

Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



Bulletin No 29 2004

**DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY
ANNUAL BULLETIN No 29
2004**

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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, Christine Reid, Bede Pounder and Artfile.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition is the 10th which I have edited. 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.

Anne Reid

SOCIETY REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The excursion year began with the first of our eight full day outings, to Callendar House near Falkirk, where we had a magnificent day weatherwise. The last of the season was the obligatory fungus foray to the Gannochy Gorge on the North Esk near Edzell. Both of these, and the other excursions, are fully covered elsewhere in this Bulletin. These main outings were interspersed with the usual evening events, barbecues and the weekend trip to Argyll. My thanks to all organisers, leaders and helpers, especially on the weekend which requires a lot of time and forward planning. I would once again urge the membership to support the excursions as the eventual cost of the fare depends on the attendance. Early outings seem to be less well supported than later ones, so please start your season earlier.

The lecture series also was well received, with attendances appearing to be up on last year, though no figures are to hand. The talks covered a wide variety of subjects including squirrels, astronomy, the Eden Estuary, New Zealand and biodiversity. Our own members, Brian Ballinger and Alban Houghton, contributed the Christmas lecture and the Dundee afternoon lecture, respectively. A Saturday morning walk around central Dundee, a Scottish social evening, a walk in Scone and our own members' night completed the winter programme.

The flower show was also a success this year, mainly due to an improved location in the main tent, but also thanks to all the willing helpers over the three days. The mushroom display attracted a lot of interest.

Membership appears to be on a par with last year, with a number of new members helping to maintain the status quo. As my three year term as president comes to an end, these membership figures suggest to me that, though I might not have set the heather on fire, at least the members are not throwing themselves out of the window to escape. Joking aside, I think that too large a membership can present organisational problems – both for officers and in the field, others may disagree.

At this point I must say how helpful all our office holders have been over the past three years and how ready they have been to fill a vacancy when one has occurred. My job has been made easy because of this, and I can't emphasise too much the amount of work that is carried out on your behalf. Thank you to everyone. I trust that the members and officials will give my successor their full support.

Gordon Maxwell

TECHNICAL CONVENOR'S REPORT

It has been an active year, with the usual and extra activities. The Society arranged four evening study excursions in the spring and these were well attended, as in previous years. The study group had excellent evenings around Invergowrie Bay and along Elliot foreshore, both in good weather, and identified a wide range of species. After the Carsegowniemuir study visit (and BBQ!) we held another very good recording evening the following week at Balkello Hill community woodland.

Anne Reid, Barbara Hogarth and others participated in a SWT-based study of the natural history of the Stannergate foreshore area to help advise Dundee City Council officers on the management of the site. Several visits were made and lists compiled and a report was written and sent in. Also, for interest, a report on the wildlife of the city centre was produced and copies were sent to the Council.

The highlight of the year, though, was the Society's participation at the flower show. This was distinguished by our stand being situated, for the first time, in the main tent, not the children's tent. The efforts and support of many members, Gordon, Peter, Brian, Katy, Margaret, Marjory, Doug, Jean, Alison and Daphne, to name but a few, were crowned by the award of a silver medal for our stand! Congratulations and many thanks to all.

Jim Cook

CARSEGOWNIEMUIR REPORT

The quarry demands frequent attention but is constantly fascinating, as always. In the spring a small group of members spent time digging holes and planting six more trees, to total 18 new trees this season. In June a good crowd of over 40 Nats gathered on an excellent evening for a barbecue (see full report on page 14). We conducted several groups round to see the sights and admire the trees. Since we had already spent time cutting paths and mulching the young trees, nobody was asked to 'sing for their supper' this time by putting *in an hour or two of work!* Instead we spent the time identifying and recording plants, birds and insects and the occasional **bat** – and feasting and sampling the local beverages, including Ronnie Young's excellent sloe gin, made from **sloes** collected just behind the cottage. On the way back to the cottage after the barbecue a few of us were fortunate enough to hear the reeling song of a distant **grasshopper warbler** (no connection with the gin!)

This year there was, thankfully, little **ragwort**, perhaps because of the very dry weather the previous summer. However, small groups still spent some time pulling the noxious weed. We also spent an hour or two cutting back two large **elders** to make way for small **oak** trees underneath. The idea is to allow the oaks enough light so that they will grow and eventually, many years hence, be able to take over from the elders. We were very pleased to hear the **grasshopper warbler** again, and equally delighted to find breeding **damselflies** again. (See articles on pages 14 and 37. Ed.)

