

The newsletter of the



# Fife and Kinross Members Centre

Scottish Wildlife Trust

No 70 Summer 2007



## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN AND SWT RESERVES IN FIFE

The chairman's column has a different format this edition. I have been concerned by the number of members who have said that they are unsure about the location of and visiting arrangements for our reserves. We have a splendid suite of 10 reserves in Fife and I would like to encourage everyone, not just members, to visit them and to become more involved.

I give a brief summary below of our local reserves. The reserves listed are open at all times to members and to the general public. Each has a volunteer reserve convener who welcomes offers of practical help, comments on the condition of the reserve and records of plants, birds, butterflies, mammals etc. Contact the reserve convener, details given below.

Further information on the reserves can be obtained from several sources:

- our local website [www.swt-fife.org.uk](http://www.swt-fife.org.uk)
- the Fife and Kinross Members Centre leaflet (available at all meetings or from the secretary)
- the national booklet 'Exploring Reserves' which is available free to members on request from SWT at Cramond (0131 3127765) and includes details of all SWT reserves throughout Scotland.

### RESERVES

#### **Bankhead Moss** (Peat Inn NO 447 103)

This is a small raised bog with a characteristic domed centre which is surrounded by willow and birch scrub and the remains of a Scots pine plantation. Adjacent to the bog is an area of open pools and marsh-land which always attracts a wide variety of birds; it is overlooked by a bird-hide. The reserve can be visited at any time of year, but it is advisable to stick to the paths, being particularly careful next to the deep drains which have been deliberately blocked in order to maintain a high water table. Please use the note book in the hide to record any interesting birds (and other observations) on the reserve.

Reserve convener: Alister Jones 01334 653069

#### **Barnyards Marsh** (Kilconquhar NO 484 021)

Barnyards Marsh is a small fen in the middle of the village of Kilconquhar. It supports a range of interesting plants and breeding Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers. A small pond has been dug. The flowering plants are at their best in June and July. Although this is a small reserve, there is always plenty to see. Practical support would be welcomed with ditch clearing and path strimming, as well as recording on the reserve.

Reserve convener: Albert Lawrie 01333 331154, email [ausldskin@lawrie66.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ausldskin@lawrie66.fsnet.co.uk)

#### **Carlingnose Point** (North Queensferry NT 132 805)

The coastal strip of Carlingnose Point Reserve has a variety of habitats, including calcareous and neutral grassland, scrub, cliffs and rocky shoreline. Locally scarce flowers include Field Gentian, Lesser Meadow-Rue and Bloody Cranesbill. The dense scrub provides cover and nesting sites for many birds. Carlingnose is a good viewpoint to watch the birdlife of the Forth estuary.

Reserve convener: John Done 01383 415731, email [john@thebrae.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:john@thebrae.wanadoo.co.uk)

#### **Cullaloe** (Aberdour NT 186 878)

The reservoir at Cullaloe originally provided the drinking water for Burntisland and now supports several locally and nationally rare plants. Although it lies close to a main road, it provides a place of tranquillity and is a great place to watch a variety of wildlife, especially in the early summer when the reserve is full of life. A range of bird species may be seen throughout the year. There is disabled access to the viewpoint over the reservoir.

Reserve convener: Ross Millar 01383 821332, email [ross.millar@hornbuckle.co.uk](mailto:ross.millar@hornbuckle.co.uk)

#### **Dumbarnie Links** (Lower Largo NO 437 023)

The reserve comprises a small part of the dune system at the east end of Largo Bay. It consists of little else but *calcareous* dune grassland which is a rare habitat hereabouts. It is at its colourful best from May to July with a great variety of flowers, but it illustrates well the enormous diversity of wildlife in natural habitats - 1420 species at the last count. It can be reached by walking east along the Fife Coastal Path from Lower Largo (1 mile) or west from the Shell Bay caravan park (1½ miles). Help with mapping vegetation, monitoring breeding birds and litter-picking would be welcome.

Reserve convener: Gordon Corbet 01333 340634, email [gcorbet@dumbarnie.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:gcorbet@dumbarnie.freeserve.co.uk)

#### **Fife Ness Muir** (Crail NO 637 097)

Known to birdwatchers as 'the Patch', this small area of scrub and trees on the most easterly point of the Fife coast provides excellent cover for migrant birds. Ringing of birds is undertaken throughout the year particularly in the migration season.

