

Fife and Kinross Members Centre



Fife Area Wildlife News

No 83 Autumn 2011



Message from Sonia Daniels, Chair



If a good fairy had granted me a wish for my time as Chair, that wish would have been to see an increase in the engagement of young people with the work of the Trust in particular, and with nature conservation in general. The next generation is our future and, without their enthusiasm, energy and commitment, our best efforts will be in vain. Well, I

now have two reasons to believe in fairies.

First came an offer from a young St Andrews member, Susie Clements, to do a sponsored coast to coast Wainwright walk with her father in the summer holidays, in aid of SWT. Susie succeeded splendidly in this aim, with support from Trust HQ and the Members Centre.

Read all about it inside.

Second was a proposal from St Andrews Botanic Gardens to collaborate with SWT and the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust and start a Junior Wildlife Club for 8 to 14 year olds. The Club will run one Saturday morning per month during term time. All credit to Nikki Macdonald, Education Officer of the Botanic Gardens, and our own Deborah Cottam for turning this fantastic idea into a reality; also to the volunteers from all three organisations who are generously giving their time and expertise. As I write, publicity for the Club has barely begun, and already potential members are signing up. More of this exciting development next time....

Both these initiatives came from St Andrews, an area where many of our members are based. However, if anyone elsewhere in Fife or Kinross has a good idea but is not sure how it can get off the ground, please contact me or any member of the Members Centre committee: we will do our best to help you.

BIRD ATLAS 2007-11

Most of you will be aware of Bird Atlas 2007-11, a cooperative effort between the BTO, SOC and BWI (BirdWatch Ireland). Fieldwork ended in July after an incredibly successful four years. The whole of Britain and Ireland has been surveyed on a 10km square grid by over 17,000 participants who recorded 202 million birds of 567 species. Here in Fife and Kinross, a total of 330 tetrads (2kmx2km squares) were surveyed intensively within our 23 10km squares (84% of the region's tetrads). 400 volunteers submitted 132,000 records of 194 species in winter and 168 in the breeding season. SWT members have played their part in gathering data and my thanks go to all of them. If you have any breeding records that have not been added to the Atlas, please get in touch with me. Even at this late stage, your record may fill a missing gap on the final maps.

Alongside the national Atlas, we have been surveying every tetrad in the old county of Kinross to produce a local Atlas which will complement the Fife Bird Atlas published in 2003. All 71 tetrads have been completed so that the fieldwork is virtually finished.

Maps produced for us by the BTO Atlas team will go a long way towards the completed Kinross Atlas, which is likely to be in electronic form initially with the option of a hard copy later.

BirdAtlas 2007-11 is the third national breeding bird Atlas, and the second winter atlas, since the 1960s, the results being vital to conservation. Work at the 10km

square level will show the distribution of each species while the more intensive tetrad surveys will reveal their relative abundance. Marked changes have already been demonstrated for many species. Lapwings (**photo below**) and Spotted Flycatchers have declined markedly in the past 20 years, while Buzzards have spread into almost all parts of the country. There will be many more interesting surprises - some pleasant, others worrying - when the Atlas is finally published in 2013. We look forward to it.



Norman Elkins, Atlas Regional Organiser, Fife & Kinross

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Reserves Manager's Update, by Alistair Whyte

Looking back at my last update for FAWN, I see that we had a very warm, dry spring. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the summer. However, despite the weather, there has been lots of activity on the Fife reserves over the last few months. Bankhead Moss has been a focus of attention, with the final parts of our funded work being carried out. We have stabilised the hide, installed a new bridge allowing access from the south side of the reserve across a ditch, and will over the winter be erecting bird and bat boxes. Jean Stewart, the reserve convener, organised a walk in August on the reserve which was attended by 19 people, a great turn out and a good chance to discuss our work on the site. We are currently looking at carrying out some more wetland creation work to the south of the raised bog itself. I hope to have more details on this in time for my next update.

At Cullaloe, the reserve warden, Grahame Boath,

found small pearl-bordered fritillary, a first for the reserve and for the area. Its caterpillar feeds on common dog-violet, of which there is plenty on the site, and hopefully we will see this butterfly back on the site next year. Also at Cullaloe we have upgraded the section of path along to the viewing screen.

We have had researchers from various universities out on the grassland sites this year, carrying out a range of botanical research and we hope to be able to use some of the results from these projects when they are available. We also held a very successful botanical monitoring refresher day for volunteers interested in helping with monitoring the Fife reserves. I am now in the process of gathering together all the data generated by our volunteers.