In the autumn small groups spent time digging fifteen holes. On a very chilly day Margaret McLaren and Wynn Tennant planted six trees, a mixture of **birch** and **ash**, but it was too cold to plant the rest. They'll have to wait for the spring. Ronnie Young also showed us a number of small self-seeded ash trees around the back of his cottage. We'll be able to plant some of these as well and grow others for future years. Ash is a tree that does very well in the harsh conditions of the quarry.

As an experiment, a trial **sand martin bank** was attempted during the summer. The plan was to cut a vertical face on the more sheltered side of the large mounds at the far end of the quarry and protect the top with a large board. The Youngs provided us with the board and we set to work with a spade and pick. The surface material appeared reasonably fine and sandy, but, as we feared, the mounds proved to be very stony underneath. Another project will continue with the **elder hedge** at the far, windward, end to provide shelter for the small trees. A further project for the coming year is to partly clear the overhanging vegetation around ponds 2 and 3, to allow in more light. Any volunteers?

Jim Cook

OBITUARIES

MOLLY LIND

My earliest recollection of Molly was during the early 70s on a plant identification course run by the museum and tutored by Adam Ritchie. It was following that course she became a regular on the Nats summer outings together with her pal Dolly Tait. Both became first-rate field botanists, who personified the ideals of the Society being always eager to learn more. Molly, in her quiet and friendly way, was equally keen to pass her knowledge to others. She was a true stalwart of the Nats, which by the 1980s had become increasingly more active and popular. Following her retirement she moved north to Kirkwall on Orkney where her niece lived, but continued her links with the Society and enjoyed reading about our exploits in the annual Bulletin. In recent years a small group of Nats visited Molly during a trip to the island and she joined them in search of the Scots Primrose, *Primula scotica*. Molly was a genuinely nice person who will be missed by many, not least myself.

Brian Allan

(Molly died on 18.2.04 in Kirkwall. Ed.)

IN MEMORIAM - MICHAEL CLEGG

I was pleased to receive at Christmas a card from Pat Clegg, wife of the late Michael Clegg known to many members for all that he did to foster interest in natural history, and especially birds, during his time at the museum in Dundee in the early 70s. With the card came a cutting from the Yorkshire Post of November 23rd 2004 with news that, helped by the Michael Clegg Memorial Trust, a newly created hay meadow named Clegg Meadow has been set up at Broomhill Flash, near Wombwell, South Yorkshire. The new meadow adds 12 acres to an original 36 acres purchased by the Garganey Trust set up to save the site in 2000. Broomhill Flash was a well-loved birdwatching spot for Michael and it is good to see it named after a man who gave so much not only to Yorkshire and Tayside, but also through his writings and broadcasts to a much wider population.

Bede Pounder

WINTER MEETINGS

TEMPLETON WOODS

New Year Barbecue – 2nd January

We haven't had a white barbecue for a few years now, but this time Templeton Woods greeted us with a couple of inches of snow. The wind, however, had dropped and the air wasn't too cold. Doug and Jean were there early to get the cooker organised and the kindling and coals going. We were all pleased to see Duncan and Roma, both because we had not seen them for some time, and also for Roma's supply of browned onions – delicious! Neil McLaren and his Australian friend, Margaret, were intrigued by the thought of a snowy instead of a sunny barbecue. Before we had time to develop a thirst, Jenny and Tracey turned up with the famed Allan mulled wine and, after a quick heat, the very welcome brew helped warm our cockles!

Jim dished out the quiz sheets and the gathered members set off to explore the area. Were there any fungi close to the Centre and had Gordon seen them? Where is the wood henge and its carvings? What out-of-place object is in a tree beside the Centre? What plants are growing in the pond? How many birds has Dorothy recorded? Had Margaret M managed to solve the anagrams? These and many more questions were answered with enthusiasm. Edna couldn't join in but, nonetheless, enjoyed the walk.

After an hour's brisk walking and talking, to encourage our appetites, we turned back to the Centre, to be welcomed by the delicious smell of barbecuing sausages and kebabs, burgers and chops. Our feast was recorded by a photographer from the Courier and appeared prominently the next day. (Were they short of news, or just amazed by a barbecue in the snow? Ed.) After the hot food, cakes, biscuits, chocolates, black bun and more mulled wine, came the reckoning – the answers to the quiz. The winners were Ina and Alastair Fraser. Ken and Moira didn't score quite as much! It had been an excellent way to begin the New Year.

