



Fife Area Wildlife News

The newsletter of the

Fife and Kinross Members Centre

Scottish Wildlife Trust



No 76 Summer 2009

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Our organisation is changing as some people, having given of their time and energy, move on and others step forward to take their place. The good thing about this is that the new people bring fresh ideas and can re-energise the group. There are two new committee members, Prof John Harwood, Tricia Towler and, from the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Tony Wilson; all of us are looking forward to working with them. Janet Butler has stepped down from the committee and I thank her for all her work on our behalf. She has been an excellent committee member who has been willing to take on many different tasks in a quiet but competent manner over many years. I hope that as an ordinary member she will continue to lend her skills and share her knowledge when needed.

Mike Mottram, who is the reserve convener at Kilminning Reserve in Crail, has decided to stand down. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his work in caring for this reserve. This means however that we need someone to take over this role; if you feel it could be you, please do get in touch with me. Ideally it would be someone in the local area who would visit the reserve regularly, help with species monitoring and continue to encourage local community interest.

David Waddell raises hundreds of pounds for the Trust selling plants and bric-a-brac at sales. He is appealing for any fresh plants and items for sale that you can contribute. Plants don't have to be neatly potted up; if you're splitting things in your garden they'll survive in a plastic bag and David will deal with them. Contact a member of the committee to make arrangements for uplift.

Coffee mornings are always enjoyable occasions and good fundraisers with various sales stalls. One of the most popular stalls is Home Baking- but we are short of bakers! If you could contribute a cake, batch of scones, tray bake or whatever your speciality is, please contact me. Our next Coffee Morning is in June at the Town Hall, St Andrews. You could also help – and have fun - by being on a stall for an hour or two.

You can contact me by phone on 01333 450 267 or email philcana1@btinternet.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Elizabeth Adams.

WELCOME to all 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.

DIARY OF AN ANCIENT WOOD—2

A wet August rolled on to a wet September. But, on a humid windy September day, some one hundred swallows and house martins had a feeding frenzy in the lea of the wood. I stood just inches away oblivious to them, as they "clicked" the insects blown from the trees and flushed by my hound from the undergrowth. . What a life enhancing experience. Next day all had flown to winter quarters.

Mole arrived in October rooting for grubs in the dense leaf mould and hedgehog has taken up winter home in one of my log piles. Field mice abound seeking refuge including my cottage.

A monster dead beech tree housing a tawny owl's nest fell in October gales. Owl still resides in wood, hear him most nights, field mice are probably dinner. Poor autumn fall leaf colour and poor fungal show as the "Indian Summer" of a warm dry September spell didn't appear. Just a few bracket fungi on an old birch and some unidentified fungi on woodland floor.

Good succession of tree seedlings which have been protected, junior trees thriving and adults have fruited well, encouraging all including my jam cupboard of crab apple jelly. Fortunately no cattle in the wood this year so seedlings have a chance to establish.

Then suddenly, winter struck on 29th November. All

quiet, hoar frost decorated trees in exquisite white beauty, leaves crisp underfoot, a commotion in the trees appeared, fieldfares had arrived and resident birds objected with a cacophony of confrontation and confusion. Cattle are now indoors having fed well on munching my sweet peas and honeysuckle over the garden fence. I have planted hundreds of native bulbs and woodland plants to encourage diversity and I look forward to watching their outcome next year. Above all the wood is sustainable and productive; the SWT must encourage such woods.

Jamie Lyall

BTO/SOC/BIRDWATCH IRELAND BIRD ATLAS 2007-11

The first year of this landmark project is now complete and preliminary results are to hand. The average number of species so far recorded per 10-km square in winter and breeding seasons are 91 and 83 respectively. In the latter season the average number of species confirmed breeding is 33 per 10-km square. This is one aspect that will need some hard work in the next three summers (or better still, search your notebooks for fillers from this past summer). Whatever records you can muster, please let me have them – all I need is a date, map ref., place name, species, breeding status and observer's name. Ask me for forms, or go online to www.birdatlas.net. **Don't hesitate! PLEASE!** Norman Elkins, Bird Atlas 2007-11 Regional Organiser, Fife & Kinross, Email: jandelkins@btinternet.com, Tel 01334 654348

MAN AND THE SEA

The World Ocean is a vast system in constant motion, driven by the heat gain at low latitudes and by heat loss at high latitudes; cooling is particularly important because it causes the water to sink in the far north, drawing surface water towards the poles. At the same time, the Earth is constantly spinning eastwards on its N-S axis, displacing surface water westwards at low latitudes where the effect, the Coriolis force, is greatest. The result is the Global Conveyor (to view diagram, see *FAWN online*) which carries the waters around the global system of oceans in the course of a thousand years. This system has operated for tens, if not hundreds, of millions of years without substantial changes. Now, however, "global warming" may change the balance between warming and cooling: there are signs that the North Sea is warming faster than waters off the west coast – good news for bathers in St Andrews, less so for holiday-makers in the Hebrides! Is this a sign that the Gulf Stream is weakening?