Reserve convener: James Cobb, 3 Station Road, Kingsbarns, KY16 8TB.

(Continued overleaf)

**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.

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN AND RESERVES

*(Continued from previous page)*

### **Fleecefaulds Meadow** (Ceres NO 402 087 )

The meadow comprises a base-rich unimproved pasture, a locally rare habitat, and scrub. Globe Flower, here at its only site in east Fife, flowers in May to June and six species of orchid occur. In July and August, the meadow is alive with butterflies and other insects. Thistle pulling and clearance of excess scrub are the main volunteer tasks.

Reserve convener: Alison Irvine 01337 830366, email: [prosen1@btinternet.com](mailto:prosen1@btinternet.com)

### **Kilminning Coast** (Crail NO 631 087)

Kilminning Coast is a strip of coastal grassland with a blackthorn and whin scrub and small areas of fen and saltmarsh. Sheep from the 'flying flock' are used in managing the grassland. Stonechats and Common Whitethroats breed on the reserve. Flowering plants include Northern Marsh Orchid, Bloody Cranesbill and Cowslips. Main management tasks include removing coarse vegetation from the grassland and litter picking.

Reserve convener: Mike Mottram 01333 310913, email [mike.mottram@btinternet.com](mailto:mike.mottram@btinternet.com)

### **Lielowan Meadow** (near Saline NT 092 926)

This meadow is a small fragment of once extensive unimproved neutral to acid grassland. As such it contains a great variety of grassland species, including the northernmost occurrence of Salad Burnet. Lielowan is

situated in the south west of Fife near Saline on the B914. It is generally at its best between May and June. Parking space is limited and the road is narrow, with fast traffic, so please take care. Typical volunteering tasks include occasional litter collecting, surveys of flora and fauna, and thistle pulling.

Reserve convener Alan Harvey 01383 851493, email [alan.harvey2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:alan.harvey2@tiscali.co.uk)

### **West Quarry Braes** (Crail NO 597 087)

A considerable amount of scrub and tree planting has been undertaken on this former refuse tip providing shelter and food for migrant and breeding birds. The area is a constant effort site for ringing birds. The reserve is not suitable for dogs and car parking is very limited with access along a rough, field-side track.

Reserve convener: James Cobb, 3 Station Road, Kingsbarns, KY16 8TB

### **John Wiffen Hide, Cameron Reservoir** (Cameron, by St Andrews NO 479 114)

The Trust also maintains a hide overlooking Cameron Reservoir. The reservoir is good for birds, especially wildfowl in winter. Keys are available to SWT members on request to the hide co-ordinator, Sheila Taylor (see article and contact details below).

*Jean Stewart*

## JOHN WIFFEN HIDE AT CAMERON RESERVOIR

*A summary of the entries from the hide logbook is submitted annually to the Fife Recorder, and a copy of the 2006 list is now on display in the Hide. During 2006 there were very few entries to summarise, though, and possibly the state of the board-walk recently has put key-holders off visiting the hide. You may therefore like to know that all the broken sections were repaired in the autumn by the SWT's Conservation Team.*

*Hide keys are still available from me to SWT and SOC members at a one-off fee of £10. Current and potential key-holders alike are reminded that, though the hide boardwalk*

*has been fixed, the access road beyond Cameron Kirk remains very rough, to be ventured only at minimum speed and with great care.*

*The logbook doesn't of course contain any records from visitors who scan the water from the east dam at the car-park end but don't go along to the hide. If anyone has interesting records from such visits I would be delighted to receive them. Contact me at 23 Huntly Place, St Andrews KY16 8XA, tel 01334 475541, email [st2@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:st2@st-andrews.ac.uk).*

*Sheila Taylor*

## HILL OF TARVIT TREE NURSERY IN GOOD HANDS

Clatto Community Woodlands Group (CCW) volunteered to take over the tree nursery from SWT last summer, and started work there by strimming around both sides of the fence and the central path. We trimmed away some overhanging branches in the SE corner to reduce shading, and removed some of the willowherb. We sold twenty of the larger trees to a kind sponsor to raise funds for a planting at our tiny Gateway woodland on Cults Hill, and planted fifty native pathside shrubs from the nursery in our woodland last November. We chose holly, rose, guelder rose and hawthorn to provide both shelter and food for birds and small mammals. Birch was used with Scots pine to start developing a shelter belt along the very windy south side of the site. All had to be protected from the roe deer which often graze there. The site has a good selection of bird life, and badgers are frequently seen.