Jim Cook

PLANT AND ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

Dr Bill Macfarlane Smith – 13th January

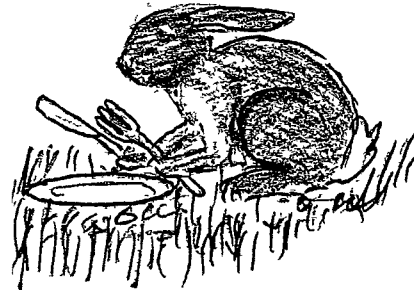
We had a fascinating lecture from our own member Dr Bill Macfarlane Smith about his research work at various institutions including the Scottish Crop Research Institute (SCRI), from which he has recently retired. We were shown a slide of the SCRI building which Bill described as a "hidden gem". His work has included studies of interaction between

the plant and animal world, chemicals in plant life in different situations, and gene manipulation in plant breeding

Bill worked on **strawberries** earlier in his career, trying to make the fruit even more appealing to the consumer by encouraging the red pigment-producing chemical to increase redness throughout the berry. He described his work with **wheat** and its different aspects and uses, studying gluten intolerance and wheat starches. By manipulating the starches the alcohol potential for brewing could be enhanced. Genetically modifying wheat maximised starch production which encouraged a greater alcohol production.

Bill went on to outline the development of man from hunter to present day crop grower and herder, with greater demands on the land as a consequence. Sheep grazing alone has a great impact on agriculture and civilisation. The growing numbers of sheep and cattle needing to be fed led to the cultivation of forage **brassicas** for animal feed. There were benefits for the animals, including good fibre from **forage rape**, carbohydrates and fibre from **swedes** and availability all year round but there are also problems. The high percentage of water in swedes meant sheep were consuming too much fluid, which means that dry matter content was clearly a problem, and Bill's work in this area showed improvements. However, these problems of brassicas paled into insignificance compared to the effects which the chemicals SMCO (s-methyl cysteine sulphoxide) and glucosinolates had on the animals. Bill's words were "They throw up oddities and problems for them," including conditions like goitre and anaemia.

Bill continued his lecture by talking about **oil seed rape** (OSR) and its impact on humans and animals. He showed a slide depicting a growth trial which had been grazed selectively by **rabbits**. Some cultivars were obviously more palatable than others and tests showed different levels of various chemicals in the different cultivars. Another example of this interaction came about between the OSR and the **rootfly**. Inoculating the roots, as the insect does when it lays eggs, affects the glucosinolate levels.



We heard about OSR as a lowland crop growing along a coastal strip from Newcastle upwards and now covering 80,000 acres. It clearly has an impact on animal and human health, he said. **Roe deer** are obsessed with its narcotic effect, while there is concern for **red deer** too. It was thought that deer and **hares** were being killed by it as they are unseen in the field during harvest time, and the narcotic effect makes them easy prey to other animals. To assess the effect OSR had on roe deer, feeding regimes were planned and observed. Bill and colleagues had to 'acquire' some roe deer first, mostly rescued orphans. Their initial challenge presented itself when trying to nurture and raise the younger orphaned animals. Radio collars were fitted to the deer to track feeding patterns. They were weighed regularly, had blood samples taken and liver and kidney damage was assessed. As regards the SMCO levels the overall picture showed no serious harm in Britain, where OSR makes up only a part of the deer's diet. In Germany, where roe deer may feed exclusively on OSR, the narcotic effect could harm the deer. OSR was not affecting hares. Their problem was found to be a viral infection.

Pollen tests of OSR were done on people showing that as few as 2-3% were affected, and this was corroborated by other countries' test results. However, the toxicity in a fungus in the plant could be responsible for streaming eyes and other allergic symptoms in humans. Sophisticated computer tests on the chemicals and pollen have been carried out at SCRI and have revealed that there is a whole list of volatile chemical "nasties" given off by OSR. Although these are in low concentrations, they are harmful and can produce complex substances in the blood.

Bill progressed onto the controversial subject of gene manipulation. There are two problems - will it work and do we want it? Technology allows us to do it! Our genes are 97% and 60% similar to the **orang-utan** and the **potato** respectively. There is gene movement in nature, he continued, and the Victorians encouraged it by importing different plants and by traditional plant breeding techniques.