Our Flying Flock have spread their wings and, as well as grazing our grassland reserves, are now also helping to maintain the new grassland at the St Ninian's surface coal mine next to the M90 as part of a major restoration project which will transform the site.

THE VALUE OF WILDLIFE RECORDING

By Alexa Tweddle, Information Officer,

Fife Nature Records Centre

Many people enjoy seeing wildlife, from the animals that visit the garden to ducks on a local pond or wildflowers that appear on roadside verges. But few people make note of the wildlife they see and fewer still provide details of these sightings to the local biological records centre. Yet these sightings are vital to conserve nature: species and habitats cannot be protected if there is no information about where they occur.

Fife Nature Records Centre is the biological records centre for Fife and plays an active role in conservation of local wildlife. One of the key priorities of the centre is to maintain an up-to-date information resource on the status and distribution of plants, animals and habitats across the Kingdom. This information can be used to aid identification of sites that are particularly important for wildlife, to identify changes in species numbers and possible causes and to inform local and national conservation policies. And this work would not be possible without the valued contribution of local people whose knowledge of where a species can be found and the value of a particular place is essential.

As well as being the first step for nature conservation, recording wildlife is hugely enjoyable for people of all ages and abilities. Wildlife recording can be undertaken individually or as a group and can be part of everyday activities such as watching the variety of birds that utilise the garden birdfeeder or walking in a local park.

All that's required are four basic pieces of information – the four W's:

- **What did you see?** This requires no special expertise: records of so-called 'common' species are extremely valuable as these tend to be under-recorded.
- **Where did you see it?** This can be a location name but a grid reference or an annotated map is even better.
- **When did you see it?** This is the date on which the sighting was made (ideally in the dd/mm/yyyy format).
- **Who are you?** It is useful to have your contact details in case we need to contact you about your sighting.

Any other information, such as whether the animal you saw was male or female, juvenile or adult, adds to the value of the record. And even records of dead animals are useful in understanding species distribution and dispersal.

Simply fill out the on-line recording form at:

http://www.fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/Online-Recording-Form_134_135_152.html

For more general information on biological recording please visit the Fife Nature Records Centre "Biological Recording" page of the Fife Coast & Countryside Trust website:

www.fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk

There you will find more information on wildlife recording and an on-line form to make submission of wildlife records quick and easy.

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO SUSIE!

As you may know from previous publicity, our Members Centre is to be the beneficiary of an heroic fund-raising venture by 14 year old Susie Clements, a student at St Leonard's School in St Andrews.

Here is Susie's own account of her expedition:

"Several weeks ago my dad and I started out on Wainwright's Coast to Coast, a 200 mile walk from the tiny village of St Bee's on the west coast of northern England, to the equally small fishing port of Robin Hood's Bay on the east. It was a journey that took us across three national parks, meeting many different people along the way, from the Irish to the North Sea.

The first section of the walk led us through Cumbria and the Lake District. The most challenging moments of the whole walk were mainly collected on the paths and slopes of this area's mountains, whether when plodding up the steep stone-stepped incline at the romantically remote Black Sail Youth Hostel, several kilometres past Ennerdale Water, or when scrambling down the worn away path through the grass on the back of the highest point of the walk, Kidsty Pike, in a real thigh-burning descent. However, thanks in no part to consistent, excellent weather, the dramatic, panoramic views of the District's mountains, valleys, and lakes, were (just about!) worth the considerable effort of the ascents and descents.

The people we kept meeting, by now becoming familiar faces, would share their stories with us on the walk and in the evening at the pub, or on one occasion, in the hostel we stayed in, always cheering me up when the going was hard.



Next we came to the Yorkshire Dales, marked by a steady climb to the ancient yet slightly 'weird' Nine Standards, nine stone cairns thought to have been built thousands of years ago for a reason still argued over today. The sweltering heat forced us

over the boggy plateau that followed, and down into the oasis of Ravenseat Farm, where refreshments and scones were available for sweaty travellers. The next few days took us into the gorgeous hay-meadows of the Swaledale, stopping off for two lovely ice creams at the village green at Reeth, and then through to the historic market-town of Richmond.



