

Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



Bulletin No 26 2001

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

ANNUAL BULLETIN No 26

2001

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The Bulletin cover illustration is by Leonore Goodliffe (née Fullerton) and shows a selection of our area's alpine plants, including the Society's emblem, the dwarf cornel. Other illustrations are by Anne Reid, Bede Pounder, Jim Cook, Jenny Allan, Mary Reid, Christine Reid and Artfile.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thanks to all members who have submitted articles and reports, it makes Bulletin production much easier, though there is always space for contributions from new authors. Thanks to Mary and Christine Reid for typing and other computing help, and to Daphne Macfarlane Smith, Colin Reid and the girls for proof reading and helpful comments.

Contributions for the next Bulletin, both articles and line drawings, are always welcome and may be submitted at any time during the year.

Anne Reid

SOCIETY REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This is my third, and final, report of a happy and stimulating three year period as President. In some ways, the year has been, for me at least, relatively quiet, the only activity outwith the normal annual routine being the botanical survey of the University grounds on which several members, and especially Jim Cook, took part. The major 'routine' event was the Moray Coast weekend which was a great success largely thanks to us being blessed by good weather and a welcome relaxation of foot and mouth restrictions. Foot and mouth caused the cancellation of our early March Saturday morning walk, but otherwise had only minor effects on our outings, in both summer and winter, which always attracted good attendances.

The lecture syllabus was also well received and once again I am pleased to acknowledge the significant contribution made by our own members, four in fact, including one from our Honorary Vice President, Dr Gordon Corbet. A Dundee afternoon lecture by Barbara Hogarth and a field excursion, led as part of the same lecture series by myself, were well supported and generated useful additions to our funds. The social evening held in the Monifieth Hotel was another success, as was the New Year barbecue in Dorothy Fyffe's garden when the weather was at its winter best.

Work at Carsegowniemuir has been carried out throughout the session by Jim Cook and his helpers. In this connection, I must pay tribute to past-president Margaret Duncan, who was largely responsible for initiating the Carsegowniemuir project and who has now returned to her native New Zealand. We wish her well for the future. I regret to note the loss of another much-loved and respected member, Doreen Fraser, who died suddenly during the session. Doreen was a stalwart and hard-working member of the Nats throughout the whole of her long membership.

For the Dundee Flower Show we combined forces with the local branch of the SWT to put on a well-received display. However, we did not enter for judgement so I am unable to record receipt of yet another award!

It is a routine requirement of Presidents' Reports to contain thanks to office-bearers and Council members, but this I do here with absolute sincerity. It really has been a great pleasure to have received such outstanding and willing support for the whole of my period of office. I must thank all who have contributed to lectures, the organisation and leading of outings and all the other activities referred to above, but particularly to those such as Margaret McLaren our secretary, Dorothy Fyffe our treasurer, and Anne Reid our Bulletin editor, for the work they have had to carry out continually throughout the session, and to Vice President Gordon Maxwell for standing in for me when necessary. Thanks are also due to Frances Towns for auditing our accounts. Finally, I must also express my gratitude to Dorothy, my wife, for providing such excellent edible fare after Council meetings. Her work made a great contribution to the enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere during the meetings, and the thought of what was to come greatly expedited members' deliberations.

Bede Pounder

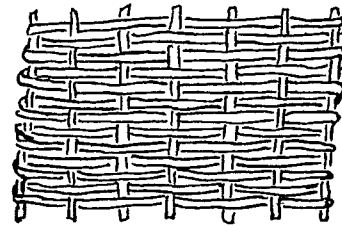
Reports on most of the activities referred to are to be found elsewhere in this Bulletin. Ed

CARSEGOWNIEMUIR REPORT

It has been a wonderful growing year at the quarry with plenty of warm weather until late in the season. Although there have been dry periods, particularly in the autumn, the trees seem to have had enough moisture in the soil to keep them going. At the time of going to press we hadn't completed the annual tree measurements but many appear to have grown well. Inevitably a few have died but the numbers are small.

During the summer the usual weed-clearing gangs went round the smaller trees pulling or cutting the rosebay willowherb for about a metre around each specimen. Fortunately, many of our trees are now tall enough to stand well clear of the willowherb and withstand the competition well. In fact, some more than hold their own and now seem to be out-competing the willowherb! A few Nats also spent time mulching trees and pulling ragwort, although the work done in previous years means that the numbers of these plants are greatly reduced. Only a few men (or women)-evenings will clear the quarry of the noxious weed. We try to leave this until fairly late in the year, to give butterflies and flies a chance to feed on the nectar and yet prevent the plants from seeding.

A few of us have had an active autumn planting trees. With Margaret Duncan leaving the country, she took the opportunity to clear out the trees she had been growing on in her garden. She, Margaret McLaren, Ewan McGregor and Jim Cook dug holes, planted trees and mulched, staked and wired them. In all 32 have been planted, with a few more to go in the spring, which raises the total comfortably above the 1,000-tree millennial target. The species planted were oak (5), birch (13), rowan (2), elder (3) and hawthorn (9). Following previous guidelines, they have been used to extend the windbreak effects of some of the exclosures (number 1 this year) and infilled into planted areas to give as wide an age structure as possible. One major problem that we intend to tackle is the exposed region (area G) at the far end of the site. The plan is to improve the windbreaks by renewing or improving the 'stockade', erecting more wicker hurdles and by planting a close hedge of elder, which was started this year. It's about the only bush that seems tough enough to withstand the conditions (and the rabbits).



The question we must consider now is "What next?" Society members have planted roughly 1,200 trees over the last 15 years. This is a very creditable total, considering the nature of the ground. (I deliberately don't use the word 'soil'!) Most trees are growing well and there are a number approaching 10m in height. The development of the planted woodland is obvious, now, from the Aberlemno road and we can envisage that in 20 to 30 years time the coverage will be impressive. Several projects are in the pipeline to improve habitats for wildlife. Tree planting will continue on a much reduced basis but summer maintenance will be required for a number of years into the future. However, the quarry is already an excellent wildlife site and we should make much more of the opportunities to study the plants and animals there. It's also a pleasant place to visit, with its ponds, paths and woodlands, on a warm summer's day or, even better, evening. Why not go along for a gentle stroll on a sunny evening?

The Youngs are always very welcoming to Society members – and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them greatly for their hospitality over the years. If you like dogs, Pfennig will be, as ever, very pleased to take you for a walk in the quarry but she's starting to slow down and become less agile (like some of us!) However, this summer we welcomed a new lurcher, Milly, who looks set to take over the role. We all look forward to the future.

If you have any ideas, suggestions or comments, I would be delighted to discuss them with you. Please don't hesitate to speak to me or any other Council member.

Jim Cook

OUR FAREWELL TO MARGARET DUNCAN

By the time you read this, Margaret Duncan will long since have left Dundee to return home, to New Zealand. It is 34 years since Margaret arrived in Britain and she spent most of that time in Dundee, which must say something worthwhile about the city! With the death last summer of her husband, Fred, the well-known local photographer, ARPS, raconteur and wit, and since her own recent retirement from the University, Margaret decided that it would be an excellent time to return to the North Island.

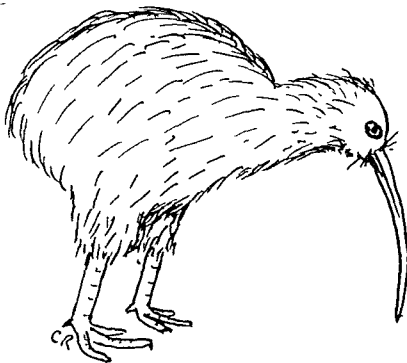
There is considerable regret, on our part, that she is leaving the country, the city and, particularly, Dundee Naturalists' Society. However, I know that she is looking forward

enthusiastically to her new life in a small 'ecological community' near Auckland. Her 'mud hut', as she calls it, should be ready when she arrives, but in fact it is a sophisticated modern ecologically-friendly house with rammed earth and concrete walls. What Tulchan, the cat, will make of the change is not so certain but I am sure that they will both settle in admirably.

Margaret is a great loss to our Society since she has been a keen and active member for many years and has instituted many solid contributions. I can remember her back in the late '70s, when she was known to some of us as the 'lady with three legs' because she often came on outings laden with her tripod or, more sensibly, persuaded someone else to carry it for her! Her abiding interest, or rather passion, has been trees and anything associated with them, especially landscapes and fungi. This enthusiasm led her on to active membership of Dundee Tree Group and, through them, to her early advocacy to DNS of Carsegowndiemuir quarry. Without her interest, constant promotion and dedication, it is possible that the Society may not have taken on the mammoth long-term task of working on and improving the wildlife habitats in the quarry.

She was the first and longest-serving chairman of the Carsegowndiemuir sub-committee and mapped out projects, went on expeditions to obtain genetically suitable trees and grew many specimens in her garden until they were large enough for planting in the harsh conditions of the quarry. Since the start of the project in 1986 she must have visited the site well over a hundred times, digging, planting, watering, mulching, fencing, weeding and seeing to all the many other tasks required. Without her application and enthusiasm, the quarry would not have progressed as well as it has.

Margaret has also served on the Council for many years, working hard for the Society. She has led a wide variety of outings and weekends, delivered lectures and given votes of thanks, organised barbecues and hosted events. To cap all the service, she was a



supportive vice-president and then an active president from 1996 to 1999, immediately before Bede Pounder. Margaret will be greatly missed and exceedingly difficult to replace.

Although more than half a world away, modern communications, the internet especially, will help Margaret to keep in touch. Perhaps she will become the New Zealand correspondent for the Bulletin! Furthermore, we look forward to hearing in the next few years of a 'Carsegowndiemuir II' project in commission, planting large numbers of native (of course!) New Zealand trees. She will have to relearn

all the wildlife out there, from kiwis, keas and kauris to tuataras and wekas, but having seen her in action here, we are in no doubt that she will be keen to get 'stuck in'. In fact a few of us have threatened her already with a Nats' Society visit – how about the Spring Weekend of 2004? Perhaps we could hire Concorde. We wish her all the very best for the future.

Jim Cook

ACTIVITIES CONVENOR'S REPORT

Society members have taken part in two major activities this year. For six weeks in the spring we visited a number of wildlife sites in and around Dundee. Because of the foot and mouth outbreak the schedule was rearranged at short notice and we were careful to stay away from any farmland in particular and Angus in general. Hopefully, next year we will be able to visit some of the Angus sites planned for the spring of 2001! The results from our surveys go in to Dundee Museum to improve their database (Naturebase, see p 35). The only notable problem was unfortunate. John Whyman joined us for the evening at Trottick Ponds but had his motorbike stolen by some of the local *****! His bike was found later but totally burned out. We're pleased to report that he received full insurance for his loss.

The other major project has been to carry out a wildlife survey of the grounds of Dundee University. We had been approached last winter by Professor Colin Reid, who chairs the University's environmental management committee, and agreed to go over the grounds thoroughly and produce a report including comments on improvements.

A number of members spent many evenings surveying and studying the extensive properties. I can't say that we penetrated every single nook and cranny, but we tried hard and had a very interesting time. There isn't much of great interest – some ferns, a few deer (perhaps – we didn't see any but almost certainly heard them), some breeding birds and a healthy bush of **deadly nightshade** (*Atropa belladonna*). However, several areas show considerable potential for improvement as wildlife habitat, in particular the area to the south of the houses along the Perth Road, opposite the tower building, and also the playing fields.

Jim Cook

OBITUARIES

Our Hon Vice President, Mrs Elizabeth Leitch, died on 24th January 2001

ELIZABETH LEITCH

I first met Elizabeth when I was a small child of six or seven as my father was a friend of her husband Neil. Both Elizabeth and Neil were tall and I can really recall from this time seeing two tall grown-ups towering over me and my mum and dad. My dad and Neil were known at the time as Little and Large, long before the TV act we know today.

My next encounter with Elizabeth was when, in the early seventies, I joined the Dundee Naturalists' Society. At that time the Society was on the point of folding and Elizabeth and a few other stalwarts made a concentrated effort to restore and rekindle interest in the Society. The fact that we are here today is testament to these efforts. I recall how desperate they were to keep things running, and I mean desperate. On my second winter meeting, the AGM, I was elected to the Council without any prior consultation, which was quite a shock to the system. But that was the way Elizabeth was, direct and right to the heart of the problem. She saw the need for new, young blood to be brought into the Society and this was one of the ways she did just that. At that time the Council met in a chilly room in the YMCA with none of the finesse we have now.

Elizabeth always tackled anything she did with the same dedication. Photography was a case in point. Not the modest 35mm colour slides for her, Elizabeth used a 2.25in square twin lens reflex camera and when she showed her slides she had a huge state-of-the-art slide projector to project them. She felt that the large square format enabled her to reproduce the views she loved of highland Scotland in a more realistic way. Any of us who were fortunate enough to see some of her work will surely agree with this point of view (pun not intended).

In later years Elizabeth gradually lost her sight, which must have been a huge blow to someone who was a reader, photographer and lover of nature, but even this did not dampen her spirit. Up until the end she remained bright and alert and could remember even the smallest detail or remind us of an anecdote from the old days that we had all forgotten. She was an inspiration to many in the Society who knew and loved her and she has left a vibrant, active Society for all of us to enjoy. She is sadly missed.

Brian Allan

DOREEN FRASER

It was with great sadness that we learned of the sudden illness of Doreen Fraser and her subsequent death on 22nd November 2001.

I first met Doreen in July 1983 on a botanical holiday to the Italian Dolomites organised by the Scottish Rock Garden Club, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Club. The cultivation of alpine plants was Doreen's primary passion, as anyone who has seen her immaculate rock garden can testify. During the 1980s and 1990s she regularly exhibited her plants at the Club's spring and summer shows, winning many prizes, particularly for the pots of early flowering species bulbs which she loved so much.

She travelled widely in Europe during those years, observing alpine plants in their natural habitat, and attempted to create similar conditions in her own garden. Her knowledge was so encyclopaedic that she always managed to produce the name of a plant for Brian Allan when he was lecturing to the Nats and had a temporary lapse of memory.

Upon retirement in the early 1980s, Doreen was determined to widen her horizons and to make new friends. This she did by joining other organisations of interest to her. It was at that time that she joined the Dundee Naturalists' Society and the Friends of the University Botanic Garden. She quickly became involved in the activities of the Society and took on the Secretaryship for two years in 1993/94, the duties of which post she carried out with great efficiency. She also spent many hours, along with Margaret Duncan, taking part in the survey undertaken jointly with Dundee Museum, recording the many sites where terrestrial orchids can be found in Angus.

Doreen will be greatly missed by her many friends, and the Society has lost a much valued member.

Ruth Arnold

(Doreen was always a very willing contributor of articles and illustrations for the Bulletin. Her write-up of a lecture on Crete, by Brian Allan, and a follow-up account are on page 9 of this edition. Ed.)

