

SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST: FIFE AND KINROSS MEMBERS CENTRE PROGRAMME FOR SPRING 2006

Non-members are very welcome at all events. Indoor meetings unless stated otherwise.

JANUARY

Marine Policy and Campaigns in Partnership with WWF *Wednesday 18th January, The Lomond Centre, Glenrothes, 19.30*
Laura Bateson from SWT HQ will talk about conserving marine biodiversity in Scotland, and raising awareness of this vital issue. Contact Alison Irvine 01337 830366.

Outdoor Meeting: Winter Birds at Morton of Pitmilly

Saturday 21st January, meet at Morton of Pitmilly (NO 582 128), 10.00
Donald and Jean Stewart will lead this outing to look for winter finch flocks and other birds on farmland which is managed for wildlife. Parking is available: turn up Station Road in Kingsbarns, opposite the church, and take the first right to Morton. Contact Jean Stewart 01334 475763

Wildlife of the Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctica; Members' Centre AGM

Wednesday 25th January, St Andrews Town Hall Supper Room, 19.30
The Annual General Meeting will be followed by an illustrated lecture by Rob Armstrong on the birds and marine mammals of this fascinating and beautiful region. Contact Jean Stewart 01334 475763

Craigencalt Ecology Centre

Thursday 26th January, St Peter's Episcopal Church, Hope Street, Inverkeithing, 19.30
Ronnie Mackie of the Craigencalt Centre in Kinghorn will describe the centre's ecological work. Joint meeting with the Church Green Gang. Contact Dorothy MacDonald 01383 414194

FEBRUARY

Reserves in Fife

Thursday 16th February, Gyles Community Centre, The Gyles, East Harbour, Pittenweem, 19.30
In this illustrated talk, Jean Stewart will describe some of the fascinating range of plants and animals on the ten reserves in Fife managed by the Trust. Organiser and contact: Janice Christianson 01333 310 798

MARCH

Red Squirrels in Scotland

Thursday 23rd March, Kinross Church Centre, Kinross 19.30
Dr Mel Tomkin of SWT will give an account of the changing fortunes of this attractive but vulnerable species in Scotland. Joint meeting with Kinross Camera Club. Organiser and contact John St Clair 01383 734 541

APRIL

Insects - the Hidden Gems of SWT Reserves

Wednesday 5th April, Vane Farm, Kinross (NO 159 989,) 19.30
Dr Stuart Glen of SWT headquarters will give an illustrated talk about some of these less well known inhabitants of our nature reserves and the vital role they play in our ecology. Contact Vane Farm 01577 862 355

Outdoor Meeting, Springtime at Birnie and Gaddon Lochs

Saturday 29th April, meet Birnie Loch Car Park (NO 283 126,) 10.00
An opportunity to see spring migrants, water fowl and plants in and around these two man-made lochs. Leader Norman Elkins 01334 654348

MAY

Outdoor meeting, a Visit to Dumbarrie Links

Sunday 28th May, meet Lower Car Park, East end of Lower Largo (NO 425 027), 13.30
Dr Gordon Corbet will lead a wildflower walk on the reserve. Contact Gordon Corbet 01333 340634

JUNE

Wildlife Week: Outing to Den of Airlie

Saturday 10th June, meet at small car park by River Melgam (NO 299 527), 10.00
Dr Hugh Ingram will lead this joint outing with Angus & Dundee and North Angus MC to explore the spectrum of natural features at the confluence of the Rivers Melgam and Isla. NB Rough walking involved, so stout boots essential. Approx 3 hours

If you have suggestions for future meetings, or can offer to lead a walk or give a talk, please contact Jean Stewart, Members Centre Chairman, tel 01334 475763, e-mail JeanStewart18@aol.com

VISITING THE NEIGHBOURS

Our neighbouring Members Centres of Lothians and of Angus & Dundee and North Angus carry out full programmes throughout the year, and welcome us to all their events. A short selection follows. For further information of these or other events, contact Pete Sykes, tel 0131 337 66 71, email pete.sykes@talk21.com (Lothians) or Bob Jaffray, tel 01307 464256, email thejaffrays@surefish.co.uk (Angus/Dundee).