The driving force behind gene manipulation is to improve upon the natural components in plants. Traditional breeding methods are a case of crossing the best with the best and hoping for the best! Research work used to be very expensive and inefficient, but now modern technology makes it faster and easier, with improved results. Plant gene

manipulation could be beneficial to humans, for example by boosting the nutritional benefits of the apple, and the vitamins in **rice**. Berries could be improved upon for health benefits by boosting the red pigments which act as antioxidants and attack harmful free radicals in humans. Wild **raspberries** in Russia have three times the benefits for human health. **Cranberries** and **blueberries** have enhanced health-giving benefits, and both should be grown more in this country. Bill concluded this very interesting and informative talk by saying he hoped the government would fund further research work in this area.

Joy Cammack

MEMBERS' NIGHT

27th January

On a cold night with some snow on the ground and more forecast it was a pleasant surprise to find that we had over 30 hardy souls prepared to turn out. Perhaps it shouldn't have been a surprise – Nats are a hardy bunch, as barbecues in the snow have shown!

As has become usual, Brian Allan organised and introduced the proceedings. Eleven members had brought prints and slides on a wide range of subjects, and with a limit of 15 slides per person we got through everything without having to rush. The following people brought slides:

Marjory Tennant 'Isles of Scilly' A variety of island views with historical sites including a Norman harbour and Bronze age chambered cairn. Also the Botanic Gardens on Treco, various plants including *Escallonia* being used as windbreaks and **corn marigolds** in a bulb field. The lighthouse on Bishop Rock.

Gordon Maxwell 'Places Nats have been' Various landscapes in the local area familiar to Nats including Glen Clova and Ben Vrackie. Shots of Schiehallion from the Sidlaws and the Sidlaws from Tayport looking very odd due to the use of a telephoto lens. A very appropriate picture of **icicles** to close on this cold night.

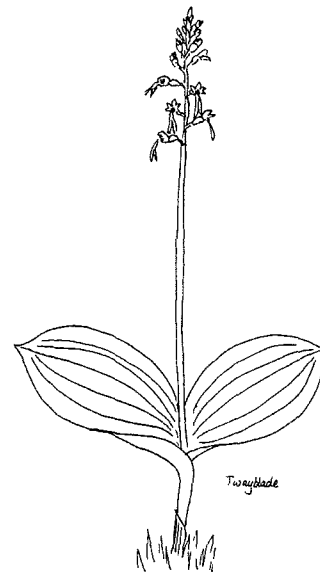
Dorothy Fyffe 'Cameroon and Farne Islands' Photos of two very contrasting places with temperatures in Cameroon in April reaching 46°C. A variety of birds including **black kite**, **sand grouse** and **black crowned cranes** visiting water holes and an **Abyssinian roller** and several **maribou storks**. Nearer to home, close-ups of **shag**, **eider**, **Arctic terns** and **puffin** on the Farnes.

Bob McCurley 'Barry Buddon' Various plants found on the range and photographed by Ken Drysdale including **greater twayblade**, **lesser butterfly orchid** and **adder's tongue fern**. Also a male **sparrowhawk** standing in a puddle beside the road, photographed by Eric McCabe, a young **tawny owl**, a female **small blue butterfly** (not blue at all but brown) and an explanation of the decoy **terns** placed on the range to encourage real **terns** to return to breed after an absence of twenty years.

Jim Cook 'Ancient Nats' A review of our prehistoric and more recent ancestors from the **dinosaur** *Tyrannosaurus rex* (!) via such early **hominids** as *Australopithecus* and **Neanderthal man** to **Society members**. All illustrated with slides of museum specimens of **skeletons** or **reconstructions**.

Brian Allan 'Spring in Northern Iberia' Pictures from a trip to northern Portugal and north-west Spain. From Portugal, photos of *Crocus carpetanus*, *Erythronium dens-canis*, *Narcissus cyclamineus* and *N. asturiensis*. Over the snowy hills to Spain and *Corydalis solida*, *N. triandrus*, *Scilla unifolia* and the mirror orchid *Ophrys speculum*.

Brian Ballinger 'The Third Wood' Bought in July, Tarroul Wood near Wick is a conifer plantation near the Flow Country. There is a wide tree-free area around the Burn of Winlass with typical marshy plants. There are a few old broadleaved trees and a short section of the Wick River along with an old alkaline meadow with **bog myrtle**. Nothing rare found yet but **dragonflies**, **butterflies** and common **mammals** and **birds** have been seen.