WINTER MEETINGS 2001

MONIKIE BARBECUE

3rd January

The New Year dawns once more. The third of January brought the Nats out in force for another happy-go-lucky foray round Monikie Country Park to look for an assortment of bits and pieces. We had to find things large and small, soft and warm, useful, unusual, something very beautiful and something very noisy. The item causing the greatest difficulty was something which reminded you of yourself. We had some weird and wonderful answers to that.

a feather - light as my feet
a twig - slender willowy figure
an empty bottle - fond of drinking
a piece of string - rather forgetful

and the Nat who produced his wife, to remind him of himself! Thank you to everyone who took part and who helped to make the morning such a success. Why don't you join us next time? The next New Year barbecue is, after all, only a few short months away.

A lot of fun finished with great gusto round the warming barbecue and resounded to shouts of "Happy New Year" and large slurps of hot mulled wine. Lovely jubbly!

Roma Miller

FLOWERS OF THE DOLOMITES

Brian Allan - 16th January

A talk by our own Brian Allan is usually eagerly awaited, and this was reflected by the turnout of over 40 members and friends. We were transported to the Dolomites, in northern Italy, for a tour of all the best plants and scenery in the area, superbly captured by Brian's photography. The tour started at Lake Garda, in an area renowned for 'iffy' weather, which was plainly not the case for the time they were there. The **limestone** in the Monte Baldo area yielded *Paeonia officinalis*, *Gentiana acaulis* and several splendid **orchids**, including **frog** and **pyramidal** (despite the original invitation to lecture on 'Anything, except orchids!')

Brian and Jenny then moved on to the Dolomites proper, where they stayed at Selva Gardena and visited the area of the Sella Pass. Here we were shown, among many, a white *Pulsatilla alpina* and a familiar favourite, the **globe flower** (*Trollius europaeus*). We also learned that the best way to photograph flowers was when wearing shorts – muddy knees are easy to wash! Among the other highlights were **lady's slipper orchids**, the wonderfully fragrant *Daphne cneorum* in various shades of pink, a wide selection of **gentians** and, of course, **alpenrose**.

The non-limestone areas consisted of **pillow lavas**, and we were shown examples of this at Lago di Fedai. These have a different flora including such plants as *Primula halleri*, the **orange lily** (*Lilium bulbiferum*), the very dark flowered *Aquilegia atrata* and **meadow clary** (*Salvia pratensis*). When lower altitudes were once again reached we were even shown **crinoidal limestones** and **ammonites** in the stone used for buildings and sea walls.

When asked about any bird life at the end of the lecture, Brian said that not much had been noticed – some **alpine choughs** scavenged around parking areas and **house martins** were nesting on one of their hotels. He added that there were lots of **fish** in the lake and we were shown a slide of a **lizard**. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed such summery slides in mid-winter and Jim Cook gave a most enthusiastic vote of thanks.

Anne Reid

MEMBERS' NIGHT

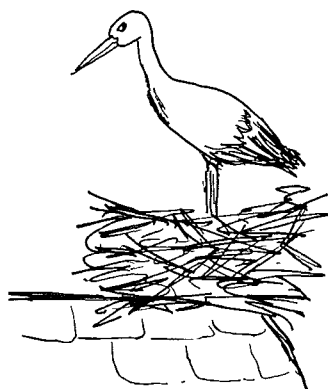
30th January

Before the formal part of the meeting, the death, on 24th January 2001, of Mrs Elizabeth Leitch, our Hon. Vice President, was announced. Brian Allan gave a short, moving, tribute (Obituary on page 5).

About 45 members and friends gathered to enjoy the varied programme provided by twelve of their number. A large number of slides had been brought along and once again we almost ran out of time. Brian Allan guided us through them and kept everyone to timetable.

Slides were shown by

Margaret Duncan	Forest gardens of Argyll in May, including Cairndow, Crarae and the Younger Botanic Garden at Ben More. Good tree growing country!
Alastair Fraser	Nacreous clouds
Brian Ballinger	North of Scotland flora and fauna. House martin nests, oyster plant , Moray Firth dolphins and <i>Dryas octopetala</i> at sea level on the north coast. Also broomrapes (<i>Orobancha</i> sp.) and garden frogs .
Gordon Maxwell	'Slides I Fancied Showing'. Including stagshorn clubmoss in the Sidlaws, northern brown argus butterfly at Ark Hill, clustered seven spot ladybirds and a 'candyfloss' effect of frost on twigs.
Jim Cook	'Up in the Air'. Atmospheric phenomena including a mist-bow , lenticular clouds over the Grampians, anvil clouds (cumulonimbus), rainbows , a sun bow and a funnel cloud .
Bob McCurley	'Home and Away'. Mostly Canada, including Douglas fir in its native habitat, bald eagles , an American robin (actually a thrush) and Barrow's goldeneye . Also mandarin duck at Perth and garden tiger moths at Barry Buddon.
Marjory Tennant	Tentsmuir New Year barbecue and the delights of the dunes and scenery in mid-winter. Cambo walk with snowdrops and aconites .
Les Tucker	A southern Spanish mixture including pine cones collected for their edible kernels, old houses thatched with palms, dwarf daffodils , a stork's nest and our familiar western butterwort (<i>Pinguicula lusitanica</i>) near Gibraltar.



Dorothy Fyffe	'2000 - Odds and Ends' More Cambo snowdrops and aconites , a blackcock lek in April, close-ups of geese at Forfar Loch, a field of blue flowered <i>Phacelia</i> in Angus and the four-spotted chaser seen at Barry Buddon
Alban Houghton	Maiden pink at Kinnaber Travels in Australia including tree ferns , banksias , Ayers Rock, the desert blooming after rain, wallabies , flooded forests and Aboriginal rock paintings of wallabies and the now extinct thylacine .
Rob Evans	'Corsica' A walk from north to south on a long distance footpath The aromatic maquis , then through pine woods to the mountains Valleys with more pin es and small Scottish-looking 'lochans' on the plateau Goats in the hills and pigs in the beech forests
Barbara Hogarth	'French Alps in September' Rich and varied alpine flora including gentians , autumn crocuses , <i>Campanula barbata</i> and edelweiss Various styles of houses from wooden chalets to stone buildings in different areas Mont Blanc from all angles

We had a wide and varied selection of subjects once again and our thanks go to all who brought slides Photos of many of the winter and summer 2000 outings were amongst those shown, full details of these can be found in last year's bulletin In addition there was a selection of Margaret McLaren's prints of the 2001 New Year barbecue at Monikie and the **grey seal skull**, now cleaned up, which had been found on the beach at Tentsmuir by Christine Reid a year earlier Thanks to Brian's guidance and reminders we managed to finish in time, despite a record number of slides this year Thank you Brian

Anne Reid

FAIR ISLE

Bob McCurley - 13th February

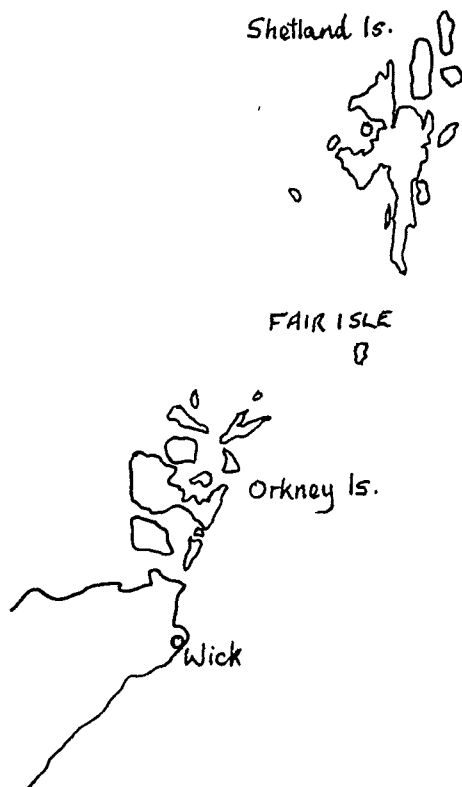
About 45 people were present to hear this lecture by Bob McCurley, one of our members and also very well known in local birdwatching circles

Bob began his talk with a short history of how the very successful Fair Isle Bird Observatory had been set up after George Waterston had noticed how important the island was for birds on migration Mr Waterston had been able to purchase the island in 1948 and founded the first bird observatory Then in 1954 The National Trust for Scotland took over and expanded and improved the facilities for both crofter and bird watcher

We were shown some spectacular views of the island from both air and sea as well as photographs of the huge sea bird colonies on the island's cliffs Bob was able to show some of the very rare birds which arrive on the island having been blown off course during migration There is a long-standing ringing programme for these migrants which has provided much interesting information

Jim Cook proposed a vote of thanks to Bob for a most informative and interesting talk

Dorothy Fyffe



SOCIAL EVENING

23rd February

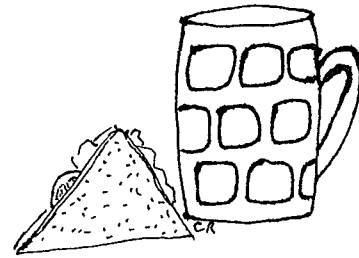
"Appeals to the chairman, after careful thought, would be dismissed with a penalty of one point!" Considering only one point was awarded in the first place, and not being good at crosswords (newspaper variety) I was going to end up with a minus score trying to unravel these anagrams Booby prize perhaps? What a way to start

When it came to choosing 'the odd one out' from Glens Deveron, Turrett, Isla and Livet, who would have thought I would be let down by my better half – the one I expected truly to know his whiskies We got it wrong! Nevertheless, with the help of much friendly assistance, the scores all round were quite respectable

And so it was all evening Laughter and giggles and affected groans of puzzlement permeated our quite small room, while our goodly crowd of thirty or so applied themselves assiduously to the oh-so-hard tasks The sheets of questions, very cleverly thought out and presented tongue-in-cheek, gave us much fun and amusement Who was that chairman who could now be bribed into reassessing the answers favourably?

Supper was a welcome break – food for the brain, including tuna fish sandwiches The hotel provided the usual high standard buffet supper, with trifle, tea and coffee to finish Then more chat and backchat until it was time to go

Finally, from the 'Well known sayings', "Goodnight, goodnight, parting is such sweet sorrow", "Roll on, roll on, 'til party time is here the morrow" (sorry – next year!) Thank you all for making the evening such a fun time and very pleasant social outing



Roma Miller

SPRINGTIME IN CRETE

Brian Allan - 27th February

For the second time during the winter season 2000-2001 disaster befell our intended speaker, and into the breach stepped Brian, making it look as if producing a talk at very short notice was just a breeze - which it isn't So 25 stalwarts who braved post-blizzard conditions expecting to hear about the Mississippi delta were instead treated to a sunshiny tour across Crete, starting at the NE tip with the native **palm trees** at Vai beach and moving westwards and inwards to the skeleton windmills on Lassithi, to the ancient sites of Knossos, Lato and Phaestos, from snow-topped Mount Ida to the depths of the Samaria gorge, from a small white chapel with faded frescoes and an old lady crotcheting lace, to an evening stroll along the waterfront at Chania

All around there were flowers. **giant fennel** taller than a man, *Cyclamen creticum* hiding in shady places, **anemones**, **turban buttercups**, and **orchids** of course - why else would he have gone - especially *Ophrys creticum* with its white marking on a dark blue background We saw slides of three of the five endemic **tulips**, and by the time this goes to print, another trip will have been made to find the other two Was it successful or not? See part two! (Following article)

Doreen Fraser

SPRINGTIME IN CRETE - PART 2

April and the Tulips

Crete is over 200 miles wide from east to west and the **tulips** are scattered across the island, so we divided our time between two bases, one at each end We started in the east where spring comes first, but unseasonably cold weather had the waterfront cafes urging shivering tourists to "come inside for nice warm stew"! - not at all the warm sunny place of earlier memories **Orchids** were part of the game plan as well (of course), but a hot spell in

March had seen off the first ones and the followers-on were pretty thin on the ground. *Orchis boryii* was an exception. A long drive took us to the area where it grew, and where we sat in the car for ages with rain thumping down on the roof. It looked as if the sky would never clear, but it did eventually. We stepped out into a watery world, and there on higher, well drained ground the orchid was at its magnificent best, rather like the **green winged orchid** but mostly darker and the spur pointing downwards. Furthermore, not far away was the first of the **tulips**, masses and masses of red *T. doerfleri* growing among grasses around small patches of cultivation and not in the least bit spoiled by the rain. Some locals appeared and were picking the tulips by the sackful but making no impression on the numbers, there were so many of them. So, a day of surprises, wet feet and smiles all round in the end.

The weather stayed unsettled but whatever the conditions some plants will benefit and for *Arum creticum* this was a bonus year. The large yellow spathes were all over wooded hillsides with *Cyclamen creticum* spread under the trees, *Paeonia clusii* in a shady hollow and *Dracunculus vulgaris*, its fetid smell thankfully lost in the chill wind.



On another sunnier day we took a tortuous road up to a mountain village where we found *Tulipa saxatilis* on the banks of a stream, the pale pink flowers with yellow centres impossible to miss. Much less obvious were two white flowers of *Tulipa cretica*, smallest of all the **tulips**, barely **crocus** size, with reddish markings on the petals and grey-green leaves, one of nature's class acts. Three tulips down, time to move to the west.

Tulipa goulimy is only known at three isolated sites, one in a corner of north-west Crete, the second in southern Greece and the third on an island in between, a relic of the land bridge which once joined Crete to mainland Greece. It doesn't flower every year, needing the encouragement of hot sunshine which hadn't been much in evidence at the time of our visit. All we could find were a few leaves with their characteristic wavy edges, no red flowers to photograph, and one up to the fickle weather. That only left *Tulipa bakeri*, smaller and deeper pink than *T. saxatilis*, and which grows at Omalos, below the summits of the White Mountains. From our base we could see in the distance that snow was well down the mountain slopes so we held back to the last moment. It was well worth the wait, the sun shone, the tulips were in larger numbers than seen in other years, there was a drift of blue *Anemone coronaria* which had been missing on our travels so far, and the dramatic scenery of the Samaria Gorge was as enthralling as ever.

Time had run out. We returned to east Crete to find that spring had finally arrived and wayside flowers were bursting into colour everywhere. *T. goulimy* was many miles away and a week advanced in growth. Might it by now, just possibly be sending up a red flower or two? We will never know!

