am and for the next 3 hours we watched several Bottlenose Dolphins sometimes at very close range. A couple of animals were seen and photographed catching Atlantic Salmon.

Also seen here was a Common Scoter, unusually 6 Manx Shearwaters and a Mediterranean Gull.

We arrived back at the cottage in good time to watch (and sort out) several Sika Deer from the Reds around the cottage before we went out to meet our friend Fiona from Abernethy for a meal at the Whitebridge Inn.



Most of the deer around the cottage had white hocks and brows along with a dark spine line, all traits of Sika Deer – presumably most if not all were hybrid Sika/Red



It was nice to see the resident population of Bottlenose Dolphins at Chanory Point were continuing to do well.



We called at Loch Ruthven on the way back to Whitebridge and had the usual Slavonian Grebes and an Osprey put in an appearance.



Osprey at Ruthven



The Slavonians were never close in our short time at the loch but having seen them at point blank range from the hide the previous year we didn't pursue any better views

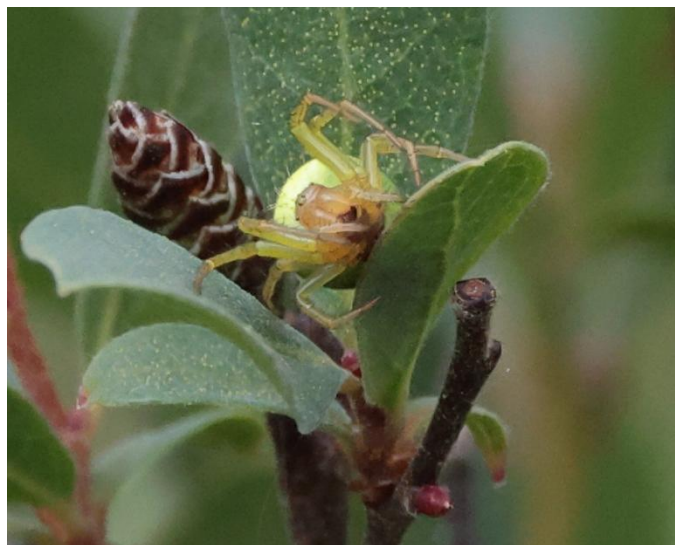
**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

We kicked off the day with a couple of White tailed Eagles from the cottage!



A pair of adult White tailed eagles on the ridge above the cottage

Having decided the weather wasn't conducive to a Mountain Ringlet day, we decided to have an Orchid day; although we had a little sunshine so we slipped into the Firepit and boardwalk at Loch Garten where we had several moth species and a Cucumber Green Orb Spider as well as a couple of Common Hawkers and the by now the usual White Faced Darters.



Cucumber Green Orb Spider – The Firepit boardwalk





We only had a couple of Common Hawkets (above) at the Firepit but there were several White faced Darters (below)







A Crested Tit put in a brief appearance at the Firepit



A few Common Frogs breed in the small pool at the Firepit

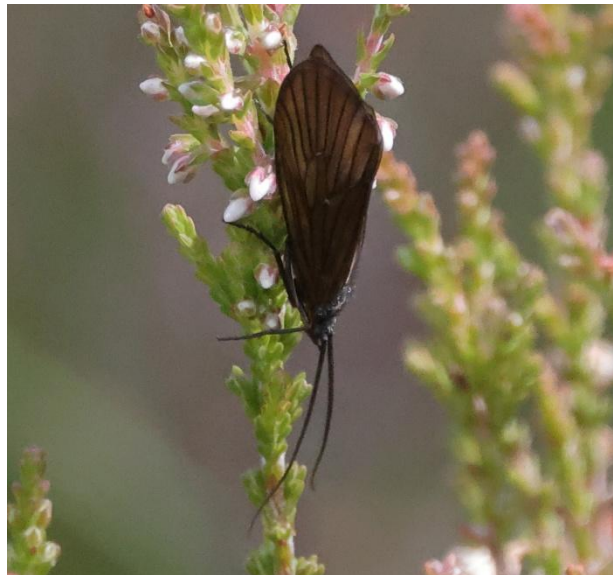




Emerald Damselfly and Raft Spider at the Firepit



Rannoch Looper and Northern Spinach Moth at the Firepit and below a Large Red Sedgefly



