

# Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



**Bulletin No 28 2003**

**DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY  
ANNUAL BULLETIN No 28  
2003**

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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, Jim Cook, Alban Houghton, 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 Jim Cook, 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 – anything, from handwriting to email, is acceptable.

Anne Reid

## SOCIETY REPORTS

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Once again our year commenced with our barbecue in January – yes, January – a hardy lot, we Nats. We then continued through our varied lecture programme which ranged from bumblebees, Tibetan plants and Scottish pearl mussels to Eastern Mediterranean history and natural history, which was generally well attended. As usual we included our own 'home grown' entertainment in the form of members' night, social evening and Saturday walks followed by lunch.

Despite having an interesting and varied summer excursion programme, the numbers attending were disappointing. Early excursions, in particular, seem to have had relatively poor attendance figures, with an average of around 35 people on the bus. A glance through some 1990s Bulletins shows an average well in excess of this, from a membership which was not much larger than that at present. I would urge members to support the outings as the fare paid decreases with increasing attendance. I would also request that any member with ideas for venues or for boosting numbers should contact me or any member of Council.

Sadly, I report the death of Mr Ken Brunton, who had attended a number of our lectures with his wife and had kindly gifted a natural history display unit to the Society.

It just remains for me, once again, to thank the many members, both ordinary and official, who have helped the society in many ways, both large and small, and to wish all members a naturally interesting coming year.

Gordon Maxwell

### CARSEGOWNIEMUIR REPORT

This past summer certainly has been the season of the **damselfly**. We've been hoping for years that our efforts in opening up and clearing out the ponds would be rewarded by an influx of these wonderful insects. Last year we found a single **blue-tailed damselfly** adult at the cottage end of the quarry but couldn't locate any more. However, this year the weeks of warm weather encouraged a swarm of these insects out of our ponds, of no less than three species. Their larvae live for at least two or three years as underwater predators and are extremely sensitive to water-borne pollutants. Their presence in large numbers, therefore, provides a good indication of the quality of the Carsegowniemuir environment (See articles 'On Gauzy Wings' and 'Independent Witnesses' on pages 34/35 for details. Ed.)

Other notable wildlife records were the 84 plants of **adder's-tongue fern** (*Ophioglossum vulgare*) and five spikes of **coralroot orchid** (*Corallorhiza trifida*), plus a host of small **froglets** and **toadlets** seen in the vicinity of pond 2 in early summer. Obviously it had been a good year for spawn, but we hadn't visited the quarry at the right time and had missed it. In November, while digging a hole for a tree, a large **toad** was disturbed out of its hibernation slumber. We briefly admired the animal and then gently reburied it.



Although the latter part of the summer was particularly dry, the soil remained moist after the soaking it had had the previous year, and we lost very few trees from lack of water. One of the larger **elms** and a well-grown **ash** both died, the elm due to unknown causes, perhaps **Dutch Elm Disease**, and the ash through **rabbit** damage from the previous winter. Overall, the young trees are growing vigorously and many of them are now large enough to overtop the **rosebay willowherb**. There is not so much concern now about them being shaded out and killed by the willowherb in late summer. That, in turn, means that we don't have to be so careful about clearing the willowherb around them and using the pulled stalks as mulch.

Nats members spent several days during the early to mid-summer, as usual, clearing the paths of willowherb and still doing some mulching. Winnie Tennant and Margaret

McLaren put in a power of work. Later in the summer, Anne, Mary, Christine and Andrew helped in the annual tasks of cutting paths and clearing the **ragwort**. There seemed to be more of it than usual, perhaps because of the good growing season the previous year, and it flowered and set seed early in the sunny weather.

On two evenings, in late July and early August, Anne set up the moth trap near pond 2 and left it overnight. The second of these short evening visits gave a good sighting of a **roe deer** near pond 5 (not a very welcome visitor!) and two **pipistrelle bats** near pond 2. In addition to adding to the **moths** recorded for the quarry, the follow-up visits also added plenty of **butterfly** records, including several **peacocks**.

All the work was finished in time for the barbecue in late August. It was a lovely clear summer evening, and everyone ate and drank well. The chill after sunset meant that the results from the moth trap were very disappointing, and the bat detector, brought by Richard Brinklow, yielded only two faint calls, probably of **pipistrelles**. (Full report on barbecue on page 19.)

At the end of the year a total of nine young **ash**, **rowan** and **birch** trees were planted. This number more than makes up for the losses of trees, from all causes, during the year. A few more will be planted in the spring.

Several projects are planned for next year. **Elder** plants seem to survive the tough conditions and grow into large spreading bushes. As an added bonus they are unpalatable to **rabbits**. We intend to plant more of them at the far end of the quarry, the dry end most exposed to the prevailing south westerly winds, to form a shelter belt or hedge to protect the other young trees in the area. Also, the trees overhanging ponds 2 and 3 need to be cut back again to prevent them shading the ponds. The other project is to cut a steep face on one of the spoil heap mounds at the far end of the quarry and protect the top with a large plank (already kindly offered by Ronnie and Lorraine Young). The aim is to encourage, with luck, the nesting of **sand martins** and also **mining bees**. However, it would greatly encourage those already working there if a few more members came along to help. Would you be interested in lending a hand?

Jim Cook

## GARDEN BUTTERFLIES 2003

Some of you may remember that there was a butterfly recording form enclosed with the Bulletin mailing in March 2003. A few people filled in and returned them to me, many thanks to those who did (and apologies to those I failed to thank in person). Even the few extra sets of records add to our local knowledge. Some returns were a small number of isolated records, but most people managed to record their garden butterflies throughout the season and requested extra forms to fill in.

It was a wonderfully sunny, warm summer overall and very good for butterflies. Ten species were recorded in total in local gardens. Most of these records were for the seven on the 'core' list which consisted of **small tortoiseshell**, **red admiral**, **peacock**, **painted lady** and the three **whites** – **large**, **small** and **green-veined**. **Ringlets** were seen in three gardens and one lucky Invergowrie garden had an **orange tip** on 3rd May and a **small copper** in early August.

Early butterflies were **small tortoiseshells** and **peacocks**, both of which hibernate over the winter. Records of **peacocks** in March and April are very pleasing as they confirm that this species, almost unknown in the area ten years ago, is now fully resident. Post hibernation **peacocks** were seen near Meigle (22nd March), in Monifieth (30th March) and in Broughty Ferry (12th April, in 'tatty' condition). Around half the gardens recorded **small tortoiseshell** in March or April, though they seem to be becoming less common.

Peak numbers of most butterflies occurred in mid-August in most gardens, when the **buddleia** bushes were still in flower. A Broughty Ferry garden had 13 **peacocks** on 20th August and eight on each of the 16th and 24th, while Forfar Road had a maximum of six on the 18th. There were a lot of records for the **painted lady**, in what was a good migration year. Most gardens saw them first in the very hot weather of the first week of August, but there were a few earlier records, for example, three near Meigle on 7th June. **Red admiral**

peak numbers were seen in September, five on **michaelmas daisies** in Broughty Ferry on 10th and 12th September, and eight at Forfar Road on the 30th

**Whites** are quite difficult to separate unless they settle and one recorder added a column 'whites' to the recording form when unable to differentiate flying butterflies. I suspect that all three whites may be under-recorded though they are usually only seen in small numbers, unless there are **brassicas** growing in the garden!

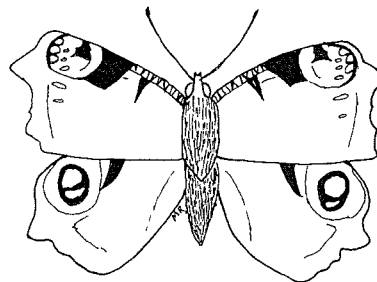
Perhaps the most exciting butterfly record of the summer was a first sighting of a **comma** on 14th September in a garden on Perth Road, Dundee, though not part of this survey. This species was until recently confined to England but has, in recent years, worked its way north with records from the Edinburgh area in 2002. The record came to light when the Courier published a photograph and article about a **comma** record in Fife and stressed its rarity. Prof. Geoff Barton of Dundee University responded to the article, via the Craigie column, with his own record, which I followed up. If conditions are right we might hope to see more commas in 2004, so keep your eyes open and send any records to me.

The year was very good for butterflies in habitats other than gardens too, with a report from the rangers at Crombie of 55 **peacocks** and 14 **painted ladies** seen while walking a recording transect on 24th August. **Peacocks** were also recorded at Carsegowniemuir for the first time and were also seen on many of the Nats outings over the summer (see individual reports). Additional, individual records of butterflies have also been submitted for inclusion in the 'Interesting Records' section on pages 26-30.

Though we shall not be repeating the full survey in 2004 anyone who would like to continue (or start) to record butterflies in their garden is very welcome to do so. Recording forms can be provided, if required, and can be returned to me (address on page 1). All records will, as before, be sent on to Dundee Museum for their local Naturebase computer database of local wildlife. May 2004 be as good as 2003.

Anne Reid

(Anyone out there who recorded butterflies but forgot to send in their forms – it isn't too late – I would still be very happy to receive the records!)



## TECHNICAL CONVENOR'S REPORT

The year was so different from the very wet year of 2002. The Tuesday evening outings were highly successful, with not one rained off. The first visit was to Dundee Law on 20th May. Although there had been rain earlier in the day we were not affected, and were able to find a good range of early spring plants, particularly spending time looking for and recording both **hair grasses**, *Aira praecox* and *A. caryophylla*. We also explored the woodlands and located a variety of alien bulbs in flower, as might be expected in a much visited locality. The Carsegowniemuir visit gave good records of **adder's tongue ferns** and **coralroot orchid** (*Corallorhiza trifida*) but it was a rather chilly evening and we saw no **damselflies** or **dragonflies**.

Brian and Barbara Ballinger welcomed the study group to Dam Pond, near Tealing, on the 3rd of June. We spent some time amongst the bankside vegetation, already well recorded by Barbara, and admired their efforts in clearing and improving paths and planting a selection of native trees and bushes to enhance the vegetation. The group also came with a variety of nets and water sampling gear and were able to catch a range of **chironomid midge larvae**, **mayfly larvae**, **caddis fly larvae** and **snails**. As well as **great pond snails**, we were able to identify **wandering snails**, a new record for the locality. Several members also caught small **fish**, nothing too exciting, though, they were all **minnows**, literally and figuratively.

During the visit on the next Tuesday to the upper Dighty in the Bridgefoot area, we were fortunate to be joined by Tom and Mary Harwood, of the local SWT group. They know the area very well and were able to guide us around and about, to record a wide range of plants and small water animals. Among a range of insect larvae, one of the most interesting finds was the tiny **freshwater limpet** (*Ancylis fluviatilis*).

Gordon Maxwell led the last excursion, along Seaton Cliffs to Carlingheugh Bay. The wind and tide combined to produce some spectacular spouts through the blowhole but the party pressed on, past the abundant display of **scurvy grass** (*Cochlearia officinalis*), with **sea campion** (*Silene maritima*) just coming out. Members noted one or two **small blue butterflies** (*Cupido minimum*) on and around **kidney vetch** (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), their food plant. Also, active **mining bees** (*Andrena* sp.) were seen with a number of **graylings** (*Hipparchia semele*) flitting about the path.

Jim Cook

## OBITUARIES

MRS FAITH BERRY  
1910 - 2003

Members will remember with great affection Mrs Faith (Bride) Berry, wife of our former Honorary President, the late Dr John Berry. We were honoured that she and her husband supported the Society so well over a period of many years. She often accompanied him on visits to our winter meetings and in earlier days was a charming and welcoming hostess to our visits to Tayfield, the family estate. She was always so full of enthusiasm for life. In fact, a recent story recounts the tale of her disappointment, only a decade or two ago, at finding that none of her grandchildren had ever climbed over the conservatory roof – at which point she promptly and memorably gave a personal demonstration of the technique! Along with her husband, she will be much missed.

Jim Cook

## HILDA RICHMOND

Miss Hilda Richmond, who died on October 17th, was a loyal member of the Naturalists' Society, and continued to attend our meetings until her health failed a year or so ago. She was also a member of Dundee Art Galleries and Museums Association, but her greatest interest was the Girl Guides in which she served as a commissioner. A keen rambler, she continued her love of the countryside with her car until a couple of years ago.

Bob McLeod

We also record the death, on 24th January 2003, of Ella Moir.

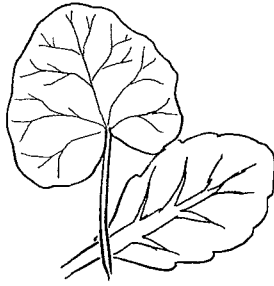
## WINTER MEETINGS 2003

### BARRY MILL BARBECUE

2nd January

The forecast was horrible and the weather lived up to it – rain, which varied in intensity but never actually stopped. This was coupled with a temperature not far above zero, so we predicted that only the real enthusiasts would be likely to turn up. It says something for the character of Nats members that a full two dozen souls braved the elements for what turned out to be a very enjoyable day.

Peter Ellis, the miller (and a Nat), had made preparations suitable for the weather, so we set up the barbecue underneath the overhang of the external fire-escape at the bottom of the mill. This gave plenty of shelter to enable cooking to be done with only the occasional drip being blown on to it. While Doug Palmer and Christine Reid tended the barbecue everyone else set off for a walk armed with Mary Reid's quiz and all their warm and waterproof clothing on. Questions ranged from pure ability to read, naming the varieties of



**apple trees**, to the observation of **birds**, **plants**, **fruits** and signs of **mammals**. The bird list was quite short, including all four **tits**, **chaffinch**, **wren**, **yellowhammer**, **mute swan** and **dipper**. Jim tried to add Peter's **Muscovy duck** for an extra point! Most folk managed to find **celandine**, **daisy** and **buttercup** leaves and a selection of **tree fruits** as requested, but not all were able to spot a **gorse** bush in flower (there were at least two). Signs of mammals were predictable – **mole** hills, **rabbit** droppings and **roe deer** footprints – '**ourselves**' and Peter's **sheep** were other additions to some people's lists.

Everyone seemed to have plentiful supplies of food to barbecue, though more than usual had taken the trouble to cook it before coming, in case we had trouble keeping the barbecue alight! Though Brian was unwell and not able to attend, Jenny delivered a large supply of mulled wine which was warmed on the range in Peter's kitchen and proved to be more than welcome to ward off the cold. After marking the quiz, which Jim won this year, some people left for home comforts while Peter very kindly invited the rest of us into the cottage for coffee, mince pies and Christmas cake. While most managed a hot drink, rather fewer were able to fit in any more food, though there were more takers after a suitable pause! It was very tempting to stay in front of the lovely log fire, but we all took our leave after thanking Peter very much for his part in making the day such a success, when the weather might otherwise have spoiled it.

Anne Reid

## BUMBLEBEES

Anne-Marie Smout – 15th January

Anne-Marie started by informing us that bumblebees are her passion at the moment and deserve a higher profile in our interest. She pointed out that they are beautiful (with a 'plumage' of coloured hairs which aids identification), as well as useful (pollinators and indicators of a healthy environment) and are easy to observe.

Apparently there are 16 species of true bumblebees in Scotland and four cuckoo bees, which take over nests of the true ones. With regard to identification, it can be helpful to divide the true bumblebees into three groups according to coloration (red or orange-tailed, yellow and black striped, foxy) and within these there can be variations according to whether the bees are queens, workers or males, and also variations in size depending on the availability of food in the larval stage.

According to Anne-Marie the first bumblebee of the year, sometimes seen, as early as March, is usually the biggest and noisiest, the queen of *Bombus terrestris* – **the buff-tailed bumblebee** (In my family, this is known as the '**4-engine job**')! She went on to talk about and illustrate the other species, pointing out differences in shape, colour bands etc. but admitted that taking photographs of them can be difficult as they are constantly on the move and, due to the curvature of their bodies, are rarely all in focus.

We learned of the life-cycle of the bumblebee and where they nest – often underground, for instance in mouse holes, but also in bird boxes. In fact, one of the things we can do to help them is to provide nest sites, as well as growing nectar-bearing plants such as **hebes**, **willows**, **valerian** and **knapweed** (I've found that the **wallflower** 'Bowles Mauve' is excellent as it flowers for months on end). Also, an important thing to remember is that, if found indoors, they should be caught (for instance with a jar and piece of card) and released as soon as possible as they overheat very rapidly and then die.

Anyone interested in learning more may care to obtain the book 'Bumblebees' by Oliver Prys-Jones & Sarah A Corbet (ISBN 0855462574) and BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) would be delighted to receive records of bumblebee sightings – further information and forms can be obtained from BRISC, c/o Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3DZ.

Daphne Macfarlane Smith

## MEMBERS' NIGHT

28th January

Just over forty members were present to see what interesting subjects our members would be showing slides on this year. Brian Allan compered and we were shown a wide variety of slides by seven of our members. The following members brought slides

Gordon Maxwell 'Birds and Things' Several species, including an **osprey** and four shots of varying quality of a **kingfisher** showing just how difficult it is to take such pictures. Also Carlingheugh Bay summer and winter, a **chiton** and flat **coccoid bugs** (a type of **scale insect**) from Tentsmuir

Les Tucker 'Barry Buddon and Autumn Narcissi' A variety of different types of **willow** seen on the Barry Buddon joint outing. Also **narcissi** seen in Spain including the green flowered *N. viridiflorus*

Dorothy Fyffe 'India' A variety of birds seen on a trip to India including a **crested serpent eagle**, **woolly-necked stork**, a **white-throated kingfisher** and, in the desert, a huge number of **demoiselle cranes** which are fed by the local people. Also a **langur**, **great eastern horseshoe bats** in a cave and the Taj Mahal, which was the highlight of her trip

Brian Ballinger 'Two woods and a pond - update' A **greater pond snail** and large settee in the pond at Tealing! A **black darter** and a **stinkhorn** covered in **flies** at Brownie Wood. **Common hawk** and **red kite** at Garrick Wood, Tain. **Pillwort**, **least adder's tongue** (*Ophioglossum azoricum*) and **golden-ringed dragonfly**. Also a **grey squirrel** in the garden for the first time

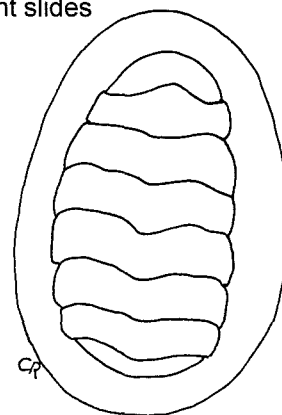
Jim Cook 'Sights Curious and Horrible' A **mayfly** hatch at Monikie, several **fungi**, a model of a **blue whale** in the Natural History Museum with **krill**, which it feeds on, a model of **giant squid** (*Architeuthis*), an **angler fish** - 'the world's ugliest'. Also several Nats, an iron age **wood henge** and the horrible **piri-piri burr** from New Zealand on Holy Island

Doug Palmer 'Arizona and around' Mainly of **geological features** from a geological excursion including Meteor Crater, the Grand Canyon, several **rock arches**, **geysers** in Yellowstone and **hot springs** with colourful **bacteria**. Also Bingham **copper mine**, the largest in the world, and the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City

Alban Houghton 'Mainly May' A variety of fairly local wildlife including **newts** in pools at Ben Eighe and a **lizard** on Liz's socks. Lindisfarne and Farne Isles at end of May with **sea birds** and **seals**. Also Balgavies, and the River Braan on the fungus foray

We had fewer slides than we have often had in the past but this meant we could proceed at a more leisurely pace and not feel rushed. As well as the slides, Jean Wigglesworth brought some prints of a trip to Nepal she had made

Mary Reid



## PLANT HUNTING IN SOUTH EAST TIBET

Fred Hunt - 11th February

This saw perhaps the largest turnout of the winter session when local alpine plant expert, Fred Hunt, described an expedition he made to the remote, and previously inaccessible, mountain area of southeast Tibet. The party of 18 plant enthusiasts, five from Scotland, flew to Kathmandu in the foothills of the Himalayas before flying on to Gongkar 96km south of Lhasa and onward by 4-wheel drive vehicles for a two-day uncomfortable journey over the 5000m high pass, Potrang La.