Doreen Fraser

SUMMER OUTINGS 2001

ABERDEEN

DUTHIE PARK, UNIVERSITY ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

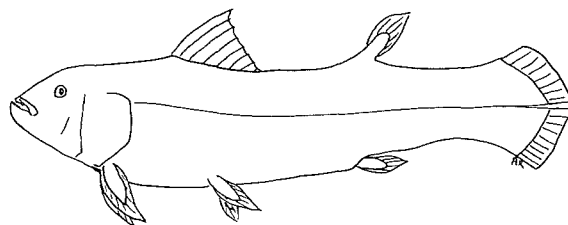
28th April

If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. Our thanks go to our leader, Margaret McLaren, for doing just that. Between absent-minded professors and time-lock doors, she did have quite a job getting us in to the museum and then making sure that she got us all out again and we didn't remain locked in until goodness knows when.

We would not have liked to have missed this part of our day's outing. Just inside the front entrance there was a huge skeleton of an immense **elephant**. None of us could remember, from our childhood visits to the zoo, seeing such a large animal. There were, of course, other exhibits and **skeletons**, but upstairs was a magnificent display of stuffed **birds**, excellent specimens to help in identifying the real bird, and to marvel at the colour and

arrangement of their feathers I was taken aback at the size of the **capercaillie** - I had not realised that they were so large – 34in There was an eye-catching exhibit of a **golden eagle**, wings outspread in all their glory, and also a **snowy owl** gazing out very realistically from his glass case How lovely they all were

Who could help but enjoy looking at the **butterflies** in all their glorious colours? The **moths** were so large that I was very thankful they did not belong to this country There were displays of **coral**, with notes that it is illegal to bring it into this country A range of **human skulls** showed progressive development of physiognomy The small number of **fish** specimens included one of the **coelacanth** family (a relic of prehistoric times) of which there are modern day members still swimming about off the coast of South Africa This is just a sample of the great number of exhibits which were too numerous to list in full



Coelacanth

The museum is a lovely place to visit, a well lit and attractive building, and full of interest

From there we went into the Botanic Gardens, next door We enjoyed the peace and sunshine for a few moments, noting in particular small golden splashes of tiny **narcissus**, runs of blue **anemones** and **scillas**, and plants of **lungwort** with their pink and blue flowers harmonising beautifully The **magnolias** were not quite out and the yellow **iris**, destined to border the small pond, were only just coming through the muddy bank A large clump of golden yellow **globe flowers** brightened up the little stream and reflected the sunshine beautifully

However, everything described above was only the second half of our outing! In the morning we arrived at the famous Winter Gardens in the Duthie Park just in time to have coffee before we followed the path into the garden proper We admired the **koi carp** swimming in the small pond and the colourful **cinerarias** bunched round the corners of the pathway We made our way to the corridor of perfumes and it lived up to its name The air was quite heavy with the scent from **geraniums**, **jasmine** and **pelargoniums** We passed Mr Puddock on the way but he did not rise to the occasion this time There were hanging baskets with **impatiens**, **petunias** and **fuchsias** all ready to burst forth, small **hydrangea** plants with huge heads of pink and blue and all shades in-between, and swathes of *Bougainvillea*, red, yellow and orange, decorating the ceiling

We went to visit the aviary and the reptile house and had to be persuaded that a large brown **frog** was really that and not just a very good stone imitation – it just did not move Neither did 'Spike' the talking cactus – must have been waiting for the young-in-years, not just the young-at-heart! Comment was made on a pile of pebbles – not so – they were living **cacti** (*Lithops* sp) in shape and colour just like a collection of small stones from the beach

We sat on one of the many benches placed along the pathways to eat our lunch, saving a few crumbs for the odd **sparrow** or two which appeared expectantly Before we left we visited a display of bonsai trees and learned a little about their cultivation They were very beautiful, but?

A most interesting, absorbing and varied day with so much to see and notice and not enough time to do justice to it all Everyone I spoke to was enthusiastic and agreed we'd had a wonderful and marvellous day Sincere thanks to everyone who arranged it all for us

Roma Miller

DUNINO WOOD

15th May

Thirteen Nats met at Dunino Church carpark, which is usually empty but, to our surprise, the place was alive with cars because it was an evening when the combined churches in the area were holding a joint service

The first part of the walk took us to a bluff which overlooks the stream There on a platform, is a deep basin in the rock Beside it is what might be the imprint of a foot,

reminiscent of the royal fort at Dunadd, Argyll, where the kings of the Scots were enthroned. However, all this is conjecture and it may simply be a natural feature.

From there the group descended some steep steps cut in the rock face, at the bottom of which is an incised, interwoven pattern enclosed in a circle. A few more yards took us to a tree on which had been hung various baubles - beads, ribbons and horseshoes. As the whole area is associated with the Druids this may be a 'healing tree'. There is also a Druid stone in the churchyard and people have placed coins on it. At a site near the manse there is reputed to have been a Druid circle but no trace of it remains.



Unfortunately, that evening, the sky was overcast and the time after seven o'clock, so the flowers had shut up shop. This was in contrast with the vivid yellow of the **celandines** seen on a sunny afternoon a fortnight earlier when the woods were carpeted with these and delicate white **wood anemones**. However, the **bluebells** which, on that occasion were just showing colour, were now in their deepest blue coats - and a brave sight they made. Along the way from the churchyard to where the path through the den meets the B9131, the undergrowth was luxurious and clusters of bright **primroses** lighted our path.

Birds were in full throat all evening - a **rookery** provided most of the noise, but there were **blackbirds** and **pigeons** too.

When we returned to the church a **woodpecker** was heard but not seen. Added to these was the unexpected noise of **bagpipes**, with the congregation following the piper to the rock bluff - 'Pied piper' fashion - and we were relieved to see them all return.

Despite the grey weather this provided a worthwhile evening full of interest.

Helen Blackburn

MORAY FIRTH WEEKEND

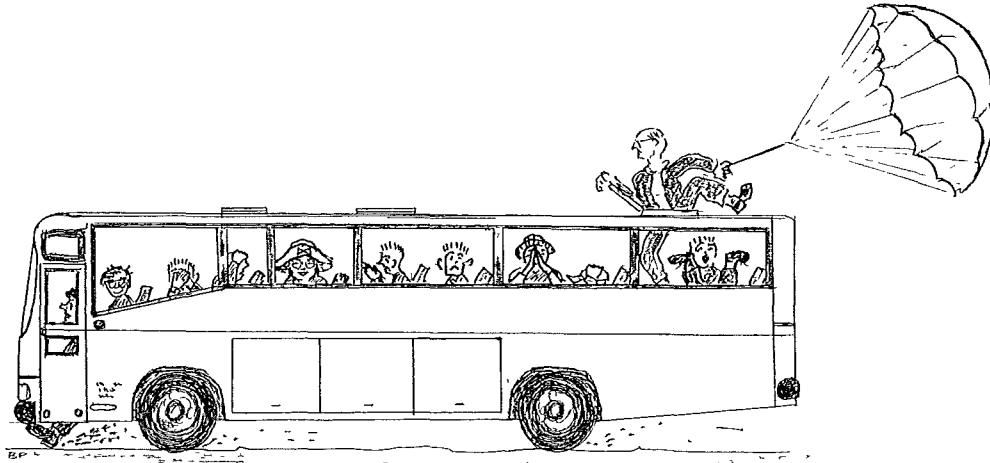
18th - 20th May

Despite uncertainties caused by the foot and mouth epidemic, 41 members risked a Friday to Sunday weekend based at the Highland Haven Hotel, Macduff.

Saturday started warm and clear as we started with a short drive to Cullykhan Bay, about one mile east of Troup Head to which access was closed. The bay separates two imposing headlands, the westward, Fort Fiddes, being connected by a narrow ridge to the cliff top. This ridge would have provided a formidable means of defence when the headland was used by the Picts as a fortified settlement. The party was dropped at the end of a long gravel road which led to a car park on the cliff top at the end of the ridge about a quarter mile distant, but looking back from the ridge, we were pleased to see that Jim, our driver, had done the almost impossible by reversing the coach not only up the road, but also round the daunting bend at the entrance to the car park. The dominant plant in the grassland at Fort Fiddes was **lesser celandine**, but there were plenty of **violets**, **primroses**, **scurvy grass** and some **thrift** amongst the hummocks of the Pictish and later fortifications. This was a good place from which to see **auks** and **kittiwakes** from Troup Head, and **gannets** stood out clearly in the distance. The western side of the headland was separated from the steep **primrose** and **scurvy grass** carpeted cliff slope by a deep V-cut gorge, full of **marsh marigolds** which in places choked a sparkling burn which scurried and tumbled to the sea far below. Looking across the gorge at one stage of the visit, my heart nearly stopped when I saw that three of our party had crossed it, and were climbing the hill to look into the fearful gaping hole, Hell's Lum. Nowhere could a geographical feature have a more apt name. The view from the eastern face of the headland was rather more benign, taking in Cullykhan Bay, sparkling in the bright sunlight, on the other side of which were two other headlands of black **slaty breccias**, one on each side of the little village of Pennan. While the Fort Fiddes headland was composed of the well-known reddish rocks of the Old Red Sandstones, the black slaty breccias were from the Middle Old Red Sandstones, a rock sequence that does not occur further south in Angus and the Mearns.

Our next stop was at Gardenstown, until fairly recently a very prosperous fishing village, which lies along the foot of a cliff so steep that its few streets all lie parallel to the

coast, access from one to another being possible only by sets of steep steps. The one extremely steep and twisting road linking the modern bungalow estate at the top of the cliff to the fishtown at the bottom seemed absolutely impossible to negotiate by coach. However, after diligent research, and the knowledge that German tourist coaches, probably driven by ex-Stuka pilots, have the harbour on their regular itineraries, Jim the driver decided to have a go. He started with a deft roll round a left hand hairpin at the top of the road and pointed the nose downwards towards even hairier hairpins further down. Somehow or other, he got us to a bend round which the gradient changed from very steep to just steep, and from here on, the only problem was caused by the rapidly narrowing road and a random array of sheds of various sizes which had to be squeezed past before running out at sea level in space with ample room for turning the coach.



Three options were available from here. The first was to walk to another cliff-girt village, Crovie, via a spectacular paved path which runs just above the high tide level round the "Snook", an enormous cliff of Lower Old Red Sandstone **breccias** and **conglomerates**. These were laid down about 400 million years ago in an arid desert environment subject to seasonal flash floods which filled wadis and gorges with scree breccias, and deposited them as alluvial fan conglomerates and sand flats on a braided river valley floor. From Crovie, a stiff climb leads back to a pick-up point near where the coach was committed to the descent into Gardenstown. The second option was to walk via the harbour past the more picturesque end of Gardenstown and cliffs in the direction of an ancient roofless kirk, St John's, high up and seeming to be glued to the side of a steep cliff face. However, access was quite easy via an unexpected idyllic valley cut into the cliff by a lovely burn fringed with **lesser celandines**, **marsh marigolds** and **water avens**. From the kirkyard, an easy path led up the valley to a pick-up point on the main road. Some of the party took the first option, others the second, and a few both. A third group took a third option, they just strolled around the village and enjoyed delicious ice cream on a cafe terrace while they watched the distant dots of the second party toiling up to the kirk.

The final trip of the day took us to Duff House in Banff, Macduff's rather more elegant neighbour, and the lovely woods which lie along the Deveron behind the house. The woods were rather unusual to us in containing plenty of **limes** and **horse chestnuts**. They were carpeted in places with **lesser celandines**, **Spanish bluebells** and **dog's mercury**, and some **bugle** was coming into flower. Less common species seen included **lords and ladies**, **solomon's seal** and **borage**, with some of the latter already in flower. There was plenty of bird song, particularly from a **thrush** which chirped lustily from a nearby branch. Outside the entrance of Duff House we admired some superb modern art in the form of beautiful models of a **horse** and an **iguana**. From just a little distance, the iguana looked exact in every detail, but from close up, we saw that the details, no matter how fine, were made up of iron and steel engine parts.

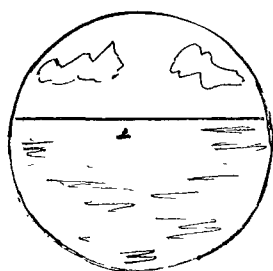
The day ended in a pleasant fashion with a drinks "Get-to-know everyone" reception in the hotel.

The return home on the Sunday included some stops which made it almost as full as Saturday. The first stop was at Cullen where a large group made a high-speed but

unfortunately abortive attempt to relocate an **oyster plant** site while the rest went along the beach to admire massive contorted boulders of **gneiss**, and what looked like an enormous **igneous dyke** which rises from the sea and juts onto the beach. However, there is nothing igneous in either the Geological Survey or the Aberdeen Geological Society guides to the area.

Continuing westwards, we stopped at Portnockie to see the "Bow Fiddle" sea stack, a wonderful feature of Old Red Sandstone draped over much older **quartzites**, which changes its visual character in quite a remarkable way when viewed from further along the coast. We had good views of **guillemots**, including a **tystie**, and **razorbills** in the water around the rock. Further westward still, we had time to visit the "Buckie Drifter" museum which gave a good insight into Buckie's fishing past, and where we noted some glaring errors in the captions on the shellfish exhibits!

And finally to the last stop before pointing the coach southwards for the journey home. This was Spey Bay, with its enormous spreads of sands and gravels at the mouth of



Spey Bay dolphin
Acer pseudodelphinidae
(Mag 30 times)

the Spey, and the best place to view the Moray Firth **dolphins** or so they say! We did see one or two, but they were certainly a long way out. However, starting from a small marshy area where we glimpsed a **corn bunting**, we walked along the Spey Way to the disused Speymouth Viaduct, an impressive structure from which a spectacular view was had of the wooded islands and shingle beds through and across which the Spey winds its way towards the sea. **Oystercatchers**, **common terns** and **black-headed gulls** were nesting here, and an added bonus was had when a **roe deer** was seen swimming the river. Some of the party were lucky enough to catch a good view of an **osprey** which fishes this section of the river mouth every day. Other interesting items added to the

log were **marestail**, and **orange tip**, **small tortoiseshell** and **green-veined white butterflies**.

As anyone who manages to get this far with this report will realise, this was a very full and rewarding weekend, fortunately blessed by good weather. We learned a lot, and so did Jim the driver, who returned to Dundee much wiser than the man who had set out on the Friday.

Bede Pounder

INCHCOLM ISLAND

2nd June

We departed from Hawes Pier, South Queensferry, on board the Maid of the Forth on a beautiful clear day. The wind was bracing to say the least, but, as we were still within the River Forth, it was a very pleasant 30 minute sail out to Inchcolm Island.

We sailed under the magnificent rail bridge, built between 1883 and 1890, one and a half miles long and with towers 361ft high. There were excellent views of the oil terminal at Hound Point where tankers load processed North Sea oil from Grangemouth. On the foreshore we could see twelfth century Barnbogle Castle and Port Edgar, where, it is said, Edgar Atheling, a Saxon prince, and his sister, Princess Margaret, landed safely in a storm.

