

The newsletter of the



# Fife and Kinross Members Centre

Scottish Wildlife Trust



No 72 Winter/Spring 2007-2008

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

*Six years pass very quickly. This is my last column as chairman of the Members' Centre (MC) as I complete my term of office in November. It has been a most enjoyable and interesting period, and I hope my successor will find it equally rewarding.*

*Many people contribute to the Trust in different ways: from looking after our reserves, fundraising, producing FAWN, organising and leading outings, arranging indoor meetings and special events to the basic business of running the Members' Centre. As always we seek new volunteers to support our activities in a range of different ways. If you have time and would like to contribute, please contact a committee member to discuss. I am pleased to report that the MC is in good heart financially, thanks to the fundraising efforts of a number of people at specific events and through our sales goods. I should particularly like to thank Lindsey Adam of 'Bonkers' for the green bag initiative and David Waddell for his 'one man' sales of just about anything.*

*There have been some recent changes in personnel. I am very pleased to welcome our new Reserves Manager, Alistair Whyte, and we look forward to working with and supporting him. Sue Armstrong has resigned*

*from the MC committee and Rosemary Story from organising sales goods; thanks to both of them for their involvement. We welcome Jack Matthews to the committee; it is good to have another member from the western part of our area. Daphne Eadington and Bidy Gray are bringing new ideas to the organising of the programme of indoor meetings and outings. I think it is a sign of a healthy organisation when we have some changes while retaining our core activities.*

*I should like to thank everyone involved with the Trust for all their hard work and I should particularly like to thank my husband, Donald, for his support and patience. Thank you all for making my period as chairman so rewarding and so much fun.*

*I am looking forward now to continuing my involvement chairing the reserves conveners' group and spending more time on our reserves. Additionally my term of office on Council has one more year to run and although I was elected as an individual, not as a MC representative, I shall continue to promote ideas and comments from local members. I hope that we can propose someone from this MC for election next year.*

*Jean Stewart*

## KNOW ABOUT DATA PROJECTORS? WE NEED YOUR HELP

**Our MC needs to move into the digital age and acquire a data projector to complement our trusty, but ageing, slide projector. We need someone to advise on the purchase, to help with applying for a grant to support this and to train committee members to operate the new projector at indoor meetings. If you are able to contribute to any or all of these, please contact Elizabeth Adams, 01333 450267, email [philcana1@btinternet.com](mailto:philcana1@btinternet.com)**

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Midsummer – what a lovely idea. A boat trip on the Tay towards Newburgh and the reed beds on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. We were forewarned that the boat, the Girl Catherine II, was open, but that didn't seem to be a problem. All the better to see the river, the wildlife and the river banks from a new viewpoint.

When we set off at about 5 pm from Broughty Ferry, the weather had changed from miserable to downright unpleasant. Were we downhearted? Certainly not.

At first one suspected that the wildlife had more sense than the humans and had literally gone to ground, but when we eventually reached the islands and reed beds off Newburgh, quite a few birds had been spotted – cormorant, shelduck, sandwich tern, heron, guillemot and oystercatcher, and even an osprey perched on a stick. At one point an excited cry of "Otter!" was heard. "There it goes running along the edge of

the water!" Sadly, the consensus was reached that what we had seen was the boat's wash rippling along the mud.

By this time most of us had consumed the contents of our thermoses, and were perhaps slightly relieved when the boat turned for home. But not before we had seen the bear. The Newburgh Bear, that is. His outline is carved on a grassy hillside to the east of Newburgh, standing upright and holding a staff – part of the heraldic device of the one-time land-owners.

Our boat trip may not have been the Midsummer Night we dreamed of, and we did get rather cold and wet, but the company was enjoyable, the visibility reasonably good and the wildlife obliging.

*Roma Adam*

**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.**

## BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS ON THE FIFE COAST

Since 2003, a team of scientists from the Sea Mammal Research Unit at the University of St Andrews has been studying the behaviour of the bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) that use the coast between Fife Ness and Arbroath. A 6m boat is used to conduct regular surveys during the summer months and take photographs of any dolphins that are encountered. There are only two resident populations of bottlenose dolphins in UK waters: one, made up of about 150 individuals, associated with the Moray Firth and the other with Cardigan Bay in Wales. Individual bottlenose dolphins can be identified by their distinctive dorsal fins, and the photographs taken of the animals encountered along the Fife coast indicate that many of them have been observed before in the Moray Firth. How the individual dolphins move about the coast seems to be variable, because some individuals are seen off Fife and the Moray Firth in the same summer, others visit the waters of Fife but are never seen in the Moray Firth, and vice versa.