The party was to follow in the footsteps of the well known botanist Kingdon Ward. He first visited the area in 1923 and was followed soon after by expeditions by other famous botanists, Ludlow and Sherriff. The transition from 4,500ft to 15,000ft in only 36 hours was, in hindsight, a little unwise, mused Fred, but undeterred he was to travel over a number of La, which means pass, during the next few weeks. The Doshong La is known as 'Rhododendron Fairyland' and is notorious for its wild weather but with the aid of 30 porters and nine other





members of the party Fred managed to get to the other side of the pass, which had not been fully explored in the past. Fred described to us many scary moments but the party all came through pretty well unscathed, though one member of the group fell while crossing a steep ice field and dropped his camera equipment. Despite the efforts of a swift-footed Sherpa, he lost the lot including three days' worth of film. Once over the pass they found a number of plants including species of **rhododendron** that had previously only been found some distance away. As expected there were some plants they could not identify immediately and some, including **primulas**, not yet in cultivation.

The party then moved higher still to two other passes, Nyima La and Temo La. Here they found a plant which appeared a bit out of context, a giant **rhubarb**, which can reach a height of eight or nine feet. Views of the mountains of the area were interspersed by wonderful photographs of a myriad of other plant species including many **primulas**, **rhododendrons**, and **ground orchids**. For me the **orchids** were, of course, the most interesting and Fred showed us species of *Pleione*, **dactylorchids**, and a number of superb *Cypripedium* species, the **slipper orchids**.

After showing us spectacular views of the Dalai Lama's palace in Lhasa, Fred concluded his talk by praising his Sherpa guides who had accompanied him from Kathmandu, since there is not yet a tradition of trekking in Tibet. However, since the area has now been closed again to visitors by the Chinese, unfortunately there will be little chance of further western expeditions in the foreseeable future.

Brian Allan

## NATS AT PLAY

21st February

The Social Evening has become a very popular event in the Dundee Naturalists' calendar and, once again, the Monifieth Hotel hosted over 30 members.

Jim Cook organised his band of helpers to provide a varied and interesting programme. Margaret McLaren decorated the tables with spring flowers and there was a tempting display of raffle prizes. Natural history was treated in a light vein - competitions, questions to answer, touchy-feely things and slides. Nothing too brain-taxing. A lot of fun and prizes all round. Pat Gaff passed round some beautiful photographs and we also had a giggle at old pictures of very youthful Nats - who could they be?

The buffet was delicious and, this year, included trifle, as requested. What better way to spend a cold February evening?

Marjory Tennant

## CYPRUS AND ITS WILDLIFE

Bob McCurley & Brian Allan - 25th February

It was an inspiration to arrange this talk on a drier February evening when we could be transported to the delightful island of Cyprus for an hour! Bob and Brian had both visited Cyprus independently last April, Bob to see the birds and Brian with a group of Nats to look at the flowers.

Bob began by explaining the importance of Cyprus as a resting-place for the migrant birds, in particular the area around the lighthouse at Paphos, which is the first landfall after crossing from Africa. He showed delightful photographs of some of the birds he had found there, including **wryneck**, **hoopoe**, **black-eared wheatear** and **spur-winged plover**. The area is a very important archaeological site with wonderful mosaics presently being excavated, and now fenced against grazing sheep and goats and ablaze with **poppies** and yellow **chrysanthemums**.

He also visited the pools below the Aspro Kremnos Dam where he saw **purple heron** and **little crane** and the Akrotiri Peninsula where he saw two endemics - the **Cyprus warbler** and the **Cyprus wheatear**

Brian has been three times to Cyprus and has succeeded in seeing most of the spring flowers. He began at Cape Greco on the east coast with his superb photographs of some of the common plants and, of course, his favourite, the **orchids**. On to Akamas in the north-east to see the **tulips** - *T. cypria* and *T. argenensis*. Unfortunately they were over at the time of last year's visit but we were able to see the photographs taken on a previous trip.

An excursion to the Troodos Mountains, through the **cedar** forest to the summit of Mount Olympus revealed more delights including *Astragalus lusitanicus* ssp. *orientalis*, *Ophrys bommuelleri*, *O. levantina*, *O. elegans* and *Crocus cyprius*.

Brian concluded with a few slides of Turkish Cyprus, along the north shore, where he found *Serapias levantina* and *Ophrys kotschy*.

Gordon Maxwell proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Bob and Brian for a beautifully illustrated presentation on the delights of Cyprus.

Dorothy Fyffe

## SEATON CLIFFS, ARBROATH

8th March

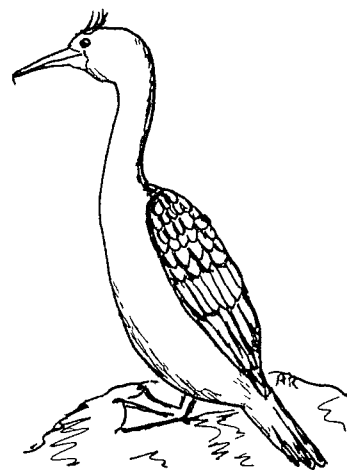
Naturalists' luck again! It had been wet on the Friday but the forecast promised good weather for Saturday morning - and it was right! The sun shone, the birds sang, a few light clouds floated in the sky, the air was reasonably warm in shelter and even the usual breeze down by the coast didn't feel too bad. What else could a happy bunch of Naturalists want?

The usual, of course, a pleasant walk with lots of natural history on show and a good blether, all followed by plenty of food and drink. The outing fitted the bill exactly. Walking up to Whiting Ness, we saw the first signs of spring flowers, a few tiny white crosses of **scurvy grass** (*Cochlearia officinalis*) with lots of buds just bursting to open. Overhead floated a **lark**, trilling loudly in the blue sky. A little further on fresh shoots of **red campion** (*Silene dioica*) and **thrift** (*Armeria maritima*) spiked the ground on both sides of the path. A small sprig of fresh **hogweed** (*Heracleum sphondylium*) supported a scrambling host of shiny dark green **beetles**, all doing what comes naturally. On the field-side bank patches of **sea campion** (*Silene maritima*) were showing signs of life, as were **sea** and **buck's-horn plantains** (*Plantago maritima* and *P. coronopus*). Spring had sprung!

We all enjoyed our stroll along the path, admiring the view, taking in the scenery and watching the antics of the **gulls** and the artistic grace of the gliding **fulmars**. Flocks of **rock doves** rocketed up and along and back again below us. On the water a **cormorant** sported among the sparkling waves while a few dark-crested **shags** aired their wings on the cliff edge. Beside the path a freshly-emerged **tiger moth** caterpillar sauntered over the grass. A few **meadow pipits** trilled in the field beside the path and a small flock of **linnets** zipped and dived. It was wonderful! We skirted the chasm of Dickmont's Den and examined the sloping grassland carefully. There were no signs yet of the **primroses** and **early purple orchids** to come. Further on, the field-side bank was clear of vegetation and a number of small holes of the **mining bees** (*Andrena* sp.) could be seen. Must come back to watch them in April.

Most of the party made it to the Deil's Heid before turning back, while the fitter ones reached Carlingheugh Bay. Heavy cloud started to drift over and by the time we reached the cars back at Whiting Ness the sun had disappeared. Never mind, we all had hearty appetites and were going to spend some time indoors. 'The Portcullis' was very pleased to welcome our custom and everyone made the most of it.

Jim Cook



## SUMMER OUTINGS 2003

### BRANKLYN GARDENS AND KINNOULL HILL

26th April

The sunny conditions for our initial summer excursion of the year seemed to set the weather pattern for the rest of the season. We began with an excellent and informative visit to the best spring garden of this region of Scotland, Branklyn Gardens in Perth. The Curator, Steve McNamara, welcomed the party with a short talk about the gardens and then led us round to admire the principal features. The **azaleas** and **rhododendrons** were just emerging into their splendid best, with masses of *Trillium*, *Meconopsis* species, **dog's tooth violets** (*Erythronium* sp.) and numerous other species, few of them weeds, carpeting the ground beneath. An excellent display in the scree garden drew many admiring eyes, as did the pond at the bottom of the garden, complete with clusters of **tadpoles**, sprouting **irises**, **lilies** and several unusual species.



By late morning most members had departed for higher and wilder places, by climbing the slopes of Kinnoull Hill. Unfortunately, our leader, Doug Palmer, began to feel unwell and decided to remain on the bus. We picked a sunny spot for a bite of lunch and then carried on up to the direction indicator, on the windy summit. Within minutes a series of wild calls from above attracted attention. Two **crows** were taking turns to harass a **peregrine falcon**. Eventually it evaded them and flew off, only to return a few minutes later with a spectacular display of dives and turns. Many of the party gathered at the folly tower, finding the **alexanders** (*Smyrnium olustratum*) growing well with bright clumps of **wallflowers** (*Cheiranthus cheiri*) on the walls and dotted at intervals along the cliff face. A few were rewarded with clear views of the **peregrine falcons** flying to and from their probable nest site. Further along the path, scatterings of spring flowers, **wood anemones**, **wood sorrel** and a few **lesser celandines**, could be found amidst unfurling **fern** fronds and sprouting **greater woodrush** under the tall conifers. A **roe deer** 50 metres away under the trees gave a coughing bark and then unhurriedly trotted for cover. Overhead **blackbirds**, **thrushes** and parties of **blue** and **coal tits** announced the season and calling **great tits** proclaimed their ownership of territories. Further on, near the bus park, we heard some of the first **chiffchaffs** of the season. It had been a great start to the summer.

Jim Cook

(Doug Palmer had an operation a few weeks later and has now made a full recovery. Ed.)

### BROWNIE WOOD

23rd April

Brownie Wood, near Gauldry, was visited as the field trip of the Wednesday afternoon lecture series, organized by the group of societies including Dundee Naturalists. For our members this was a repeat visit, but at a different time of year.

Brownie Wood is an old mixed plantation, dating back to at least the mid 19th century, which has good views over the Tay and towards the North Sea. We were fortunate in having a sunny and relatively mild day and 33 people attended, about a third of them Nats members. Since the previous visit there have been some changes, including thinning of the new plantation area and the removal of some patches of **spruce**. The rides have been opened out and waymarked and the rubbish finally removed from the quarry, including the main challenge, the bright yellow tractor cab. (See Bulletin No 25, 2000, page 21)

More **butterflies** have appeared, including **peacocks**, **orange tips** and **ringlets**, although only **whites** were seen on the day of the walk. **Black darter dragonflies** have been spotted by the small pond in the quarry later in the season.

At the entrance to the wood a fine specimen of **dryad's saddle fungus** was admired and photographed on a fallen tree. **Dog violets** (*Viola riviniana*) were scattered through the wood, although it was too early to see most of the **bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) in flower. The **wood sorrel** (*Oxalis acetosella*) was at its best, and the **cherry** trees at the edge of the wood were in bloom.

Various **mammal** signs were detected, but no mammals were seen on this occasion (They often appear for smaller parties). **Red** and **grey squirrels** still co-exist here and eaten **cones** littered the paths. Many woodland birds, including **tree-creepers**, put in an appearance, but the **great spotted woodpecker**, seen the previous day, eluded us.

As always, it was a great pleasure to show visitors round this wood, owned by my wife Barbara and myself, and Nats members (and others) are welcome to come at any time.

Brian Ballinger

## HATTON WASTEWATER TREATMENT WORKS

13th May

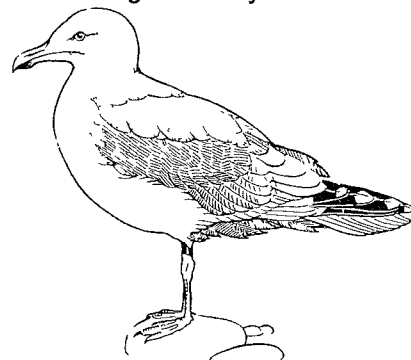
This was a slightly unusual evening outing for the Nats as we went to look at the relatively newly commissioned wastewater treatment works, otherwise known as sewage works, at Hatton between Carnoustie and Arbroath. The effect of untreated sewage being discharged into our coastal waters has been of concern for a number of years, and the European requirements to upgrade sewage systems was taken as the starting point for this ambitious project, one of the largest civil engineering schemes in Scotland for many years.

The Hatton plant receives the wastewater from the whole of Dundee, as far west as Invergowrie, and from Monifieth, Carnoustie and Arbroath – a truly mind-boggling catchment size serving a population of 140,000. The treatment facility has adequate capacity for some increase to this, but should the population grow appreciably then there is spare room on site to expand the treatment plant as required. Storm water tanks and pumping stations at strategic points along the feeder pipes regulate the flow and prevent unmanageable surges of wastewater.

On arrival at Hatton the sewage is first screened, through 6mm screens, to remove large or plastic items and then channelled through a curved, river-mimic, channel where gravel and grit are deposited. From here the sewage passes into three large settlement tanks where the sludge settles out. The wastewater is then piped to aeration tanks where bacterial digestion removes further impurities. After settlement of the bacterial debris the clear liquid from this process is discharged into the outer estuary through the long outfall pipe.

The sludge is piped from the bottom of the settlement tanks and treated by heating to 35°C in digestion tanks, again by bacterial action. Methane is produced as a by-product of this process and is used on site to fuel the drying of the sludge and its processing into dry pelleted form for use as an agricultural fertiliser. Sludge from other local treatment plants and from septic tanks is tankered in and incorporated into this part of the process. All stages of the process are monitored by staff in the on-site laboratory to ensure that discharges are within acceptable purity limits and that operational processes are working efficiently.

After we had had the whole system described to us by the manager, David Carmichael, we were taken out for a tour of the site to see some parts of the plant, which helped to clarify our understanding of the various stages of the sewage treatment. Some members noticed that the only obvious wildlife consisted of **herring gulls** and **crows** around the settlement tanks, though we did disturb a **meadow pipit** from the long grass. There is a large earth bank, or bund, around the site which has been extensively planted with trees for shelter and screening purposes. In the light rain and falling light we could see that these included **rowan**, **pine**, **rose**, **sycamore**, **oak** and **sea buckthorn**.



Some of these should manage to survive the exposed coastal site, with the help of the bank's shelter, and may eventually provide added natural history interest to the treatment works

Everyone present seemed to find the visit interesting and informative and the fact that 27 Nats booked and turned up vindicated our decision to include this unusual visit in our summer programme

Anne Reid

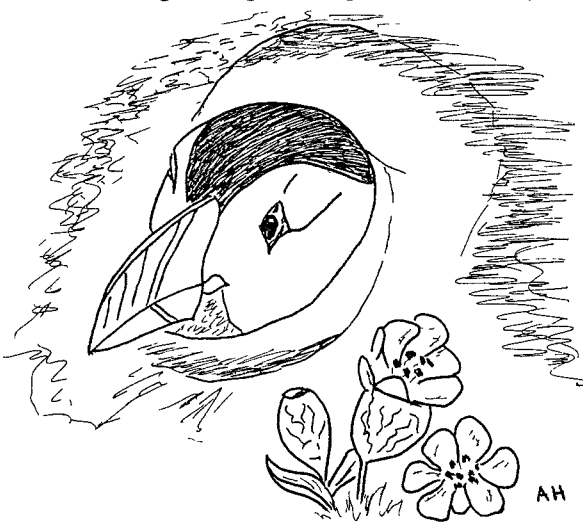
## NORTHUMBERLAND WEEKEND

16th – 18th May

Leaving a wet Dundee on Friday evening, all on the Nats bus were hoping for a drier and calmer day for our Farne Islands sail the next day. We were famished when we arrived at the Beach House Hotel a little later than expected due to a minor windscreen-wiper repair, expertly carried out by Jim, the Riddler's driver.

Jim was definitely thinking he had made the wrong decision in coming with the 'nutty Nats' to a cold and wet Staple Island next morning. We appreciated just how low the tide was when the exclusively Nats-occupied boat, Billy Shiel's 'Glad Tidings', bumped along on shallow gravel at the harbour mouth. The boat may have rolled and heaved but none of the passengers followed suit. The seabird spectacle really was spectacular, and the nesting **shags**, **kittiwakes**, **puffins**, **guillemots** and **eider ducks** coped with the rain and slippery rocks better than we did. Predatory **lesser black-backed** gulls patrolled a **puffin** colony and some **bridled guillemots** were present. One does get very close views as humans and birds stare at each other across the dividing rope. The heavy shower passed over and the rest of the day was fair.

We then cruised round the outer Farnes with seabirds all around including **gannets**, **cormorants**, **fulmars** and a flock of **bar-tailed godwits**. Groups of lounging **grey seals** and Grace Darling's Longstone lighthouse were pointed out by the captain.



FARNE ISLANDS - PUFFIN IN BURROW, SEACAMPION

St Cuthbert's chapel and welcome toilets awaited us on the Inner Farne but first we were thoroughly checked out by the National Trust warden and dive-bombing **arctic terns**. There were also some **common terns** and a beach colony of **sandwich terns** and, allegedly, one **roseate tern**. We saw the same seabird colonies as in the morning and also a very busy **rock pipit** feeding young. Several **eider ducks** sat so tight, very close to the path, some had fluffy **ducklings**. These endearing birds are called '**cuddy ducks**' after St Cuthbert who stayed as a hermit on the Inner Farne from 678 to 684AD. Some incubating **puffins** could be seen in their **sea campion**-framed burrows.