Daphne MacFarlane Smith 'New Zealand' A brief selection of slides from her trip to New Zealand from Christchurch and Banks Peninsula to Mount Cook and the volcanoes on North Island Also **monarch butterflies** (introduced), **southern beech** (*Nothofagus* sp) and a **weta**

Alban Houghton 'Through 2003' From **thrift** in April through Nats on the Farnes and the recce for the Crinan weekend to **water lobelia** in Scotland and a related **giant lobelia** with a **sunbird**, its pollinator, on Kilimanjaro

Prints, mainly of local wildlife, were also brought by Davy Stein and Pat Gaff while Daphne had a large number of prints of New Zealand Those who had dared to venture out on this wintry night were rewarded with a show of the high quality photography of our members A very enjoyable evening

Mary Reid

NATURAL WONDERS

Rita and Millar Clark – 10th February

This evening's lecture was an audio-visual slide presentation in six parts, each lasting for about ten minutes Stunning photography and lively commentary gave character to each subject, with background music used to good effect The Clarks admitted to having eleven and a half thousand slides at home and they only keep one third of those that they take on their travels! Each ten minute presentation takes about a week to prepare

We were shown:

"Safari India" Beautiful birds in a natural reserve and magnificent tigers The man-made splendour of the Taj Mahal

"Hydrospheres" Water in all its forms, including waterfalls, geysers, bubbles and icicles

"Zoom and Bloom" Flowers with attendant bees, hoverflies or butterflies

"Heat, Dust and Dreams" Namibian animals, birds and awesome sand dunes

"National Parks of Western North America" Mountains, lakes, flowers, birds and cliff dwellings

"Shot in the Dark" Clever and amusing shots of after dark scenes, neon lights and fireworks

Marjory Tennant gave the vote of thanks for this full and varied programme.

Bob McCurley

SOCIAL EVENING

20th February

Thirty five members turned up at the Monifieth Hotel to enjoy a social evening organised by a commendably large number of members, including, of course, our hard working and able Secretary who always has so much to do with the preliminary work

On arrival, most took an opportunity to examine a rather hefty section of **tree trunk**, complete with a **woodpecker's nest hole**, brought by Peter Middleton, and a photo print quiz prepared by Pat Gaff An interesting Headline Guessing quiz and more formal quizzes making use of slides and display boards provided by Daphne Macfarlane Smith, Wynn Tennant and our President Gordon Maxwell were very entertaining, but often in tantalising ways There were tongue-twisters to do with those 'terrible lizards', the **dinosaurs**, we were asked to list the seven Natural Wonders of the world, we were taught that China produces more meat, fruit and vegetables than any other country, and that Canadians enjoy the highest quality of life in the western world (Try that one on a Canadian living in a log cabin in the middle of the prairie in mid winter!)

Our President's slide selection lived up to its usual high standard and included subjects as diverse as meteorology, birds, woodland scenes, a huge heap of agricultural fertilizer in which **sand martins** had set up home, and a public toilet which extended a welcome to long-staying guests! The highlight of the evening must surely have been the "Call My Bluff" session carried out with such skill and professionalism by the two Tennants, Marjory

and Wynn (who wrote the questions) and Jim Cook. This particular event produced the only group of people probably in the whole of the country who could recite the meanings of words such as **salep**, **thrasonical** and **totipotency**, to name just three! What a pity they have probably forgotten them all by now!

The evening ended with a good buffet meal of pizza, chicken drumsticks, sausage rolls and assorted sandwiches, and a raffle draw for which thanks are due to all who provided the prizes. Well done to everyone concerned with the organisation of this most successful evening.

Bede Pounder

VOLCANOES

Dr Arthur Warden – 24th February

Dr Warden's enthusiasm for his subject was obvious from the start of his talk and he stimulated our interest by handing round a 'volcanic bomb' of basaltic rock which he obtained 'fresh from the oven' while working in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) in 1962.

He explained that the outer layers of the earth's crust don't form a rigid shell but make up a mosaic of plates which move – parting, colliding and sliding past one another. Also volcanoes are not scattered randomly but are concentrated at 'spreading centres' (where plates are moving apart) such as along the 'MOR' (mid-ocean ridge of the Atlantic) and 'subduction zones' (where a plate is pushed under another into the mantle and melts), for instance at the New Hebrides trench. Here the Australian plate is being pushed under the Pacific one and is part of the 'Pacific Ring of Fire'.