CCW is a small group of outdoor enthusiasts based around Cults and Clatto Hills and surrounding villages. It was formed as a company limited by guarantee and a Scottish charity in early spring 2006, when we were generously gifted 3.8 acres of woodland by Mr Edward Baxter of New Gilston.

We welcome helpers on our Sunday Workdays, (usually the second Sunday of the month at 11am) and all are welcome to attend our Events (see our website [www.clatto.org.uk](http://www.clatto.org.uk)).

We publish a bi-annual newsletter, the Clatto Acorn, which gives details of all our activities.

We would be delighted to see SWT members at any of our indoor or outdoor meetings. The Gateway woodland site is on the lane running south from the Cupar to Pitlessie road (A914) over Cults Hill to Kennoway, on the small crest before Downlaw and Clatto Hill. Travelling south towards Kennoway, turn left into a small pull-in just before the right turn to Downfield Farm. The views North are fabulous on a clear day – right into the Grampians. (NO 349 076). Parking for approx. 15 cars.

Volunteers who would like to carry on helping at the tree nursery by growing saplings from seed, tidying up and weeding over there, or by buying young trees for their own gardens to increase our funds, would be warmly welcomed. We will always try to supply small numbers of trees and shrubs for planting in SWT reserves, or to members, as our own requirements are quite limited at present. We aim to buy much more woodland on the hilltop in future, if we can! Please contact me for more details on 01337 831175 or email [daphne@eadingtond.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:daphne@eadingtond.freeseve.co.uk).

*Daphne Eadington*

*(See Programme for June for joint SWT/CCW Guided Walk – Ed.)*

# WHALES IN THE FIRTH OF FORTH

You will probably be aware, as I am, of the recent publicity given to whales in this area. This follows a report from the Green Party of 94 whales of various species seen in the last few months and of orcas visiting the Queensferry area of the Firth of Forth. Is this a new phenomenon? Has it anything to do with climate change? What is the true situation?

The historical records show interesting strandings up the Forth eg a Narwhal in the seventeenth century, false killers stranded in 1935 at Dunbar, St Andrews, Carnoustie and Montrose, orca in St Andrews in 1941 and a 73 foot fin whale at the Bell Rock in 1918. The industrial whaling of the twentieth century reduced the numbers of great whales drastically and very few were seen from 1950 to 1990. Whaling was stopped in 1966 and since then there has been a slow increase in numbers, and sightings are now becoming more frequent but still rare.

The whales we can expect to see more frequently are the rorquals - fin whales, humpback and minke whales. Their prey species are shoaling fish like herring, sprats, spurling and sand-eels. The shape of the Firth with its wide mouth and gradual narrowing concentrates the fish as they go westward so there is a chance that these whales could be seen from the foreshore at Edinburgh (I have seen a minke surface off Granton from the plane coming in to land at Edinburgh airport). Single humpback whales have been seen most years since 1997, often in the area of Inchkeith island and usually in February and March. A fin whale was seen from Aberdeen in 1997, but this year some were seen blowing from Fife Ness and off Dunbar. They may become more common in the future. Minke whales are the most common rorqual and can be seen mostly in the summer and autumn but occasionally in March. They are occasionally seen from the ferry to the Isle of May and have been known to go above the Forth Road Bridge. As many as five can be seen on summer days, but 2006 was a poorer year with fewer sightings.

Sperm whales, pilot whales and beaked whales are deep water

whales and should not be on the continental shelf. When they come into the area they often get into trouble on the shelving beaches and occasionally strand, so it is better that they keep to deeper water. The increased number of sperm whales stranding in recent years is probably an indication of greater numbers of these whales since whaling stopped.

Why are more whales being seen? Many people now have good binoculars or telescopes and are looking out for seabirds passing and are noticing the occasional whale blowing. That is one reason for the increased sightings but may not be the main one.