The changeable May weather continued to favour us in that it rained during the night and was bright and dry for our Sunday morning sally across the causeway to Holy Island. Brian Allan, in full **orchid-hound** mode, unerringly homed in on a wonderful dune-slack area of the Snook. Good spikes of purple stemmed **coralroot**, **northern marsh orchids**, **early marsh orchids** (both ssp *incarnata* and the darker ssp *coccinea*) and even emerging leaves of **marsh helleborine** were found. A showy bank of **primroses**, **cinnabar moths**, lots of **tiger moth caterpillars** and **garden snails** all added to the interest.

The main part of the island is a very attractive place and various groups wandered around Lindisfarne Priory, Castle and National Nature Reserve. Jenny and Mo saw a **stoat** making off with a **wader** – a wonderful sighting. On the nature trail the lime-loving **bulbous buttercup**, **three-lobed water crowfoot** flowers (the leaves were found eventually), **cowslips** and more **northern marsh orchids** were discovered. A very bushy *Viola (riviniana)*

or *canina*) prompted much deliberation and eventual keying as the flowers were purple rather than blue **Bogbean** in full flower and emergent **marestail** were seen at the Lough

The Lough hide provided most of the bird sightings but shorebirds included **ringed plover** and **turnstone** The most numerous Lough birds were nesting **black-headed gulls** Others were **little grebe**, **shoveler**, **mallard**, **tufted duck**, **moorhen**, **coot** and **mute swan** **Frogs**, a **smooth newt** and several large **leeches** were found in the ditches There is much more to see on Lindisfarne later in the year including many **butterflies** and a rich variety of **migrant** and **wintering birds**

We crossed the causeway before the tide marooned us and set off north to break our journey at the Hirsell, near Coldstream Various walks were enjoyed along the Tweed riverbank, round the loch and in the **rhododendron** and **azalea** woods which had **bluebells** but no **nuthatches** The tearoom and craft shops were popular too

Having had mainly fair weather, we were able to enjoy Northumberland's islands and their wealth of wildlife Our successful boat trip was particularly welcome after recent disappointments

Alban Houghton

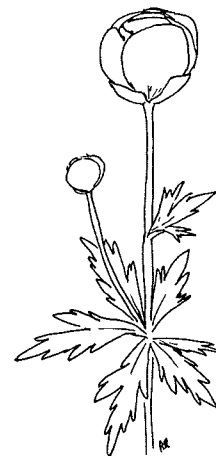
## MYSTERY TOUR

7th June

The first mystery of this tour began to unfold when, soon after getting underway, the coach turned into a maze of roads near the Ninewells Technology Park and stopped at the edge of a football pitch at Myrekirk, just off the Kingsway Here the mystery was resolved when Jim Cook, our leader, guided us across the pitch to inspect one of the few Bronze Age **stone circles** to be seen anywhere within the boundaries of a British city This was a good reminder that archaeology was one of the special topics catered for by our society in its younger days

Natural, rather than ancient, history was the theme of all the other stops during the day, the first of which was at Inveralmond where the coach was parked in front of the Caithness Glass premises where tea and toilets were provided for those in need The main party was taken by Jim through an industrial estate to the south bank of the River Almond where **sand martins** swooped over meadows full of **buttercups** and **ox-eye daisies** alongside a path which led to a wide and long strip of river bank on which wild flowers were growing in profusion, with many in full bloom Here, all jostling for space and light, were **ox-eye daisy**, **ragged robin**, **cuckoo flower**, **yellow rattle**, **crosswort**, **lady's mantle**, **bird's foot trefoil**, **red clover**, **meadow buttercup**, **silverweed**, **lesser** and **greater stitchwort**, **garlic mustard**, **slender** and **germander speedwells**, **meadow** and **wood cranesbills**, **white dead nettle**, **dandelions**, **daisies**, **sweet cicely**, **cow parsley**, and **Himalayan balsam** There was also **dame's violet** with a single, late **orange tip butterfly** sitting resplendent on its flowers Now I know we have seen all these species many times before, but surely only rarely in such a magnificent profusion which gladdened our eyes, even though the variety gave just a little hint that we were benefitting from the contents of a sack of wild flower seed If the display was in fact a work of man, then so what? It was money well spent - in the writer's opinion at least

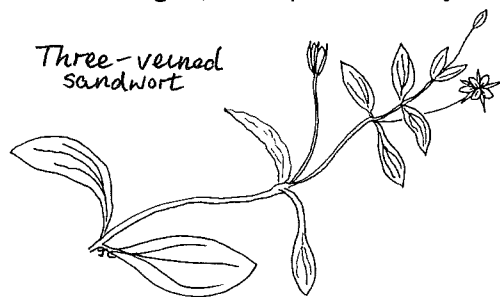
Leaving Perth, we were taken westwards past Almondbank and Methven, near which Jim pointed out an interesting experimental site on which research is being carried out to find a means of minimising the numbers of **capercaillies** flying into unseen woodland-edge fencing The main stop hereabouts, however, was at Buchanty Spout where the Almond tumbles and twists around tortuously faulted strata of **Old Red Sandstones**, scraped bare over large areas during spates of almost unbelievable ferocity by river-borne boulders Almost perfectly cylindrical **pot holes** have been drilled on the rocky surfaces, many feet above the main river channel Surely nothing could gain a foothold and thrive on such a surface? In fact there was evidence of life in almost every nook and cranny which provided niches, however temporary, for **dandelions**, including the marsh species with the prominent red vein, **cat's ear**,



Globe flower

**marsh hawksbeard** (*Crepis paludosa*), **lady's bedstraw**, **wavy** and **large flowered bitter cress**, **golden rod** and **viviparous fescue**. At the edges of the bare rock surfaces were good clumps of **marsh marigolds** and **globe flower**. The woodland path leading down to the Spout had a good show of early summer flowers, including lots of **pignut**, **red campion**, **wood cranesbill**, **wood avens**, **lady's mantle**, **pink purslane**, **dog's mercury** and **cow parsley**, while the roadside bank near the bridge had lots of **ground ivy** and a handsome **figwort**.

We were reminded that this part of Perthshire was once under Roman occupation when we travelled further westwards and passed the **Roman fort** at Fendoch on our way to Crieff. Fendoch is at the entrance to the Sma Glen, access to and from which would have been controlled from the fort. Just outside Crieff we parked, by arrangement, at the Glen Turret Distillery which boasts the largest **grouse** in the world, standing on a plinth just outside the main entrance. The monster is easily big enough to give a considerable fright to any late night reveller coming across it unexpectedly after imbibing a little too much of the liquid it is intended to advertise. Our itinerary did not of course include a visit to the distillery – we had to be satisfied with whisky flavoured zephyrs which floated on the air as we tackled a steepish path, part of the Hosh Walk. The path was at first open and fringed with **sweet cicely**, still sufficiently aromatic to compete with some success against the distillery vapours, but, at its highest point, it passed into a dark wood through which we gradually descended, with the distillery burn tumbling along far below, to the main road where the coach was waiting. There was lots of **dog's mercury** in the wood, as well as **red campion**, **wood avens**, **pignut**, **cow parsley**, **pink purslane** and **wild garlic**, by this time well past its best. Also spotted were **yellow pimpernell**, **enchanter's nightshade**, **goldilocks**, **bulbous buttercup**, an **oak maze bracket fungus**, and a plant that only the eyes of Jim could possibly have picked out from the



darkness of the forest floor on which it lurked, a tiny **three-veined sandwort**. Some enormous **poplars** growing at the side of the burn were a feature at the bridge on the main road.

After welcome ice creams at the Crieff Visitor Centre, we drove southwards along the course of the Roman road to the last stop of the day at Bennybeg Smithy. Here we set off on an interesting walk which started along the base of an impressive cliff of **dolerite**, exposed, seemingly as

a fault scarp, the dolerite having been intruded up the fault plane. Some **hops** were growing at the base of the cliff and there was lots of **cow parsley**, **wood avens** and **pignut** along the sides of the path. This path soon turned at a fringe of open woodland before leading back to the smithy along the side of Bennybeg Pond, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long, 100 yard wide stretch of water which is a widening of the burn that drains a larger pond, on the Drummond Estate, to the Almond. We saw two **herons**, **mute swans**, **mallards** and a family of **Canada geese** at the pond on which were large rafts of **brandy bottle** (**yellow water lilies**), and over which **large red**, **common blue** and **blue tailed damselflies** darted to and fro. **Flag irises**, **purple loosestrife**, **greater spearwort**, **meadow sweet**, **marsh marigolds** and **greater water dock** were admired from a conveniently placed wooden viewing platform. The walk was brought to a well received conclusion by visits to Bennybeg's tearoom and garden centre.

This was a really memorable outing, and a credit to our leader Jim Cook who had carefully provided scenic sites with a wealth of natural history for us to admire and had ensured that there were always suitable alternatives for those unable to tackle anything too strenuous. Toilets and tearooms were carefully slotted into the itinerary as well as the possibility of a tipple at Glen Turret for any that so desired.

Bede Pounder

## BOAT TRIP – ARBROATH TO LUNAN BAY

17th June

On a warm June evening 31 happy smiling Nats turned out for this pleasant three hour sail up the Angus coast. We had assembled at Arbroath harbour at 5.45pm and the leader thought it would be advisable to take a group photograph of smiling faces before we

set sail rather than after! Our motor craft the 'Girl Katherine' left the harbour on time at 6pm and set sail for Lunan Bay on a fairly calm sea with some swell

During the course of the next three hours members present enjoyed the spectacle of close-up **sea birds** and clear views of their breeding colonies on the cliffs. There were tantalising glimpses into some of the **caves** under the cliffs but despite so many pairs of eyes, no **cetaceans** were spotted. Every so often 'Cap'n Cook' sampled the water with his plankton net, though there was remarkably little caught. There were a few **sea gooseberries** (*Pleurobrachia pileus*), members of the **comb jelly** family, which are almost completely transparent, but virtually no **plankton**. Other dips with the net captured a **pipe fish**, which is a **sea horse** relative, and a different comb jelly with lilac stripes (*Beroe cucumis*). Peter Ellis caught two small, silvery green elongated fish, which the boatmen said were young **herring**, but which were later identified as juvenile **lesser sand eels** (*Ammodytes tobianus*).

Despite the swell, which left a few people feeling slightly unwell, about 15 bird species were spotted including **gannets**, **manx shearwaters**, a **red throated diver**, **fulmars**, **sandwich terns** and the ever popular **puffins**. Close up views of the Angus coast made us all realise just how beautiful our coastline is. Just as the boat was approaching Arbroath harbour a cry went up of "**Dolphins**!" Everyone got good, close, if fleeting, views of three or possibly four of the beasts though we were not too sure of the identification – either **harbour porpoises** or **bottle nosed dolphins**. Their small size suggested the former but nobody was quite sure. Everyone present enjoyed the sail and many people, though perhaps not all (!), agreed it would be worth repeating the same outing next year. All aboard!

Bob McCurley

## GLEN TILT

21st June

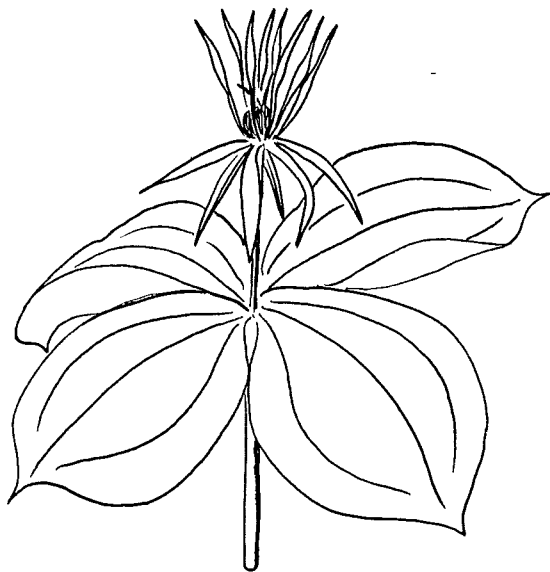
Our repeat visit to Glen Tilt was enjoyed by 42 members and friends. This time we were earlier in the year, so we saw a different range of wildlife. The sun did not shine and there was some rain, but this did not prevent us having an interesting and rewarding day.

After a short delay caused by the bus hitting a **pigeon** on the Perth bypass, which jolted some of the passengers, we were greeted by Polly Freeman the Ranger. She told us a little about the wildlife of the Atholl Estates as we stood under the shelter of a large tree.

We then set off up the riverside path, and most of the party walked as far as Gilbert's Bridge. A small group led by Margaret McLaren chose a shorter walk, after a visit to the **calcareous woodland**. In the early stages **dippers** and **red squirrels** were seen, though none of the reported **otters** showed themselves. **Common wintergreen** (*Pyrola minor*) was coming into flower in various places and the unusual **white woodrush** (*Luzula luzuloides*) was nearby.

We then paid homage to the small patch of **herb Paris** (*Paris quadrifolia*), although it was not easy to locate in the deep shade. This population seems to be precarious. The **lily of the valley** previously spotted by Dorothy Fyffe was quite widespread and believed to be native here, although it had ceased flowering. Birdsong was all around and Daphne Macfarlane Smith provided useful identifications.

We continued along the estate road, avoiding the shooting range, where the rain did not seem to have inhibited the marksmen. After a long debate we decided that we had probably found the scarce **small cow wheat** (*Melampyrum sylvaticum*). Lunch was taken at the bridge before Gilbert's Bridge, which turned out to be fortunate, as the **midges** would have had us for lunch at the planned stop.



Herb Paris



In the afternoon we walked through flowery meadows and skirted the **alkaline flushes** on the higher path. Four species of **orchid** were seen (**fragrant**, **northern marsh**, **early marsh** and **heath spotted**) as well as **rockrose** (*Helianthemum nummularium*). The **bird's nest orchid** previously seen by Brian Allan did not show its face in the riverside wood, but a good view of **grey wagtails** provided some compensation.

Brian Ballinger

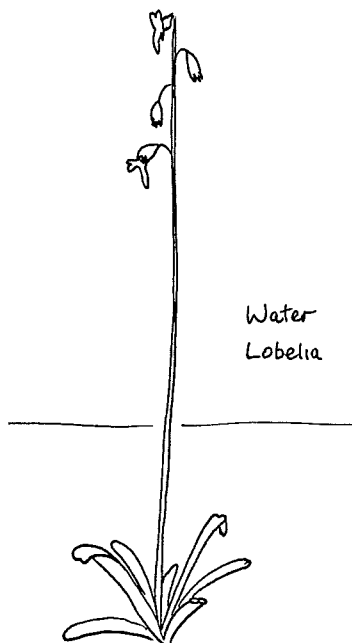
## LOCH ORDIE

2nd July

An encouraging number of members and friends turned up at Albert Square for the outing to this attractive area of Highland Perthshire, to be approached from Dowally village, off the A9 between Dunkeld and Pitlochry. The weather looked promising and hopes were high for our first Wednesday outing.

After sorting ourselves out off the bus, we started on the initial climb up the path to Raor Lodge. On the way a number of **green-veined white butterflies** appeared plus a **chimney sweeper moth**, spotted by Bob McCurley. Someone ahead found **town hall clock** (*Adoxa moschatellina*) with its angularly displayed flowers. Raor Lodge was soon reached after the steep but pleasant walk up the gorge of the Ordie Burn.

At this point one group opted for the shorter walk, eastwards to Dowally and Rotmell Lochs and the Mill Dam, led by Joy Cammack. A good selection of sightings was reported by them, including **small heath**, **common blue**, **ringlelet** and **small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies**, and another **chimney sweeper moth**. Among the plants seen were **alpine bistort**, **heath spotted orchid** and **St John's wort**. Further on **silver Y** and **snout moths** were found and many blue **damselflies** were spotted. At Dowally Loch, **marsh pennywort**, **marsh cinquefoil**, **bogbean**, **bog myrtle**, **water lobelia** and **water sedge** were all in evidence. On the bird scene were **mallard** with chicks, **common sandpiper** and **osprey**. Many common **grasses** and **sedges** were identified along the way and at Rotmell Loch **water forget-me-not**, **wood sage**, **ragged robin** and **bog asphodel** were added to the list.



Meanwhile the western group were observing many **heath spotted orchids** in the boggy areas en route for Loch Ordie. A **slow worm** was found on the path and showed to everyone by Christine before being released into the relative safety of the **heather**, away from large booted feet. There were **wheatears** nearby and, further on, a **stonechat** was seen perched on a fence post at the edge of a forestry plantation. **Ravens** were seen and heard and a **common sandpiper** and **chick** were seen on the shore of the loch. Lunch was taken sitting overlooking Loch Ordie. Once finished eating, Christine decided that a paddle in the loch would cool her feet down and pointed out some wave damaged **water lobelia** plants near the edge. The small group that elected to walk around the lochside path were rewarded with a fine view of an **osprey** as it took off from the loch shore. On return a different route was chosen, affording good views over to Schiehallion and Pitlochry. Our progress on this path was slightly delayed by forestry operations, but we lost no one under the bulldozer or fallen logs. The craft centre was soon reached and some opted for a welcome bun and cup of tea, or an ice cream to cool the blood after what had been a warm day.

It had been, perhaps, a longish walk for some of the Nats, but I heard no complaints other than those relating to weary feet, and I think that another Wednesday outing might be on the cards, if only for the mid-week peace and quiet which we enjoyed at Loch Ordie.

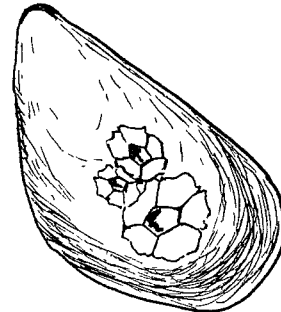
Gordon Maxwell

## SANDS OF FORVIE NNR

12th July

Annabel Drysdale, assistant warden, greeted our party (a bus full) as we arrived at the River Ythan car park. The fine day brought out the butterflies even though there was a cooling sea breeze. **Common blues**, **painted ladies** and numerous **dark green fritillaries** were particularly eye-catching. Adult **antler** and **burnet moths** and **fox moth caterpillars** were also seen.

**Eider** and **human** populations of Forvie have obviously consumed vast quantities of **mussels** over the years. Regurgitated wee piles of ground-up mussel shells left by Britain's largest eider breeding colony littered the river bank and Annabel pointed out the deep human **mussel midden** exposed by the river. **Stonechat** and **rock pipit** were seen perched by the path.



The **ternery** was deserted by the time of our trip, but in 2003 the following breeding pair counts were recorded at Forvie: **sandwich tern** 900, **arctic tern** 60, **common tern** 12 and **little tern** 45. Adults of the first three species were seen on our visit. The huge **dunes** sheltered us as we ate our lunch. **Marram grass** and **sand couch grass** help to stabilise them. Blown sand has buried settlements for 8,000 years, but the ruined 12th century church can still be seen.

Sitting for a while on a 'presidential' high chair he had found on the sandy beach, Gordon could have been the subject of a surreal painting entitled 'Waiting for a Pint'. **Baltic tellin shells** and some **lion's mane jellyfish** had been washed ashore. We did not have time to visit the **oysterplant** site.