So, we are dealing with a single, world-wide system - events in one part may affect anywhere else in the world. It is a highly developed system that ensures changing conditions in the water as it flows, from cold to warm, from light to dark, from poor to rich in nutrients, but always well oxygenated. This makes it an extraordinarily productive biological system, although within it there are also desert areas as there are on land. It was the environment in which life began and it remains the primary domain for most major groups of organisms.

But to mankind the sea is a foreign environment - to be feared or challenged, to be the stuff of legend or

simply to be ignored. We can never belong there, but we make use of it in many, many ways: nations need to secure their boundaries; our vessels need to sail in safety and with certainty; successful fishing depends on finding and catching the creatures we hunt; in aquaculture, we need to know how to farm the sea; we must be cautious in the disposal of waste in the sea; and we have a responsibility to pass on the beauty and diversity of the sea and the life it contains.

Our various marine activities are often in conflict, and Governments have tended to rely on separate management systems – for fishing, aquaculture, waste disposal, etc. – which do little to address the underlying problem of how to manage the seas for best overall results. The problems with this sectoral approach have been particularly apparent in the case of conservation: various measures for protecting marine areas, analogous to SSSIs, National Parks etc. on land, have been proposed but with limited success. This is partly because it is difficult to set firm boundaries in a fluid environment, and partly because it may be difficult to determine rights and responsibilities in the sea where ownership rarely applies.

A decade ago, the phrase, Integrated Coastal Zone Management, was anathema to government. Now it is openly being discussed and the concept lies at the centre of legislation for marine management currently being proposed by both the UK and the Scottish Governments. We can truly hope that this particular "tide" will start to turn in 2009!

Jack Matthews

RESERVE MANAGER'S UPDATE

One of the most important aspects of reserve management is recording species. Without knowing what is on our reserves, and without being able to track trends and changes, we would not be able to effectively target our management.

The Trust commissions regular professional surveys, and our reserves which are also SSSIs are monitored on a regular basis by SNH, but we need more than this if we are to maintain a good knowledge of the species we look after. We are fortunate in Fife in having a host of dedicated reserve conveners, who provide detailed data for their reserves. Whether it is the butterfly transect at Cullaloe, or the invertebrate monitoring at Dumbarnie, all the records generated are recorded at SWT headquarters where the data can be accessed at any time.

It is particularly important to be able to produce records when we are undertaking habitat management projects. Funders often want to see evidence of success, and we need to be able to demonstrate that our policies and plans are having an effect. We are undertaking a programme of coppicing at Cullaloe Wildlife Reserve to ensure a diverse scrub structure and to create open boggy areas. This should provide ideal habitat for snipe, and, in the willow scrub, warblers. The management works will be accompanied

by a programme of monitoring to enable us to ascertain whether we have been successful and to target our actions in the future. Similarly, we are embarking on the next stage of the project to restore the raised bog at Bankhead Moss through a range of management techniques. The best way to know if we are being successful is to record the presence or absence of species associated with this habitat type.

The good news is that recording can be done by anyone. You don't have to be a reserve convener, and you don't need any in-depth specialist knowledge. Just take a note of the species you see when you take a walk round any of our reserves and send the records to the convener, and/or to myself. You will be helping to build up a picture of the wildlife that uses our reserves, and helping to influence future management. We will also be working with the newly restored Fife Nature Record Centre (see the last issue of *FAWN* for details) to ensure that species records are put to the best use. If you would like any further information on how your birdwatching, botanising or moth-spotting can help us manage our reserves, please let me know.

Alistair Whyte

Moth trapping with Tim Brain

We do not have very good records for the moths on our reserves and so it was decided we should do something about it. We have applied for a grant from "Awards for All" for a Moth Trap and generator; and so in anticipation I have stuck my neck out and agreed to arrange a series of trapping nights. All welcome.

The suggested meeting times should give time to set the traps up and have a look for some of the species that start to fly at dusk. The weather can be quite a factor in the success of mothing, and so if you have any doubts as to whether we will be going out or not, please give me a ring on my mobile 07739428224.