The team not only photographs the dolphins it encounters, in order to build up a picture of where different individuals go, it also collects underwater recordings of the sounds they are making to determine the role of their different vocalisations. The location of each vocalising animal relative to the survey boat can be calculated and this makes it possible to relate the observed behaviour of that individual to the sounds it is making.

Bottlenose dolphins produce three different kinds of vocalisations: whistles, pulsed sounds and clicks. Clicks are mainly used for navigation, avoiding obstacles and locating prey. Pulsed sounds are also used in echolocation as well as in a variety of other contexts, such as during aggressive interactions or mating. Whistles are pure communication signals. Recent results from our studies show that the rate at which individuals produce whistles depends on the behavioural context at the time. The highest rates are found when group members are more dispersed. This suggests that whistles help maintain contact between group members. When individuals are swimming in close proximity to each other and in the same direction, they do not produce as many whistles as when animals are moving in different directions or are involved in social interactions. Each animal also has its own individually distinctive signature whistle, which is used when groups of dolphins join together at sea. This allows animals to determine which individuals are present at a particular location.

The team also records the locations and behaviour of other whale and dolphin species found off the Fife coast. Regular sightings of porpoises that appear to be foraging are collected along with any visits by Minke whales. The whales also use the area to forage and are often associated with large aggregations of seabirds feeding at the surface.

*Nicola Quick, John Harwood and Vincent M. Janik*

## FLYING EVER HIGHER

*The flying flock has had a very busy year in more ways than one, for not only have they been grazing eight Trust Reserves, they have also grazed four sites for other people. On top of this they managed to produce the largest crop of lambs yet, about 180, so the flock size is now about 430.*

*Our usual Reserves have all been grazed and the results are very encouraging. At Fleecefaulds the numbers of greater butterfly orchids (over 800) and fragrant orchids (about 200) have both increased considerably and the adder's tongue continues to spread. At Kilminning the northern marsh orchids were a real show in mid-June, but unfortunately because of lambing I never managed to see the bluebells. Cullaloe was grazed hard in the early summer with the intention of opening the sward and hopefully allowing more flowering plants to establish. A few of the sheep have done their usual birch control spell on Bankhead Moss and also at Flanders Moss, where for some reason they do better than at Bankhead. They have also been to Lielowan, Bo'mains Meadow and Cambus Pools.*

*Some of the "flying" visits have been quite far flung. Forty or so are on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) near Carlops in the Borders for the summer, grazing the banks of a disused reservoir for a Trust member. Forty spent the second half of the winter at Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve for East Lothian Council, grazing the edge of the salt marsh to improve*

*conditions for resting waders – I understand some 28 pairs of lapwing nested this spring. This project has proved so successful that this winter about 20 ha are to be grazed and so about 100 sheep will be going there for a longer period.*

*Here locally a few sheep spent the autumn at Gaddon Loch for Fife Council. Others went to Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve (NNR), and this group came away in disgrace, because although they did a good grazing job they also decided to investigate parts of the surrounding forest. Poor Tom Cunningham, the reserve manager, was not best pleased!*

*Looking to the future – Auchtermuchty Common Committee have been successful in obtaining the necessary grants to stock proof the Common and hope to start grazing this back-end. At Flanders Moss our reserve is being passed on to Scottish Natural Heritage to be incorporated in the NNR and it is planned to graze a very much larger area next summer. So it looks as if the flock will have a busy time ahead.*

*Finally, a big thank you to all the volunteers who have helped with the checking.*

**NOTE – Whole or half lambs and sheep are available for freezers. Please contact me on 07739 428224 for details.**

*Tim Brain*

It was a real privilege for me to join the SWT on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2007 on their outing to Cullaloe Wildlife Reserve. Given the rather unsettled summer, we had been none too hopeful of seeing many butterflies on the wing. However, the sun emerged and so did a few ringlets (dark wings edged in white), soon to be joined by the meadow browns, (with single white spot in a black "eye", surrounded by a distinctive flash of orange on the forewing). A short digression was made to view a solitary twayblade, a tall spike of greenish yellow flowers standing in proud isolation on the boggy ground in the lea of the lightly wooded escarpment.