**Coastal heath** and more typical seaside plants were noted. **Grass of Parnassus** made a fine show on one cliff. The marshy burn sides were ablaze with **marsh lousewort** and **marsh ragwort**. In one wet area Jim caught a **smooth newt**. A **frog** and a **toad** shared this habitat.

After visiting the fine displays at the Forvie Visitor Centre we boarded the bus. A mobile phone order ensured that our fish suppers were ready as we arrived in Stonehaven. We did enjoy eating *al fresco* in the blazing sun.

Alban Houghton

## LUNAN BAY

22nd July

On a lovely July evening about fifteen Nats members gathered at what must be ranked as one of the major beauty spots in Angus, Lunan Bay. The programme promised a visit to the seawatching hide, recently established by the Angus and Dundee Bird Club, and a walk on the beach itself to test the famous 'singing sands', which actually make a squeaking sound when walked on.

The hide was 'still there' when we all arrived and members were soon sitting comfortably and admiring the panoramic sea views of Lunan Bay, protected on the north side by Boddin Point and by Red Head, with its towering **red sandstone** cliffs, to the south.

Keen-eyed Nats were soon spotting sea birds, such as **gannets**, **guillemots**, **puffins** and **terns**, through bins and scopes, and amassed a very respectable total of 23 species by the end of the evening. A few early migrant **sanderling** also put in an appearance amongst the **dunlin** at the water's edge. We were further entertained by a passing pod of **bottlenose dolphins** which kept disappearing in the light swell which made seeing them very tricky. Near the cottage a large stand of **evening primrose** lightened the gloom of the approaching nightfall.

Unfortunately, the chorus of the 'singing sands' was having a night off, and their music was not heard, but everyone present agreed that the evening had been highly entertaining with all the other natural history attractions which we had enjoyed.

Bob McCurley

## MONTROSE BASIN

2nd August

Our first stop was at the SWT Visitor Centre where we enjoyed the tea/coffee provided while watching the **sand martins** flying in and out of the 'holey' wall built specially for them, and where they were raising their second broods

Graham Christer, the Centre Manager, was our guide for the day and, first of all, took us from the Old Mill Car Park to the elevated Wigeon Hide, pausing en route to tell us about the Reserve, the shooting permitted and the **mute swans** which gather to moult each summer. Several butterflies were about – **painted lady**, **small** and **green-veined whites**, **small tortoiseshell**. Compared with during the winter, there were few birds out on the mudflats – **carrion crows**, **oystercatchers**, **lapwing** and **shelduck** – but at the far end of a



ditch leading north from the hide was a **wood sandpiper**. On the saltmarsh, where **sea aster** appeared to predominate, Jim Cook pointed out **sea plantain**, **sea arrowgrass**, **greater sea spurrey**, **sea milkwort**, **spear-leaved orache**, **glasswort** and **scurvy-grass** to the 'trampoline of naturalists' present. Other sightings included a **bank vole** which, unusually, was sitting out in the open (possibly daunted by the crowd but, more likely, unwell) and a plump green caterpillar with a yellow stripe down each side (unidentified). Nearly all of us ventured across the uneven surface of the marsh to arrive safely on the sticky mud before heading out to where the ground was firmer but mostly covered with a film of water in which small shrimp-like *Corophium* crustaceans were found – a favourite food for smaller waders, such as **redshank**, **knot** and **dunlin**. Here a sward of **eel-grass**, on which the swans feed, was growing. Half a dozen **seaweeds** were identified and as many species of **molluscs** including innumerable tiny spiral shells of *Hydrobia* (a **shelduck** delicacy!) Our visit was well-timed as low tide was at 11.30am and the weather was fair with a pleasant breeze so not too hot. Numerous **green**

**shore crabs**, both alive and dead, were found and, as we headed for a dry bank to have our lunch, also the shell of a young **velvet swimming-crab** with a fringe of hairs on its hind legs. The sun came out and, as we sat munching, Jim drew our attention to the **grass-leaved orache** in the marsh in front of us and also to a beautiful golden **chrysalis** hanging from a grass. As we returned **sparrowhawk**, **greenshank**, **common sandpiper** (hardly bigger than a **pied wagtail**!) and **snipe** were added to our bird list and Gordon Maxwell met us with a **sand martin** in his cupped hands. It did manage to flutter a few feet but whether it would survive was doubtful.

Our second walk was from Bridge of Dun to the Old Montrose Pier. **Monkey flower**, **giant hogweed** and **Himalayan balsam** were on the banks of the River Esk and, further on, **tansy** and **crow garlic** (a purple onion-like flower) were by the path. On the water were **heron**, **mute swan**, **eider**, **mallard** and a pair of **red-breasted mergansers** with about a dozen young (probably all their own, though they do form creches sometimes) and all the while in the background was the constant 'chatter' of **broom** seedpods snapping open in the hot sun. As we neared the pier, and aided by Graham's telescope, we got good views of the **little egret**, with plumes flying in the wind, as well as an **osprey** perched on a dead tree, swept downriver and now stuck in the mud. A **small copper** butterfly, **great crested grebe** and two **Canada geese** were also sighted.

Back at the Centre, the video camera brought the shore activity close to us – including **dunlin** and **turnstone** – and ice creams were refreshingly welcome before we headed home having enjoyed an interesting day and real summer weather!

Daphne Macfarlane Smith

## BARRY BUDDON JOINT MEETING

10th August

Once again the Barry Buddon Nature Day proved a great success. This year the weather was slightly dull but fine and the event drew a throng of nearly 70 naturalists, from the SWT and Dundee Nats particularly, but also with representatives from RSPB and SOC groups. Most participants were from Dundee, Angus, Fife and Perth but visitors arrived from as far afield as Aberdeen, Stirling and Falkirk. Bob McCurley welcomed everyone and thanked the army for their excellent co-operation over the last 15 years of similar outings. He then introduced a number of experts in various fields of natural history including our own Hon. President, Gordon Corbet (invertebrates), Dorothy Fyffe (birds), Barbara Hogarth (plants) and Gordon Maxwell (fungi).

Bob led the party straight to the lighthouse for a photograph to be taken by a Dundee Courier photographer, which duly appeared in Monday's paper. We then split into our usual bird and botany groups. Bob escorted the ornithologists over to the ponds with their possibilities for seeing **ducks**, **waders** and small **passerines** while Jim Cook led the botanical group to Happy Valley and its **orchids** and **adder's tongue ferns**. The 'botanicals' also spent time looking for unusual **willow** hybrids including our own *Salix angusensis*, with Les Tucker and Barbara Hogarth. Bob's group came round the Happy Valley area later and found such interesting species as **green woodpecker**.

The sun appeared at intervals and both groups spent time finding a good range of butterflies, including **small tortoiseshells**, **small heaths**, **small coppers**, a **painted lady** and a variety of other **insects**. Later on in the morning the botanists moved over to the golf course ponds where John Whyman helped to catch several good specimens of insects, including **blue-tailed** and handsome **emerald damselflies**. After careful scrutiny by the group the specimens were released. Meanwhile, Margaret McLaren had visited the site for **yellow bartsia** (*Parentucellia viscosa*), a rare introduction from southern England, and led us all over to admire it.

We all gathered on the seashore dunes near the lighthouses for lunch to watch the wing-drying **cormorants**, diving **eider**, calling **sandwich** and **arctic terns** and, further out, plunging and gliding **gannets**. Everyone hoped to catch a glimpse of the resident **cetaceans** but reported no definite sightings. Instead we made do with the numerous curious **grey seals**. In the afternoon the bird enthusiasts moved over to the Monifieth end of the training ground, while the plant hunters explored the scrapes first, and then the lower reaches of the Buddon Burn. The most striking plants, by far, were the numerous shining white heads of the **grass of Parnassus** (*Parnassia palustris*) and, amongst the reeds, shy stalks of flowering **gypsywort** (*Lycopus europaeus*). The bird list was greatly improved as well, with **sedge warblers**, **thrushes** and a variety of **finches**. It had been a wonderfully productive day and even the furthest-travelled participants thought it had been highly worthwhile.



Jim Cook

(This article is an edited version of one which appeared in the local SWT newsletter in January '04 Ed.)

## QUARRY BARBECUE

26th August

It was a beautiful evening when we set off for our summer BBQ at the Quarry. We were very early, as we were in charge of setting up, but this allowed us to see quite a lot of **butterflies**. The lighting of the barbecue took a while since we have not had much practice and had to be done with strategically placed buckets of water as all the vegetation was tinder

dry after the long hot summer. Thankfully the water was not needed but Milly and Pfennig, the owners' dogs, welcomed a drink.

Once most people had arrived they set off on a walk, led by Jim, to see what they could find while they waited for the barbecue to be ready. Christine, Andrew and Mary had brought pond dipping equipment so went to see what they could catch in pond 5. A lot was caught including several **caddis fly larvae**, **pond snails** and a **leech**.

Then it was back to the barbecue which was now ready for a veritable feast. As well as all the usual food Peter Middleton had brought some late variety **strawberries** from his neighbour's farm and Liz Houghton had a huge basket of perfect, juicy **plums** from her garden.

After the food most people went home but a few hardy souls remained to see what had been caught in the moth trap and look for **bats**. Unfortunately, due to the fast decreasing temperatures (clear skies give lovely days but cold nights), there was nothing other than a couple of **caddis flies** in the trap. No more success was had with bats despite a long time spent with a bat detector.

The evening was a great success especially due to the excellent weather. If only the weather was always like that!

Mary Reid

## BLACK WOOD OF RANNOCH – FUNGUS FORAY

6th September

Just over 30 hardy souls left Albert Square for the journey of over 60 miles to the Rannoch area. A recce had decided a change of destination to the Forestry Commission site at Carie, adjacent to the Black Wood but nearer to Rannoch village, due to bus parking problems and also the better facilities and waymarked routes at the site. The weather was set fair and a brief halt at Pitlochry enabled some to top up the calories with ice cream or coffee and buns.

Along Strathtummel the beauties of Highland Perthshire were obvious as Loch Tummel and Schiehallion became the dominant features on the latter part of the journey. Arriving at the site we were slightly disappointed to discover that one of the routes was closed due to forestry operations but fortunately there were alternatives. It should be mentioned that due to the very dry summer, the fungus foray part of the walk was, in common with most other areas, a bit disastrous with even the commoner species virtually absent. Nevertheless a number of fungi turned up including *Collybia butyracea*, *Boletus chrysenteron*, *Lycoperdon perlatum* and *Pleurotellus porrigens*, an attractive species mainly found in Scottish **pine woods**.



Dave Stein came across two **toads** which were no doubt searching for a damp spot in the woods and a feature of the walk was the number of **wood ant** nests, some nearly three feet tall, near to the paths. Two **red squirrels** were spotted by Peter Middleton and a number of birds were seen by the eagle-eyed enthusiasts including **blue**, **coal** and **long-tailed tits** (seen by Dorothy Fyffe), and **buzzard**. Some butterflies were also observed with a few **Scotch argus** near the end of their flight period and one or two **peacocks** as evidence of how far this species has expanded in recent years. The large **dragonflies** were also in flight and one wonders how many more there would have been in a wetter year.

Despite the lack of mushrooms it was obvious that most of the company enjoyed the walk and the highland scenery. A heavy downpour near Pitlochry, on the return journey, only seemed to emphasise the good weather enjoyed on the walk.

Gordon Maxwell

## AUTUMN MEETINGS 2003

### PEARL MUSSELS IN THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND

Mark Young - 7th October

Dr Mark Young of Aberdeen University gave a fascinating talk on the endangered freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) to a gathering of about 40 Nats members and friends. Dr Young is a freshwater biologist, but has also studied terrestrial insects and has written a splendid book on moths in the Poyser Natural History series.

After giving a little historical information, he went on to describe the structure, life history and distribution of the pearl mussel in Scotland. Pearls have been precious to humanity since antiquity and Julius Caesar took home some freshwater specimens from the British Isles. In the past there were professional pearl collectors who were usually careful to preserve the populations, unlike some recent amateurs.

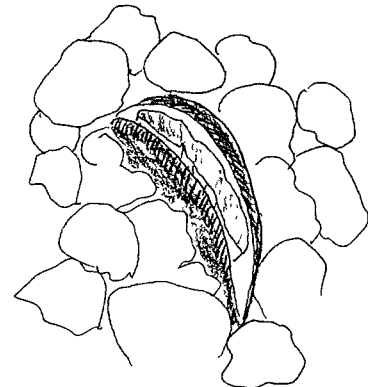
Pearl mussels live in the coarse sediments in rivers and siphon water in and out to collect nutrients. They are very long-lived, surviving for an average of 85 years and sometimes reaching 120 years old. The larvae or **glochidia** are very small and are inhaled by juvenile **trout** and **salmon**, becoming parasites on their **gills**. Many perish, but those that do survive drop down onto the sediment and grow over many years.

Only 10 or 12 Scottish rivers have viable populations of pearl mussels and these are mainly in the north, although there are small remnant populations elsewhere. The position in the rest of Europe is worse and the only other major concentrations are in North America, although this may be a different species.

One of the causes of the decline is pearl fishing, which is now illegal. River bank works for fishing and flood control, and forestry plantation too near the river are also likely to damage pearl mussels. Fertilisers spread on the surrounding land, and sewage discharge have caused losses, and toxic chemicals have occasionally been dumped in pearl mussel rivers. It is not certain how much the decline in salmon numbers has affected the mussels.

It is important that research continues and further conservation strategies are developed and implemented to protect these interesting animals. Dr Young was thanked for his clear and stimulating presentation.

Brian Ballinger



Pearl mussel in river gravel

### BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLIES, MAGICAL MOTHS

Paul Kirkland - 21st October

An attendance of over 50 welcomed the lecturer, Mr Paul Kirkland, to Dundee. He was introduced as a BSc of Durham University, now living in Auchterarder and employed as a full time official of Butterfly Conservation based in Stirling. Paul started his talk with an amusing incident which happened on the way to Dundee when a butterfly flew into his car – surely a good omen for the lecture.

In his excellent slide show he featured a number of rare or scarce butterflies including the **chequered skipper** which is now only found in northwest Scotland and the **northern brown argus**, localised, but found in the Dundee area and moths such as the **Kentish glory** which, despite its name, is only found in a few sites in Highland Scotland, the **narrow-bordered bee hawkmoth**, a bee mimic, which is rarely found north of the border and the **forester**, a small, iridescent green moth which has been seen at Crombie reservoir. He also covered most of the commoner butterflies of Scotland along with a fair number of the much more numerous moths.

Also prominent in his talk was the conservation theme, especially the loss of habitat. But it was not all doom and gloom with the recent expansion of species such as the **peacock**, **orange tip** and **comma** butterflies highlighted as notable successes. In his vote of thanks the President praised Paul's obvious enthusiasm for the subject and the high quality of both the slides and the information in the lecture.

Gordon Maxwell

## PLANT HUNTING IN GEORGIA

Mike Almond – 4th November

This lecture, one of a number which Mike Almond has given to the Society over the years, was an excellent illustrated account of his botanical explorations of this wild and remote country in the central Caucasus. Georgia is an ancient Christian kingdom with a variety of fascinating plant habitats ranging from dry mountainous terrain through high and wide valleys with lakes and woods to limestone peaks. Mike showed so many different plants, often from familiar genera, that there is room for only a few here.



He began by conducting us through south western Georgia, with purple *Verbascum consolidida* and spectacular *Eremostachys* on the lower ground, **poppies** and *Campanula* species growing as field weeds with *Adonis aestivalis* on higher ground. In the drier mountains species such as the orchid *Dactylorhiza ibirica*, *Onosma taurica*, pale yellow *Viola altaica* and *Androsace albana* can be found.

A host of flowers flourish in the wide flat valleys of central Georgia, such as metre-high, pink-flowered *Dictamnus albus*, *Papaver orientale*, well known as a garden plant in this country, also *Helleborus orientalis*, **crooked**

**birch** *Betula lacchthvenovia*, gangly greenish-yellow *Daphne pontica*, *Pyrola rotundifolia* and so many more. **Orchids** abound, some known in this country, including *Ophrys scolopax*, *Neottia nidus-avis*, 35cm high pink *Orchis caucasica* and *O. pseudolaxiflora*.

Outliers of Caucasian limestone reach 2500m in altitude and harbour such wonderful plants as *Trollius patulus*, white *Anemone impexa* and pink *A. fasciculata*. *Tanacetum coccineum*, *Campanula bellidifolia* and *Aquilegia caucasica* can also be found. Tiny blue *Gentiana verna* ssp. *pontica*, *Primula auriculata* and the small *P. algida* grow at altitude. The **Snowdon lily**, *Lloydia graeca*, reaches about 1700m. A wonderful *Pedicularis oederi*, with yellowish-brown petals and red tips, *Draba bryoides*, pink *Primula elatior* var. *mayori* and a superb white and pink *Anemone vesiculata* were found on a valley floor at 1,200m.

Further on were blue *Scilla bifolia*, dark blue *S. sibirica*, *Silene lacera*, a yellow and pink *Dactylorhiza flavescens*, *Primula luteola*, *Paeonia whitmanniana*, a considerable find, the rare parasitic plant *Phelypea coccinea* and many more. Near to the ancient village of Mestia, with its spectacular and characteristic tower houses, were *Ornithogalum album*, *Corydalis flavescens* and the **snowdrop** *Galanthus platyphyllos*.

Mount Ushva, at 4,400m, towered over the scenery. In the highest valley in Europe, at around 2,400m, a variety of good species occurred. These included a terrific *Pulsatilla aurea*, *Gentiana angulosa*, *Corydalis alpestris* and the wonderful and rare *Primula crassifolia*, which has thick fleshy leaves and a 35cm head of ivory flowers. It was a wonderful way to finish a talk that fascinated the audience with its sheer variety of plants in an unfamiliar, far away place.

Jim Cook

(Apologies for the shortage of English plant names, there are problems with naming and identification and local floras disagree with each other. Many species are similar to those found nearer to home in the same genus, but are often bigger and brighter! Ed.)

## ST ANDREWS WALK

15th November

About 23 members and friends turned up for the walk along the Lade Braes in St Andrews on a very nice day for the time of year. After losing a few tail-enders temporarily, we started the walk at around 11am and soon a few birds were spotted by observant members. Two **dippers** were seen on their direct flight along the burn and a **heron** was spotted in a tree near the Botanic Gardens. Most of the commoner garden birds were seen including **wren**, **blue tit**, **coal tit**, **great tit**, **chaffinch**, **goldcrest** and **robin**. A few **mushrooms** were identified including *Ganoderma* species and *Mycena* species. Perhaps a foray earlier in the year is something to consider for the future.