It can get quite cold so I would suggest bringing some warm clothing, just in case, and a torch. We will meet in the Reserve car park (see our website or Reserves leaflets for directions), except for Barnyards where we will meet at the Reserve entrance near car park opposite Kinneuchar Inn, Kilconquhar.

All Fridays except Sat 6 June when we return to Cullaloe at 10.00 am to see what we caught the previous night

22 May – Fleecefaulds - 9.00 pm; 5 June – Cullaloe - 9.30 pm; 6 June (Wildlife Week) - Cullaloe 10.00 am; Sat 20 June – Cullaloe - 10.00 pm; 3 July - Barnyards Marsh - 10.00 pm; 17 July - Dunbarnie Links - 10.00 pm; 31 July - Bankhead Moss - 9.30 pm; 14 August – Fleecefaulds - 9.00 pm; 28 August – Kilminning - 8.30 pm; 10 September - Cullaloe - 8.00 pm; 25 September – Fleecefaulds - 7.30 pm.

Tim Brain

SMELLY, SPINY—AND SPREADING

Even before I opened the envelope from Jean Stewart, I knew what she'd sent me to identify because of the distinctive odour. Out tumbled a piece of a pale green plant with inconspicuous flowers and a smell that is variously termed foetid, pungent or – incredibly – like garden cress; however the most apt adjective may well be porcine, relating to the animal after which it is named: swinecress. Since then I've come across it in waste ground in a number of places, sometimes almost forming a carpet, and, in Jean's neighbours' case, their lawn – it is definitely here to stay.

A second low-growing plant that is beginning to establish itself especially by paths is the quaint pirri-pirri-bur, the Maori name in its homeland. This is not much to look at until it forms its typical heads full of spines, and then it becomes a nuisance to furry animals (and to humans). There is a story by a well-known botanist of his dog becoming "fantastically (in its original meaning) beburred after a short run" in an area where the plant had found a home.

Another antipodean alien is also fast spreading: the more prosaically named least yellow sorrel; around my home in west Kirkcaldy every fourth garden or so seems to have some of this low plant with typical oxalis leaves, small yellow flowers with thread-like stems, nestling in any cracks in paving, on lawns and in borders. A sibling is slightly bigger and has purple foliage; both are very fond of green-houses and like all self-respecting weeds, are very difficult to eradicate. You'll come across one or more of this trio soon.

George Ballantyne

EDEN ESTUARY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE—A NEW APPROACH

In August 2008 some 450 people converged on Guardbridge to attend the Eden Estuary Open Day. This event was to mark the 30th anniversary of the site's designation as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Since 1971 and designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Eden estuary has gradually been recognised as one of the most important sites on the east of Scotland for migrating and wintering birds, culminating in 2000 with designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA).

LNR designation in 1978 set out objectives to increase public awareness and interaction with the reserve whilst ensuring the 'primacy' of nature. Protecting the site through monitoring and legislation has been highly successful, ensuring the success of the estuary as a nature reserve.

However, in response to the dynamic environment of the Eden Estuary moves have been made to address issues that face the reserve in the 21st century. Issues such as changes in habitat, coastal erosion, species decline and climate change.

To address coastal erosion, an innovative beach nourishment took place at Outhead in 2001, and was replenished in 2008. Then 2005 saw the reserve become a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and part of the Natura network. Recognising the importance of the estuarine habitat has led to a more holistic view of the estuary as a working ecosystem, affording greater protection and import to the wider reserve.

In 2006 wetland was created at Coble Shore, installing

freshwater pools and scrapes to increase habitat. In 2008 the management objectives were revised to take into account the changing influence on the reserve. St Andrews University Sediment Ecology Group have been commissioned to assess the current status and future impacts on the reserve and to define recommendations for mitigating these impacts.

In April 2009, the site management by the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust will move from pilot into full working status and the ranger service and reserve should benefit from this state-of-the-art delivery of countryside services. The Trust has charitable status and the ability to tap in to funding and support previously unavailable to Fife Council.

FCCT supported by reserve stakeholders, including SWT, is seeking new and sustainable solutions to the issues that face the reserve. These include a review of coastal management to improve the structure and function of the estuary; an increased interface between the reserve and the local community; investment in a new Eden Estuary Centre; improving the experience for visitors and extending the reserve to address habitat changes and support for breeding birds.

The Eden Estuary is of ecological and economical importance locally and internationally. It is intrinsically valuable for its landscape, species and the functional services it provides for wildlife and communities alike. Naturally a bird spectacle and effluent plant, roost and playground, breeding ground and laboratory, bird larder and carbon sink, it is at once beautiful and useful. A true natural asset.