He also mentioned various phenomena associated with volcanic activity including earthquakes, pyrotechnic fountains (one 600ft high with a temperature of 1080°C at its centre), incandescent ash clouds, coalescent lava flows, pillow lavas (formed under water) and the explosive combination of molten lava and water which creates superheated steam.

Dr Warden's personal anecdotes brought to life the excitement and possible dangers of being a volcanologist – he has known people killed near volcanoes during eruptions and one time he was crossing a lake in a caldera (volcanic depression) when the raft disintegrated so he and his companions had to swim the rest of the way back!

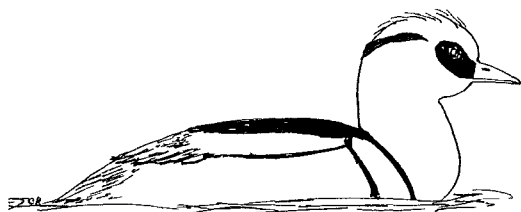
However, he pointed out that, though causing death and devastation at times, volcanic activity is beneficial in creating new land (one third of Iceland has been formed in the last 10,000 years), providing thermal energy and being a source of valuable minerals such as gold, copper and nickel. Also, as several of us can confirm, geothermal areas are a source of interest to tourists – for instance in Lanzarote (lava landscape and tunnels) and in New Zealand (geysers and hot pools – smelly but nice!)

A vote of thanks was given on behalf of the forty members present, highlighting the wide variety of slides and infectious enthusiasm of Dr Warden.

Daphne Macfarlane Smith

FORFAR LOCH

6th March



Over 30 members and guests turned up at the ranger centre at Forfar Loch for the society's end-of-winter short walk and lunch. The weather was pleasant for the time of year and as soon as the parking was sorted out the group set out on the anti-clockwise tour of the loch (about 3 miles).

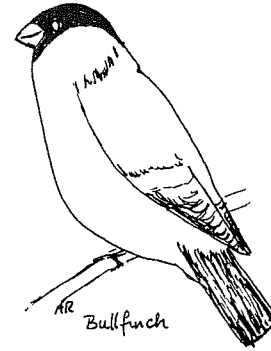
After avoiding the 'charge of the light brigade' in the shape of the resident **ducks** and **geese**, a good variety of birds were noted on the loch such as **coot**, **moorhen**, **pochard**, **tufties**,

wigeon, **mallard** and **goldeneye** plus a number of **geese** including **pink-foot**, **greylag** and some others of dubious ancestry. The star bird of the day however was the sighting of a male **smew** resplendent in its black and white livery. This bird is very rare in Angus and members were privileged to view it in excellent light with binoculars and telescopes. This particular bird

has been 'on show' for a number of weeks at Forfar Loch. Smaller birds were also in evidence by the pathsides and included **bullfinch**, **yellowhammer**, **chaffinch**, **goldfinch**, **blue**, **great**, **coal** and **long-tailed tits** and at least one **goldcrest**. These are only a small selection of the birds which can be seen around the loch which is remarkably good for wildlife despite being walked around by many locals and their dogs every day.

The walk was easily accomplished at a leisurely pace and the company made their way to the Royal Hotel in Forfar where, although the meal was a bit slow arriving on the table, it was well received. No one seemed in much of a hurry anyway, most of us having a good post-walk blether.

Gordon Maxwell



SUMMER OUTINGS

CALENDAR HOUSE, FALKIRK

25th April

Over 30 members and friends left Albert Square for this large Falkirk council-managed estate just outside the town. On arrival at the house, via the Kincardine Bridge, Jim Cook's arm was gently twisted to persuade him to talk on the Antonine Wall and the Roman occupation (part of the wall runs through the grounds). Jim gave a good account of the various defence methods but soon, towards the end of his excellent talk, some members were eyeing the attractive café in the grounds which had just opened its doors (despite coffee and buns at Kinross on the way).

Since Callendar House does not open on Sunday until 2pm, most people elected to tour the grounds first and leave the house for later. They were not disappointed. The sun was now beating down on what was surely the best day of the year so far and a number of butterflies were seen – especially **peacocks** and **green-veined whites**. Birds were also much in evidence, as one would expect on a sunny spring day. More than 20 species were seen including **magpies**, a common bird in the area, which is seldom seen near Dundee. A breakaway group sought out the Forbes family mausoleum and racked their brains to translate the Greek inscription above the door. It reads "All things we mortals call our own are mortal too and quickly flown; But could they all for ever stay, We soon from them must pass away" (Translated by Gordon Maxwell via Callendar House).