We were fortunate to have with us on the walk our Hon. President, Gordon Corbet. Never slow to notice the smaller things in nature, Gordon provided the answer to many a query, including one of my own. The problem was a large **beech** tree beside the path, partly covered on the bark by a white woolly-looking mass. There was debate as to whether this was of **fungal** or **insect** origin. A few days later Gordon phoned with the answer. It was indeed insect related and specific to beech, going by the name *Cryptococcus fagifuga* – and I'm sure you'll all remember that!

Some of the company took in the site of a former Pictish cemetery, over a thousand years old, before hurrying back to make the meal deadline at 12.30 when the group enjoyed a good selection of wholesome fare at Ziggy's in St Andrews. A satisfying end to a good morning.

Gordon Maxwell

## THREE YEARS ON HANDA

Uwe Stoneman – 18th November

Though born in Stuttgart, our speaker has lived in Scotland for a number of years and is now the SWT warden at Loch of the Lowes. He was employed as a ranger by Highland Council in the far north west before becoming the seasonal warden on the SWT reserve of Handa Isle for three successive summers, from 1998 to 2000, inclusive, the longest 'stint' anyone has ever done on the island! In addition, his wife wardened for the two previous years and the two following Uwe, making another significant record of a total of four years as warden. With such close connections to Handa, and having met there, they were actually married on the island – their certificate is 'Handa Isle 001'!

This gave Uwe an amazing range of information to give us in his fascinating talk. The 'summer' season runs from April to September, and, situated on the far north west of Scotland, Handa can experience almost any sort of weather in any season. We were shown the island clothed in April snow and a metal sheep fence iced-up to such a degree that it appeared to be a wall of ice. We also saw the more benign summer weather and the inviting looking sandy beaches. Wind was an ever present feature, as might be expected.

The main responsibility of the warden is to count the **seabirds** on Handa's cliffs, in addition to greeting the tourists. We were given an insight into the methods for counting and estimating the huge numbers present. There are over 200,000 birds on Handa in the summer, including 150,000 **guillemots** and **razorbills**, so this is a very time-consuming task! The breeding success of all these birds reflects the state of the sea where most of the birds spend the majority of their time. An island reserve alone is not ideal – the sea needs full protection too.

The island flowers shown included **thrift**, **roseroot**, **lovage**, **primrose** and **pyramidal bugle**. Dark green fritillary butterflies are common and one year there was an influx of an estimated 1.5 million **garden tiger moths**. **Rabbits** and **lizards** are present but there are very few of the small birds we would consider common. A visit from one male and two female **chaffinches** was such an event as to be worthy of mention,





especially since one bird shared Uwe's breakfast porridge! Less welcome wildlife came in the form of **midges** which were able to get into the warden's shed accommodation through the gaps between boards. Original methods of midge control included boiling the kettle until the window steamed up so much that the beasts stuck to it, and lighting a candle which both attracted and despatched them (with a small but satisfying sizzling noise!)

The beauty, loneliness and natural diversity of Handa were skillfully portrayed in the excellent slides of the island in all its moods. We also learned a lot about the resourcefulness and sheer hard work required to carry out the warden's duties in such an isolated place. Uwe was thanked very warmly for such an enjoyable and informative lecture that left us hankering for summer weather and wild places again.

Anne Reid

## MILLS OBSERVATORY VISIT

25th November

The disconcertingly dark road up Balgay Hill to the Observatory had its compensations when we saw a number of **winter moths** fluttering weakly in the light from the car headlights. The parking bottleneck, caused by the changeover between visiting groups, was safely overcome and everyone gathered inside. We were split into two groups, one seeing the planetarium display while the other looked through the telescope and admired the display boards before changing over. We had hoped for good views of Mars which was just past its closest position to earth for 60,000 years, but the thin cloud permitted us to find only a pale image of it. Nonetheless, everyone found the visit very interesting and many vowed to return on a clearer evening.

Anne Reid

## THE JOHN MUIR TRUST AND ITS WORK IN SCOTLAND

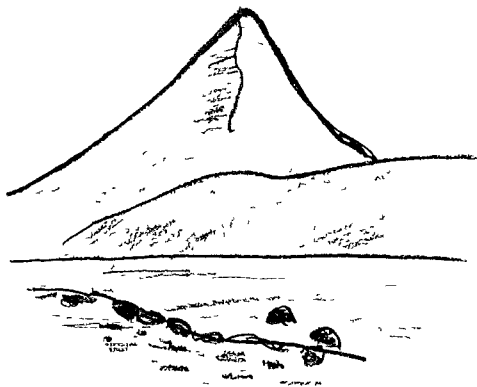
Nigel Hawkins – 2nd December

The John Muir Trust (JMT) is a UK membership organization dedicated to the conservation of wild land. Its director, Nigel Hawkins, who lives in Auchterhouse, told of the JMT's 20 year history and of the American Scot long acknowledged as the father of nature conservation in the USA. A poll in the year 2000 named him as 'the most famous Californian'.

Though born in Dunbar, John Muir emigrated with his family to a Wisconsin farm in 1849 when he was eleven. This partly explains why he is a prophet without honour in

Scotland. He lived for the last 45 years of his life in California after he spent his 'First Summer in the Sierra' in 1869. He effectively started the National Park system when Yosemite was so designated in 1890. Muir's passion for protecting wild land was shared by President Theodore Roosevelt who wielded his 'big stick' in the cause. Muir described himself as a 'self-styled poetico-trampo-geologist-bot and ornith-natural etc!'. Does this ring any bells for Dundee Nats?

In 1982 the MoD threatened to buy and restrict access to Knoydart. The JMT was formed in response and 3,300 acres of the NE side of Ladhur Bhein were purchased for £10,000, so conserving one of Scotland's wildest places. Volunteers ran the Trust then and this tradition continues to augment staff efforts. Local **Scots pine** seedlings were



SCHIEHALLION FROM LOCH RANNOCH

planted to reforest this first reserve. The general principle was to give nature an opportunity to prevail – in this instance, an enclosure fence to exclude grazing **deer**. Nats who plant trees at Carsegownie will empathise! A community buyout of the whole Knoydart estate in 1999 was supported by the JMT, which is a partner in the Knoydart Foundation.

The theme of partnership with neighbours and tenants has continued as the Trust acquired six more estates: three estates in the Skye Cuillins but not including the main Black Cuillin ridge, Sandwood Bay in the far north west, East Schiehallion and Ben Nevis estate. The Black Cuillin may be secured for the nation with the help of the JMT if the issue of Dunvegan castle roof can be resolved.

The Tayside JMT property, Schiehallion, was bought for £147,000 with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund, SNH and BP. Generous BP staff sponsorship of £750 per volunteer per day enabled completion of the new path in this year's amazingly dry weather – total £80,000! The old, badly eroded path is to be restored. Some of the 8,000 members have done similar work at Sandwood and Blaven. Drystane dyking and litter picking on beach and hill are enthusiastically tackled by regular work parties. (Who are the so and sos who drop plastic, particularly those 4 inch bits, by the thousand, into the sea?) Members who are expert naturalists and archaeologists do surveys too. They are doing what John Muir advocated: 'do something for wildness and make the mountains glad.'

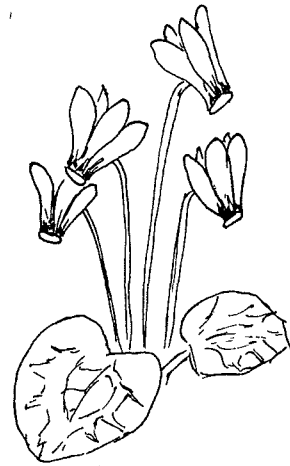
Alban Houghton

## NATURAL AND ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Brian Allan – 3rd December

Our own Brian Allan skilfully blended the flora and history of the Mediterranean on his journey among the ancient sites of Greece, Crete and Sicily. We were made aware of the grandeur of the ruined buildings, but the simple beauty of the flowers nestling in the crevices was breathtaking. A bank of *Sternbergia*, golden in the sunshine, tiny **cyclamen** along the steps of an amphitheatre, *Arum* and **irises**, **orchids** and **anemones** – all were jewels in a perfect setting. A splendid way to spend a winter afternoon.

Marjory Tennant



*Cyclamen graecum*

## A CLOSER LOOK

Jim Cook and Gordon Maxwell  
16th December

Our lecture in preparation for the Christmas festivities was 'double act' by our own Gordon and Jim. The idea was to take a closer look at a wide range of natural history and to be told interesting facts about the subjects of the slides. One of Gordon's photos of a **fallow deer** turned out also to be a portrait of a passing **cat**, much to his surprise. We were challenged by Jim to find a **peppered moth** on a tree trunk, but it was so well camouflaged that it eventually had to be pointed out. Gordon had a group of images of white forms of familiar flowers, including **lousewort** and **early purple orchid**. He had also found a white **pheasant**. We learned from Jim that **oil beetles** lay their eggs in the nests of **mining bees** and that the 'flowers' of the **dwarf cornel**, our emblem, are in fact **bracts** or modified leaves. Gordon showed a **bank vole** swimming in a **rock pool** and emphasised that by carrying a camera such chance encounters could be recorded to amaze a disbelieving audience.

After a very wide-ranging and carefully choreographed wander through the plant and animal kingdoms, with Gordon and Jim taking turn about, we transferred our attention to the festive fare on offer. Everyone had a good blether and much tea, coffee and baking, provided by members, was enjoyed.

Anne Reid

## MEMBERS' ARTICLES

### INTERESTING SIGHTINGS 2003

Any member is most welcome to submit individual records of natural history interest for this compilation. Unusual or interesting sightings are welcome at any time of year – write it down and send it in! Telephone or email messages are equally acceptable (01382 532486 or acmc.reid@virgin.net)

Other members like to know what is about. Keep your eyes open, you never know what you will see! We all have different ideas of what is 'notable' – some record rarities, while others delight in unusual antics of common species or 'favourites' such as long tailed tits – all are welcome

Each entry is followed by the initials of the recorder

Brian Ballinger	BB	Ian MacIntosh	IMcl
Sheila Brinkley	SB	Margaret McLaren	MMcL
Jim Cook	JC	Nancy Middleton	NM
Monica Edwards	ME	Daphne Macfarlane Smith	DMS
Andrew Ferguson	AF	Anne Reid	AR
Ben Herschell	BH	Christine Reid	ChR
Alban Houghton	AH	Colin Reid	CR
Gordon Maxwell	GM	Marjory Tennant	MT
Bob McCurley	BM	Douglas Yeaman	DY

**4th January** A **tawny owl** seen in headlights, hunting, near Ethiebeaton, Monifieth, in the early evening JC

**15th January** A **cormorant** was standing drying his wings on the pavement near the Monifieth Road/St Vincent Street traffic lights in Broughty Ferry. He looked very alien standing there, but just ignored the traffic and passers by MMcL

**16th January** With all the mild (and wet!) weather, the first **snowdrop** opened today in the garden in Broughty Ferry. A few days earlier than last year, but not necessarily a sign of global warming JC

**18th January** While on an SWT 'litter pick' at The Miley, saw 20 **goldfinches** lined up drinking from the gutter of a building DMS

**18th January** I found two **pelican's foot shells** on Broughty Ferry beach to the east of the castle. They do turn up occasionally on Monifieth beach but have not, according to the museum, been recorded so near the castle before AR

**18th January** A **fox** making a terrible noise in our back garden in Invergowrie. The first one we have seen or heard since moving here five years ago ME

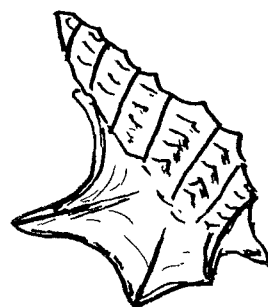
**20th January** A **robin** (and, perhaps, a **thrush** in the distance) singing lustily in the pre-dawn darkness of Broughty Ferry. They're a bit optimistic about the arrival of spring! JC

**27th January** A very warm day. **Honey bee** seen on **mahonia** ME.

**1st February** A **small tortoiseshell butterfly** seen flying in Fontstane Road, Monifieth. This was a still, cold day when we had low temperatures but sun all day. Maybe its hibernating hideout warmed up or perhaps it was disturbed. Snow a couple of days later! IMcl

**7th February** From the kitchen window I spotted a small greenish bird on my peanut feeder. The immediate thought was that it was a **siskin**, especially since it was feeding 'head down'. It turned out to be a **goldcrest**, with its feathers fluffed up so that it looked larger. The bird fed for about a minute, actively pecking at the nuts, something I have seen before, but the last time was over the winter of '98-'99 AR

**28th February** Still, warm, sunny weather tempted a **drone fly** out of hibernation, the first one seen this year. It was found basking in an open **crocus** flower in my Monifieth garden AR



*Pelican's foot*

- 28th February** At 7 45am a small party of **siskins** feeding on peanuts in our Invergowrie garden. They continued to visit regularly for several weeks. ME
- 1st March** It felt as if spring was truly 'around the corner' when a **song thrush** took up position on a high tree in the garden and started proclaiming his territory. Still around on the 3rd when he was seen chasing off a rival with some very risky-looking, low, close-formation flying! AR
- 7th March** 'Golden King' **holly** berries, having been ignored by the birds all winter, were being enjoyed by seven **woodpigeons** today – our usual maximum is two! DMS
- 12th March** The first **bumblebee** of the season seen in my Monifieth garden. A fleeting glimpse from the window, so I don't know which species! Also saw a **lesser black-back gull**, another sign of spring. However, the **small tortoiseshell** is still hibernating in the garage, so not really spring yet! AR
- 16th March** Near Loch Laggan found **purple saxifrage** in bloom, often found near retreating snow patches. The dry sunny weather in February and March had speeded the snow melt this year. Also saw a **golden eagle** overhead. AH
- 19th March** On a swift visit to Crombie Country Park I found a dead **pygmy shrew** on one of the footpaths. The rangers had no other records of the species for the park, and it was only the second one I had ever seen – the first was found dead in a nest box at Carsegowriemuir several years ago. AR
- 23rd March** The first **chiffchaff** of the season near to the Dighty in Monifieth. It was singing rather half-heartedly but I got a good view of it in a **willow** bush. AR
- 27th March** Instead of the usual **gulls**, I noticed a **rook** in Dundee High School's playground (Seemed unusual to me, but maybe I'm wrong?!). DMS
- 12th April** The first butterflies of the year in our Broughty Ferry garden. One **small tortoise-shell** and one, rather tatty, **peacock**. Also **blue tit** carrying nesting material into nest box. Spring is here. DMS
- 17th April** My first **sand martins** of the year seen at Dunkeld over the Cathedral and River Tay. AR.
- 18th April** I was staring idly out of the car window while in a traffic jam on the Kingsway (not far from the Forfar Road roundabout). I spotted a **red squirrel** in a (leafless) tree at the very edge of Caird Park. ChR
- 18th April** While hanging out the washing I heard a **willow warbler** in the garden singing loudly. I failed to spot it and it was obviously just passing through, as it soon moved a few gardens away. AR
- 20th April** A warm sunny day. Two **seven spot ladybirds** seen in the garden (Invergowrie). The **siskins** still coming daily (see 28th Feb). ME
- 26th April** Over Forthill area of Broughty Ferry saw a **buzzard** being mobbed by three **carion crows**. DMS
- 27th April** A pair of **collared doves** seen nesting on a roofed bird table in the garden of flats. The male was guarding the nest. NM.
- 2nd May** When heading down Castleroy Road in Broughty Ferry, heard a **chiffchaff** and saw a **heron** flying over. DMS.
- 5th May** At Kintail the **hawthorn** was in bloom at sea level. Higher up, **alpine scurvy grass**, **moss campion** and **sibbaldia** were in flower. An early season due to warm sunny days. Is this 'normal variation' or 'global warming'? AH
- 5th May** My first **swift** of the season, a single one, seen above Monifieth at 8am. AR.
- 7th May** At Drumoig, saw two **greylag geese** and numerous **sand martins**. DMS
- 11th May** Saw first **swift** over the house (Broughty Ferry). DMS
- 20th May** Three **bats** seen flying over our Invergowrie garden at dusk. One was smaller than the other two. ME
- 22nd May** A **chiffchaff** was singing persistently in one of the large gardens in Broughty Ferry, in Victoria Road near to the Strathern Road junction. AR
- 25th May** In the Sidlaws, near Auchterhouse, saw 40+ **green-veined whites**, two **small heaths**, an **emperor moth**, two **linnets**, two **stonechats** and four **buzzards**. Also spotted a **palmate newt** in a muddy rut. GM



**4th June** Little Glen Shee is a good area for birds. My list included **cuckoo**, **spotted flycatcher**, **peewits**, nesting **curlews**, **twite**, **wheatear**, **mistle thrush** and **ravens**. The slate quarry spoil heaps are an excellent site for **parsley fern**. SB

**6th June** A **large red damselfly** seen at my garden pond at Letham (Angus). Apparently a lone, flying visit. AH

**8th June** Delighted to see young **blue tits** emerging from nest box – four, possibly five – mid afternoon on a fine but overcast day. Other years the young have flown very early in the morning and their absence only apparent from the quietness of the box! DMS

**14th June** On Rannoch moor there were female **northern eggar moths** every few yards in grass and heather. They were obviously wafting their pheromones – responding males were zipping over the heather. Possibly also saw **fox moths**. AH

**17th June** Margaret McLaren phoned me just before 8.30am to say that her neighbour had found a pair of mating **hawk moths**. I dropped everything and went to see, only two minutes away in Barnhill, and found that they were **poplar hawk moths**, and both in very good fresh condition. Many of the hawk moths seen here are migrants, but the poplar hawk moth is resident and reasonably common. AR

**28th June** A **ringlet butterfly** seen in my garden (Invergowrie). ME

**29th June** At Craig Mellon, Glen Clova, saw 30+ **small heath butterflies**, 12 **green-veined whites**, nine **mountain ringlets**, eight **small pearl-bordered fritillaries**, five **dark green fritillaries** and four **common blues**. A sunny day with light wind. GM

**2nd July** A **turtle dove** seen at Montrose Basin from the Visitor centre window. BM

**19th July** Birding at Arbroath turned up two rarities. A **bridled tern** was a first record for Angus and only the fourth for Scotland. Also seen was a **Mediterranean gull** in full breeding plumage. BM

**30th July** On the upper path above the Mill Dam, Dunkeld I found a dead **mole** covered in **sexton beetles** (*Nicrophorus* sp.). These beetles are black with orangey red bands across the elytra and bury corpses of small mammals as food for their larvae. There were obviously beetles underneath the mole as its body 'moved' with their efforts to bury it – quite a feat as the soil of the path is packed down hard by walkers' feet. SB

**31st July** A **humming bird hawk moth** observed at the **buddleia** beside the lodge at Crombie Country Park. Still there the following day. BH