Thursday 2nd February, 19.30. Bats & the Millennium Link: Highlights and long nights discovering the silent secrets of a dark canal by Neil Middleton. 33 Melville Street, Edinburgh

Saturday 4th February, 10.00. Outing to Montrose Basin, led by Ranger and Andy Wakelin. Winter birds and their food supplies. Meet Visitor Centre car park (NO 700 656). Approx 2.5 hours, followed by pub lunch. Wellies essential

Thursday 2nd March, 19.30. Dragonflies in Scotland by Betty Smith. 33 Melville Street, Edinburgh

Thursday 23rd March, 19.30. Scottish Fisheries Past Present and Future. Lucy Paton, Fishery Research Service, Aberdeen on change over the past 100 years in Scotland in conservation, regulation and fishing patterns. Admission £3.50/Junior £1. Meffan Institute Forfar

Saturday 25th March, 10.30. Outing to Musselburgh Lagoons with Richard English. Meet Goose Green, end of Balcarres Rd, near river mouth

Saturday 22nd April, 10.30. Outing to Aberlady Bay. Migrants, with Ian Thomson. Meet Aberlady Reserve Car Park

Saturday 6th May 14.00-16.00. Outing to Hermand Birch Wood, West Calder with Jim Hewlett. Meet at car park, grid ref NT 031 621. Contact Fiona Hewlett tel 01501 785206

Sunday 14th May, 14.00. The Beauty of Bluebells, outing to Darroch and Kinclaven woods; led by Jim Cook. Fine displays of spring plants and birds. Meet 14.00 car park Angus Hotel, Blairgowrie (NO 181 452)

PLANT A TREE FOR A FRIEND

You can contribute to conservation in Fife, and at the same time give an unusual gift or memorial, by having a tree planted at one of our reserves. Minimum donation is £15 for the first tree and £10 for each subsequent tree; cost includes a commemorative certificate. Contact Alison Irvine, Tel: 01337 830366, e-mail: prosen@ukf.net

EDITOR OF FAWN

Sonia Daniels, 11 Newmill Gardens, St Andrews, Fife KY16 8RY, Tel 01334 473847; E-mail soniadaniels11@yahoo.co.uk
Articles, news, snippets from contributors both old and new will be welcome. Please feel free to contact me to discuss your ideas.
All contributions by 17 March 2006 • Printed by West Port Print & Design, St. Andrews



The newsletter of the _____

Fife and Kinross Members Centre

Scottish Wildlife Trust

No. 66 Spring 2006



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

In the absence of Chairman Jean Stewart, on holiday in Australia at time of writing, the duty of producing a Chairman's Column for the next issue of Fawn has fallen on me. The duties of Vice-Chairman have not been such an onerous task because of Jean's hard work in leaving behind a well organised programme of outings, talks and fund-raising activities which, with the assistance of other committee members and volunteers, have run smoothly. This was demonstrated by the October Coffee Morning in Crail, when the work and commitment of many SWT members and friends raised £470 towards Fife and Kinross Members Centre funds.

By the time you read this, the Members Centre winter programme of talks will be well under way and I urge as many members as possible to attend the lectures and would encourage you to bring along a friend to our meetings. Although the programme for winter

has been organised, we still have not managed to replace our Programme Co-ordinator on the committee. Can you help?

The exceptionally changeable weather continues, with the warmest October day on record surprising us and confusing the Red Admiral butterfly which I saw that same day on the wing by Birnie Loch. This was at a time when our Patron, Prince Charles, called our attention to the fact that Climatic Change is perhaps the greatest challenge of our times. We all have responsibility to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions and minimise our impact on the environment. A fine day in October is welcome, but the hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico are perhaps a warning. Who knows what winter will bring? But remember to feed the birds!

Biddy Gray, Vice-Chairman

REFLECTIONS OF AN ORGANIC GARDENER

Participation in SWT affairs is difficult these days, but I have a garden: so, although I can't reach wildlife, wildlife comes to me. I've never liked using chemicals in the garden, so I suppose I've always been a fairly "organic" gardener like my grandmother, a great believer in DUNG – in her village days, easily available! She grew wonderful fruit and vegetables, and her garden was full of birds and their nests.

Bees, butterflies and hoverflies enjoy my herb garden, where grow thymes, mints, lavender, bergamot, marjoram, hyssop, lemon balm and angelica, among others. Flowering trees and shrubs provide nectar and berries: geans, amelanchier, bird-cherry, viburnums, prunus, buddleia, philadelphus, spireas, bramble and honeysuckle. Plenty insects provide good pollination.

Mice collect wild cherry stones and hide them in "larders" under bricks and rocks. Thrushes consume snails and, bless its heart, so does the hedgehog (does it live in the brushwood shelter I constructed?). There is a newt, seldom seen, but the pond supports toads and frogs aplenty – we counted approximately 20 (frogs move) at last spring's clear-out. Frogs eat slugs, goody! But being a member of EFOG (East Fife Organic Gardeners) is useful – I learn that NOT ALL SLUGS ARE BADDIES. For 2006, I'm trying the SEER (Sustainable Ecological Earth Regeneration) rockdust for the vegetable garden, to see what happens.