Ronald Strachan, Fife Ranger Service,



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



FIFE & KINROSS MC PROGRAMME FOR SUMMER 2009 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 Elizabeth Adams, email philcana1@btinternet.com, tel 01333 450267.

For outdoor events sturdy footwear and suitable clothing are advised. A local tel. no. is given below for each outdoor event, if you need further details.

There will be an admission charge of £2 for indoor events to defray costs unless otherwise stated.

MARCH

Space, time and tide – an Early Spring Walk beside the Eden Estuary

Saturday 21 March, 1.30 pm, Eden Estuary Centre, south side of Guardbridge Papermill, (NO 451 192)

An excellent chance to see waders, winter visitors and other birds of sea and shore, with Ranald Strachan, Ranger, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust. Contact Ranald on 07985707593.

Magic Moments—Travels with my Camera

Thursday 26 March, 7.30 pm, Kinross Church Centre, Kinross

Margaret Coulls, traveller and wildlife photographer. Joint meeting with Kinross Camera Club. No admission charge, donation for refreshments.

APRIL

Children's Outdoor Event

Thursday 16 April, Cockshaugh Park, St Andrews. Admission by pre-booking at Bonkers, Market St, St Andrews (tel 01334 473919) from 6th April

There will be various games and activities with a wildlife theme.

Walk at Morton of Pitmilley, Kingsbarns, an eco-friendly farm

Sunday 19 April, 2.00 pm, Morton of Pitmilley (NO 582 128), turn off A917 at Kingsbarns opposite Church, up Station Road towards Dunino to Pitmilley sign on right. Ample car parking

Jean Stewart will lead a walk on this eco-friendly farm, which is carefully managed for diversity. Many opportunities to see wildlife: skylarks, buzzards, early spring flowers. Contact Jean Stewart 01334 475763.

MAY

The Microscopic Inhabitants of your Garden Pond

Wednesday 6 May, 7.00 – 9.00 pm Adam Smith College, Kirkcaldy, no charge

Micro-Pond Dipping – Optical Microscopy with Dr Deborah Cottam. Maximum 16 places, booking essential, contact Deborah email deborahcottam@adamsmith.ac.uk or 01333 422116.

CONTACTS—No list this time, but see previous FAWNs (your own or website) or contact the Secretary, Deborah Cottam, tel 01333 422116, or email deborahcottam@adamsmith.ac.uk

Nothing at Fleecefaulds Reserve Ceres (NO 402 087)

Friday 22 May, 9 pm

First in a series of nothing events led by Tim Brain. Details on inside page.

Visit to Loch of the Lowes SWT Reserve

Saturday 30 May, meet 11.00 am Reserve Visitor Centre, Dunkeld (NO 050440). Shared cars: to offer or request a lift, contact Daphne Eadington 01337 831175

Osprey nesting time at Loch of the Lowes.

JUNE

Wildlife Week: Coffee Morning

Saturday 6 June, Supper Room, Town Hall, St Andrews, 10.00 to 12.00 noon

Please come and support this event. Bring your friends. Donations of books, especially with a wildlife interest, baking, plants, bric-a-brac and raffle prizes are welcome. Tickets £1.50 at door. Please contact Deborah Cottam (01333 422116) with offers of help.

Wildlife Week Nothing with Tim Brain

Cullaloe Reserve Aberdour (NT 186 878)

9.30 pm Friday 5 June trapping and 10.00 am Saturday 6 June return to check on what was caught the previous night. (Further nothing events listed on inside page.)

Boat Trip to Isle of May from Anstruther Harbour

Saturday 20 June, reservations and details from Jack Matthews, matthews.oban@tiscali.co.uk or 01577 861066. Please book your place by 31 March.

JULY

Cullaloe Walk

Saturday 11 July, 2 pm, Cullaloe Reserve, Aberdour, (NT 186 878)

Birds, flowers, butterflies and moths, led by Gordon Corbet. Contact Grahame Boath on 07739320990.

AUGUST

Cullaloe Reserve Open Day for All the Family

Date to be confirmed, Cullaloe Reserve, Aberdour (NT 186 878)

Contact Grahame Boath, Reserve Warden, on 07739320990.

WILD FLOWERS IN FIFE AND KINROSS—There are still some copies available of George Ballantyne's checklist, published in 2002. Copies can be obtained from George (tel 01592 263 135 or email gballantyne@live.co.uk) for £5, including p&p. All proceeds to SWT.

EDITOR OF FAWN

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

Deadline for contributions 1 June 2009



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