The initial group had now split into various groups. One had gone outside the grounds to walk along part of the Union Canal, others had walked through the extensive woods and had seen **grey squirrel** and **roe deer** and many had returned to the now open Callendar House to view the various exhibits in separate rooms and on a variety of themes. The park in front of the house was now busy with locals and their kids so it seemed to be a good time to adjourn to the café to cool off with ice cream and a snack. Perhaps it was not the best place we have been with regard to wildlife but nevertheless it was interesting for a variety of other reasons and there appeared to be a number of other potential sites in the vicinity worthy of a visit in the future.

Gordon Maxwell

SCOTSTON FARM

11th May

A group of 21 members visited Scotston farm on a mild but slightly misty evening. We received a very warm welcome from Iain Baird who farms Scotston with his sons and is himself interested in natural history. He described his mixed arable and livestock farm, which is mainly organic and extends over about 600 acres in the Sidlaws near Auchterhouse. The

mainly 19th century farm building and remains of a mill were of interest and we were told a little about the history of the site

We began by walking round the mill pond that was home for a mixture of wild and domesticated **ducks**, and then westwards along the track before heading up the hill along a burn. A pond created by a dam a few years ago looked interesting, and Barbara Hogarth, Jim Cook, Alban and Liz Houghton and others spent some time noting the plants. There were nice displays of **marsh marigold** (*Caltha palustris*), **golden saxifrage** (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) and **horsetail** (*Equisetum*) species and we agreed that a visit later in the year would be very worthwhile.

The group then followed a steep path through a wooded den, with waterfalls and a mixture of coniferous and broadleaved trees. A high stile led out to a more open area near the burn. A few rather cold looking **green-veined white butterflies** were found, but the mist limited the scope of bird watching, as well as obscuring the fine views. We found **primroses** (*Primula vulgaris*), **spring sedge** (*Carex caryophyllaea*), **ivy-leaved crowfoot** (*Ranunculus hederaceus*) and many other plants in or by the stream. There was a patch of **rock-rose** (*Helianthemum nummularium*) which had yet to flower, and nearby was a good wet area that had once been a sheep dip.

Coming round over the higher pastures several species of fungi were seen, including **St. George's mushroom** (*Calocybe gambosa*), which were much enjoyed later! Down by the farm buildings once more, some of the party caught a glimpse of **pipistrelle bats** setting forth on their night's activities.

At the end of the evening Iain invited us into his barn for tea and coffee as well as some really excellent cake. He kindly handed out his organic free-range eggs which are sold in Dundee and elsewhere. We thanked our host for a most interesting and enjoyable evening.

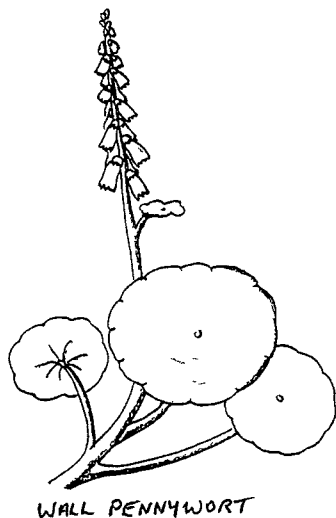
Brian Ballinger

CRINAN WEEKEND

21st – 23rd May

Unlike last year's weekend, the venue was easy to find, fortunately, since there are few suitable hotels in the area. In the event the Grey Gull Inn proved itself fully up to expectations. We arrived later than planned on the Friday evening, due to having to take a half hour stop at Inverary so that Jim, the bus driver, would not have exceeded his driving time allocation. However, it was a superb evening and the drive down Loch Fyne provided an excellent introduction to the scenery and landscape of the west coast. The hotel, we found, backed right onto the Crinan Canal.

Our main visit on Saturday was to the area around Tayvallich, at the head of Loch Sween. Most of the party made its way down through the western woodlands to the wonderful nature reserve of Taynish. The sun was out and the distinctly warm air carried the scents and smells of spring, the new leaves, open flowers and warm earth. We found **bluebells** and **wood anemones**, numerous **ferns**, **hemp agrimony** and, most notably, **wall pennywort** (*Umbilicus rupestris*). The air was alive with the calls of **chaffinches** and **chiffchaffs**, **willow warblers** and the occasional **whitethroat** and we were fortunate to find a few early **blue-tailed damselflies** (*Ishnura elegans*) – all seen before we'd even reached the reserve.