Comfrey grows in a corner, and the leaves (which soon regrow), when put into a bin with a little water, rot down to a wonderful brown juice that, well diluted, makes a great fertiliser. Two compost bins and two "heaps" hold a layered mix of kitchen waste, dry stalks, grass cuttings, tissues and dead annuals to create a fine compost. Leaves fill punctured black binbags to make leafmould. I leave seedheads until wind and rain smash them to a brown mash, then leave enough stalk for the ladybirds to overwinter amongst – ready for next year's aphids!

Recently I rummaged for the riddle to sieve some compost – and found a Peacock butterfly overwintering in it. Ah well, compost unsieved. In 2005, a Peacock appeared in the garden in early April; a Hawthorn Shieldbug appeared in the scullery in March and last September one landed on my sweatshirt.

Happy gardening!

June Johnson

WELCOME to the many new members who have joined, or moved into the area, during the last few months. We hope many of you will enjoy playing an active part in our activities, but even if that is not possible your support is greatly appreciated.

FUNGAL FORAY

Joint outing with Fife Fungal Interest Group

On a Saturday in October I joined a small group of people to meet Tony Wilson of the Fife Ranger Service on a search for fungi in Devilla Forest. Tony wasn't too hopeful about finding many because the summer had been so dry, but it wasn't long before we began finding a few, and by the end of the day we had found, and Tony had identified, more than thirty species.

The common names of some reflected their appearance, smell or taste. One was called "plums and custard": it had a lovely dark pink top and bright yellow gills; when "the miller" had its rim broken it smelled of raw

flour or uncooked pastry; "the milk caps" exuded a milky juice when their edges were damaged.

We saw a wide variety of forms, colours and habitats, and were given advice on cooking "shaggy ink-caps" (their juice really was once used as ink). Tony gave vivid descriptions of what the poisonous varieties could do to the human body, and his advice was "First learn to identify the poisonous ones, and then go on to learn the others".

Margaret Wilkinson

YOUR WILDLIFE TRUST NEEDS YOU!

Volunteer now!

Regular readers of FAWN know that we often appeal for volunteers. Who are the 'we' in that sentence? Well, we're you – or we hope you'll be us – ordinary members of the Trust who pitch in to do whatever we are able to do, who contribute a few pieces each to the huge jigsaw of the Trust's ongoing activities.

Why volunteer? There's definitely the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile, making a real contribution towards conservation. Benefits also include the fun of being out with other people doing the same thing – working on a reserve or helping to organise a successful evening meeting. And the coffee mornings – you haven't tasted baking like that since you were a child - the small contribution to Trust funds is money well spent!

People often comment that they are insufficiently knowledgeable about wildlife to be useful as a volunteer. I'd say that people are far more knowledgeable than they think - in two ways. First, someone who cares enough about Scotland's wildlife to contribute their hard-earned cash in membership subscriptions really does know

quite a lot about the natural world, learned purely out of interest. Second, it's not just wildlife knowledge that's valuable – lots of skills come into play in an organisation like ours. Anyone who enjoys a bit of gardening has the skills to help in the Tree Nursery or pull some thistles up on reserves (though to be honest, the only skill you need for the latter is the ability to wear thick gloves!). Occasionally we have fund-raising coffee mornings – on those occasions skilled cake-makers are valued above rubies! Organisational abilities, talking to people, having fundraising ideas, being good at photography, art, desktop publishing, websites, writing, publicity, working with children – the list of useful skills is endless.

But above all, I'd say that the best and most valuable skills anyone can bring are the desire to do something real and active for conservation, and the enthusiasm and willingness to get stuck in!

So please get in touch with any of the Committee members listed in this newsletter, and try a new hobby – that of being an active conservationist!

Deborah Cottam

LOCAL NATURE RESERVES IN FIFE

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are declared and managed by local authorities under powers given by Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They relate to land which is within the jurisdiction of the authority and which is owned or leased by them or subject to appropriate management agreements with the owners and occupiers of the land concerned. There is a statutory duty to consult with SNH (Scottish Natural Heritage) prior to designation so that the proposal can be endorsed.