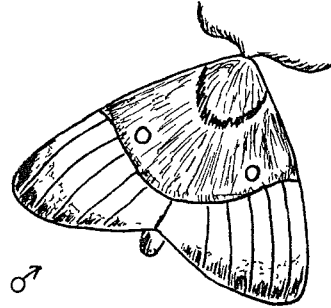
**1st August** 837 **terns** were counted (really!) at the Redcastle hide at Lunan Bay. They were a mixture of **common**, **sandwich** and **arctic terns** and were on the start of the return autumn migration. BM

**1st August** An **elephant hawk moth** caterpillar found on **willowherb** at Crombie Country Park by ranger Lisa. BH

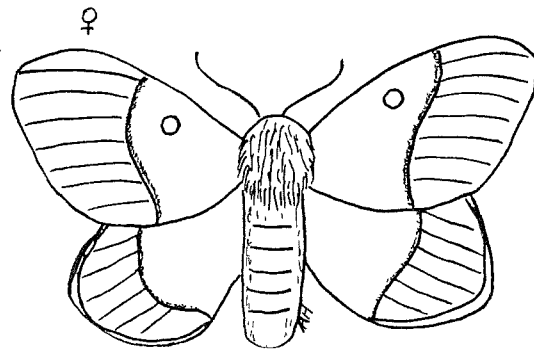
**5th August** Our **cats** were concentrating on one spot in the garden so I investigated and saw a **field mouse**. One cat pounced – and missed – the mouse emerged from under a plant and sat up. I grabbed it and while it hung on to my finger with its teeth (ouch!) I moved away and released it safely. The cats were none too pleased! DMS

**16th August** Maximum of three **painted lady butterflies** on **buddleia**, along with eight **peacocks** and one **large white**. DMS

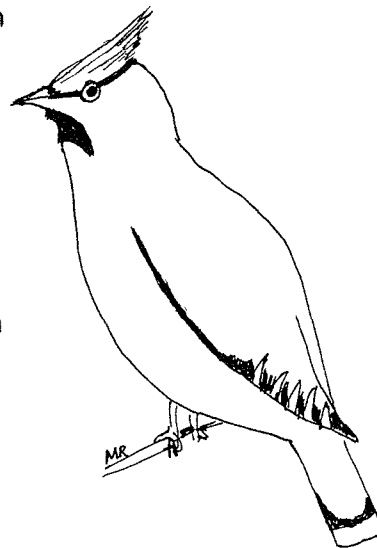
**20th August** A record maximum of 13 **peacocks** on **buddleia**, plus one **painted lady** and two **red admirals**. What a contrast to a few years ago when one peacock butterfly was unusual. DMS



NORTHERN EGGAR MOTH



- 27th August** Flowers of *Mimulus moschata*, **monkey flower**, on wet ground in the Hermitage area, Dunkeld This was a very hairy plant with small pure yellow flowers, very different from the usual larger flowered hybrids of *Mimulus* SB
- 30th August** Wonderful - a **peacock butterfly** on the **buddleia** A first record in my Broughty Ferry garden Later in the day another one seen (or the same?) continuing the feast JC
- 7th September** The **buddleia** in the garden was still in full flower and attracted a **peacock**, four **small tortoiseshells** and two **red admirals**, all within 20 minutes of each other JC
- 8th September** **Cream spot ladybird** found crawling up our lounge window. Although it flew away when taken outside, two days later there was another one in the same place It is still there (7th Oct) ME.
- 19th September** About 15 **geese** seen flying over Craigmill Den, mid morning – my first definite record of the autumn Dorothy Fyfe thought she had heard them two days previously, but only distantly AR
- 21st September** A flock of about a dozen **tree sparrows** clustered noisily in a few small **rowans** near the cottage at Carsegowndiemuir JC
- 23rd September** First view of **pink-footed geese** this autumn, over Broughty Ferry at 8 55am, in three skeins (45 + 31 + 32) DMS
- 24th September** A **kingfisher** seen on the lower Dighty, not far from the seven arches viaduct, late afternoon AF
- 3rd October** A good day at the Lunan Bay hide. Records included three **barnacle geese**, four **ringed plovers**, a **pink foot goose** and over 50 **kittiwakes** GM
- 3rd October** While walking near Barnhill Primary School, mid morning, I became aware of a **raptor** being mobbed by two **crows**, high above A second look revealed a forked tail, and wings much narrower than those of a **buzzard**, which had been my first identification. It was also much bigger than a buzzard (the crows gave scale) and my conclusion was that it must have been a **red kite** It kept flying steadily westwards despite the crows AR
- 5th October** At the House of Dun fungus foray a shortage of species after the very dry season However, there were large numbers of **honey fungus** (*Armillaria mellea*) a destructive species hated by foresters On a brighter note, a good number of edible *Agaricus* sp were found in a mainly disused walled garden GM
- 30th October** Spectacular **aurora borealis** seen (see page 38) AR
- 31st October and 1st November** Rustling of leaves in the garden, Broughty Ferry, due, not to the expected **blackbird**, but to a **hedgehog** It looked small, maybe because there was a lack of food during the long dry summer DMS
- 1st November** I had just returned to the car, parked by the fence at the edge of the Tesco, Monifieth car park, when a **sparrowhawk** landed on the ground between the car and the fence CR
- 3rd November** A large skein of **geese** flew low over the centre of the city at about 6pm Some people looked up in admiration but many didn't even notice JC
- 6th November** A very late **red admiral butterfly** sunning itself on the conservatory, Invergowrie ME
- 7th November** We saw 10 **waxwings** outside our flat at Fearn Station, E Ross BB
- 9th November** 10 **waxwings** were seen in a small tree in the car park opposite Broughty Ferry Library – part of a big influx 700 had been recorded in the country at about this time DMS
- 10th November** A **grey squirrel** visited my Balgillo Road garden MT
- 10th November** During the previous week I enjoyed seeing a **goldfinch** on our net bag of peanuts, but today there were three Word of the food source must be spreading Had never noticed the two rows of white dots down the wings and onto the tail before DMS
- 11th November** A record number of **blackbirds** were seen in our Broughty Ferry garden 12 were feasting on the **apples** on and beneath the tree which our son, Peter, grew from a Golden Delicious pip about 22 years ago DMS



- 14th November** From the Guardbridge hide saw two **swallows** (probably late youngsters) flying near the hide. Other birds seen included thousands of **golden plovers**, 30 or more **fieldfares**, two **sparrowhawks**, **black-tailed** and **bar-tailed godwits**, **dabchicks**, **goldeneye**, **shoveler**, **eider**, **teal**, **kestrel**, **peregrine** and **kingfisher** GM
- 14th November** Somewhat unexpectedly a **frog** was found hopping around outside our back door at 6pm. We had just had a very mild spell and some rain, but I hadn't seen one in the garden for a couple of months (not even in the pond) AR
- 16th November** 30 **waxwings** in our garden in West Dundee BB
- 16th November** A **small tortoiseshell butterfly** sunned itself on the front of the house for about half an hour. It should have been hibernating JC
- 17th November** Bill phoned me at work to tell me about a bird in our **autumn-flowering cherry** – more or less **blackbird** size with a distinct pale stripe above its eye and reddish on its side – a **redwing**. The first he'd ever seen DMS
- 19th November** Another warm weather indicator, after daytime temperatures of 12 and 13°C. A **buff-tailed bumblebee** seen flying about the garden, none having been seen for several weeks AR
- 20th November** Three weeks, to the day, since the last time, another spectacular **aurora borealis** seen. This one predominantly a turquoise glow to the south, when not showing the pretty colours overhead AR.
- 28th November** A **bumblebee** seen in my garden at Carnoustie. Weather was cold and wet and the poor insect was clearly suffering DY
- 5th December** About five **waxwings** seen in a rosebush up the lane beside Monifieth High School AF
- 6th December** A **bumblebee** flew around the front of the garden for a few minutes, in a blink of sunshine JC
- 14th December** At 4.30pm a **hedgehog** was seen on our patio eating the remains of food put out for the birds. Later put out some cat food but this remained untouched by the morning. About a week later hedgehog droppings were found on the patio, so it was still about DMS
- 22nd December** While waiting at Tesco filling station on Riverside Drive, what appeared to be a flurry of bits of paper blown by the wind turned out to be 30+ **pie wagtails**. It seems that the small tree and shrubs beneath it on the east side of the building have become a winter roost DMS
- 25th December** The **pussy willow** catkins on the big tree near the Dighty in Monifieth were already coming into flower and showing their silky 'paws' CR
- 31st December** **Fieldfare** in my Broughty Ferry garden feeding on **holly** berries and **apples**, which I had kept in the shed since October. I had been putting a few out each day but, unfortunately, this bird came when the supply was well-nigh exhausted DMS



## FORFAR LOCH

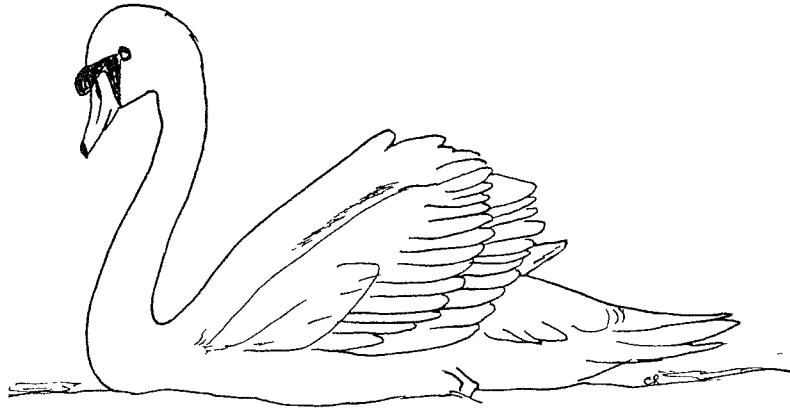
9th January

The sun was shining and, though frosty, the roads were clear after the ice and snow of the previous week. My initial reason for a trip to Forfar was to see if the excellent ironmonger there had a saucepan of the type for which I had looked unsuccessfully in Dundee, but I could not justify going that far for that alone, so I decided to walk around the loch to get a little post-Christmas exercise and to see what was about.

The loch itself was extensively covered in ice, though there were several isolated patches of open water where the water birds were concentrated. At the spit by the sailing club I had hoped to attract some of the **mute swans** across so that I could record any ring numbers. Even when I produced some bread they, unusually, failed to respond, but the large numbers of **mallard** and **coots** had no such inhibitions and greedily cleared up every last morsel. It is only in winter that **coots** are prepared to co-exist so peacefully and I had

wonderful close up views of their bright white face patches and beautiful, delicate pale pink beaks which were translucent in the low sunshine. The **mallards** too were at their brightest and best, ready for the breeding season.

On returning to the main track, there were not many birds about. Several **blackbirds** raked noisily through the fallen leaves below the bushes and a charm of eight or so **goldfinches** was gathered in a **hawthorn** bush, preening busily and twittering all the while. A **wren** dived into deeper cover beside the path and **robins** seemed to pop up to have a look at me every few hundred metres. At the far (west) end of the loch I spotted three birds perched in the top of a **birch** tree. Against the light it was difficult to make out any detail – were they just **finches** fluffed up against the cold? There was obviously doubt in my mind, for I stopped and examined them through the binoculars. Was that a crest? Yes, they were **waxwings**, which became clearer as they shifted position slightly so that their heads were fully silhouetted against the bright sky. I stood and admired them for a while before continuing my walk.



Where it was possible to see the patches of water along the south shore there were yet more **mallard** and **coots**, a few **wigeon**, a **little grebe** and plenty of **tufted ducks** and **goldeneye**. The **swans** were still completely unresponsive and just as I thought that I had exhausted the possibilities for water birds I spotted a small party of **teal** keeping close to the cover of some willows. More **goldfinches** flew overhead and a small group of **long-tailed tits** foraged through the waterside bushes. I was almost back at the start of my circuit when a male **sparrowhawk** swooped in low over the path and perched on the lower branches of one of the trees beside the cricket ground. He was sitting in the perfect position for a good view, and the pink on his breast positively glowed in the low sunlight. Even the feral **greylag geese** didn't seem hungry enough to come and try their usual intimidation – perhaps they know that winter walkers do just that, and don't usually come armed with food. Overall a very pleasant and bracing walk, perfectly good justification for my journey. I even found a suitable saucepan too!

Anne Reid

## A LOAD OF BULL

I was searching for the first reported sighting of **Magellan ragwort** (*Senecio smithii*) in Angus but I couldn't find it. It was supposed to be growing in a marshy patch down by the coast, but where was it? It must be in that bit of wet ground on the other side of the field, I thought, and hopped over the wall to walk over to it. At the other end, 150 or so metres away, were a group of cows but they weren't paying any attention to me and I wasn't intending to disturb them. Slightly nearer was another large cow but it was lying down with its back towards me and also not paying any attention.

I trotted over to the marshy ground on the other side of the fence and began to carefully look for the large leaves and striking head of flowers. No sign. Perhaps it was further along. Still looking hard in among the **sedges** and **rushes**, I slowly paced up beside the fence. Suddenly a loud snort in front of me caught my attention – and how! There, about 30 metres away, was the large cow.

It was standing up, facing me, only it wasn't a cow at all. It was a very large and menacing beast – a real load of bull. And quite a load at that. He was magnificent, a Charolais, I think, with muscles rippling in his shoulders. He snorted again, pawed one hoof and lowered his head slightly. He obviously didn't like the look of me, and I wasn't too keen

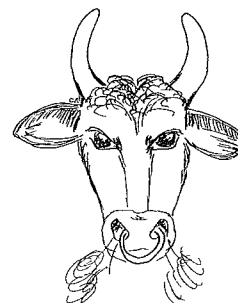


on him either I immediately thought of jumping the fence into the marsh but rapidly changed my mind It looked extremely soft and squelchy Probably smelly too Not only would it give everyone else a good laugh, but even the bull might be amused as well Slowly I backed away, trying to avoid looking him in the eye, but staying close to the fence in case he made a move towards me

Fortunately he was well behaved and just warning me not to come closer I moved a hundred metres along the fence and, once out of the danger zone, walked back across the field while keeping an eye on the lord of the field I wouldn't say he was wild but certainly very testy Serves me right, of course, for paying too much attention to the vegetation and not enough to the other forms of life And I never did find the **ragwort** Ah well, there's always next year (Illustrated in 2002 Bulletin, page 37 Ed )

Jim Cook

(A warning to all naturalists! Ed )



**Q: WHEN IS A WALL NOT A WALL?  
A: WHEN IT IS A CORNISH HEDGE**

The narrow, twisting, Cornish lanes are bounded by tall hedges, so tall that it is only when passing a field gate that you glimpse the countryside A church tower might be the only sign of nearby habitation. Oncoming cars – not frequent – are unseen, and the tiny passing places on the larger corners are welcome. If you miss one and think that the hedge might bend a little or afford a cushion – forget it! That hedge is solid wall.

Hedges come in many patterns and heights The usual boundary hedge is a double wall, firmly based, tapering upwards, rubble filled and topped with either turves or a row of stones Shrubs may be planted into the turf top, so heightening the structure There are dry stone walls, as we would know them, and pretty ones laid in a herringbone pattern. The latter often near the sea

Nature takes over very quickly and smothers the stonework with plants Field plants, or woodland, moorland or seaside ones – the hedges become vertical gardens and a haven for wildlife Insects flourish, birds nest among the brambles and honeysuckle and lizards sun themselves Old cottages and new houses plant their hedges with alpiners or top them with bedding plants But Nature does it better

Marjory Tennant

**SEASHORE FESTIVAL**

Broughty Castle Green  
1st June

We arrived early, in time to help Dave Ferguson and George Potts with the setting up and arrangements of the tents, and assembled our stand, shared between Dundee Nats and the local branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust Gordon Maxwell and Margaret McLaren positioned the tables, arranged the display boards and organised the shell specimens Soon a trickle of visitors appeared, lured by the warm sunny weather We spent a busy morning talking to a wide variety of interested people, telling them about our local wildlife, the Society and the SWT and its activities Later on Marjory Tennant and Bob and Mary Harwood came along to support our efforts and Gordon and Jim led two parties in excursions along Broughty Beach They were able to describe the variety of wildlife that could be found along the shoreline and the difference that the new sewage works at Hatton had made already to the quality of the water

A number of people of all ages expressed interest in our local wildlife, the DNS and the SWT From that point of view the day was reasonably worthwhile, as a way of educating the public about wildlife issues and threats to the environment The festival also provided an

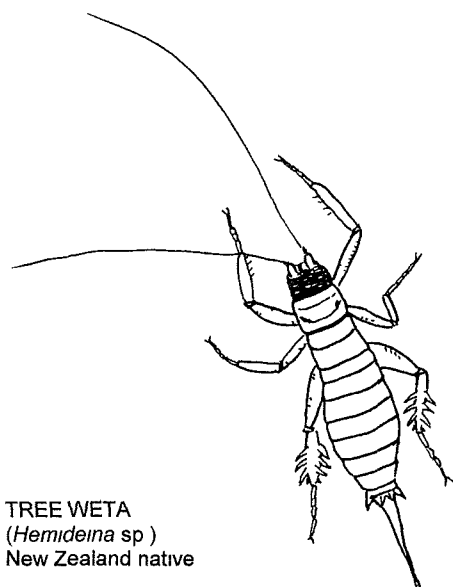
opportunity to increase public awareness of the two organisations and their activities. It remains to be seen, however, whether any new members will join as a result of our efforts.

Jim Cook

(This is an example of the kind of effort that goes into setting up and manning a stand, for publicity and educational purposes, with little noticeable payback in terms of new members! Our best publicity is still for YOU to bring along like-minded friends and colleagues. Ed.)

## YEAR TWO IN NEW ZEALAND

Well, I've now been living at Earthsong Eco-Neighbourhood for 18 months and I'm still thoroughly enjoying my retirement adventure. I feel so fortunate that the opportunity arose to join the first Co-housing project in New Zealand at just the right time of life for me. I'm also very glad that I have a strong interest in natural history to give me a life outside the



TREE WETA  
(*Hemideina* sp.)  
New Zealand native

community. My progress as a student of New Zealand flora and fauna is still slow. What is that saying about the more you learn the more you find there is to know? Not only should I learn the common name for each plant, but the Latin name and the Maori name - but even recognising the plant in the first place is complicated because it may have up to five leaf shapes at different times in its development! There are 200 seed plants which differ in a more or less striking degree at various stages of their growth. Certain species which exhibit this phenomenon in New Zealand do not do so elsewhere, so there must be something strange about the New Zealand environment. It certainly makes life interesting.

On a recent morning walk along the nearby Waiomoko stream I noted 33 plants which I recognised, only seven were native, 15 were familiars I knew in Britain and 11 were exotic weeds. The exotics were often similar plants to those I knew in Scotland but different species,

such as *Ranunculus sardous* and *Lotus pedunculatus*. Be reassured that if you come to visit you will find many plants you recognise, such as *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Crepis capillaris*, *Taraxacum officinalis*, *Allium triquetrum*, *Bellis perennis* and so on. But there are a lot of interesting weeds from all over the world. There were many more natives along the streamside which I did not identify. On our own land the most obvious weeds are *Daucus carota*, *Galinsoga parviflora*, *Solanum chenopodioides*, *Raphanus raphanistrum* and *Picris echioides*.