Approaching Inchcolm, we could see **seals**, **cormorants**, **razorbills**, **guillemots**, **puffins** and **gannets**. On landing we dispersed, as always, to the four corners to explore. Some went to the beautiful abbey, built during the 13th and 14th centuries, others braved the dive-bombing of the **herring gull** colony and were rewarded with sightings of the newly hatched chicks in their nests. Yet others clambered up to inspect the gun emplacements and fortifications remaining from the war.

Returning to South Queensferry some chose to explore the town while others took the opportunity to walk over the road bridge to North Queensferry. Far below the bridge we could see **arctic terns** which nest on the rocks, and, because of the excellent visibility, we

had wonderful views up river, all the way to the Arrochar Alps. There was just time for a brief walk along the cliff top at North Queensferry before the coach arrived to take us home.

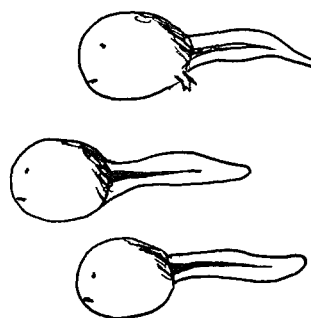
Dorothy Fyffe

BALKELLO COMMUNITY WOODLAND

13th June

Although this was a rather dull evening for mid-June, 22 members turned out for our first walk as a Society round the Balkello "Woodland Walk" Nature Trail, since it was laid out during the previous year. Those involved in the preparation of the trail were more than relieved to see that none of the 12 numbered posts had succumbed to vandalism and that the yellow and black numbered end faces stood out clearly despite the gloomy conditions. We were also pleased to find a supply of brochures in a stout steel container, and only one floating with the **flote grass** and **water speedwell** in the nearby pond. It was good to see many thousands of trees making excellent progress in what is now rapidly beginning to look like a real woodland, and acting as a splendid habitat for a diverse insect fauna which was particularly rich in **weevils**. The weather this spring obviously suited them.

The mown pathways on the ground between posts 1 and 2 were fringed with **germander speedwell** and **lady's mantle**, and 14 species of **moss** and **lichens** were identified by the experts on only 3m of the drystone dyke at post 3. The stiff climb between posts 4 and 5 was resplendent with **gorse** and **broom**, and **tormentil** and **heath bedstraw** became increasingly evident as height was gained. Male **stonechats** and **whitethroats** proclaimed their territories. There was plenty of **rockrose** in bloom with **bitter vetchling** and **birds-foot trefoil** along the path to the marshy area at post 6 which is probably the most interesting site on the reserve. **Tadpoles** crowded one shallow pool which they shared with **water forget-me-not**, **water speedwell** and a variety of **sedges**. Drifts of **meadow buttercup** with pockets of **rockrose**, **thyme** and **cuckoo flower** covered the wet grassy areas. **Mountain everlasting** was looked for and found on the side of the small quarry where there were clumps of deep blue **milkwort**, and large numbers of black caterpillars of **small tortoiseshell** butterflies were feeding in the nettle beds.



After the second stiff climb to the quarry at post 8, we were rewarded by the sight of five **early purple orchids** still in bloom, but a little past their best, and three or four long-dead specimens. There was plenty of **mouse-eared hawkweed** in the short grass at this exposed site, along with more **thyme** and lots of **milkwort** with flowers of a less intense blue.

From here, the walk was mostly downhill and through areas thick with **gorse** and **broom** in full flower or, in places, recently cleared and covered with young saplings. There were birds in plenty here, including **blackbird**, **thrush**, **stonechat**, **crows** and a **kestrel**, and a good view was had of a **red-legged partridge** on the path. **Willow warblers** and **whitethroats** were heard in several places.

Despite the lack of colour due to the overcast conditions, this was a most enjoyable walk, and it was good to see the reserve in such good shape.

Bede Pounder

DUMBARNIE LINKS

23rd June

A good turn-out of 38 members enjoyed the sunshine on this visit to the new SWT reserve and adjacent areas of the Fife coast. We were particularly interested in seeing the coastal plants on this occasion.

The walk began at Lundin Links where a fine display of wild flowers included **shining cranesbill** (*Geranium lucidum*) and the introduced **tree lupin** (*Lupinus arboreus*). The tide

was low so the shore could be examined. At this point **volcanic** and **sedimentary rocks** are side by side and the effects of the heat of the volcanic eruption can be seen where rock types meet. Many **fossils** were present in the sedimentary rocks. Apart from the expected algae and animals, we were surprised to find a **bank vole** sheltering on the edge of the rocky beach and providing opportunities for photography.

To the east of Lower Largo the path follows the old railway line and this is now rich with flowers including a variety of **roses** and **meadow cranesbill** (*Geranium pratense*). **Cinnabar moths** (*Tyria jacobaea*) were numerous and **whitethroats** and **yellowhammers** were seen. Butterflies were not very much in evidence but we saw the **small heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) on several occasions.

We then visited the SWT reserve of Dumbarnie Links which includes an area of calcareous dune grassland covered in **cowslips** (*Primula veris*). This site has many species, including 160 vascular plants and 200 beetles. Gordon Corbet, who has done so much work in setting up this reserve, has found the rare snail *Truncatellina cylindrica* in its only Scottish location. The track was littered with empty snail shells which crunched under our feet.

Further on orchids were viewed in several areas of the dune slacks including the unusual dark red and white forms of the **early marsh orchid** (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) as well as other wetland plants. At the time of the visit **purple milk vetch** (*Astragalus danicus*) was widespread and flowering profusely and **lesser meadow rue** (*Thalictrum minus*) was scattered along the path.

As we approached Shell Bay a damp area was thickly covered with a rather pale **thrift** (*Armeria maritima*), **sea spurrey** (*Spergularia media*) and **sea milkwort** (*Glaux maritima*). At the caravan site we found **bur chervil** (*Anthriscus caucalis*). As we drove away we saw a field ablaze with **poppies** and at Strathkinness we passed an area covered with **northern marsh orchid** (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*).

Brian Ballinger

ST CYRUS NNR

14th July

Following a cold and wet week, our day at St Cyrus National Nature Reserve thankfully remained dry. Even though it was mid-July, some wise members donned hats and gloves to keep the chill wind at bay.



Clustered bellflower

Catriona, the summer warden, met us at the Visitor Centre, distributed reserve guide leaflets and accompanied us to the 'gun moo', a large amphitheatre carved out of the **andesite** cliff. There we watched a **peregrine** eat its lunch while we ate ours. Jim Cook and company, who had been botanising, caught up with us for this spectacle. On the raised beach nearer the sea Jenny Allan had found **maiden pink** in flower. The failure to record the pink last year obviously did not indicate its absence. Later we found quite a number of clumps here and there in the dune pasture near the fishers' bothy. The very showy **clustered bellflower** was everywhere, but **Nottingham catchfly**, the third St Cyrus special, had flowered earlier. All three are at the northern limit of their British range.

Stonechats, some with young, were chacking above the gorse. A **buzzard** and a **kestrel** hunted over the cliffs. **Gannets** cruised and fished along the shore. Of course there were no **little terns** in their 'sanctuary area', having been seen off by dogs and humans years ago.

Wandering up the cliff path, **bloody cranesbill** and **wood vetch**, with its exquisitely veined flowers, were spectacular. **Wild liquorice** was here too. At the

northern end of the reserve, where the dunes run out, **carline thistle** and the very local **sea wormwood**, growing on an intertidal stack, were found. A solitary **henbane** flower seen the previous week was no longer there.

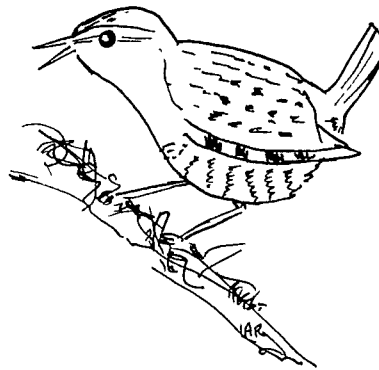
Rowan, the only junior Nat on our outing, found the remains of a **thornback ray** and, earlier, the first of several **cinnabar moth** larvae. The lack of sunshine limited butterfly sightings - **meadow brown** and **common blue** were two of these. A **six spot burnet moth**, a **tiger moth** and a **digger wasp** were also seen. One could only dream of the archetypal sunny July day at St Cyrus when several species of butterfly, including the **grayling**, flutter over and sup on the massed **marjoram** flower heads.

Alban Houghton

BACKMUIR WOOD

24th July

About fifteen enthusiasts turned up for this evening walk round the attractive wood adjacent to Muirhead and Birkhill. Partly owned by the Woodland Trust, it is a mixed deciduous and conifer wood with a fairly even mixture of both throughout. There are fine stands of **Scots pine**, **beech** and **birch** (both old and new) and I would guess that the older trees are about 80 years old. Although the evening was pleasant enough weatherwise, there did not appear to be much in the way of bird life apart from the commoner species such as **blackbird**, **robin**, **wren** and **chaffinch**, but it must be borne in mind that this is a wood which is walked regularly by the local inhabitants of the village along with dogs, cats and the occasional horse, which is obvious from the multitude of paths criss-crossing the wood. Despite this, one or two things turned up, including a few **ringlet butterflies** on a pathside with long grass and **gorse**, the first time I have seen them so near to Dundee. (We have ringlets in Monifieth - Ed.) A number of fungi were also found, especially *Russula* species, despite being early in the year and also rather dry underfoot. Someone spotted a **squirrel** (reds are still commonest) probably reflecting the **Scots pine** area.



By about 7.30 the light had started to fade and most folk had drifted off, back to their transport. It was then, being about the last one to leave the wood at its eastern side, that I spotted a bat patrolling backwards and forwards along a wide tree-lined path. It appeared to be larger than a **pipistrelle** but in the dim conditions I could not be sure.

Gordon Maxwell

GLEN TANAR

4th August

The day started on a fine morning at Albert Square with just over 30 eager Nats and friends bound for the highland estate of Glen Tanar. The route would take us via Glenshee and Braemar revealing fine vistas of the eastern Grampians. But first on the agenda was a stop at Coupar Angus to look at a local phenomenon: well over 100 nest holes had been dug out of a large (approx. 30ft high) mound of fertiliser/sand by **sand martins** on an open site almost in the middle of the village. Their normal home, presumably, is on the banks of the river Isla nearby where they have nested for many years. The success of their newly acquired upmarket accommodation was obvious as dozens of birds flew back and forth to feed their young. It is to be hoped that the mound will be left to cater for future generations.

The long drag up to the Cairnwell ski station and the halt at the top took its toll of the passing minutes and we arrived at our allotted parking bay in the estate about an hour behind schedule. However, one of the estate ranger service personnel, Stan Moyes, soon showed up and proved to be a mine of information on both the history of the estate and the wildlife therein. At this point the walk split into two groups: a small group travelling upstream onto higher ground, the rest electing to go downstream on a previously recce'd walk accompanied by Stan Moyes. En route, the first interesting feature was the old estate chapel which was in excellent condition for its years (19th century I think).

Further on, an interesting pre-arranged talk was given by the man in charge of the estate's small scale **charcoal burning** operation. This proved to be intriguing and covered many aspects of the process including choice of woods, how to start off the burning process, length of burning time and various applications of the finished product, all demonstrated with a pawky humour by the charcoal burner, an exiled Englishman.

The next interesting feature to appear was the sight of thousands of **solitary bees** - if that is not a contradiction - swarming just above the ground below a 100 yard stretch of **Scots pine** on an earthy bank. I have checked a number of books and have yet to see a reference to this behaviour, and no one present could make any suggestions. Any offers?



Just adjacent to this area was an attractive lochan called the Fairy Lochan. No "fairies" of any sort were seen, but a number of **damsels** (flies) were spotted plus the odd **dragonfly**. This was a bit disappointing as on the recce (a sunny day) the location had been "hoaching" with dragonflies large and small, but now the weather had clouded over and we had just been caught in a heavy shower. The Nats nevertheless pressed on regardless and soon veered left to regain the riverside and a few butterflies were seen including **dark green fritillary**, **ringlet** and **green-veined white**. It had not been a good day for the birdwatchers, but a few **dippers** were spotted on the river. We searched for the cast skins (exuviae) of **stoneflies**, which had been found and

photographed on the recce at the riverside, but it was not their day.

The way back upstream led through an area of **Scots pine** and a number of fungi were found including the unusual tennis racquet shaped *Spatularia flavida*. On arrival at the small ranger centre various odds and ends were put on show such as fungi, moth wings, pine cones and most were successfully identified.

Returning, by a different route via Forfar, the bus was strangely silent except for the odd yawn or snore, but I'm sure that most would agree that a future visit to this large and varied location would be worthwhile.

Gordon Maxwell

BARRY BUDDON JOINT OUTING

5th August

This year's outing was blessed by sunshine, very welcome after last year. Over 30 people turned up and, as usual, split into two groups.

The birders, led by Bob McCurley, initially had to work hard to achieve last year's total of 56 species but in the end saw an amazing 68 species. These included such highlights as lots of **wheatears**, a **green woodpecker**, several **buzzards**, and one or two **sparrowhawks**, **greenshanks** and **common sandpipers**. Dorothy's friend, the **farmyard goose**, was not included in the total!

Many old favourites were found by the botany group, led by Jim Cook. The **grass of Parnassus** was at its beautiful best and the stands of **gypsywort** (*Lycopus europaeus*) were larger than ever seen before. A number of spikes of **adder's tongue fern** and **greater twayblade** were found but no **coralroot orchids**. On land adjacent to the SSSI the rare **yellow bartsia** (*Parentucellia viscosa*) was easily found this year, apparently thriving.

A good range of insects was also seen, including eleven species of **butterflies**. There were particularly large numbers of **graylings**, possibly recently emerged. In addition four **damselfly** and two **dragonfly** species were seen. A good day on all counts.

Anne Reid

(Based on the report of the outing by Bob McCurley in the SWT Dundee and Angus Newsletter, with his permission Ed.)

LUNAN BAY BARBECUE

28th August

The weather was on our side again as we repeated the tradition of previous years with a barbecue at Jenny's family hut at the south end of Lunan Bay. For those who have not yet enjoyed the luxury of the 'Lunan Hut' let me describe it. It has only one room, two small beds, a table and two chairs and a sideboard. There is room for two cars but there is no water, power or toilet facilities! It does, however, have a wood-burning stove and two paraffin Tilly lamps.

On the day, a number of energetic Nats arrived early. Some walked north along the beach towards Red Castle while others headed south round the cliff path to the tiny village of Ethie Haven. The main contingent arrived at teatime and soon the smell of not one, not two, but three barbecues filled the air. As usual there were copious amounts of mulled wine to be consumed and to follow, strawberries, gateaux and even scrumptious profiteroles.

