

Small Copper

Lycaena phlaeas

Insects · On the wing May-Sep · two or three broods



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A small, bright butterfly with brilliant coppery-orange forewings spotted with black, and dark brown hindwings edged with an orange band. Small coppers like short, dry, open ground — heath, verges, old quarries, waste ground and unimproved grassland — where sorrel and dock grow. They are widespread around Dumfries but never numerous in one place.

BEHAVIOUR

Males are pugnacious, holding a small territory from a low perch and darting up at anything that passes, including butterflies several times their size and the occasional passing bird. Eggs are laid singly on common sorrel and sheep's sorrel. There are usually two broods, and a warm autumn can produce a third, so fresh individuals appear right through the summer.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Blues and coppers (Lycaenidae)
WINGSPAN	3–3.5 cm
STATUS	Native; widespread but thinly spread

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