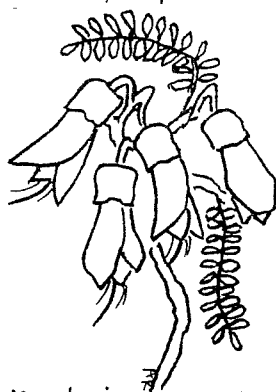
I recently spent three nights at the annual Rhododendron Festival in Taranaki. I didn't go just to see Rhodos but I knew that about 60 private gardens would be open for the Festival and I was keen to see some of them. It's a help in developing my new garden to see what is possible. My stay in Taranaki province was especially enjoyable because I met up with a college friend I hadn't seen for 44 years. When at the famous Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, on the slopes of Mt Taranaki (Egmont), I spent most of my time on their riverside walk amongst native plants. I saw my first New Zealand **tree fuchsia** (*F. excorticata*) in abundance there.

Much of my long drive (414 km) to Taranaki was through dairy country. There were very many **hawthorn**, and other, hedges. A lot of the hawthorn was unmanaged and was a wonderful sight in full flower. The dairy herds were big - usually about 100 cows - all grazing one paddock, with lots of empty paddocks around - no doubt being carefully managed. My friend's family farm is now an amalgam of five farms and milks 500 cows!

During my trip I stumbled upon the Kiwhouse and Native Bird Park in the small town of Otorohanga. It is run by a non-profit organisation which has the largest aviary in New

Zealand and has good displays of **kiwis**, **tuatara**, **geckos** and **native birds**. Those with computers may be interested in their Website [www.kiwihouse.org.nz](http://www.kiwihouse.org.nz)

I try to attend regularly the monthly lectures (if not the field trips) of the Forest & Bird Society. I also spent five hours one Friday evening helping staple, fold and label their newsletters. Only 30 or so turn up to lectures but there are 650 members in West Auckland. The branch (Waitakere) is on a high at the moment since in spite of the low turnouts there is a good core of very active members. Banrock Station Wines (an Australian firm) has contributed \$10,000 towards an extension of our local Matuku wetland nature reserve. The history of Matuku is interesting in that when F&B acquired it the wetland was covered in an almost continuous mat of floating vegetation and there were no large areas of open water. This all changed in 1979 when heavy rain coincided with a spring tide at Bethells Beach downstream, and a full Waitakere reservoir, upstream. The valley flooded dramatically. The flood waters rolled up huge carpets of vegetation and swept them into the sea, creating large open ponds within the wetland. Within 24 hours the floodwater had receded, but the ponds remained, resulting in a mosaic of habitats that attract a wide range of water birds. More than 250 species of plants have been recorded, along with 45 bird species (5 of them threatened), 6 species of native fish, two lizards and numerous insect species. The reserve now totals 120 hectares, acquired in five blocks over the years. **Goats** and **possums** were the first major problems, now pest control focuses on **possums**, **rats** and **stoats**. Invertebrate numbers have bounced back particularly quickly and bird species are now following suit.



Kowhai - *Sophora* sp.

I've now visited four islands in the Hauraki Gulf, the last was to a nature reserve on Waiheke Island with the Botanical Society. I hadn't been out with them before but they were a nice bunch of people. We saw the native white **clematis** (*C. paniculata*) and **Kowhai trees** with their yellow flowers – the New Zealand harbingers of spring. We also saw three types of **orchid**.

The envelopes in my letterbox are sometimes sampled by **snails** so it pays to collect regularly before they eat into the message. I got a shock recently when opening mail in my living room. A **tree weta** (*Hemideina* sp) dropped out onto the table.

I know they are relatively harmless but these giant crickets look fierce.

I haven't come across very many fungi but two notable species are a **birdsnest fungus** (*Crucibulum laeve*) and a **white basket fungus** (*Ileodictyon cibarius*).

Best wishes to all my friends in DNats  
Margaret Duncan

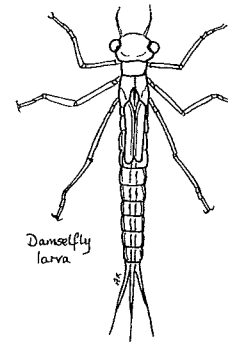
## ON GAUZY WINGS

14th June

It was a good year for **adder's-tongue fern** (*Ophioglossum vulgare*) in the quarry and in early June we counted 84 leaves and a few fertile stalks in the usual site. A visit a few weeks earlier had revealed five separate stalks of **coralroot orchid** (*Corallorhiza trifida*), an increase of two on last year, beside pond 3. They had all been marked with small sticks and this time we hoped to find a few left. The **rabbits**, however, had been at it again, but they did miss one stalk. A later visit showed that they had returned and finished off the job – not a stalk was left.

Last year Brian Ballinger's sharp eyes had picked up a single **blue-tailed damselfly** (*Ishnura elegans*) resting on **willowherb** in the quarry. Would we find any this year? And would we be able to prove that they were breeding? The sun came out while we were beside pond 2 and, almost on cue, Margaret cried out "There's one!" Wonderful. It was a **blue-tailed damselfly**. Within a few minutes we had sighted another four. Surely they must be breeding. And then came a mating pair, proof positive. We watched the female rest on some floating vegetation and dip her tail into the water, obviously laying eggs. At the same time several specimens of another species came into view, the **large red damselfly** (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*). Our **Odonata** count was getting better and better!

We moved to pond 3 to try our luck there. We sat down on the stones above the narrow, sunny end of the pond and were rewarded by five blue-tailed, including a mating pair, and four large red damselflies. There was even a large red flitting about above the square tank between ponds 3 and 4. Pond 4 itself yielded another four blue-tailed damselflies and five large reds, including a pair. We were also intrigued to see half a dozen or so 'things', about 2cm long, hanging in the water roughly half a metre down. Occasionally they propelled themselves quite rapidly up to near the surface. Eventually we managed to catch one. It turned out to be a **damselfly nymph**, of unknown species. We realised that we had seen the same animals in pond 3. It is probably not a coincidence that these two ponds have no fish in them!



The sun was still shining strongly and the air was warm, with only a gentle breeze. We sat down to eat our lunch on the bank above the broader end of pond five and within half an hour were rewarded with excellent views of six separate blue-tailed individuals, including another two mating pairs. They flitted vigorously about, their gauzy wings shimmering in the sunlight. A short while later two females landed to lay eggs on floating pondweeds. At the same time we counted five individuals of large red damselflies and, even better, two of yet another species, the **common blue damselfly** (*Enallagma cyathigerum*). A short while after, a movement at the water's edge below caught our attention and there was a **newt**, probably a **palmate newt** (*Triturus helveticus*). It dived under a large stone as soon as we moved. Although there wasn't time to search all around the pond, it is likely that many more damselflies would have been found and perhaps a few more newts as well. The numbers we saw indicate a thriving population, a little surprising considering the numbers of small fish (**minnows**, perhaps, and **perch**) in pond 5 – unlike all the other ponds which have no records of any fish other than a single large eel back in 1987. Only pond 1 didn't yield any records of damselflies, perhaps because the sun was hidden behind a cloud both times we passed it. We'll just have to try harder next year.

Jim Cook

## INDEPENDENT WITNESSES

July and August

Knowing that a **blue-tailed damselfly** had been found at the quarry last year I decided that one or two daytime trips in midsummer might add to our records for the species there. I had also been planning to run the **moth trap** overnight with a return visit the following morning to empty it and to look for **butterflies** and any **damselflies**.

The first morning visit to empty the moth trap, on 23rd July, added a few common moths to the quarry list. Colin and I then took a walk to see what else was about and found a few **butterflies** including **small heath**, **ringlet** and **meadow brown**. In the long grass above pond 5 I spotted a **damselfly** which, most cooperatively, landed on a grass stem and enabled me to confirm that it was a **common blue**. Despite searching we found no more damselflies and left with the firm intention of returning.

The next visit (29th July) was intended as a path-clearing and **ragwort**-pulling expedition and involved a brutal attack on the **willowherb** by Mary, Christine and Andrew armed with two sickles, kindly lent by Ronnie. I made very sure that they worked at opposite ends of the path, issued safety instructions, crossed my fingers and left them to it. The result was small blisters all round and a reasonably clear path, though the technique needs to be refined! Meanwhile I pulled ragwort with occasional help from whoever did not have a sickle at the time. After lunch we went for a wander to see if we could find damselflies again. It was bright but not sunny, quite good for working but not so good for finding sun-loving insects. We saw a **common blue butterfly** near pond 4, found an underground **wasp bike** actually on the path under the big ash tree (I nearly stood on the entrance!), and then when we got to the bank by pond 5 found that there were a few damselflies around. Many were resting on the grass, but once I got my eye in they were quite easy to count. Our maximum numbers, seen at one time, were two **blue-tailed damselflies** and seven **common blue damselflies** – excellent totals.

Our final foray to the quarry on 13th August was, once again, to empty the moth trap. A different selection of common moths was added to the list and, again, we went to see what else we could find. Bright sunshine helped to bring out the butterflies and we saw three **peacocks**, previously rare in the area, one **red admiral** and one **painted lady**, in addition to the more commonly recorded species. There were still **damselflies** about and we saw a pair of **blue-tailed** and a female laying eggs in pond 5, and at least four **common blues**, also at pond 5.

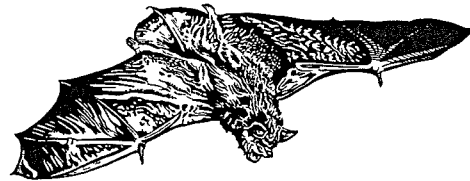
All these observations were made before we knew of Jim's sightings (see above) and show that there were significant numbers of damselflies present over a long period. I saw no **large red damselflies**, but their flight period is a little earlier than that of the other two species found. Who knows what we will find next season!

Anne Reid

## BATS

27th July

While we were away carrying out the recce for the Crinan weekend, Dorothy Fyffe and I went for a walk along the shores of Loch Crinan while the men went to climb a hill and check the area. An hour or two later there was no sign of the two explorers so we decided to retrace our steps. The sun by this time was just setting and the colours across the water and sky were absolutely breathtaking. All of a sudden we heard a wheesh and, on looking up, saw about ten **bats**. Following where they came from we saw more and more flying out from under a house roof. I personally had never seen so many and marvelled at their aerobatics. We gave up trying to count them – but what a sight they were against the pink and orange sky.



Margaret McLaren

(A taster for those going on the weekend in May 2004 Ed.)

## DOLPHINS AT BROUGHTY FERRY

From my place of work on Beach Crescent, Broughty Ferry, I have seen **dolphins** on several occasions. My first sighting of these lovely creatures was at 7.30am on 17th September in 2002, when seven or eight of them were swimming very rapidly upstream towards Dundee, only to return to fish in a more leisurely manner, quite close inshore.

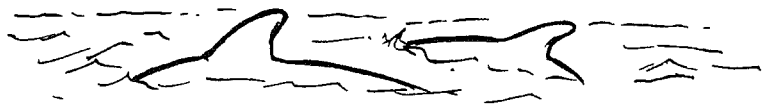
On 1st July 2003 I saw five or six **bottlenosed dolphins** (*Tursiops truncatus*) fishing one to two hundred metres off Broughty Ferry harbour. They stayed for over half an hour, with two occasionally jumping side by side. This was at about 11.45am which was near to high tide.

I saw them again on 29th July showing similar behaviour. There were about six **dolphins** slightly further offshore but they stayed for longer and there was more leaping. This time at a similar state of the tide, at 11.30am.

About six **dolphins** were seen moving slowly downstream on 11th August. The area between the lifeboat jetty and the big orange buoy seems to be a good fishing spot. High tide again, around noon. On each occasion when the dolphins were seen the sea was fairly calm.

Ellie Dickson of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society told the Sunday Post on 24th August that **dolphins** seen off the Ferry are probably part of the Moray Firth population which is about 130 strong.

Alison McAdam



## STATIONS OF THE FAR NORTH

The Far North Line runs from Inverness to Thurso and Wick by a rather roundabout route and is one of Britain's great railway journeys. Barbara and I have a special interest, as we own a flat in the upper half of Fearn station and also a wood near Wick which is bounded by the line. There is much wildlife to be seen along the route, but this account focuses on the stations.

The 23 stations north of Inverness often have attractive buildings, some being used as houses and others appearing rather neglected. Many are request stops. The station platforms are sprayed with weed killer occasionally, but are often covered with wild flowers and alive with birdsong in the spring and summer.

We visited all the stations on two occasions between May and September over the last three years and found an average of 52 flowering plant species in the accessible areas of the platforms and approaches. Thurso had the fewest (26), being a manned station and Fearn the most (84), perhaps because we know it best and because it was used for lime deliveries in the past. Many of the plants were common roadside species, but there were some interesting finds.

The scarce and tiny *Crassula tillaea* (**mossy stonecrop**) was found in the gravel on three stations (not to be confused with the less welcome and invasive *Crassula helmsii* or **New Zealand pygmyweed**, (see below). **Northern marsh orchid** (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) grew on the platforms at Georgemas junction and Wick and the uncommon **white ramping fumitory** (*Fumaria capreolata*) was found. Some stations were being invaded by **birchwood** or **heather** and there were good shows of **kidney vetch** (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) in places, for example Muir of Ord.

**Lichens** covered some platforms including **dog lichen** (*Peltigera*) and *Cladonia* species and **mosses** were plentiful. Station buildings were used by nesting birds such as **house martins** and **swallows** and at some times of year **butterflies** were frequent - **common blues**, **painted ladies** etc. The very unusual **tongue gall** caused by the fungus *Taphrina amenerum* grew on the cones of **grey alder** (*Alnus incana*) on Lairg station.

So amongst all the other attractions, the stations are worth looking at when you visit the far north railway.

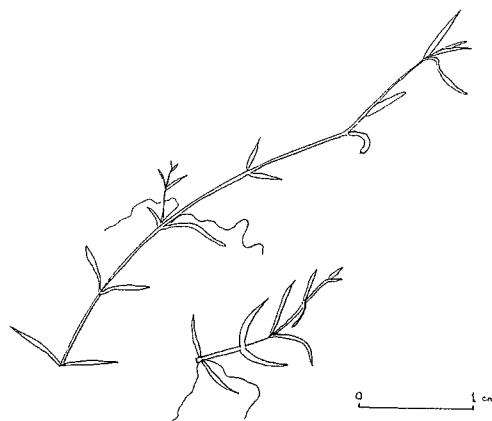
Brian Ballinger

## BOTANICAL INVASION

**Australian swamp stonecrop** or **New Zealand pygmyweed** (*Crassula helmsii*), a native of shallow water habitats in Australia and New Zealand, has been reported this last year from a locality in central Angus. This is a worrying development. In the south of England the plant seems to be highly invasive, growing vigorously and taking over and dominating large areas of shallow water in only a year or two. Who knows what might happen, but the fear is that it may invade the range of shallow lochs in central Angus and crowd out much of the native vegetation. The plant is a small insignificant looking weedy species which is easy to miss. The diagram gives some indication of its main features.

Unfortunately, the garden pond trade often supplies it (sometimes under the name of *Tillaea recurva*) as an oxygenating plant for ponds and thus encourages its spread.

Would all naturalists keep their eyes open this coming summer and report, as soon as possible, any plants they find to Richard Brinklow at the Museum, Barbara Hogarth (the county recorder for plants), Brian Ballinger (our Vice-President) or to any Nats Council member?



Jim Cook

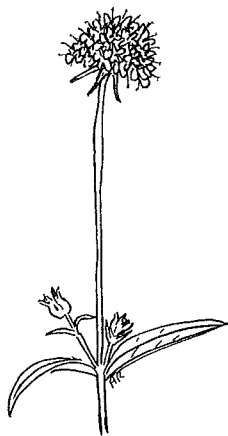
## LOCAL DISTURBANCE

11th August

I had just stepped out of my front door when there was a commotion across the road and I saw a hawk sweep low in my front garden. There was a great deal of squawking too. It was a **sparrowhawk**, of all things attacking a young **crow**. Next, father and mother crow arrived and dive-bombed the sparrowhawk. Within a minute or two she gave up and flew to a nearby fir tree. I got a really good view of a disgruntled female sparrowhawk. The family of crows were sitting on top of the neighbouring house, having a great deal to say to each other. An exciting start to my day, and for the crow as well!

Margaret McLaren

(Female sparrowhawks are larger than the males and can attack larger prey, including crows and woodpigeons. Ed.)



Devil's-bit scabious

## SERENDIPITY

23rd August

Recently a round of golf at Blairgowrie ended with a final humbling slice into thick rough and heather. No sign of the ball but a search led to **scabious** and numerous (double figures) **peacock butterflies**. Frustration eased and I lingered happily while my companions headed for the green and 19th hole.

Jean Colquhoun

## CELESTIAL FIREWORKS

30th October

After putting the car in the garage just after 9pm I looked up to see if the night was clear or cloudy and almost did a double take. There was an amazing display of streaks of coloured light all radiating from a common point high overhead, and clearly visible despite streetlights. Concluding that this must be the **aurora borealis** I went in the front door, told the family, and went outside again at the back where at least one streetlight has failed (and I have not reported it, so that moth trapping and star gazing are more effective!). Mary's reaction was to tell me that it had been forecast. She had read about it in the paper and seen it mentioned on the television news, and said that it was connected with the unusually strong solar flares from sun spot activity causing ionisation. We all jumped about, with oohs and aahs, pointing out the ever changing colours and shapes of the aurora, which covered most of the sky to begin with and included red, green and blue patches of varying intensity. As time went on the activity died down and settled to pale greenish patches in a **northerly** direction, still changing in intensity and direction but quite tame compared with when we first went outside.

Our neighbours can only have had their conclusions about our nuttiness confirmed by our nocturnal use of the garden. It was, however, a truly spectacular display and well worth the discomfort of getting cricks in our necks and chilled fingers.

Anne Reid

## REPEAT PERFORMANCE

20th November

A very similar display of the **aurora**, first seen at 6pm, when it was spotted overhead and also as a greenish tinge in the **southern** sky this time. This time it kept going, off and on throughout the evening even though we only checked periodically. Quite good at 7.30 but at its best at 9pm (again). It originated high overhead as before with multicoloured rays, rather like searchlight beams, across the whole of the southern part of the sky. There was hardly any activity to the north this time and the general glow remained in the south. We were also looking for **meteors** from the Leonid shower but they did not oblige this time. What a spectacular sight that would have been – meteors seen through the aurora!

