Gheibhear an dealan-dè beag grinn seo (air a bheil rèis-sgèithe dìreach 3cm) ga blianadh fhèin air lusan no air uachdaran grianach rathaidean ann am meadhan an t-samhraidh nuair a bhios na h-itean sònraichte letheach fosgailte aige – a chuireadh na h-itean air saighead nad chuimhne – ga chomharrachadh mar fhear de shliochd nan sùrdagan. Tha itealaich gu math làidir is dìreach aige, agus tha an gluasad bocadail sùrdagail aige, agus mar as nòs leis socrachadh uair is uair dìreach air do bheulaibh agus tu a' coiseachd sìos an casan, ga fhàgail follaiseach fiù 's dhan fheadhainn aig nach eil ùidh shònraichte sna dealanan-dè.

Tha cuairt-bheatha inntinneach aige. Bidh na bratagan a' biathadh an ìre mhath gu tur air an fheur air a bheil feur a' chinn bhàin (*Holcus lanatus*). Bidh a' bhratag bhaineann a' breith a cuid uighean ann an cuiseagan an fheòir agus tha iad seo a' gur aig deireadh an t-samhraidh. Bidh a' bhratag ag ithe sporan nan uighean agus an uair sin a' dol a chadal a' gheamhraidh gun dàil ann an truaill an fheòir agus a' nochdadh a-rithist as t-earrach, a' biathadh agus a' fàs nan dealanan-dè iad fhèin.

Small Skipper Butterfly
Sùrdagan Beag
Thymelicus sylvestris

Tha na fireannaich gu math glèidhteach agus chì thu iad a' dìon an àite aca an aghaidh fhireannach eile agus a' ruith suas gus a h-uile leòman no dealan-dè a' dol seachad a ghlacadh, agus an uair sin a' tilleadh gu luath air obair an fhreiceadain nuair a gheibh e briseadh-dùil seach gur e gnè dhiofraichte a th' ann.

Gheibhear iad tron chuid as motha den Roinn Eòrpa, cho fada ri taobh an iar Àisia, ann an Afraga a tuath agus san Àird an Ear Mheadhanaich. Agus iad pailt ann an Sasainn, tha an raon aca air leudachadh gu tuath o chionn ghoirid a-steach ann an ceann a deas is ceann an iar na h-Alba mar thoradh air blàthachadh na gnàth-shìde agus tha e ri fhaotainn ann an cluaintean grianach, ann am blàrain-choille, ann an iomall raointean, talamh-feòir agus cladaichean far a bheil feur a' chinn bhàin pailt. Tha na h-inbhich ag òl neachtair agus 's fheàrr leotha gu mòr dìtheanan purpaidh mar an cluaran, seamrag nan each agus an t-seamrag-dhearg.

a-muigh san Àilean leam air cheum
gu mall is thall air a' chasan romham,
seall, sùrdagan beag na leum

This lovely little butterfly (with a wingspan of just 3cm) can be found basking on vegetation or on sunny road surfaces in high summer where its characteristic half open wings – reminiscent of the fletches on an arrow - identify it as one of the skipper family. It has a very strong and direct flight, and its bouncing, skipping movement, together with its habit of settling again and again just ahead of you as you walk down a path, make it noticeable even to those who have no special interest in butterflies.

It has an interesting life-cycle. The caterpillars feed almost exclusively on the grass known as "Yorkshire fog" (*Holcus lanatus*). The female butterfly lays its eggs into the stems of the grass and these hatch in late summer. The caterpillar eats the egg case and then immediately goes into hibernation in the grass sheath to emerge again in the spring, feed and become butterflies themselves.

The males are very territorial and you can see them defending their space against other males and racing up to intercept each and every passing moth or butterfly, and then swiftly returning to lookout duty when it is disappointed to find that it is a different species.

They are found through much of Europe, as far as western Asia, in north Africa and the Middle East. Plentiful in England, their range has recently expanded northwards into southern and western Scotland as a result of warming climate and it can be found in sunny meadows, woodland glades, field edges, grassland and shorelines where Yorkshire fog is plentiful. The adults drink nectar and have a definite preference for purple flowers such as thistles, knapweed and red clover.

NOTES

The name derives from one who skips, capers or bounces and can denote an acrobat or jester. The "little acrobat" will be following our footsteps northward in the years to come.

a-muigh san Àilean leam air cheum
gu mall is thall air a' chasan romham,
seall, sùrdagan beag na leum

out in the meadow walking slowly and over on the path in front of me, look, a small skipper butterfly fluttering and bouncing by