Moving on to the Flower Meadow near Avimore. Flowerfield is Jeremy Fletcher's house, which is surrounded by Glencairn Meadow; parking at 57.2232, -3.7590 where there were lots of Lesser Butterfly Orchids and a few Heath Fragrant Orchids. This is a private field and Jeremy can be contacted to make a visit ([jeremybfletcher@btinternet.com](mailto:jeremybfletcher@btinternet.com)) but

to be honest can be viewed from the road without too much difficulty. Due to dry conditions there were no visible Small White Orchids but there were some Round leaved Wintergreens on the opposite verge.



A hybrid Heath Spotted x Northern Marsh Orchid at Flowerfields

We then went to Newtonmore Wildcat trail and the Greater Butterfly Orchids had to be seen to be believed – there were 10's of hundreds down by the Spey.



Chimney Sweeper Moths were common at Newtonmore





Greater Butterfly Orchids at Newtonmore – the scent from the 1000's of flowers was overwhelming.

We returned to Felchin at Whitebridge via Avimore to do some food shopping.



Ravens were hanging around the Felchin cottage at Whitebridge on our return

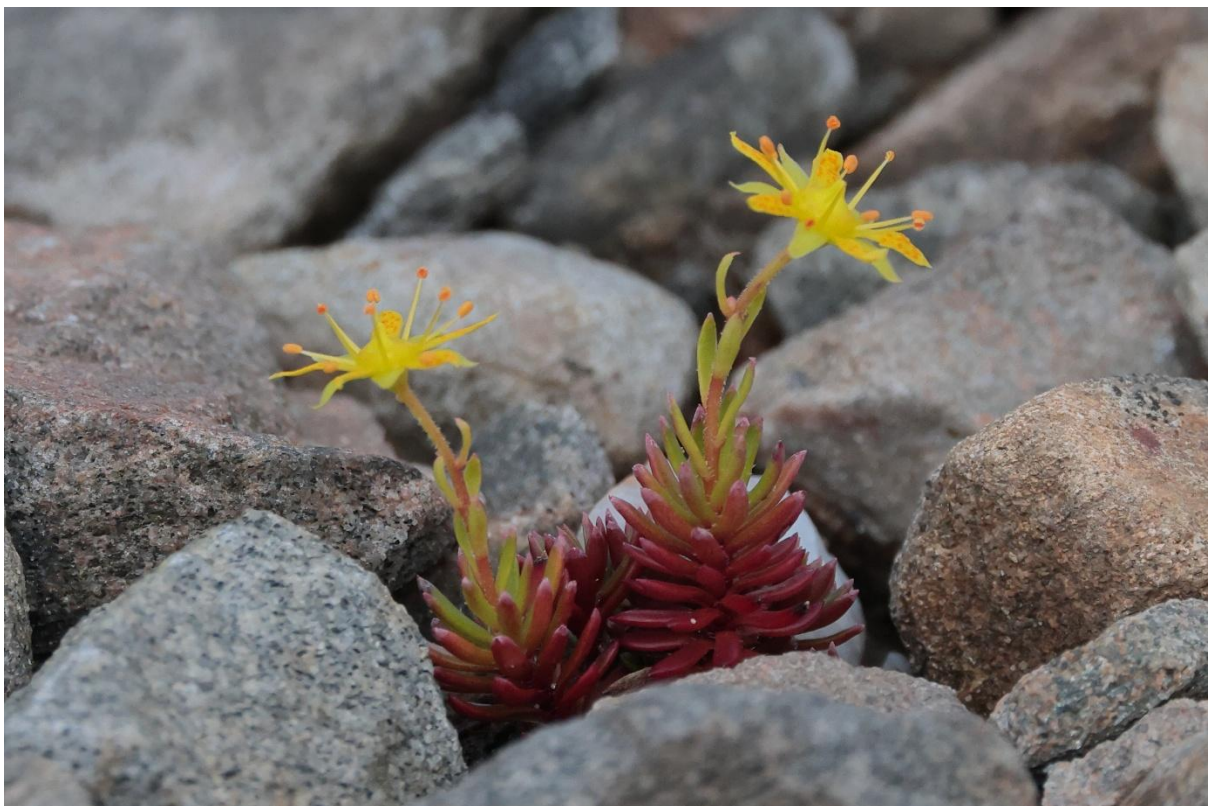
### **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025**