In 1992 a large school of bottlenose dolphins (60+) came south from the Moray Firth and spent the summer round the Fife coast. They have returned every year since and some are present every month of the year. They are big (12 ft), dark with a big dorsal fin and are often close to the shore and easy to see. Sometimes they are very active, leaping and splashing but other times they lie motionless or move very slowly. Whales are very difficult to identify: I think these large dolphins may account for many of the recent sightings.

Orca sightings have become more frequent in recent years. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1994 three orcas were playing in a tide race by the Forth Rail Bridge. On 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007 the same thing was happening. In August 2006 a group was seen from Fife Ness. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2006 a fishing boat passed three orcas off Anstruther. "The dorsal fin of the male was the height of a man", said the fisherman.

We have over 1000 grey seal pups born on the Isle of May in October to November each year, and the Orcas are known to feed on seals. It is possible that the sight of "man size fins" could become a regular feature of our wildlife in this area.

*Ian Cumming*

## bonkers!

An exciting new initiative in Green Awareness has recently been launched by the **bonkers** gift shop in St. Andrews. Customers are being encouraged to invest in a reuseable and compostable jute bag for all of their shopping needs, thereby reducing the amount of plastic waste which is generated by unnecessary packaging. The bags, which cost £3.95 to buy, will also raise money for the Scottish Wildlife Trust, with £1.50 from each purchase being donated to our local Members Centre funds.

To publicise the project the shop's owner, Lindsey Adam, dressed one of her display windows with a wildlife theme, including panels illustrating the work of

SWT. The launch was covered by a write-up and photo in the local press.

A small working party of the SWT Fife and Kinross Members Centre was set up to decide how to spend this windfall donation, and has agreed to design and print a leaflet on Fife coastal wildlife which can be distributed in local primary schools. It is envisaged that the leaflets would be based on the "I-Spy" books, with children being encouraged to collect points for each animal, bird or plant that they identify. A modest prize will be awarded to each child who manages to complete the set. Watch this space for further details.

*Cliff Davies*

## COMMEMORATIVE TREE PLANTING SCHEME REVAMP

As you will realise from another article in this FAWN, SWT no longer runs the tree nursery at Hill of Tarvit, though thankfully the nursery is still functional and producing trees to plant out. In addition, the three reserves at which our gift tree planting scheme operated are running out of space for new trees. This is probably a sign of the popularity of the gift tree scheme, but still means we have had to re-think.

The opportunity to give a gift or memorial tree has obviously

been appreciated by people in Fife and we are now revamping how we run the scheme. We are developing a partnership with Fife Council to plant trees in various parks around Fife. The Council are currently reviewing the way they manage many of our parks, including looking into more tree planting and wildlife areas and we will work with them to offer gift trees in these new wildlife spaces. The exact details have yet to be worked out and will be publicised later.

*Alison Irvine*

**NATIONAL BREEDING BIRD & WINTERING BIRD ATLASES** are due to be repeated between 2007 and 2011. Fieldwork for the first winter begins in November 2007. To prepare, we hope to run one-day courses locally on Atlas techniques and other fieldwork eg the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Please contact me if (1) you would be willing to assist with Atlas fieldwork (however minor) in Fife and Kinross and (2) you would be interested in attending a course, *Norman Elkins, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Fife & Kinross, Email: [jandnelkins@btinternet.com](mailto:jandnelkins@btinternet.com), Tel: 01334 654348*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### FIFE & KINROSS MC PROGRAMME FOR SUMMER 2007

Non-members are very welcome at all events.

*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](mailto:JeanStewart18@aol.com)*

*To receive email reminders and updates about changes to the programme, including notice of additional events, email Jean and she'll add you to her list. For each of the outings, a local telephone contact number is given, phone if you would like further details.*

#### JUNE

##### **Wildlife Week: Guided walk in Gateway Wood**

Sunday 3 June, 1400, meet at the Gateway site, on the lane running south from the Cupar to Pittlessie road (A914) over Cults Hill to Kennoway, on the small crest before Downlaw and Clatto Hill. Park on the east side of the road just before the right turn to Downfield Farm. (NO 349 076). Please share cars as parking is limited.

Alison Irvine will lead this joint outing with Clatto Community Woodlands to the Gateway Wood. Contact Alison Irvine 01337 830366.