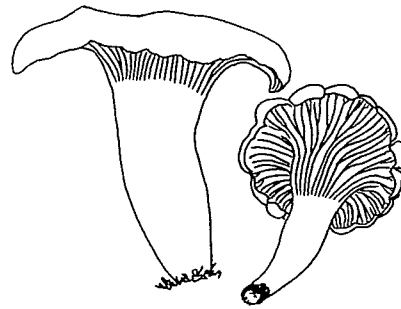
As the light faded those who had stayed to the bitter end crammed into the hut to enjoy the company and reminiscences.

Brian Allan

LINN OF TUMMEL - FUNGUS FORAY

8th September

It's that time of year again. The days are starting to shorten noticeably, the leaves are beginning to turn and the scent of change is in the air. Know what that means? Time for the Nats' fascinating foray for fabulous fantastic fungi again. Except that this year the fungi weren't so fantastic, rather sparse in fact. Not many people complain about dry weather - mycologists and mycophagists certainly do. What's needed for a good crop of fungi is a spell of lovely wet and warm weather but the late summer and early autumn of 2001 proved to be exceptionally dry. It's not that there were no fungi, just far fewer and the specimens were poorer. Gordon, Brian and Pat found some good specimens of **chanterelles** (*Cantharellus cibarius*) early on and someone picked some **hedgehog fungi** (*Hydnum repandum*), both of which are edible and excellent (lightly fried in butter, perhaps with an egg!). However, although we found a few **ceps**, or **penny buns**, (*Boletus edulis*) later on, they were well maggoted and not worth eating - unless you fancy your protein on the hoof. Most of the party had a sunny lunch down by the falls, enlivened by watching a few groups of adventurers in rubber boats come down the rapids (but nobody fell in!). A number of us went up to the old suspension bridge, the Coronation Bridge of George V, and found a few more specimens. There was the usual good crop of **bracket fungi**, a large stump with a great crop of **oak maze-gill** (*Daedalea quercina*), **birch brackets** (*Piptoporus betulinus*) all over the place and a few **stink horns** (*Phallus impudicus*) but nothing really spectacular. We ended up with a list of about 50 different fungi, well down from the expected 80 species.



Jim Cook

AUTUMN MEETINGS 2001

JOURNEY TO THE LOST WORLD

Richard Brinklow - 2nd October

An audience in excess of 50 heard the speaker introduced as Dundee Museum's expert on natural history and as a former President of the Society who had helped its activities in many ways over the years

The subject of the talk was a trip to Venezuela in early 2001, concentrating especially on the isolated plateau of Roraima, immortalised in Conan Doyle's book "The Lost World" Richard showed spectacular slides of the fantastic scenery of the country, both mountain and river, and described the problems of journeying to the plateau on foot, and of an additional trip up one of the rivers by motorised canoe, all led by local guides Though not specifically a natural history trip he managed to describe various species, many endemic to the area, and also mentioned that unguided parties were not encouraged due to the depredations of orchid hunters and other collectors Some members were surprised at the presence of **bracken** there, the same species as in Britain

Though there were many species of **humming birds** Richard had not had the time to attempt photographs of them, though he did manage one of a **parrotlet** - a very small green parrot - in the mountain forests A large number of **orchid** species were found on the Roraima plateau along with a wide variety of other fascinating plants A chilly night spent on the plateau in its only 'hotel' (a cave) and a description of the rugged terrain with its boggy pools gave members an insight into the unusual atmosphere of the place

In his vote of thanks, Jim Cook commended Richard for his efforts in just getting there in addition to his fine photography No doubt many members went home dreaming of a trip to such an exotic location, but in the cold light of day well, we can always dream!

Gordon Maxwell

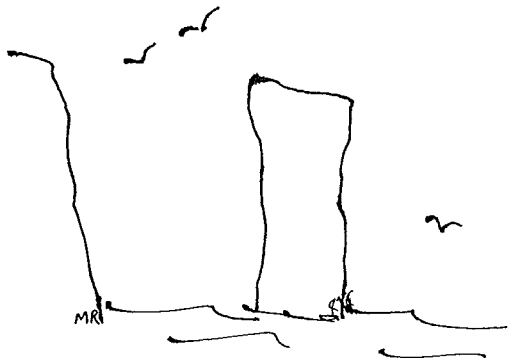
SCOTLAND'S COASTS

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Dr Rob Duck - 16th October

To start with, Dr Duck informed us that Scotland has the longest coastline of any country in Europe, measuring 11,772km long, of which 87.8% of the mainland is underdeveloped This amazing length includes numerous islands with a total coastline of 7,866km, making up 66.8% of the total

There is now very little dispute that our climate will change in future decades and that global warming and increased storm activity are threatening our coasts The chilling quote "The oceans are the graveyards of the land" prepared us somewhat for the bad and the ugly aspects of the somewhat enigmatic title Coastal erosion is inevitable and predictable, and attempts to stem this erosion merely transfer the problem to other areas



Stunning images of sea stacks depicted the erosion which has already taken place around them Present day wave action will eventually undermine the bases of these monoliths and they will eventually topple We also saw slides of features of old coastlines left behind when sea levels fell in ancient times, such as former sea cliffs on Arran, the Needle E'e, an arch which is no longer in active contact with the sea, and the raised shoreline at Newport Many of these may come under threat if sea levels rise and resulting erosion pressures increase

Dr Duck went forward in time to 2050 to convey interesting comparisons between projected sea level rise and isostatic rise of the land in some areas In Angus the predicted uplift of the land is between 5

and 9.9cm and the possible sea level rise between 25 and 29.9cm, a net sea level rise relative to the land. We were shown maps which predicted the overall results of these two processes for the whole of the UK – even more worrying for parts of the south of England.

Sadly our natural environment is fragile. The Devonian sandstone cliffs of Orkney will suffer from wave action, the dramatic stacks at Duncansby Head will erode and the impressive Bow Fiddle arch at Portknockie will go eventually. Yet Dr Duck strongly believes that we must not interfere, but adapt to this natural change and accept the loss. He gave us numerous other examples of areas at risk, including Montrose and Tentsmuir, with slides graphically depicting the erosion.

Though in favour of the protection of houses and livelihoods Dr Duck's pet hate seems to be the ineffective and unsightly consequences of attempts at protection. 'Bad' and 'ugly' rock armour, gabion baskets and sandbags are aesthetically displeasing and just focus the erosion elsewhere. However, heritage protection, such as that necessary at Skara Brae, is very important, though this should be carried out in a sensitive fashion where it is necessary.

Finishing on a sad note, Dr Duck pointed out that species rich habitats such as salt marshes and intertidal muds are vulnerable to erosion too and emphasised that we must accept this. Even naturalists must accommodate these inevitable changes to our coastline.

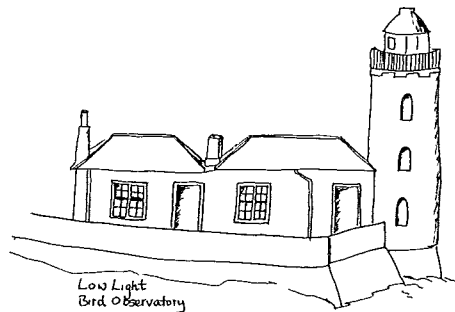
Joy Cammack

THE ISLE OF MAY

Russell Nisbet – 13th November

Few visitors to the Isle of May have seen a sunrise or a sunset from this wee island lying at the mouth of the Firth of Forth. Russell Nisbet has enjoyed such spectacles when he was the resident SNH warden on the island for the 1996 summer season, and has savoured the peaceful atmosphere of the island for 35 years.

Scottish Natural Heritage have managed the island National Nature Reserve for the Northern Lighthouse Board since 1956. One of the three lighthouses, the Low Light, makes a very cosy bothy for the warden and the Bird Observatory volunteers. In May and October migrant birds are trapped in Heligoland traps and then ringed by these 'birders'. Examples shown were **rustic bunting**, **wryneck**, **bluethroat**, (ooh, wouldn't it be nice to see one of those) **redstart** and **long-eared owl**. However, not all flying migrants are birds and Russell showed us groups of **painted ladies**, **red admirals**, **small tortoiseshells** and **silver-Y moths** feeding on **thistles**. A thousand or so **Atlantic grey seal** pups are born on the isle in October. These are studied by the Sea Mammal Research Unit from St Andrews.



The island has been inhabited in the past. Near the Kirkhaven landing is St Adrian's chapel. He was killed by marauding Danes in 875AD. The chapel is the only visible part of a 12th century priory which became an important place of pilgrimage. The summit beacon, built in 1636, was Scotland's first permanently manned lighthouse. Three men were employed and four hundred tons of coal were burnt annually. The Main Light and then the Low Light, to the north, were built in the 19th century.

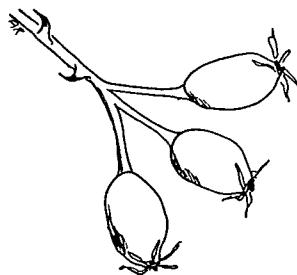
It is relatively easy to visit the island during the summer on the *May Princess* which sails daily from Anstruther. A Nats outing has been arranged on Saturday 8th June 2002, so let's hope that the seas are kind to us. It is the season to see spectacular displays of breeding birds – **kittiwakes**, **guillemots**, **razorbills**, **shags**, **eiders** and 40,000 **puffins**. Russell explained that 1,000 **arctic terns** now nest since the **gull** population has been reduced to 15,000 by culling. Though the displays of **lesser celandine** may be over by June, drifts of **thrift** and **sea campion** should still delight the eye. Russell gave us a great preview.

Alban Houghton

WORMIT TO BALMERINO WALK

17th November

The sky was cloudy, but there was no wind or rain to deter the 18 Nats who turned up for the walk. We began with an **agate** hunt on the beach at Wormit Bay. Roma found the first one and soon after the Nats, having been shown what to look for, found several other agates. Then we followed the cliff path west towards Balmerino. Some sprays of **red campion** provided welcome colour in the hedges along with red **rose hips**. Tufts of yellow **ragwort** still stood defiantly in the meadows.



The low tide exposed large sand and mud banks where a few **seals** were lying. Lots of birds satisfied the binocular-carrying ornithologists, including, Roma assures me, a 'charm' of **goldfinches** and a **red-throated diver** and **mergansers** on the water. Some **fungi**, which Gordon identified, included the bright orange *Tremella mesenterica* on a dead branch and two large **parasol mushrooms**. The muddy path led over the headland and down to a dip where some Nats were able to descend a steep wooded bank down to the beach at Jock's Hole. Here more abundant **agates** awaited us along with **red chalcidony (cornelian)**, both often used in jewellery, ancient and modern. Brian and Gordon both found large agate-containing pebbles which Doug was asked to slice and polish with his special stone-cutting and polishing equipment. Other finds were shared and exclaimed over before watches were consulted and hunger pains told us it was time to go. We headed back to our cars and made for the Newport Hotel for a welcome lunch. An excellent day!

Jenny Allan

See also article on agates on page 32 Ed

BUTTERFLIES OF SCOTLAND

Peter Kinnear – 4th December

President Bede Pounder introduced the speaker to an audience of about 50 members and friends. The speaker confessed that he would not be showing slides, and immediately launched into many thought-provoking ideas on the study of lepidoptera, from the Victorian era up to the present day. Involving the audience in his talk as much as possible, he amused them, saying that the first lepidopterists were regarded as stark raving mad, an attitude still held, perhaps to a lesser degree, to the present day. Peter then brought things up to the present on the theme that all was not doom and gloom in the butterfly world, and quoted the cases of the **peacock** and **orange tip butterflies** which have both extended their range in our area in recent years, the peacock especially, with increasing success. Peter ended his talk by inviting his audience to examine the very large display of books, both new and old, which he had put on display.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Mr Kinnear could be said to have reversed that proverb, though some still missed the slides.

Gordon Maxwell

THE AZORES

Brian Ballinger – 18th December

The title of this, our Christmas meeting, had originally been 'The Azores and Other Islands' but, in the interests of impending refreshments, the 'others' were left for a future occasion. So, 45 members and friends settled down to learn about this remote group of islands.

Of the nine islands which make up the group, two are on the American tectonic plate and seven on the Eurasian plate, though the whole group is Portuguese with the only means of

access via Lisbon. Situated as they are on the mid-Atlantic ridge, the islands are actively volcanic, and Mount Pico, at 7,700ft is Portugal's highest peak. The climate is very humid with plentiful rainfall and this results in very lush vegetation. There is a population of only a quarter of a million and most of the islands are given over to very small scale agriculture.

Three of the islands had been visited, on two trips, and Brian described aspects of these in more detail. San Miguel is the largest island and many of the plants there are endemics. There are also some notable introductions, including the **conifer** *Cryptomeria japonica* and a relative of **ginger**, which both thrive in the damp conditions. The local **mosses** and **liverworts** are very lush and there are lots of different **daisies**, but no books to aid identification! This island had 99 species of **snails** and we were also shown a slide of a **marsh frog**. There are only seven mammals, including **bats**, **rats** and **mice**. On Faial there were **tree heathers** and introduced **pinus** and we were told that the locals cooked in the hot springs.

The ferry trip to Pico yielded sightings of **Cory's shearwater** and a number of **cetaceans** including **common** and **Risso's dolphins** and **sperm** and **pilot whales**. **Rock samphire** (*Crithmum maritimum*) was growing on the harbour wall and here there seemed to be an abundance of insect life and **lizards** which presumably took advantage of this. We were shown some of the varieties of **butterflies** seen - **clouded yellows**, **whites**, **long-tailed blues**, a **painted lady** and a **monarch**. On Mount Pico itself there was the endemic **Azores juniper**. The volcano last erupted in 1963.

The vote of thanks was given by Bede Pounder before Jim Cook made a presentation to Margaret Duncan to thank her for her long and active involvement with the Dundee Naturalists' Society and to mark her imminent departure to New Zealand. (See article on page 3.) We then moved on to the refreshments so generously contributed by members and all had a good chat to bring the year to a close.

Anne Reid

MEMBERS' ARTICLES

INTERESTING RECORDS 2001

This compilation is intended to let everyone know what has been seen in the local area of natural history interest. Please submit any interesting sightings as this listing is appropriate for items too short to warrant a full write up.

Each entry is followed by the initials of the recorder.