We travelled down to the moors above Trinafore (56.78760, -4.08421) but were worried it wasn't going to be sunny enough by the time we got there at around 10:30 for the Mountain Ringlets to show. The site has an estimated Elevation of 389m (1277ft). As we parked we noticed Chris and Jane, who told us about the site, were already present and watching a Mountain Ringlet which they duly pointed out to us. We saw and photographed several more plus Dark Green Fritillary, Ringlet, Common Blue, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary and prime of the odonata were a couple of Golden Ringed Dragonflies. I was somewhat sceptical of the Large Heaths being reported as they were quite small. After lunch we drove back to the A9 and had a fine stand by the roadside of Northern Marsh Orchids.





Mountain Ringlet – Trinafore. Normally this is a butterfly that is horrendously difficult to find.



Yellow Mountain Saxifrage grew commonly on the hardcore roads up on the moors at Trinafore



Some splendid Northern Marsh Orchids at the roadside just below the moors at Trinafore





A Ringlet of the rare form 'caeca' seen amid the heather and rushes the usual spots are replaced by small white dots.

We called at the fields opposite the Grantown Smoke House (57.31623, -3.6027) to see if we could see Northern Brown Argus. The site looked perfect, and we did have Common Damselfly and a very nice Dark Green Fritillary as well as several Ringlets, but the weather had deteriorated into rain and hail so we regrettably made our way back North to Felchin Cottage where we had an Osprey among many other raptors.



Dark Green Fritillary at the Spey Smokehouse site

### **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025**

We tried for Azure Hawker today, but the weather was against us. We drove to Loch Maree where we visited several sites but despite the forecasted showers and sunshine we were met with relentless rain. A visit to the Visitors Centre to watch a few siskins was the best we could do.

We drove back and visited the small quarry opposite the smokehouse in Grantown (we parked at 57.31655, -3.60009 today – the quarry is at the back of the electricity sub-station) close to where we visited yesterday where a little sun gave us hundreds of Northern Brown Argus as well as a few other butterflies and a splendid Golden Ringed Dragonfly.

We then visited the woods at Grant House (parking at 57.33911, -3.77115 and walk into the grounds) looking for single flower wintergreen without success. However, we did find



many thousands of Twinflower and Creeping Ladies Tresses with smaller numbers of Arctic Starflower.

Tania spotted our first Red Squirrel from the car on the return journey to Whitebridge.

The Northern Brown Argus sightings rescued an otherwise disappointing day.



Golden Ringed Dragonfly at the Smokehouse Quarry near Grantown



Northern Brown Argus were in good numbers when the sun came out at the Smokehouse Quarry



Small Heath at the Smokehouse Quarry



### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

The forecast was for rain all day however in reality it was overcast with very little drizzle at times; although it was quite windy. We drove over to Boat of Garten woods where we walked the footpaths. A few Roe Deer and Round leafed Wintergreen with yet more Creeping ladies Tresses but little else. Certainly no sign (droppings or sound) of reported Capercaillie.

After lunch we visited the feeders at Grantown Woods but saw little other than common garden birds. We also stopped at the entrance to Castle Grant and walked in the woods.

The journey back to Whitebridge was done over Farr moor. Again, little to see.



Roe Deer at Boat of Garten Woods



Round leaved Wintergreen at Boat of Garten Woods



Common Sandpiper on the Findhorn Valley road leading over to Farr



**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

A long drive home after a 7:10am start. We stopped first at a Golden Eagle stakeout on the A9 but with no luck. We moved on the Northumberland coast where we stopped for lunch at Stag Rocks near Bamburgh. The best find here was an Eyed Ladybird – a new species for all of us.



Eyed Ladybird – a new species for all of us

After filling up with fuel we continued our journey South towards the Broomrape site seen on our journey North. Although the Broomrape had gone over a little it still provided us with some fun finding it!



Thistle Broomrape – a rare plant in a shockingly busy location



We continued the journey home to Norfolk without incident.

Carl and Tania Chapman with Tony Eadson

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