Initially a primary reason for designating such sites was their role at the local level in providing for the protection and management of the natural heritage interest of a site, both biodiversity and geodiversity. Increasingly, however, and in the light of the publication of SNH guidance in 2000 on the selection and designation of LNR's, their role in providing opportunities for public access and enjoyment of the natural heritage, and the close involvement of local communities in site management, has been identified as of equal importance. Such an approach has close links with the local biodiversity action planning process and the Fife Community Plan, and is supportive of the duty imposed by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 for public bodies to 'further the conservation of biodiversity'.

A report on potential LNR's in Fife was considered by Fife Council in 1998 and a phased designation approach was agreed with priority given to those sites where designation would involve the need for minimal additional resources. Up to that time there were only two LNR's in Fife – the Eden Estuary (declared in 1978) and Torry Bay (declared in 1996). Subsequent to the report both Coul Den and Birnie/Gaddon Lochs were declared in 2000. On 8th August 2005 two new LNR's were declared at Cullaloe and Dalbeath Marsh bringing the number of such sites in Fife to six. A seventh site has

been agreed for Gillingshill Reservoir and this should be declared before the end of 2005.

The three recent designations, in which Fife Council Development Services has provided the co-ordinating role in the process, highlight the value of involving local communities and other organisations in supporting and managing the sites. Dalbeath Marsh was progressed with the support of a 'Friends of Dalbeath Marsh' group which ensured active community involvement and Gillingshill has been managed jointly and very effectively between Fife Council and Carnbee & Arncroach Community Council since 1994. Cullaloe, which is leased to the SWT by Fife Council, has been a SWT Reserve since 1995 and is seen as one of the key environmental education reserves in Fife for the Trust. Designation of all of these sites will see the continuation of local authority support and community involvement through Reserve Advisory Groups which will oversee the implementation of reserve management plans and development of community initiatives.

All of the sites declared recently have been under the control of Fife Council and used by the Council's Countryside Rangers for various educational and environmental awareness projects. It is hoped that new LNR's will be declared in future but this will be dependent upon agreement with private owners and the provision of adequate resources to assist with their management. However, there is little doubt that such sites appear to have widespread local community support and they can play a key role in raising the profile of the natural heritage at the local level.

Allan W. Brown, Planner – Natural Heritage, Development Services, Fife Council, County Buildings, Cupar, Fife, KY15 4TA. Tel: 01334 412796. E-mail: allan.brown@fife.gov.uk

A FEAST FOR THE EYES

At the SWT Members' Evening in Cupar in early October, we were delighted to have Paul Bartlett of St. Andrews share some of his wildlife paintings with us. He took us through his developing techniques of water colour and mixed media, and brought some original paintings and prints which were a delight to browse through and buy.

Alison Irvine gave us a fascinating description of developments at Fleecefaulds Meadow, and Steve Blow, our Conservation Manager, presented a slide show of most of the Reserves in North East Fife, featuring beautiful wild flowers and our distinguished

flock of Shetland and Hebridean sheep. One of the best photos was of a long line of sheep following Tim Brain across the hill at Fleecefaulds!

David Waddell's plant stall was splendid, and Rosemary Story and Maggie Tracey included our own Christmas cards of robins and puffins (photographs by Rob Armstrong) on their stall.

Our thanks go to all who helped make this evening go with a buzz, and to Janet Butler and her Team for good refreshments.

Vi Shannon

CONSERVATION MANAGER'S NOTES

It has been a busy autumn in Fife and Clackmannanshire this year with plenty of activity on all the reserves. Over 100 bales of hay were collected from Kilminning Coast reserve to help tide the Flying Flock over through the winter. The flock themselves had spread their wings further than ever this year, grazing Flanders Moss reserve beyond Stirling in the summer and spending the autumn at Gaddon Loch, the Fife Council Local Nature Reserve near Collessie. The monitoring that has been carried out annually to measure changes in the vegetation has been collated and is showing very promising results, with all sites benefiting from the grazing. The current funding that supports the flock runs out in March and we are securing additional funding to continue the project for three more years, at which point we will be selling high quality lamb (start clearing space in your freezers!) and the income generated will help the project stand on its own four legs.

Cullaloe has seen quite a change this year with an improved path surface and some experimental scraping undertaken to benefit the rare plant, mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*), that thrives on exposed muddy margins of lochs and reservoirs.

The most significant change however has been David Jamieson stepping down as the Reserve Convener after over 17 years of involvement with the site. It was his enthusiasm and persistence that helped develop SWT's involvement in the site and his extensive knowledge of the reserve, its management and history has made my job of getting to know the site so much easier. Thanks again David and I'm sure that Ross Millar, who has taken over as Reserve Convener, and I, will continue to call on your experience and knowledge for some time yet.