Joy Cammack	JoyC	Nancy Middleton	NM
Jim Cook	JC	Anne Reid	AR
Monica Edwards	ME	Daphne Macfarlane Smith	DMS
Gordon Maxwell	GM	Marjory Tennant	MT
Bob McCurley	BM		

3rd January I spotted 23 **waxwings** resting on a tall tree on the lower Dighty, near the Seven Arches. A good way to start the birdwatching year. AR

3rd/4th/5th January **Tawny owls** calling in the late evenings, Broughty Ferry. JC

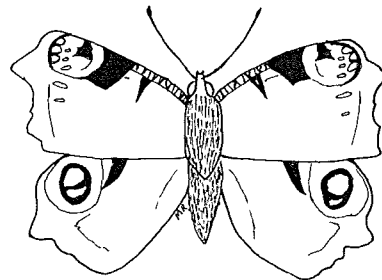
4th January A '**crow parliament**' in tree near my back window, with about 50 carrion crows involved, accompanied by much noise. After about 15 minutes they flew off, leaving a few residents behind. The decision appeared to be unanimous. GM

6th January A **robin** singing in the later afternoon, Broughty Ferry (just getting tuned up for spring?) Weather not mild and spring-like! JC

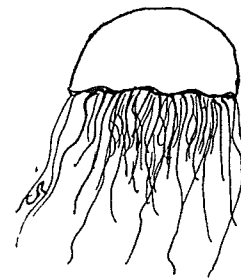
7th January Around 40 **waxwings** behind Ancrum Road School. ME

9th January Twelve **long-tailed ducks** on the Eden estuary at Out Head, near St Andrews. GM

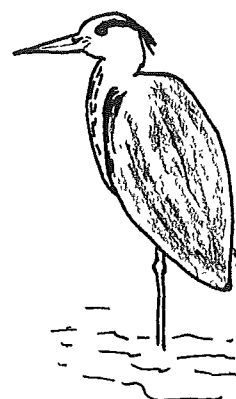
- 9th January** A total eclipse of the moon at a civilised hour (last year we got up at some ungodly hour) It was a beautifully clear evening so the full sequence of events was easy to observe. Totality was from 7 50 - 8 50pm with the moon still visible as a dull red disc until the brilliant crescent reappeared and full moonlight was eventually restored. AR
- 13th January** A **kestrel** and a **short-eared owl** engaged in aerial combat above the car park at Balkello (Sidlaws). The kestrel broke off the engagement after a few minutes. GM
- 18th January** Twelve **waxwings** in Carselea Road, Invergowrie. A very good year for them. ME
- 22nd January** First **snowdrop** appeared in the garden in Broughty Ferry (and on the north side of the house too!) Just in time for the snows and freezing temperatures at the end of January and early February - but it survived and even looked better for the experience. Lots of other snowdrops appearing as the snows melted by 12th February. JC
- 5th February** Four **fieldfares** feeding on **cotoneaster** berries in a garden just along the street, Monifieth. Probably driven to the coast by the blizzards. AR
- 10th February** A **woodcock** in our Broughty Ferry garden at 2pm, turning over leaves under a shrub. It flew off when approached by a **cat**! DMS
- 11th February** Birds started singing again, all of a sudden, as the second major snows melted. **Blackbirds**, **robins**, **dunnocks** and one **thrush**, in the neighbour's garden. JC
- 11th February** About 40 **pintails** on casual water pools at Earls Hall reserve. Other ducks also present. GM
- 14th February** A pair of **peregrines** seen patrolling over Carlingheugh Bay, Arbroath. There was also a pair of **kestrels** in the same area and about six **dolphins** a quarter of a mile offshore. GM
- 17th February** A **painted lady butterfly** seen flying in Ballinard Road, Broughty Ferry, at 10.30 on a sunny morning. Its hibernation must have been disturbed. MT
- 26th February** Ten **fieldfares** in Station Road Invergowrie. ME
- February/March** Various visits to my garden from a flock of **long-tailed tits**, presumably from neighbouring Templeton Woods. JoyC
- February/March** A female **blackcap** resident in the garden, Invergowrie, for about four weeks. ME
- 9th March** A pair of **bullfinches** visited my garden, Birkhill, beside Templeton Woods. JoyC
- 31st March** Newly hatched **small white butterfly** on my rear window sill. A further examination of the windows revealed another 17 pupae, no doubt all originating from last year's Brussels sprout crop! GM
- 12th April** First **small tortoiseshell** of the year, basking on a wall. JC
- 12th April** **Peacock butterfly** in the garden, Invergowrie. Presumably one which had hibernated. They are becoming much more common locally. ME
- 23rd April** **Peregrine falcon** on the face of large quarry above Balkello. Also six **red grouse** and a few **wheatears**. GM
- 27th April** Two **linnets** in the garden, Birkhill. JoyC
- 6th May** A **peacock butterfly** and an **orange tip** near Rotmel Loch, Dunkeld. GM
- 12th May** Bird table visited, briefly, by a **goldfinch** - a very rarely seen visitor in my Broughty Ferry garden. Must be the attractions of Peter Ellis's bird seed mixture! JC
- 15th May** While watching **swans** and other birds near the mouth of the Dighty at Balmossie at 9 30am I was suddenly aware of **swans**, **gulls** and **oystercatchers** reacting to a disturbance. My instant reaction was to scan the sky for a **raptor**, but finding no sign of one I looked around and saw a **roe deer** lolloping along the beach from Broughty Ferry towards Monifieth and the cover on Barry Buddon. Are they getting more common or am I just lucky? AR
- 4th June** **Magpie moth** caterpillar in garden, Broughty Ferry, on **hazel**, but possibly fallen off apple tree. DMS



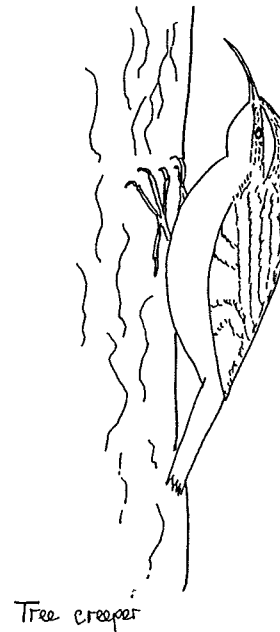
- 7th June** A spanking pink and black **rosy starling** seen near Easthaven on the coastal path
BM
- 9th June** Four young **blue tits** flew from garden birdbox DMS
- 16th June** A couple of **tree sparrows** seen up at Carsegowniemuir quarry JC
- 22nd June** On walk through Ledcreeff Wood and on to Lundie Crag saw many butterflies, including – **small coppers**, **green-veined whites**, **small heaths**, **large whites**, **small pearl-bordered fritillaries** and one **northern brown argus** On the crags saw a **buzzard** and an **osprey** being harried, for a short time, by a **kestrel** Also saw one **roe deer** hind with two **fawns** All this only a few miles from Dundee GM
- 23rd June** One young **green woodpecker** pushing its head out of nest hole near Laird's Loch GM
- 25th June** A **short-eared owl** seen at Mealna Letter, near Spittal of Glenshee JoyC
- 3rd July** A fine display by about four **dolphins** at Carlingheugh Bay, sometimes jumping clear of the water two at a time **Latticed heath moths** (day flying) seen above the beach GM
- 5th July** More than 150 **sand martin** nest holes in a large heap of fertiliser in Coupar Angus and many birds in flight This site has been used for a number of years, according to local information GM
- 13th July** A grand total of 230 **little gulls** seen at the mouth of the Buddon Burn on their return migration BM
- 14th July** While on Barry Buddon saw two **magpies** near the Monifieth end Also, unusually, some white flowered **restharrow** BM
- 16th July** A **buff-tip moth** on the roses in the garden ME
- 18th July** On a family outing to the West Sands, St Andrews, my granddaughter and I counted 131 **jellyfish**, of at least two different species, washed ashore BM
- 23rd July** **Yellow bartsia** reappeared on the golf practice area at Carnoustie It was also seen by those on the Barry Buddon outing on 5th August BM
- 27th July** Two **bats** flying low over our Invergowrie garden at dusk ME
- 28th July** Eight **dotterel** and six **ptarmigan** seen on Glas Maol - a hillwalker's bonus! BM
- 31st July** A **grasshopper** in the garden ME
- 1st August** A single **osprey** seen briefly at Crombie Only the children saw it, ahead of us on their way to the playground, but it was positively identified by Mary and Andrew BM
- 4th August** A trip to Glen Doll yielded a new site for the **northern brown argus butterfly** and my first records in the area for **common hawker** and **golden ringed dragonflies** BM
- 6th August** Realised stalks of creeper on house had become a roosting site for at least six **house sparrows**, perfectly screened by leaves except when they moved! DMS
- 14th August** Had two **small tortoiseshells**, a **red admiral**, a **large white** and a single **peacock** (a first for the garden) on one prolific **buddleia** bush, all during the course of one day! The plant has certainly earned its name of butterfly bush JC
- 15th August** Millions (I counted them!) of flying **ants** on all paths around and above Laird's Loch Many young **frogs** and **toads** also in evidence GM
- 17th August** Between Kinshaldy and Earls Hall Muir a wide range of sightings, including – eight **peacock butterflies** plus eight other species, **pebble prominent** caterpillars on **dwarf willow**, about 100 mixed **goosanders** and **mergansers**, both young and old, offshore, **ringed plovers** and **dunlin** on the beach, 100 **seals** near the Eden estuary, many **dragonflies**, mainly *Sympetrum* species, and ten **grey partridges**, flushed from the dunes, at the top of the beach GM
- 23rd August** A tiny **froglet** found in the (full) watering can by the back door The first record for our garden We have no pond but suspect it must have come from a neighbour's AR
- 24th August** At Craigower Hill, Pitlochry saw 11 **peacock butterflies** and many **Scotch argus**, also **common blues**, **small tortoiseshells**, **small whites** and **small coppers** Much **grass of Parnassus** by the forestry paths **Buzzards**, **kestrels** and **roe deer** also seen GM



- 6th September** Forty **pinkfooted geese** at Montrose Basin, the first arrivals of the autumn BM
- 17th September** First **pinkfeet** of the autumn overflow Broughty Ferry at 4pm DMS
- 23rd September** Two rare passage migrants, a **barred warbler** and a **wood warbler**, seen at Mains of Usan, Montrose BM
- 30th September** First **fieldfare** on tree in neighbour's garden DMS
- 7th October** About 400 **seals** on two sandbanks off Tentsmuir Point An uncommon fungus, *Gyromitra esculenta*, found beside a **Scots pine** There was a magnificent **rainbow** over the estuary lasting nearly half an hour GM
- 9th October** Lots of fungi in the grass of the back lawn - *Panaeolus foenisecii*, *Psilocybe semilanceata* (but did NOT indulge!) and several other "little brown jobs" Also *Cystoderma amianthinum*, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, *Phallus impudicus*, *Scleroderma citrinum* and even *Lepiota rhacodes* (but very old when discovered) elsewhere in the garden JC
- 14th October** **Buzzards** and many smaller birds seen at Burnside Quarry near Newtyle, also many **red-legged partridges** (probably reared for shooting) and a **grey squirrel** Some nice **fungi** found in the quarry too What fine wildlife sites some of these disused quarries would make, though this one will probably go the way of most of the others – destined to be filled with domestic rubbish GM
- 18th October** Woken up at about 5am, well before dawn, by a **robin** singing lustily in a tree close to the bedroom window Just getting in a little practice for spring and maintaining his territory JC
- 23rd October** A **great grey shrike** seen at West Seaton, Arbroath BM
- 26th October** Good views of a **red squirrel** in Dundee Botanic Gardens ME
- 27th October** A late afternoon walk up the lower Dighty yielded good views of the **dipper**, two late **swallows**, a **pheasant** (unusual in the area) and **greenfinches** eating the seeds from the **rose hips** When we got to the weir by the screening station the **heron** was standing, head forward, alert to any movement We paused for a few moments and, almost immediately, it caught a sizeable **fish** - at least as long as its head and beak together Once it had subdued and swallowed the fish, the heron immediately flew into a nearby tree to digest this worthwhile catch. AR
- 27th October** A pair of **buzzards** circling above my front door (Foggyley Gardens) and being harried by four **crows** They'll be in the back gardens next! GM
- 28th October** Three **magpies**, a **jay** and about a hundred mixed **fieldfares** and **redwings** on a field bordered by a conifer wood above the Den of Alyth NM
- 28th October** A late **red admiral** flitting about (looking for nectar, perhaps, but without much luck) in a blink of sunshine It settled on a dried up **geranium** that had long ago shed its pods and completely ignored a floriferous **fuchsia** just a few metres away Perhaps **red admirals** don't recognise these foreign flowers! Weather still unseasonably mild, no frosts yet JC (But what about Buddleia? Butterflies often just bask at this time of year - Ed)
- 28th October** Another late **red admiral** on a sunny afternoon AR
- 29th October** A flock of nine **blue tits**, six **long-tailed tits** and two **great tits** passed through the garden DMS
- 30th October** Last **swallow** seen, heading south DMS (See also article on page 33)
- 31st October** **Red admiral butterfly** in the garden, Invergowrie, at 9am ME
- 3rd November** **Small tortoiseshell butterfly** at my few remaining flowers on a lovely sunny morning No real frosts yet so the butterflies have not gone into hibernation AR
- 4th November** A covey of ten plump **ptarmigan** on Glas Maol JoyC
- 6th November** A large queen **buff-tailed bumble bee** battering at the window on a sunny morning - looking for somewhere to hibernate presumably AR
- 11th November** A family party of three **slavonian grebes** seen in Carnoustie Bay and a **great northern diver**, in adult winter plumage, seen off Barry Buddon Point BM
- 19th November** Three **goldfinches**, 20 **siskins**, six **chaffinches** and four **blue tits** all seen on a tree from my rear window GM



- 27th November** A **jay** visited the garden from nearby Templeton Woods JoyC
- 27th November** A **kestrel** has been appearing recently on a tree overlooking my next door neighbour's bird table Not good news for the birds, but a good opportunity for a photograph GM
- 2nd December** En route to Moncrieffe Hill a **highland cow** was seen, with a **crow** perched on each horn, in a field near Bridge of Earn NM
- 11th December** A **barn owl** seen near the main Arbroath road above Monifieth at 6 25am Not usually found in the area, possibly a wandering juvenile DMS (I got a very excited phone call for this one! – Ed)
- 26th December** BM came and confirmed that the imprint on my patio door had been made by a **sparrowhawk**, though this species has never been seen in our garden! DMS
- 29th December** A walk on crisp, crusty snow at Crombie gave us sightings of a **treecreeper**, **tits**, a **redwing** and two **great spotted woodpeckers**, one in the woods and the other at the feeders by the lodge There was also a single flower of **broom**, still untouched by the weather! **Fieldfares** were also seen near Newbigging on the outward and return journeys AR



EARLY NATURALISTS IN DUNDEE

In Bulletin 25, Anne Reid asked if anyone would like to write a history of the Society There is certainly a wealth of Society archives, shared between Dundee Museum, the Wellgate Library and Dundee University, in addition to specimens in Dundee Museum, Dundee University and the National Museum of Scotland

However, the Society was comparatively late in making its appearance Many towns much smaller than Dundee had flourishing natural history societies long before the Dundee Naturalists' Society was established in 1874, towards the end of the Victorian heyday of natural history At that time, the journal *Scottish Naturalist* gave the Society a barbed welcome "We are glad to observe signs of life in Dundee That town, long noted for its commercial enterprise, has had nearly an equal, but not enviable, celebrity for its poverty and deadness in regard to the study of natural science But we trust that that reproach will soon be wiped away "

Later historians have pointed out that the rapid growth of Dundee in the 19th century, with heavy demand for unskilled labour in the jute industry, resulted in the city having a relatively small middle class and the least educated working class of any Scottish city These were both factors which would reduce the potential membership of learned societies, and which had contributed to the failure of the Dundee Watt Institution in 1852

But Dundee had several societies and informal associations devoted to the study of natural history many years before our Society was established The president of the Dundee Naturalists' Society gave a brief history of these in an address delivered in 1895 – one, 'The Gleaners of Nature' had been formed as early as 1828 by the botanist William Gardiner

Even more remarkably, David Elliston Allen's social history, *The Naturalist in Britain*, records that Dundee had a natural history society of sorts as early as 1706 This club, started in connection with Dundee's Physic Garden, was one of the earliest such societies in the world, preceded only by London's Temple Coffee House Botanic Club (founded around 1689) Sadly, its inspirer, the local apothecary Patrick Blair (famed for dissecting an elephant that died on the road to Broughty Ferry, and reconstructing its skeleton), became involved with the 1715 Jacobite uprising, and neither the club nor Blair's career survived

It is a credit to the founders of Dundee Naturalists' Society that their organisation succeeded where others had failed and far from being celebrated for "poverty and deadness", the city should be known as being one of the first to have a body devoted to the study of natural science

Colin McLeod

AN EYE-OPENER

I have walked about the Angus coast for many years noting its geology, its bird life, its insects and its flora. I realised that this was a rich environment for any naturalist to explore. Having been tricked (persuaded? - Ed) into joining the Dundee and Angus Bird Club by the well known local bird-man, Bob McCurley, I received before long the club's annual report. I noted that it was long on unusual birds and rare migrants, but rather short on detail concerning our more common birds, especially the large numbers of coastal breeding birds.