AR

Note. Other members had seen the aurora on Wednesday 29th October and on Saturday 22nd November, and there were some spectacular colour photographs of one of them at the Mills Observatory when we visited on 25th November. (See page 24)

## WINTER WASPS

15th November

Wasps die off in the autumn – or do they? We have had a colony of wasps (presumably **wall mason wasps**, they don't look like **common wasps**) beneath our dining room window. Endlessly they zoomed out through the **cotoneaster** branches, intent on their own affairs, never showing the least hostility, and they are still active, in mid November. Will climate change see the emergence of a new all-year-round wasp?

Bob McLeod

(The colony under the window may have been one of the other, reasonably common, social wasps such as **German wasp**, **Norwegian wasp** or **tree wasp**. **Mason wasps** are not usually colony builders. I have also seen active wasps in mid November this autumn, but all have been queens. Ed.)

## AN ALTERNATIVE WALK

November 15th

I missed the St Andrew walk because I was staying with relatives in Kirkcaldy. However a hike from Linktown, Kirkcaldy to Pettycur Harbour just south of Kinghorn and back, a seven mile round trip on a warm sunny day, produced a large colony of **seals** basking on rocks about one and a half miles south of Linktown. About twelve were ashore and others were swimming around with the tide low. Also saw **cormorants**, **kittiwakes**, **oystercatchers**, **redshanks**, one **curlew**, a flock of **dunlin** and boring old **mallard**. On the way home after a pub lunch in Kinghorn we saw two **stonechats** and **blue tits** but the highlight was about six **waxwings** moving through wild **rose** bushes and calling to each other a few metres from the path. One paused for a binocular opportunity (alas, no camera) two metres away. I have been reading that waxwings may be abundant this year. Also **harebell** and **knapweed** were still in flower but, since no botanists were present, they were only noticed because we had to watch our footing on the rugged path.



Alison McAdam



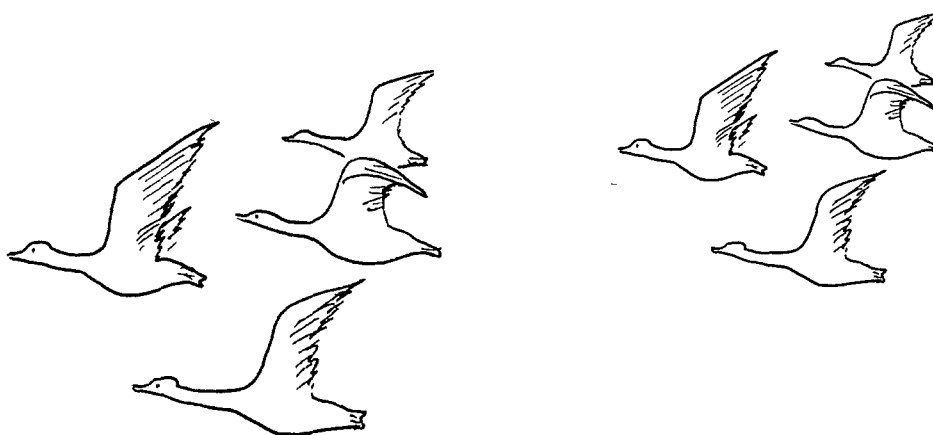
## GEESE

10th December

Driving along the main road in Monifieth as the light was beginning to fade, in late afternoon, I saw a small boy pause and crane his neck to look upwards, with dropped jaw and an amazed look. I became aware of the sound of geese, above the noise of the engine, and glanced up (very briefly) at a huge skein of unusually low flying geese. In the space of the next hundred metres, or so, I was aware of a woman, also stopped in her tracks, looking up at them, and an elderly gentleman glancing up and smiling.

This obvious wonderment at one of nature's spectacles brought a smile to my face too. However commonplace we might think skeins of geese at dusk are in this part of the world, they are still a magnificent, attention-demanding sight. (This in contrast to the urban teenagers, completely unmoved by such a sight, observed by Jim in October 2001 and reported in that year's Bulletin, page 32.)

Anne Reid



## CROMBIE COUNTRY PARK

23rd December

On a day with the slightest dusting of snow at home we set out for Crombie hoping that there might be more snow there than at Monifieth, as is often the case. There was very marginally more but still hardly any but we still set out to walk around the (still dry) reservoir. On the first part of the path there were several **gorse** bushes with flowers on. There were not many birds about but high pitched squeaking above our heads alerted us to **goldcrests** and an assortment of **tits**.

From the footprints we could see that only one couple had been along the path ahead of us which meant the wildlife had not been disturbed much. As we neared the "deer hide" Mum suddenly stopped in her tracks and signalled for us to approach quietly. Up ahead was a **roe deer** which swiftly fled when it caught sight of us but not before we had got a wonderful view of it.

There was not much else around but as we neared the lodge the parts of the path where there were land rover tracks that went crunch as you stepped on them. We soon found that there were large expanses of columnar **ice crystals** lifting the surface of the path and it was these which were producing the satisfying crunch. An enjoyable walk despite the lack of wildlife sightings.

Mary Reid

# DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 18th March, 2003 at the Chaplaincy Centre.

Gordon Maxwell was in the chair and about fifty five people were present .

**Apologies for absence** were received from Helen Blackburn, Jenni Christie and Sheila Taylor

**Minutes of previous meeting.** These were read and adopted as an accurate record Proposed by Bede Pounder and seconded by Alban Houghton

**Matters arising.** There were no matters arising from the minutes

**President's Report.** The full report appears in the Bulletin Gordon thanked all who have helped in any way during the year, but especially our long suffering Secretary - Margaret; Treasurer - Dorothy and Bulletin Editor - Anne Reid Last but not least Frances Towns, our lone auditor ploughing a largely unseen but necessary furrow through the society's financial affairs. He apologised if he had left anyone out

Gordon then continued with a resume of our activities throughout the year Our excursions had been well attended and the long weekend at Seahouses was enjoyed by everyone The Isle of May trip was a disappointment as we could not land due to rough weather. The Wednesday outing proved successful and we hope to repeat it next year. At this point Gordon introduced Jean Colquhoun as our new Excursion Secretary and thanked Roma Miller for all her patience and work in the post over the last number of years

Social Events were also well attended and those who do not come along missed some very good times, including an excellent BBQ at Barry Mill, thanks to Peter Ellis' excellent hospitality. On 13th April a team attended the SWT Golden Wellie Quiz at the Guide Dog Centre, Forfar, beating Golden Labs by a narrow margin. The Winter Programme has been well attended though one lecturer had to call off at the last moment Brian Allan and Gordon filled in

Gordon then thanked everyone for their help over his first year and hoped we would enjoy our excellent summer outings programme.

**Secretary's Report:** The membership is currently 184 consisting of 108 ordinary members, 55 family members, 7 past members, 7 honorary members, and 5 student members. This is a slight decline (197 last year) but unfortunately due to bereavement and changes of address we have lost 22 members We have 9 new members and there are two requests for application forms, so overall we have a healthy society. 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 our Society.

The summer programme proved to be successful, but with the continuing rise in the cost 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. Our Saturday morning 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.

At this point, Margaret added her thanks to Roma for her help in organising the buses As Roma had decided it was time to hand over the reins to someone else, Jean Colquhoun had been co-opted onto the Council at the end of last month Margaret looked forward to working with Jean and also hoped we would still see Roma and Duncan on the outings

**Treasurer's report.** Copies of the accounts were available at the meeting and Dorothy reviewed the accounts and explained the deficit of £224 40, which is made up by the income from donations and fund raising £239.40 Dorothy then reminded the members that it is now costing £2.13 per head for insurance and it is almost £2.00 per head for printing the bulletin and syllabus etc Also next year she would anticipate another increase to insurance premiums and it is likely that the University rental for T9 will rise

Dorothy suggested (a) an increase in the subscriptions payable from March 2004 to £12 for single membership, £18 for family and the juvenile and student membership to remain at £5 and (b) a charge of say 50p per lecture would help to cover the cost of renting T9

A show of hands was taken and (a) was accepted but (b) rejected.

Shelagh Gardner proposed adoption of the accounts and Bede Pounder seconded .

**Technical Convenor's Report and Carsegowndiemuir Convenor's Report.** Jim spoke about both reports, outlining the various activities planned for the evenings in the coming year.

A busy time was spent at Carsegowndiemuir last summer, pulling Ragwort and cutting back Rosebay Willowherb The trees are growing well and we hope to plant a few more in autumn We are now well up on the 1,000 trees which are mostly growing very well indeed. Measuring of the trees is still to be completed. A few of the original trees were blown down, but this was expected Both reports appear in full in the Bulletin.

Jim also mentioned Anne Reid had a Butterfly Survey and Bumblebee Survey and would like some sheets filled in - observation from your own garden.

Joy Ingram had two microscopes - (donation of sale to NATS) one requiring repair. Joy was thanked.

We shall still consider attendance at such events as the Flower Show and Seashore Festival, but participation will depend on resources available and some new volunteers to help Council members

### **Elections.**

It was proposed by Jim Cook that Dr Gordon Corbet be elected as Honorary President, in place of Dr John Berry who died last year, seconded by Anne Reid.

Dorothy Fyffe proposed that Bede Pounder replace Dr Corbet as Honorary Vice President, seconded by Bob McCurley.

Council Member: Winnie Tennant - proposed by Shelagh Gardiner, seconded by Joy Cammack

Council Member: Marjory Tennant - proposed by Jim Cook, seconded by Anne Reid.

Excursion Secretary: Jean Colquhoun - proposed by Jim Cook, seconded by Bede Pounder

Anne Reid agreed to continue as Bulletin editor (proposed, Peter Ellis, seconded Daphne MacFarlane Smith) and Jim Cook agreed to continue as both Technical Convenor and Carsegowndiemuir Convenor (proposed Anne Reid, seconded Alastair Fraser) As there were no other nominations from the floor both Anne and Jim were re-appointed and thanked Miss Frances Towns (proposed Jim Cook, seconded Shelagh Gardiner) agreed to audit our books and Gordon thanked her for her work.

### **AOCB.**

Announcements were made of forthcoming meetings, and Jim's Tuesday evening excursions

B. Ballinger and A. Houghton entertained us with a quiz after the formal business.

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

Margaret McLaren (Hon Secretary)

# DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

## Summer Programme 2004

Visitors are more than welcome on any outing, if booked in the usual way - please bring your friends

- Sunday April 25th Callander House** Leader Gordon Maxwell  
The house has a history spanning five centuries. Over that time it has been visited by famous and/or infamous figures such as Mary, Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie and Oliver Cromwell and was the seat of the Livingston and Forbes families. It is funded by Falkirk Council in conjunction with other conservation bodies. The house exterior and interior are spectacular and contain a museum which houses various themes in different rooms.  
The remains of part of the Antonine Wall runs through the grounds and these are studded with impressive trees. The Union Canal passes the south side of the grounds and, time permitting, it is hoped that we can include this in our walk. A small tearoom serving light meals etc, is situated not far from the house and is popular (get there early)!  
We hope to arrange a brief talk on the history of the house on arrival. Charges are Adults £3, Concessions £1.50, Children (6 - 16) £1. There is a toilet on each floor.
- Tuesday May 11th Scotston Farm** Leader Brian Ballinger  
Iain Baird and his sons farm at Scotston near Auchterhouse in the Sidlaws. The farm is mainly organic and is a mixed arable and livestock unit at about 200 metres above sea level. We will hear about organic farming with wildlife conservation in mind. We are likely to walk along a track through a small wooded den with a burn (a little steep in places) and then over a stile to come back over moor and fields, about a mile in all. A variety of wildlife should be seen, including birds and spring flowers. Scotston Farm is marked on the OS map at NO 334 398 (OS map 53, with the approach on OS map 54). From Kirkton of Auchterhouse drive up the minor Bonnyton Road past the church and turn right shortly along a road labelled "Scotston" opposite Dronley Road. Follow this road for about a mile and the farm is at the end. Members requiring a lift should meet at East Whale Lane at 6.15pm, otherwise at the farm at 7.00pm.
- Friday May 21st to 23rd Ardrishaig/Crinan** Leaders Jim Cook & Alban Houghton  
Our base will be the Grey Gull Inn at Ardrishaig, by Lochgilphead. The plan is to have our evening meal soon after arrival on the Friday and then explore the area - including a walk along the Crinan canal towpath, which literally passes the back door of the hotel. Saturday morning takes us to the wonderful township of Tayvallich, at the head of Loch Sween, with the option of a short walk to overlook the sound of Jura. Fitter members will be keen to explore the Taynish Nature reserve, excellent for birds, plants, butterflies and dragonflies. In the afternoon we intend to explore the historic and ancient fortress of Dunadd and go on to the great moss of Mhoine Mhor. On Sunday morning the party will visit the small but excellent Kilmartin museum, followed by time to explore some of the Neolithic sites of the valley. We plan to take time for a break on the journey home.  
A full itinerary with accompanying maps will be issued to members on the bus.
- Sunday June 6th Lochore Meadows** Leaders Brian Ballinger & Margaret McLaren  
The Lochore Meadows Country Park near Lochgelly in Fife was reclaimed from the scarred landscape following pit closures in the 1950s and 1960s. The restoration of this beautiful area with its loch, ponds, woodlands and meadows is an outstanding achievement and apart from the preserved winding gear, it is hard to believe that mining ever took place here.  
Starting from the visitor centre we will walk round the loch, which is often rich in birdlife. Harran Hill wood has a fine display of bluebells in May and early June and elsewhere various wildflowers including orchids, are usually to be seen in the meadows.  
The visitor centre has toilets, information and refreshments. We will aim to divide into a group undertaking a walk of 5 to 6 miles (some may find a hiking stick helpful) and a party doing a shorter walk.
- Tuesday June 15th Carsegowriemuir BBQ** Leaders Jim Cook and Anne Reid  
Come along to admire the work we've all done at the quarry to see how the trees are growing. We'll take a walk around our own private reserve, meet the local inhabitants and the tuck into a delicious barbecue!! (Bring your own food). Members who do not have transport meet at 6.30pm at East Whale Lane (Allan Street).
- Saturday June 19th Nigg Bay and Scotstown Moor, Aberdeen** Leaders Margaret McLaren & Marjory Tennant  
We will have our usual stop at Duthie Park for the facilities there, and rejoin the bus after a short break. We then go back over the River Dee to the west of Aberdeen passing the harbour as we arrive at the old

army barracks where the bus will drop us off. We will walk along the shore line for approximately 2 miles and we hope to find Oyster Plant and Sea Pea. The bus will pick us up at 1 00pm at the west end beside a car park. We will then proceed through Aberdeen to Scotstown Moor, a local nature reserve where a Countryside Ranger will meet us at 2pm. The bog at the southern end of the site contains the greatest diversity of plants. We should leave to return home at 4pm.

**Wednesday June 30th Spittal of Glenshee**

Leaders Joy Cammack and Gordon Maxwell

After a short stop at Blairgowrie, the bus will continue the picturesque journey to the Spittal of Glenshee Hotel. Our walk starts at the old humpback bridge, next to the church, minutes from the bus, and progresses along a well defined track alongside the river in Gleann Taitneach. Two kilometres along we cross a second strong wooden bridge to return back along a tarred, very quiet, road south of the river, back to the bus. Total distance is approximately 4 kilometres. Lots of flora and some wildlife to observe, as well as stunning mountain scenery. There is the option of stopping short of the wooden bridge and returning to the hotel or bus earlier if anyone wants a shorter walk, or if the weather is inclement.

**Saturday July 10th Dunbar/Belhaven Bay**

Leaders Wynn Tennant and Jean Colquhoun

During our winter programme Nigel Hawkins gave us a very interesting talk on "The John Muir Trust". As a follow on from this talk we are to visit John Muir's birth place at Dunbar. There is no entrance fee and a lift gives easy access to all three floors. We shall have time to explore Dunbar Harbour, which has interesting rock formations and a large colony of sea birds.

At 2pm we have a booking with a Countryside Ranger who will give us a guided walk around the John Muir Country Park at Belhaven Bay. We will be likely to return late. Remember an 8 30am start to the day.

**Saturday July 24th Isle of May**

Leaders Bob McCurley and Daphne Macfarlane Smith

The bus will leave at 8 30am arriving in Anstruther about 10 00am giving you time for a walk around the town and a cup of tea or whatever. The boat for the Island, "May Princess" will sail from Anstruther at 10 45am and return to Anstruther at about 4pm. The boat company requires to know the number of passengers and the fares have to be **paid one month before the trip**. The return boat fare is £15 00 for adults, £13 00 for senior citizens and £7 00 for children. Please send your cheque for the appropriate boat fare, (made payable to Dundee Naturalists' Society) to Daphne Macfarlane Smith, **42 Holly Road, Broughty Ferry, Dundee not later than 24th June**.

The pleasant crossing takes approx 50 minutes and our time on the island is about 3 hours. Our time will be spent exploring this fascinating island, seeking out botanical species, observing nesting sea birds at very close quarters and archaeological and other interests. As always the time simply flies when visiting this magical island which incidentally houses Scotland's first bird observatory.

**Please book early** - more places can be arranged if demand is there. Book your place on the boat through Daphne Macfarlane Smith on 01382 739148. Remember the **bus** has still to be paid and **booked** the usual way. The more seats taken on the bus the cheaper the outing will be. Anyone who just wishes to go to Anstruther to have a walk there is more than welcome.

**Tuesday August 3rd Forfar Loch**

Leaders Alban Houghton and Anne Reid

This walk will enable us to compare the walk around Forfar Loch with the one which we did in March this year. There will be a variety of sights of interest. Meet at East Whale Lane at 6 15pm or at the Ranger Centre, Forfar Loch at 7 00pm.

**Sunday August 8th Barry Buddon Joint Outing**

Leaders Bob McCurley, Jim Cook and others

This is one of the "traditional" natural history highlights of the year and attracts naturalists from as far away as Aberdeen, Falkirk and Edinburgh. It's a great opportunity to join groups, led by naturalists who know the area well, to see the best places for birds, butterflies, plants and damselflies. Don't miss it!

**Tuesday August 31st Dorothy's Garden, Carnoustie and Craigmill Den - BBQ and Night Walk**

Leaders Jim Cook, Dorothy Fyffe and Anne Reid

We're meeting at Dorothy's garden at 33 Ireland Street for a BBQ early on and then a walk up Craigmill Den, as it starts to get dark, to experience wildlife at night. Bring a torch!, your own food, warm clothing, and wellies or good boots. We shall set up the moth trap in the garden to see what is about.

**Saturday September 11th Rocks of Solitude, Gannochy - Fungus Foray** Leaders Gordon Maxwell & Jim Cook

The Gannochy Gorge area is always an excellent venue for fungi. If the season is good, we should find a varied range of fascinating fungi. It's also a good venue for scenery, birds and geology. Why not join us?

**NOTE** Bus pick-up point - **Albert Square, near McManus Gallery**