The path was then retraced up steps into rich grassland, the children delighted to see how many tiny toads they could catch, and a few larger ones to boot! Out came the butterfly nets and plastic containers, into which we successfully coaxed several species of bumblebee, including *Bombus lucorum*, (two-banded white tail), *B. lapidarius*, (black-bodied red tail) and the rufous-brown foxy bee, memorably named (*B. pascuorum*). We also discovered the intriguing bee mimic (*Volucella bombylans*), which cunningly changes its colour scheme in accordance with the local bee species. Spotted orchids, marsh thistle, yellow vetchling, ragged robin, zigzag clover and red clover (yes, by the end of the day we could just about tell one from t'other thanks to the experts!) added a patchwork of colour to the grassland. Bright red soldier beetles buzzed around the Umbelliferae, and a species of biting fly was observed (from a safe distance under the glass!).

Some striking moths were caught – for example, the six-spot burnet, with its iridescent blue-black wings dotted with pinkish red spots (and full of cyanide from its diet as a caterpillar on bird's-foot trefoil), and the large yellow underwing, arguably more orange on the lower wing, with a distinctive black border. Less showy, but with intricately marked wings best appreciated under the magnifying glass, was the silver ground carpet moth, triangular in shape and a member of the Geometrid family (alas, there

are so many of them – so it was good to have expert Tim Brain identify it conclusively). This one is best remembered by the brown band across the middle of both wings, like a piece of dark lace.

Though the insects and flowers definitely stole the show, a few birds made their presence felt here and there: a buzzard soaring above the ridge near the car park (one of a breeding pair), long-tailed tits foraging in the rapidly maturing willow trees on the carr, sedge warblers churring in the reeds, and a few people saw redpolls flying overhead; some also reported hearing the rich, liquid song of a blackcap and the reprimanding chatter of whitethroats.

A wander into the woodland revealed several tall drooping spikes of broad-leaved helleborine, a relative rarity, its intricate green flowers not yet fully developed into purplish-tinged blooms. Eventually the group crossed the diverted reservoir, framed by views of the Cullaloe hills and rolling Fife countryside. Bright yellow monkey flower (*Mimulus*) and delicate white water crowfoot were spotted along the margins of the stream. Jars, tubs and nets were eagerly brought out and several aquatic beasties identified: water boatman, mayfly nymphs (characterized by their three tails) and stonefly nymphs (with two tails); caddis fly larvae, camouflaged by their distinctive portable outer casing made from fragments of stone and plants and held together with silk, as well as a common darter female dragonfly, newly emerged, with yellow and brown striped thorax and helicopter-like wings.

Whether it be the water life, woodland or marshland that interests you, Cullaloe has a great variety of habitats on offer. I certainly came away at the end of the afternoon with the satisfaction of having taken many new sightings on board, and having noted how carefully all the creatures inspected had been returned to their habitats. So a big thank you in particular to Alison Irvine and Tom and Bidy Gray for leading the expedition and sharing such diverse and detailed knowledge with us.

Clare Elder

### GONE BONKERS!

By now many of you may have seen the bright, lime-green **bonkers**' reusable and compostible bags from the sale of each of which SWT benefits to the tune of £1.50. A membership leaflet is placed inside each bag and donations to SWT can be made at point of sale. The first fruits of this generous exercise were recently handed over to Jean Stewart by Lindsey Adam, owner of **bonkers**. On a cloudy but bright day in early July the figure of £675 was scratched into the surface of the west sands beach in St Andrews in readiness for the arrival of photographers from the St Andrews Citizen and the Dundee Courier who came to record the scene; a short article (and welcome publicity) duly appeared in both papers. As often happens with acts of generosity, **bonkers** is also benefiting from the scheme, winning the 'best retail initiative', a national gift industry award. Lindsey is also finding that, as the bags carry the magic words 'St Andrews', sales, particularly to foreign visitors, are exceeding her expectations. It is hoped that this addition to SWT funds will be put towards the production of a new members centre leaflet and also used to support work on reserves in Fife.

Janet Butler

VISIT YOUR WEBSITE [www.swt-fife.org.uk](http://www.swt-fife.org.uk)

A significant outreach activity in Fife and Kinross Members Centre is the provision and updating of our very own website. This has been on the go now for about seven years and focuses on activities and details that are unique to our Members Centre (MC) and our part of the country. This is important since it not only can be seen by wildlife enthusiasts both locally and all over Scotland, but delivers up to the minute information for research or for anyone planning to visit our area from anywhere in the world.

The site provides local geographic details; information about visiting each MC reserve; contact details of MC activists; schedule of activities in the MC; details of publications either owned or shared by the MC; web links to other relevant sites; up to the minute MC news. This FAWN newsletter is another regular on-line feature.

So please visit the website. But remember that to keep it up-to-date, we always need news and information from members. Also if you can think of another section that you'd like to see on line, then please contact me, and I can see about adding it.