In May this year I set out on a small adventure, walking the coastline from Broughty Ferry to the mouth of the North Esk. My purpose for this trip was to see what birds we had breeding here and in what sort of numbers. I spent only about eight days in this pursuit, but during this time I saw so much as to beguile anyone. I suppose having a focus does help to attain a view, or a clearer picture.

The sea birds breeding in Angus were as follows

Fulmars	886	
Shags	39	
Herring Gulls	3120	
Kittiwakes	2668	
Auks	1265	(Razorbills, Puffins & Guillemots)
Cormorants	152+	
Eider and Mallard were not counted		

I also counted at least 19 cliff colonies of **house martins**, having four to five nests per colony. All these figures are liable to be underestimates. The real surprise was to find nesting **cormorants**, to my knowledge this is something new.

I saw many other birds on these outings. Some days one's attention was drawn to other events such as the appearance of **dolphins** no more than ten feet away, **roe deer** grazing, **brown hares** sunning themselves, the odd **fox** out hunting and the sheer beauty of spring on the coast. I hope to cover this more thoroughly next year and to have something interesting to report.

Pat Gaff

CURTAIN DOWN ON THE TREE GROUP

Dundee Tree Group voted itself out of existence in April, with a feeling of "job well done, time to go".

After about twenty-five years of phoning, writing, appealing to councils, tramping the countryside and badgering landowners, I can doff my chairman's hat and just sit and doze through meetings (if I choose to attend). But I can't lay down my spade without appealing to all the Naturalists. It's up to you now! You can take up the torch and sound the alarm when builders and developers endanger the amenities, or when any worthwhile tree is threatened by a thoughtless "improvement".

Fortunately, the public attitude to trees has changed greatly, since the Tree Group leapt into the path of the bulldozer, and there is a lot more tree planting going on.

I always told the group members that they would get no medals for working with the Tree Group, but they could drive about the countryside proud to know that some of those trees were there because of the work of the Tree Group.

Robert McLeod

PEACOCKS AND ORANGE TIPS

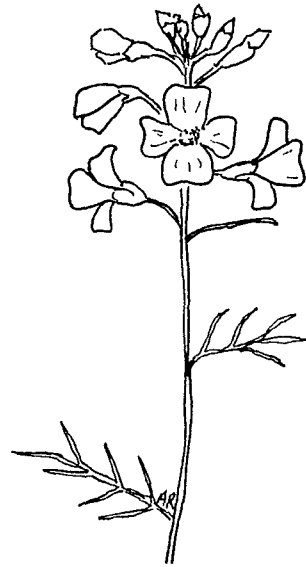
An Angus Success Story

In these days of gloomy stories of declining species, pollution, grubbed out hedgerows and lost habitat for wildlife, it is heartening to see that, at least in the above two butterfly species, some wildlife is holding its own, and one of these, the **peacock**, is certainly on the increase. My observations in this respect are based mainly in Angus and Perthshire. Counts from a number of localities in these counties and also in Fife show that there has been a steady increase over the past five years in peacock numbers since I first spotted two in Fife near Earls Hall reserve. These were soon supplemented by sightings by myself and others in the society, notably Anne Reid, Bob McCurley, Ron Lawrie, Jim Cook and others who came in with records from in and around Dundee. Soon it became obvious that this was no local invasion, and sightings were brought in from further afield. There appeared to be a steady build-up in numbers over the next few years, culminating in 2001. In this year I counted six between Kinshaldy car park and Earls Hall in Fife, a dozen on **buddleia** at the Eden hide at Guardbridge, also Fife, one at Laird's Loch, Tullybaccart, two on a forest walk round the back of Lundie Crag (the last near the top of the crags) one on the Happs road, off Forfar road, and last but not least one on the harling above my back door. But perhaps the most interesting find was on a track round the back of Craigower Hill, near Pitlochry, where I counted 10 on buddleia (a more intensive search would almost certainly have yielded more), this added to one near Aberfeldy on a previous year indicates to me that the peacock is here to stay. The food plant is stinging nettle and there is no shortage of that.

The **orange tip** on the other hand does not seem to have quite matched the peacock's success, but nevertheless I have recorded one in the Tayport area and another at Auchterhouse in the Sidlaws where the foodplant, **cuckoo flower**, exists in reasonable quantity. Records have also come in from the Broughty Ferry/Monifieth area, mainly from Society members. So the signs look promising and I think we can look forward to two colourful and hopefully permanent additions to our local lepidoptera in the coming years.

The reasons for these incursions are controversial and varied, but that is another story, at present I'm content to just admire or photograph the new residents.

Gordon Maxwell



TURKEY OAKS

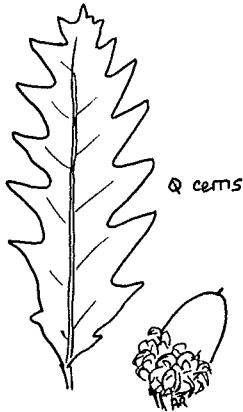
The **Turkey oak** is *Quercus cerris* and you do not have to go to Turkey to see it. Most stately homes have it somewhere in their parks, along with a **cedar of Lebanon**, a **redwood** or two and other exotic **conifers**. Camperdown Park has one and Craigtoun Park near St Andrews has several really big trees. They hold their distinctive, narrow leaves late into winter and have a thick coat of bristles on the acorn cups.

A flower trip to Turkey's Pontic Alps seemed a chance to investigate further and a browse through tree books revealed a total of 15 possibilities (for comparison, there are 27 species in the Flora Europaea). Distribution details are often a bit hazy - "east of the Caucasus" leaves room for error. The write-up of last year's tour mentioned another species, *Q. petraea* ssp. *iberica*. So the great Turkish **oak** hunt was on, as on the first day we piled out of the minibuses and walked up through steep forests of oriental spruce to a monastery perched on a cliff.

The first traces were just dead, wind-blown leaves piled by the roadside lower down the valley. The roads are forced to follow the rivers in deep valleys, and the main tree by them is our own **alder**, the oaks were higher up. Next day as most of the party enthused over **orchids** in a near vertical hazel grove, there were several smallish oaks in a copse of

oriental hornbeam The leaves were recognisable as oak, though the lobes were shallow. It was a dead ringer for *Q. hartwissiana*. The side veins of the leaf were ruler straight, parallel and all ended in a lobe. Bean (*Trees and Shrubs hardy in the British Isles*) says it is primitive and very similar to a fossil oak. The next day, on the coast, it was found with young fruits, bunched on long peduncles, which clinched it. We carried eight out of the ten volumes of the Turkish Flora with us (written and published in Edinburgh!) which gave it as a relict Euxine species (i.e. round the Black Sea) and the distribution map also supported the identification.

We then crossed the coastal range to Artvin, perched high above a gorge with meadows not yet cut and full of flowers, wherever the slope eased, and mixed woodland on the really steep bits, very Swiss in feel. In the hedges and scattered in the meadows was a small-leaved oak, *Q. petraea* ssp. *iberica*. A close relative of our own **durmast oak**, it was widespread on these drier slopes, and often lopped for forage near farms.



The deep, hot gorges had a rich selection of dry-land species but no oaks, and the high tableland round Ardehan, part of the east Anatolian plateau, was grassland - steppe - and almost devoid of trees.

Turkey is a vast country, so two oaks might be a fair catch. But did any get away? Well, the Turkish Flora distribution maps had dots in our locality for *Q. pontica*. With a name like that, *Q. pontica* would have been nice, to keep up with the *Rhododendron ponticum* Joneses. It is shrubby, with leaves remarkably like sweet chestnut. Now there were **sweet**

chestnuts in the forest and many seedlings. We commented that they looked a bit different, but thought no more of it. Were they that oak, that chestnut look-alike? Too late now.

And THE Turkey oak? Well, you could try further west in Turkey, but Camperdown is nearer!

Pauline B. Topham

(Three Nats went on a Greentours trip to the Pontic Alps in May 2001)

THE YEAR OF THE HEDGEHOG

27th April Came home late and almost trod on what looked like a small football on the back doorstep. Resisted the urge to kick it but switched on the porch light - and there curled up in a tight ball was a large and bristling hedgehog! First one this year, the mild weather has brought them out on time.

6th May Hedgehog on the back lawn in the late evening. It froze for a few moments and then trotted off surprisingly fast in the rapid shambling run of their kind. Good to see one now, just at the start of National Hedgehog Week. Very appropriate.

7th May Was digging quietly with a hand fork in the garden at the side of the house (trying to massacre some of the all too abundant weeds in fact!) when a movement out of the corner of my eye caught my attention. There, only a few feet away was a hedgehog. I froze and awaited developments. It waddled past, almost walking over the fork, and then, virtually right in front of me, it stopped and snuffled at something - a large slug. The hedgehog devoured the morsel with noisy relish and shambled on. Thanks, I need all the help I can get, at times it seems that the whole point of the garden is to breed huge numbers of large and healthy slugs!

26th May As darkness gathered in late evening, a series of extraordinary grunting and snuffling noises, almost human at times, began to sound out from under some bushes in the front garden. My imagination took off and brought thoughts of the "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" variety to mind! I sneaked up close to see what was happening (my apologies to anyone who was driving past) and, after peering like a pantomime villain into the darkness under the bush for about ten minutes, was able to make out not one but two hedgehogs, doing what comes naturally - and it wasn't even a gooseberry bush! I'd obviously got the name of the pantomime wrong. It was "Babes in the Wood".

29th May Was watching the news on the telly when what sounded like a cross between a very loud dog and cat fight broke out just outside. Rushed out to see who was murdering whom but, guess what, it turned out to be merely two hedgehogs having a disagreement. Perhaps it was the pair from a few evenings before and she was telling him what to do with himself. Or possibly a pair of rival males were sizing each other up.

12th June Heard rustling in the bushes in mid-evening. Is it that blasted neighbour's cat coming round to leave an offering again? Nope, just your friendly neighbourhood hedgehog doing its rounds looking for a light supper.

18th June In the late but still bright evening, a large hedgehog snuffled over the front lawn.

20th August Medium-sized hedgehog on the path at the side of the house. First one I've see for a while. It's good to see that they are still around and helping to control slugs and similar pests in the garden.

3rd September Hedgehog in the bed at the side of the house, heading towards the compost heap, in the late evening. It seemed to know the location of the best food supply!

21st October After a day of heavy rain, during a chill drier interval, a small ball appeared on the front lawn. I had a close look and it was a young animal, perhaps only 20cm long and well under a kilo in weight. Possibly it was one of the young from the pair in the garden. No wonder the poor little beast was out looking for food so late in the season, at that size it wouldn't survive hibernation.

I put some food out but it continued snuffling for worms and there seemed to be a fair number, brought to the surface by the weekend monsoon. The food was untouched the next morning, if a trifle damp. I can only hope that the unfortunate animal was able to find enough worms and then burrow into a very sheltered spot.

4th November I'd gone out late to put some more of Peter's peanuts in the feeder for the birds in the morning and then became aware of a distinctive rustling in the bushes. What was it? Was it that blasted cat from across the road again, the one that keeps leaving little gifts? No, the rustling was far too deliberate, not stealthy enough. A dog perhaps? No, not noisy enough. A rabbit, then? Surely not, the rustling went on for far too long. It just had to be a hedgehog – but at this time of year? Shouldn't it have been hibernating for the last month?

I just had to find out. Torch in hand, and keeping a wary eye open for the neighbours and the police (I don't want a worse reputation than the one I have already!), I stalked carefully around and eventually found the culprit. It was a large and healthy-looking hedgehog foraging, I hope, for a last-minute supper. It should have gone to sleep for the winter several weeks ago but the unusually warm weather, presumably, had kept it awake. We must hope that this disruption hasn't harmed their chances of surviving the winter and providing entertainment next year.

I wonder why there have been so many sightings of hedgehogs this year? Perhaps it's just chance that a pair have taken up residence in the garden this year or possibly because I haven't used any pesticides for years. Whatever the reason, there haven't been many problems from slugs and the hostas and beans, which usually get shredded, have done very well.

Jim Cook



'Hedgehog in the bed.....'

A SHOT FROM THE PAST

My particular interest in butterflies commenced in 2000 at our meeting to Barry Buddon. There were so few butterflies that day. I remembered times, many years ago, when butterflies seemed plentiful every summer. Then, I remembered a time more recently when

on a hillwalk I was descending Craig Mellon in Glen Doll, on a particularly warm day, and in spite of being tired, thirsty and looking forward to what comforts Clova Pub could provide me, I was transfixed by the quantity and beauty of the dancing, flittering insects. This scene had been squirreled away in my memory until now.

