

Small Blue Butterfly

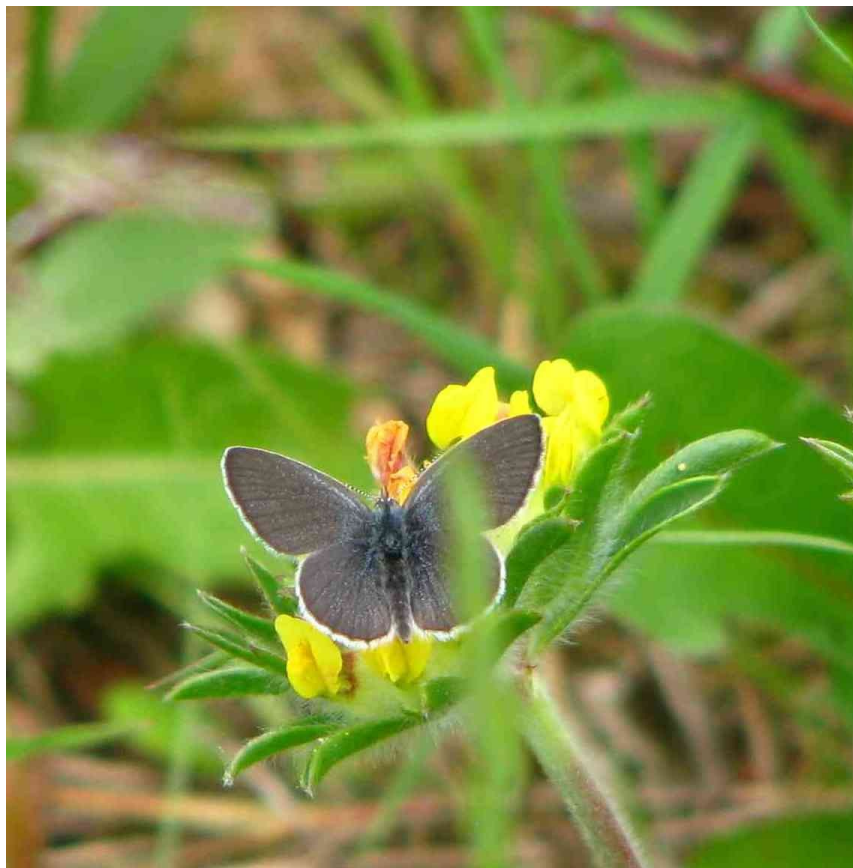


The Small Blue was found for the first time on Old Down in 2010. There was just one confirmed sighting, the photo below. The picture was taken in our first Trial sown in 2008 and the butterfly was feeding on Kidney Vetch. This butterfly is a **national** priority species because it has declined enormously. The following details from *'The Butterflies of Britain & Ireland'* by Jeremy Thomas & Richard Lewington presents a fascinating insight into the complex yet fragile lifecycle of a fellow species and demonstrates how easy it is for humans to disrupt and harm animals and the plants they need to survive.

"In late April or early May the caterpillar, which has remained under soil and especially under moss during hibernation, seeks a pupation site, again under vegetation on the ground. It is probably earthed up by ants at this stage for the chrysalis also attracts them.

Adult Small Blues are highly colonial and are often confined to no more than **200 square metres of land**, supported by perhaps two dozen Kidney Vetch plants. The eggs are only laid on Kidney Vetch. Few female Small Blues fly more than **40metres** from the emergence spots. Males appear to gather in a sheltered nook where there is a scattering of shrubs or tussock grass and wait for the females to appear."

Adults drink nectar almost exclusively from Common Bird's-foot Trefoil, Horseshoe Vetch or Kidney Vetch.



Improving Old Down for people & wildlife.