##### **Wildlife Week: Coffee Morning**

Saturday 9 June, Supper Room, Town Hall, St Andrews, 1000 to 1130.

Please come and support this event. Bring your friends. The book stall will be specialising in natural history books. Donations of books, especially with a wildlife interest, baking, plants, bric-a-brac and raffle prizes are welcome. Tickets £1 at door. Please contact Jean Stewart (01334 475763) with offers of help.

##### **Plants at Kilminning**

Wednesday 13 June; Kilminning Coast Reserve, meet in the car park at 1900. (Off road from Crail to Fife Ness, NO 631 088).

In mid June, the reserve should be looking very colourful with its flowering plants. Ruth Ingram will lead this evening walk along the coastal footpath through the reserve. Contact Ruth Ingram 01337 870294.

##### **Midsummer boat trip on the Tay towards Perth**

Saturday 23 June, meet at Broughty Ferry harbour at 1615.

This outing provides an opportunity to see the Tay and the expanse of reedbeds from a different perspective. Trip will last for 3 to 4 hours; bring refreshments and warm clothing. Cost £20 per person; payment by 15 June. Further details from and bookings to Jean Stewart 01334 475763.

#### JULY

##### **Butterflies, Bumblebees and other insects**

Saturday 14 July, Cullaloe Reserve, reserve car park off B9157, 1.5 miles N of Aberdour (NT 186 878 ) at 1400.

Gordon Corbet and Brian Little will lead this outing to look at the diversity of insects and other organisms on this reserve. Families welcome. Contact Gordon Corbet 01333 340634.

#### AUGUST

##### **Moth trapping at Barnyards Marsh Reserve**

Saturday 18 August, meet at the reserve entrance near car park by Kinneuchar Inn, Kilconquhar (NO 484 021), 1930. The marsh is usually wet underfoot; wellies recommended.

Elsbeth Christie and other local moth enthusiasts will be operating a light trap and demonstrating the range of moths to be found at this reserve. Contact Elsbeth Christie 01337 830480.

#### SEPTEMBER

##### **Geology and Lichens**

Sunday 2 September, meet in the car park, Elie Ness ( NO 497 998), 1400.

Peder Aspen, a geologist who has developed a keen interest in lichens will lead this outing. Contact Peder Aspen 01383 822611.

##### **Autumn woodland in Dunnikier Park, Kirkcaldy**

Sunday 16 September, turn off the B981 along the road just east of Kirkcaldy High School, meet at parks depot car park at top of drive ( NT275944 ), 1400.

Led by Kate Morison and Tony Wilson of Fife Ranger Service who will demonstrate the variety of trees and their associated fungi. Suitable for all ages.

Contact Kate Morison 01592 414300 (Lochore Meadows)

##### **National AGM**

Saturday 29 September, Westerwood Hotel, Cumbernauld. Full details in Scottish Wildlife.

## CONTACTS

**Members Centre Website** [www.swt-fife.org.uk](http://www.swt-fife.org.uk)

**Chairman** Jean Stewart, 01334 475763, email [JeanStewart18@aol.com](mailto:JeanStewart18@aol.com)

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**Web-site** Bruce Borrows, 01383 824606, email [scorchie@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:scorchie@dsl.pipex.com)

**Fife Access Forum Contact** Paul Blackburn, 0138 542826, email [paul@blackburn95.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:paul@blackburn95.fsnet.co.uk)

**Acting Reserve Manager East Central** Alan Anderson, SWT, HQ Cramond House, Edinburgh EH4 6NS, 0131 312 4768, mobile 07795 608263, email [anderson@swt.org.uk](mailto:anderson@swt.org.uk)

**SWT Headquarters (Cramond)** 0131 312 7765 Website: [www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)

**Take a Pride in Fife Environmental Information Centre (TAPICEIC) [formerly FERN]** Simon Scott, 01592 413550, email [simon.scott@fife.gov.uk](mailto:simon.scott@fife.gov.uk)

**Perth & Kinross Biological Records Centre** 01738 632488

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Articles, news, snippets from contributors both old and new will be welcome. Please feel free to contact me to discuss your ideas.

**Deadline for contributions 1 June 2007.**



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