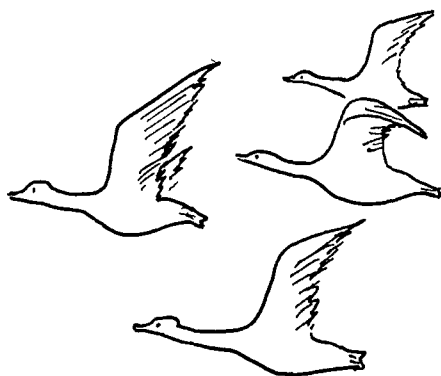
On recalling this event, I enlisted the company of an Angus Ranger and made for Craig Mellon. We were not to be disappointed. We found **Scotch argus**, **mountain ringlet**, **common blue**, **small heath**, **small pearl-bordered fritillary**, **dark green fritillary** and, on our way down, we found **chimney sweeper moths**. We also noted on some cliffs above us, across some very rough screes, a lot of flowers. Through my binoculars I could see that these were huge drifts of **wood vetch** (*Vicia sylvatica*).

Having noted the wood vetch, several days later I set out to explore the area from a botanical point of view. I got no further than the butterflies. There were very large numbers of these insects, especially **northern brown argus**, all the butterflies mentioned above and also **meadow brown** and **common ringlet**. I certainly intend to return next year and hope to offer a more comprehensive report.

Pat Gaff

DON'T THEY MISS A LOT?

10th October



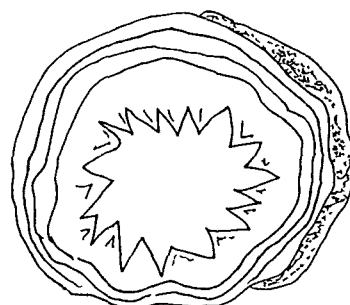
Dusk was drawing in and I was working outside when the usual resonant honking of the evening **geese** started to be heard from the sky. This time, though, they were much louder than usual. A short distance along the road a group of three young girls were standing chatting. A huge skein of **pinkfooted geese** swept over, only a few hundred feet up, on their way to the Tay and night time roosts. It was a magnificent spectacle, one of the most marvellous sights that the wild has to offer us, and in the middle of Broughty Ferry, too. It made my evening, but did the girls respond? Did they heck. They didn't glance up, not once, and didn't even notice. They kept chatting to each other and talking on their mobiles. Don't you think we're very fortunate to take an interest in natural history, and that other folk miss so much?

Jim Cook

AGATES, GEODES AND GEMS

When **andesite lavas** are erupted along with **volcanic gases**, the gas forms bubbles in the lavas which become holes when the rocks solidify, the process is similar to making puff candy! Later pulses of hot fluids containing high concentrations of **silica** may invade the lavas, filling up the holes left by the gas bubbles and any other cracks and crevices. This fluid slowly solidifies, generally from the outside inwards, forming the characteristic **agate** rings. Colours depend on mineral traces in these fluids.

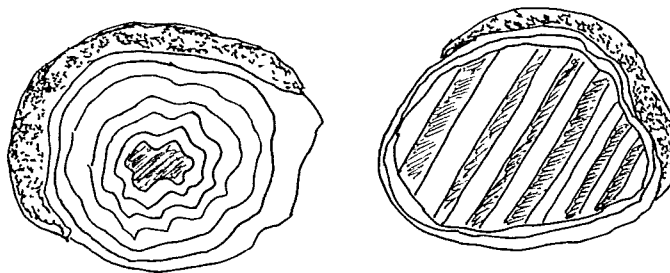
Sometimes with a large infilled 'bubble' the volume of siliceous fluid is greater than the volume of the solid formed. This results in a '**geode**' which has a hole in the centre, often crystal lined. Usually these crystals are made of pure **silica** resulting in clear **quartz**, but they may be red



A geode slice

tinged (**rosy quartz**), grey (**smoky quartz**) or purple (**amethyst**), the last indicating the presence of manganese in the fluids

The lavas of Wormit and Balmerino are of Devonian (Lower Old Red Sandstone) age, 370-400 million years old. These lavas also outcrop on the north end of Lunan Bay, between Rickle Crag and Scurdie Ness. Colours are predominantly red but blue **agates** and crystal lined **geodes**, with **rosy** and **smoky quartz** and, rarely, **amethyst**, have also been found



Typical agate slices

Jenny Allan

LAST BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST!

2nd - 4th November

With thousands of **pinkfeet** having already arrived at Montrose Basin, and snow flurries telling us that winter was just around the corner, I was very surprised to receive a phone call telling me of a sighting of a **swift** in Brook Street, Broughty Ferry late on Friday afternoon, November 2nd

With reported sightings, elsewhere in Scotland, of **pallid swift**, a small group gathered early next morning full of hopeful expectation. We were not to be disappointed. Suddenly a fast flying, dark coloured swift came flying over our heads, which, upon close scrutiny, was identified as our familiar **common swift** - the latest ever record in Angus and Dundee

As if this in itself was not enough reward for our early rise, we then discovered, along the Esplanade in Broughty Ferry, two **house martins** plus, wait for it, three **swallows**. We just could not believe our eyes, seeing these summer visitors so late in the season. All three species were still there the next day too. The wonders of birdwatching never cease to amaze! Keep watching

Bob McCurley

(My last two swallows this year were on 27th October in Monifieth. In 1998 two were spotted at Tayport on 10th November. Your late migrants probably had a premonition of the (forecast) freezing north winds and snow that hit us on 8th November after a warm and late autumn - Ed)

FIREWORKS NIGHT

5th November

It was a cold, clear evening. The fireworks earlier had been spectacularly colourful and noisy. With any luck the almost continual bangs and flashes of the last few weeks would die out! I was just thinking of heading for bed when I glanced out of the back window and was rewarded by a wonderful sight, far better than any earlier. Glowing greenish-grey and dull to bright red, long streaks and columns stretched from the northern horizon up to the zenith. It

was an **aurora borealis**, one of the best I've seen for years. The merry dancers continued to shift and flicker across the cold northern sky but a dull red glow, like an approaching dawn, hovered over the north-east horizon. I wrapped up warmly and sat outside to admire the show. It was well worth missing an hour or so of sleep.

Jim Cook

SPARROWHAWK MEALTIMES

13th November

I had just spotted one of our less frequent garden visitors on my bird table, a **great tit**, when it and all the other small birds scattered at high speed. A **sparrowhawk** did a quick circuit and plucked a **starling** from the top of a large **Norway spruce**. There were a lot of agonised squawks from the starling which put up a very spirited fight, trying to peck at its captor's breast. This rather nonplussed what now appeared to be an inexperienced juvenile sparrowhawk. It persisted in a slightly ineffectual way and eventually after three or four minutes, and a lot more resistance from the victim, it did succeed in securing its lunch.

I have seen many other sparrowhawk kills from the window and this has been the most protracted yet - longer even than the **collared dove** caught in the garden by a female in September. Interestingly, when a large bird is killed the predator eats its fill and then leaves the carcase. Nothing else seems to touch what would seem to be an easy meal and the sparrowhawk returns the following day to finish its meal. This has also been observed in my mother's garden in Cheshire, where a female managed to subdue a fat **woodpigeon** - a really long battle which had us all captivated (much better than television!). This bird returned two days running to make full use of its kill despite the garden being regularly visited by foxes and badgers. Small birds are usually eaten at one 'sitting' or carried off to a more secluded spot, as are small remains of large kills. Keep looking out of the window, you never know what you will learn!

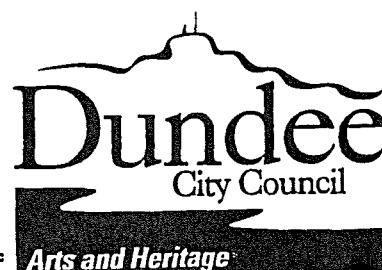
Anne Reid



As many of you will know, the Dundee Museums have a computerised wildlife database [Naturebase] which covers the local area.

We are always interested in obtaining any records for inclusion in this project. They can be brought or sent to the museum as extracts from your field notebooks or on one of our many recording forms. The computer is best at processing long lists of species very quickly where details of Locality (with Grid reference), Date and Observer remain constant. All records are welcome, and recording forms are always available at the museum.

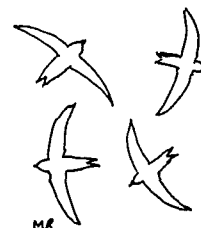
Further Information.-
Telephone 01382 432069



REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

NESTING SWIFTS

Do you have **swifts** nesting in your roofspace? Do any of your neighbours, friends or relatives? Naturebase has only a very few records of nesting swifts in Dundee and the surrounding area, even though the birds are a common and familiar sight every summer



NESTING HOUSE MARTINS

A similar survey was undertaken by the Museum for Changing Nature in 2000. Though a number of nesting sites for **house martins** are now recorded on Naturebase any new sites would be of interest. If in doubt, we would rather have the record twice than not at all!

NESTING SWALLOWS

New for this year! The logical follow on is to record any sites where **swallows** nest in the local area. Swallows usually build on a ledge in an outhouse or garage, but also use beams in porches and other similar sites.



All records would be welcome and can be submitted to the museum direct (see above) or through Anne Reid.

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 13th March, 2001 at the Chaplaincy Centre.

Bede Pounder was in the chair and fifty plus people were present.

Apologies for absence were received from Anne Aitken, Irene Cameron and Jean Pollard

Minutes of previous meeting. These were read and adopted as an accurate record. Proposed by Jim Cook and seconded by Anne Reid.

Matters arising. There were no matters arising from the minutes

President's Report. The full report appears in the bulletin but Bede thanked all the Council members for their assistance during the year and he thought it was worth stressing that the millennium year has seen a healthy involvement of members in different aspects of our activities - Jim Cook and Brian Allan in particular for organising the special evening functions. Eight members of the Council were involved with five of the formal lectures, with Brian Allan, Jim Cook and Gordon Maxwell stepping in at very short notice to cover for lecturers who had to cancel for one reason or another. Several members worked on field projects such as the Lichen and Garden Bird Surveys carried out as part of the Changing Nature Project; much work was done to finish the Balkello Project and at Carsegownie. In addition, it was mentioned that we have recently agreed to carry out a survey of the University's extensive grounds

Our Outings Programme was again most successful, except for last Saturday's trip to Tentsmuir which had to be cancelled at short notice because of the Foot and Mouth scare. All who had worked so hard in organising, doing recces and leading outings were thanked. It is to be hoped that the Foot and Mouth crisis will be resolved by the time our next set of outdoor activities get under way.

On a sad note, this session saw the death of three past presidents: Eileen Kidney, Bob Philip and lately Elizabeth Leitch

Bede then thanked all members of Council and Office bearers for all their help and encouragement, and particularly the Secretary, Margaret McLaren, who took over and got to grips with the details of this job with so little fuss. He also thanked Frances Towns for auditing the accounts for the year and apologised for omitting to thank her and Gert Robertson for their work in the previous session.

Lastly the President thanked all who once again did so much to make the Social Evening at the Monifieth Hotel successful, and to those who helped show the flag at the Montrose Basin Quiz organised by Jim Cook for the SWT. (We came second last having lost 10 points in one question.!!)

Bede closed his report by saying he was looking forward to another successful year.

Secretary's Report: The membership is currently 197 consisting of 112 ordinary members, 69 family members, 7 past members, 7 honorary members, and 2 student members. Recently interest has been shown in membership and there are four new applications. It is important that we all try to bring new people to the group.

The winter programme again appeared to be well received, despite the fact that both the first and last speakers were indisposed. However, our own members rose to the occasion to fill the gaps and we are very grateful to them for so willingly giving excellent talks at very short notice. The summer programme proved to be successful but, with the continuing rise in the cost of the hire of the coach, it is imperative that at least a week's notice be given if you are cancelling - otherwise a charge will be levied. Likewise if you wish to come at the last moment please contact Roma Miller (tele. 01382 553057) or Margaret McLaren (01382 779422). The cost of bus hire continues to rise sharply and the only way we can offset this is by increasing the number of members joining the excursions or encouraging friends to join us. I would like to thank Roma for her efforts as excursion secretary. It is not an easy task and her diligence is much appreciated..

Our Saturday morning walks and Tuesday evening walks proved popular and our thanks are due to the respective leaders.

Anne Reid deserves high praise for all her hard work and enthusiasm in producing another excellent Bulletin and for ensuring we have a "cuppa" at the end of our special evenings.

Finally I would like to thank most sincerely all those who have helped me through my first year as secretary.

Treasurer's report. Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and Dorothy talked in some detail about them. Dorothy also reminded everyone how important it was to keep up the membership and the Council is recommending an increase in the annual subscription at this time. At this point Mamie Bruce-Gardyne proposed that the subscription should be increased to £10 the following year - family membership £15. There was an overwhelming majority and Brian Allan seconded this.

Brian proposed adoption of the accounts and Richard seconded.

Technical Convenor's Report and Carsegowniemuir Convenor's Report. Jim spoke about both reports, outlining the various activities planned for the evenings in the coming year. Unfortunately due to the Foot and Mouth crisis venues would probably have to be changed but the Tuesday and Thursday evenings which are all within Dundee will go ahead - Caird Park, Broughty Ferry foreshore, Changing Nature Survey, woods, our own gardens, and a survey of the University gardens. Most of the trees in Carsegowniemuir appear to be growing well and there are now 1006 living trees in the quarry. Foot and Mouth has kept us out. Measuring will continue after restrictions are lifted. Both reports appear in full in the Bulletin.

Elections. Bede said a few words in appreciation of retiring members - Helen Blackburn, Richard Brinklow and Mamie Bruce-Gardyne. Bede thanked them for their valued contributions Doug Palmer, for giving Margaret McLaren a help in her first year as Secretary relinquishes the Membership Secretary position to her and Doug was thanked for all his work

Council Members: Three new members of Council were proposed

Joy Cammack	- Proposed by Ina Fraser Seconded by Roma Miller
Patrick Gaff	- Proposed by Jim Cook Seconded by Richard Brinklow
Margaret Duncan	- Proposed by Doreen Fraser Seconded by Brian Allan

All accepted to be on the Council There were no other nominations

Anne Reid agreed to continue as Bulletin editor and Jim Cook agreed to continue as both Technical Convenor and Carsegowndiemuir Convenor As there were no other nominations from the floor both Anne and Jim were appointed

Miss Frances Towns agreed to audit our books as Miss G Robertson has resigned
Bede thanked them both for their careful book work

A.O.C.B. Foot and Mouth crisis.

Unfortunately due to the crisis, if there is no improvement, we shall have to reconsider most of our summer programme.

It was decided that the Macduff weekend would go ahead, but that everyone would have to take 'pot luck' with the actual outings

Other bus outings will go ahead, but not necessarily to the published destination The first trip to Aberdeen on April 28th will go ahead as planned.

It was decided to produce a slip regarding the changes due to the Foot and Mouth and this would be enclosed in the uncollected envelopes

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Richard Brinklow had prepared an excellent and thought provoking quiz which was greatly appreciated by everyone.

Anne served the 'tea and cakes' with help from her daughters with their usual panache