A 24 mile slog of a day followed, across the Vale of York, from where we ascended into our last national park, the North York Moors, the remotest and stormiest section of the walk (although the weather had held out until then). The last day was epic, with hail, thunder and lightning blocking our first proper view of the North Sea, on the moorland before the descent down to the cliffs south of Whitby. I was soaked through, and we stopped at a pub and rested for a while, before completing the home straight along the coastline, the sun coming out in the early evening to welcome us to Robin Hood's Bay, with all the tourists and holiday-goers there enjoying it, having no idea what achievement was happening for one person as she dipped her boot in the North Sea and finished the two week long Coast to Coast. I had done it!"

Susie has already received a letter of thank you from SWT HQ along with a certificate of gratitude from Allan Bantick (Chairman of the Council of Trustees). There will also be an article on her challenge in the national Wildlife WATCH magazine, a first for the Scottish Wildlife Trust! Susie raised just over £750 – a really impressive total – and this will go towards two projects involving our reserves. Half will be put towards a hedge laying project at Fleecefaulds. The plan is to plant a boundary hedge at Fleecefaulds to allow for easier grazing through preventing stock escaping and enhance biodiversity through providing a hedgerow, a rare and decreasing habitat. The remaining share will be used to provide nesting boxes for Barn and Tawny Owls as well as some bat boxes.

It's not too late to donate, if you haven't already! Just visit Susie's JustGiving page - <http://www.justgiving.com/susiecoast2coast> or send a text message to 70070 - text SWTR14 [£2/£5/£10] - eg SWTR14£5).

EVENTS AUTUMN/ WINTER 2011

Any suggestions? Able to lead a walk? Give a talk? Get in touch with Deborah Cottam.



All welcome. We advise sturdy footwear and suitable clothing for outdoor events. There will be a £2 admission charge for indoor events unless stated otherwise.

Thurs 17th November 2011 7.30pm Fife and Kinross Reserves Showcase

AGM (see below) followed by short briefings on some SWT Reserves in Fife and Kinross. *Lumsden Memorial Hall, Freuchie (no admission charge).*

Monday 12th December 2011 7.30pm Dumbarrie Links: A Microcosm of Life on Earth

An illustrated talk by Gordon Corbet, convenor of this Fife reserve. (Postponed from 1st Dec 2010). Followed by refreshments and mince pies. *St Andrews Town Hall Supper Room.*

Thurs 26th Jan 2012 7.30pm Wildlife and Environmental Crime in Fife

A talk by PC Ian Laing, Fife Constabulary Wildlife and Environmental Crime Co-ordinator, on the latest trends locally.

St Peter's Episcopal Church Hall, Hope St., Inverkeithing

Thurs 8th March 2012 7.30pm Scottish Nature

An illustrated talk by Fergus Gill. Joint meeting with Kinross Camera Club.

Kinross Church Centre (no admission charge, donations for refreshments).

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2011

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the **Lumsden Memorial Hall, Freuchie** on **Thursday 17th November at 7.30pm**

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Minutes of meeting Wednesday 3rd November 2010**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Annual Report 2010-11**
5. **Members' Centre Accounts 2010-2011**
6. **Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members**

Office Bearers – Bruce Borrows (Website Secretary) and Tricia Towler (Membership Secretary) are due to retire and are willing to

stand again this year.

Committee Members - John Harwood, Jack Matthews and Tony Wilson are due to retire and are willing to stand again this year. Ian Hunter, who has been co-opted onto the Committee, is willing to stand for election. In addition, there is one vacancy for a Committee member.

Nominations for the above Vacancies are invited from any paid-up members of Scottish Wildlife Trust. All nominations must be proposed and seconded in writing and accompanied by the written agreement of the nominee. They should be lodged with the Minutes Secretary (Vi Shannon – see Contacts below) at least 14 clear days before the AGM.

7. **Any Other Competent Business.**

After the business meeting Reserves Manager, Alistair Whyte, and Reserves Conveners will speak on some Fife and Kinross Reserves. Light refreshments to follow.

Award for Duncan Davidson

Many members will remember Duncan's stimulating and beautifully illustrated talk on Moths and Butterflies back in November. There is not much that Duncan is not involved in! Butterfly Recorder for the whole of East Scotland since 2006, Duncan more recently became County Moth Recorder for Fife, where he also acts as the

local organiser.

In this latter position he organises field trips and produces a local Fife Butterfly Conservation newsletter four times a year. In recognition of his immense contribution, Duncan was presented with one of the Outstanding Volunteers of the Year Awards at Butterfly Conservation Scotland's Members' Day in 2010.

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