The winter will see a start on tree felling work at Bankhead Moss to continue the restoration of the raised bog. Thanks to Chris Scott who came out on a fairly dismal day in October to help with spreading cut heather to seed onto the areas of bare peat. The aim is to develop better heath vegetation on the drier margins of the bog and open up the centre of the bog for the sheep to browse the birch more effectively.

Finally, bats in Largo Bay will have a very desirable residence with sea views as one of the WW2 pill boxes will be converted for their exclusive use by the Fife Conservation Team.

Steve Blow

GRAZING AT LIELOWAN MEADOW

Lielown Meadow, if not actively managed, would ultimately revert from open grassland to woodland, hence the application and monitoring of a suitable grazing regime is the primary management task. In the past we know that hay was cut by machine, and that the site was grazed by both cattle and horses. Since the Trust acquired the site in 1992, grazing has been predominantly by sheep during spring and autumn, however since this was by agreement with a local farmer, the exact timing and number of sheep put on to the site was rather haphazard. Now that the Trust has its own 'flying flock', control over the grazing is much improved.

Getting the balance right between over- and under-grazing is not simple to achieve and both conditions have been noted for the site at different times in the past. More recently it was felt that the vegetation was too high over the summer months and that continuing the grazing over the summer would prove beneficial. I certainly recall that, during my first visits to the site a few years ago, in the summer getting around could be a hard push through

waist high grass and reeds. The site has now been grazed over the summers of 2004 and 2005 resulting in a much reduced sward height, giving a much more open appearance; however there have been fewer wild flowers to see. The intention is to revert to spring and autumn grazing only this year (2006), to allow the flowering plants to set seed, so it should be very interesting to visit Lielowan over the summer to see just what effect the grazing has had.

In 2000 a concern was raised that the colony of Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) on the site was in decline but this has since shown itself to be quite stable. As well as its intrinsic value to the site, the Salad Burnet, being at the northern limit of its distribution, could also be a valuable indicator species of the effects of 'Global Warming'. Now that the grazing of the site is under our control, any changes due to such an external factor should be easier to distinguish.

Alan Harvey, Convener for Lielowan Meadow

OH RATS! Or, When is wildlife not wildlife?

In our garden we have a bird-feeding station made of an old iron washing-line pole, fitted with wooden cross pieces at the top. Four bird-feeders hang from this contraption, and it's very nice to stand at the kitchen window and watch the garden birds, including the occasional great-spotted woodpecker, on the feeders. The other day, looking out, I saw a mammal, not a bird. It climbed nimbly up the pole, along the cross piece and jumped onto a peanut feeder, where it clung on, nibbling peanuts and balancing itself with its tail. It was a rat, and a very handsome creature too; glossy brown coat and bright eyes, agile and active, and with, apparently, no fear of being seen in broad daylight! Quite intelligent enough to make use of the feeders and to know that a person banging on a window was no danger! But this resourceful, intelligent animal isn't endangered; we don't need to set up reserves or legislate for its protection – so does it count as wildlife? Perhaps we've become more comfortable with endangered wildlife – they don't encroach on human preserves, but rather retire gracefully, even to extinction. This little fellow wasn't at all retiring but definitely encroaching – does he count as wildlife? I really hope I don't have to contemplate using the rat trap – maybe he'll learn some discretion!

Deborah Cottam

CONTACTS

Members Centre Website www.swt-fife.org.uk

Chairman Jean Stewart, 01334 475763, e-mail JeanStewart18@aol.com

Vice Chairman Bidy Gray, 01592 752372, e-mail grays@tigre4.freereserve.co.uk

Secretary Deborah Cottam, 01333 422116, e-mail deborahcottam@adamsmith.ac.uk

Treasurer and Kinross Group Tim Brain, 01577 840317

Membership Secretary Tricia Towler, 01577 864749, e-mail triciatowler@aol.com

Programme Co-ordinator Vacancy

Publicity Heather McLean 01383 825770 heather@bekaheni.com

Web-site Bruce Borrows, 01383 824606, e-mail scorchie@dsl.pipex.com

Conservation Manager Fife and Clackmannanshire Stephen Blow, SWT, Units 5-7 Napier Way, Wardpark North, Cumbernauld, Glasgow G68 0EH, tel 01236 617117, mobile 07739 428204, e-mail sblow@swt.org.uk

SWT Headquarters (Cramond) 0131 312 7765 Website: www.swt.org.uk

Fife Environmental Recording Network (FERN) Simon Scott, 01592 413550, e-mail simon.scott@fife.gov.uk

Perth & Kinross Biological Records Centre 01738 632488