

Information Note:

Land Management for

Chequered Skipper Butterfly



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

Action Points

This small, fast-flying butterfly is now restricted to damp grassy habitats in a few places in western Scotland. The butterfly breeds on open damp grassland, dominated by tall Purple Moor-grass. Favoured sites are on the southern edges of open broadleaved woodland as richer soils produce a lush growth of the foodplant.

- Grazing is not essential but the sites must remain scrub and bracken free.
- Warm and sheltered sites are important
- These butterflies are probably under recorded. If you spot any send your record to Butterfly Conservation



Habitat requirements

Chequered Skipper generally require

- In Scotland, the butterfly breeds on open damp grassland, dominated by tall lush Purple Moor-grass. Favoured sites are often south facing on the edges of open broadleaved woodland, as richer soils produce a lush growth of the foodplant.
- It's entire UK population occurs in Lochaber and north Argyll, where there are around 50 colonies.
- The main foodplant in Scotland is Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) found in sheltered woodland edges or glades in South Lochaber and North Argyll.
- Adult Chequered Skippers are usually on the wing from the third week of May until the end of June. Adults tend to congregate where there are lots of nectar plants; they are particularly fond of bugle, bluebell and marsh thistle. Choose a sunny, warm and if possible calm day and look for them in sunny sheltered areas.

Status of Chequered Skipper in the UK:

Chequered Skipper butterflies became extinct in England in 1976. where there are on going trials trying to re-establish it's presence.

In Scotland the butterfly is restricted to damp grassy woodland edge habitats in the west around Fort William. There are around 10 core areas.

They are protected under the Nature Conservation Act in Scotland, and is a UK BAP Priority Species and a Butterfly Conservation high priority species.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



For more information about Scotland's National Priority Species, see the FAS website www.fas.scot Follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook at @FASscot.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Egg												
Caterpillar												
Chrysalis												
Adult												

Chequered Skipper Life cycle

Management Requirements to Benefit Chequered Skipper Butterfly

- The ideal management of Chequered Skipper sites is light grazing. This helps keep glades open whilst also keeping areas flower-rich. Heavy cattle grazing can be detrimental to the site as the butterfly likes lush *Molinia* grassland. Livestock are not essential but the site must be kept open of scrub and bracken.
- Low-levels of deer browsing can be particularly important at keeping scrub in check if there is no cattle grazing
- It is sometimes necessary to control bracken to prevent excessive encroachment into both nectar plant areas and breeding areas. The maintenance of open space within woodlands allows Chequered Skippers to fly between colonies.
- Rides and paths running east to west have a greater proportion of warmer south-facing edges. The inclusion of scalloped bays at intervals along the south-facing edge provides additional sheltered habitat.
- The main threats to remaining populations of the butterfly are inappropriate management, or lack of management, leading to loss of colonies; and fragmentation of the habitat between colonies, causing isolation. This is important for species like the Chequered Skipper which exist in a metapopulation, i.e. a network of geographically discrete colonies, which are linked by the dispersal of individuals between the colonies to form a single large population.
- The regular cutting of regrowth on wayleaves provides suitable sheltered and open habitat, and their linear nature means that they can act as ideal corridors along which individuals can fly to neighbouring colonies

Key messages:

Chequered Skipper butterflies need sheltered open rides in sunny damp woodlands where lush Purple Moor grass grows. Wayleaves often provide ideal habitat but must be kept scrub and bracken free. Grazing is not essential as long as the site remains open.



Chequered Skipper Facts

The Chequered Skipper, so called because of the golden chequered pattern on its wings, is the only skipper butterfly in northwest Scotland.

In warm weather the adults are extremely active and fly with a swift, darting, almost moth-like gait that is difficult to follow as they 'skip' just above the vegetation.