Bruce Borrows, 01383 824606, email [aquilazilla@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:aquilazilla@dsl.pipex.com)

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### FIFE & KINROSS MC PROGRAMME FOR WINTER/SPRING 2007-2008 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 Daphne Eadington, 01337 831175, email [daphne@eadingtond.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:daphne@eadingtond.freereserve.co.uk)*

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

*Please note that there will be an admission charge of £2 for all indoor events, to help defray the costs*

#### NOVEMBER

##### **Members Centre AGM and talk, 'Counting birds in Fife and beyond'**

*Tuesday 6 November 19.30, Auchtermuchty Town Hall*

The Members Centre AGM will be followed by a talk by Norman Elkins, a well known bird watcher and bird recorder in Fife. He will give an illustrated talk about surveys organised by the British Trust for Ornithology on both garden birds and the new national atlas. Contact Kate Morrison 01337 828058.

#### DECEMBER

##### **The Effect on Marine Mammals of Increasing Oceanic Noise**

*Wednesday 5 December 19.30, St Andrews Town Hall Supper Room*

Professor John Harwood of the Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews, will talk about understanding and reducing the risk to marine mammals from noise 'pollution' in the oceans. Contact Daphne Eadington 01337 831175.

#### JANUARY

##### **A Nip in the Air - Clatto in Winter**

*Sunday 6 January 11 00. Meet at the Gateway Wood, Cults Hill, Fife (NO 347076), almost opposite the track to Downfield Farm*

Walk to look for migrant swans, geese and other water birds on Clatto Reservoir, and to enjoy the fine hilltop views. OK for older children, but no dogs, please, because of sheep. Joint Meeting with Clatto Community Woodland. Collection for refreshments. Contact Daphne Eadington 01337 831175.

##### **Wildlife around the Carlingnose Reserve**

*Thursday 24 January 19 30, St Peter's Episcopal Church Hall, Hope Street, Inverkeithing*

John Done, Reserve Convenor, will give a talk on the local flora and fauna. Contact Dorothy Macdonald 01383 414194.

#### FEBRUARY

##### **Sights, Sounds and Activities of the Jupiter Project, Grangemouth**

*Wednesday 20 February 19.30, the Lomond Centre, Glenrothes*

Stephen Owen, SWT Jupiter Ranger, will give an insight into the activities of this remarkable wildlife-rich, urban reserve in the heart of Grangemouth. Joint Meeting with the Pitcairn Society. Contact Alison Irvine 01337 830366.

#### MARCH

##### **Wee Hooligans! - the Life and Times of the Roe Deer**

*Wednesday 5 March 19.30, Pitlessie Village Inn*

A speaker from the Scottish Branch of the Deer Society will give an illustrated talk on the life cycle of the Roe Deer and other native species, explaining how management is necessary to protect young trees. Joint meeting with Clatto Community Woodland. Contact Daphne Eadington 01337 831175.

##### **The Falls of Clyde Wildlife Reserve**

*Thursday 27 March 19.30, Kinross Church Centre, Kinross*

With spectacular waterfalls, deep gorges and ancient woodlands, the Falls of Clyde are a strong draw for people and wildlife alike. Find out about the natural and social history of this fascinating area. This illustrated talk will be given by Steve Blow, former Conservation Manager for Fife, now Reserves Manager for the south of Scotland. Joint meeting with Kinross Camera Club. Contact Julie Close 01592 840485.

#### APRIL

##### **Sea Eagles in Fife**

*Thursday 24 April, 19.30. Advance notice so you can keep the date free for this exciting topic. Details next FAWN*

Claire Smith, RSPB East Scotland Eagle Officer, on the reintroduction of these wonderful birds in Fife.

#### 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) (until 6 Nov 07)

**Vice Chairman** Biddy Gray, 01592 752372, email [tomandbidy@btinternet.com](mailto:tomandbidy@btinternet.com)

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**Membership Secretary** Tricia Towler, 01577 864749, email [triciatowler@aol.com](mailto:triciatowler@aol.com)

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**Reserves Manager East Central Scotland** Alistair Whyte, Units 5/7 Napier Way, Wardpark North, Cumbernauld G68 0EH, Tel 01236 617115, Mobile 07920 468562 email [awhyte@swt.org.uk](mailto:awhyte@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 (TAPIFEIC) [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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**Deadline for contributions 1 January 2008**



Printed by West Port Print & Design, St Andrews

The pulp used in the manufacture of this paper is from renewable timber produced on a fully sustainable basis.