Once through the entrance the group made its way past the small loch, with **reeds**, **water lilies**, a carpet of **shore weed** (*Littorella uniflora*) and hordes of **tadpoles**, and down the path to the shore. With the sound of a **cuckoo** carrying over the water from the other side of Loch Sween, we nibbled on an early lunch. A snack was all that most could manage, after the enormous breakfast. The group spent a short time along the shore and then split up to explore the forest. **Redstarts** called amongst the trees and we saw the occasional flash of a reddish tail. We could also hear **wood warblers** and **chiffchaffs** and numbers of other species. The trees were festooned with a rich cover of luxuriant

lichens and **mosses**, as expected in a west coast woodland, and the forest floor was decorated by a varied ground cover of **ferns** and herbs. In places trees were decorated by long strands of silk from descending **caterpillars**, and we saw a few **speckled wood butterflies**.

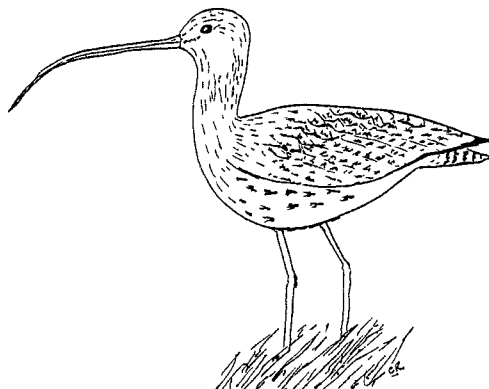
The rest of the coach load walked over the short road from Tayvallich to admire Carsaig Bay and its views to Jura. Only a few heard a calling **grasshopper warbler**, but there was a considerable variety of other wildlife to add interest.

After mid-afternoon ice creams in Tayvallich (to cool off!), the party left for the early Scots stronghold of Dunadd. We managed to park the bus in the small car park below the rocky outcrop and then the group made its way up the rough path to the top. We could see the remains of earthen ramparts and broken stone walls on the way up and then found the carved footprint and basin along with the outline of the boar and ogham script on the flat rock near the top. A few of us couldn't resist placing our feet into the footprint and dreaming of the crowning ceremonies of the ancient Scottish kings! The rest of the party spent time in the sun admiring the view over the wide open landscape.

In the evening many of us jumped back onto the coach for a short ride round to Kilmory Gardens. They were once one of the best early Victorian gardens, but were still a splendid show, with a riot of huge wonderful **rhododendrons** and hordes of exotic species (and of ravenous **midgies**!)

On Sunday morning we began by exploring the superb award-winning museum of ancient life at Kilmartin and then took the coach down to the **Neolithic linear cemetery** on the valley floor. It forms one of the best-preserved sites in Scotland to imagine the peoples and landscape of 4,000 to 5,000 years ago. We spent time examining the **burial mound** and **chambered cairn** at Nether Largie South and then moved on to admire the ancient site of Temple Wood, in amongst a carpet of **bluebells**.

Our final site of the weekend was 'The Great Moss', the Moine Mhor (pronounced 'Monney Vhor'), not far from Kilmartin. The party began to explore the tileworks nature trail but soon split up and settled down for lunch at various spots in the woodland and looking out over the boggy ground. A number of us made our way out to the end of the board walk over the **raised bog** and sat down for food to watch for wildlife. We could see carpets of **bog mosses** (*Sphagnum* species), **cotton grasses**, **rushes** and clumps of **bog myrtle** (*Myrica gale*) and were soon rewarded with excellent views of several large **damselflies**, one dipping down to lay eggs, and mating **damselflies**. **Meadow pipits** flitted about in the sun and a few **curlews** called while a distant **buzzard** circled over the open moor. Soon, though, it was time to go, the end of a weekend of western woodlands, historic sites, sparkling waters, a peaceful canal and, most important of all, blue skies and a strong sun.



Jim Cook

ARDRISHAIG WEEKEND A SECOND OPINION

"Somebody push!" Not a remark often heard on a Nats outing. But this was something special. Our intrepid, not so young Nat, determined to reach the top of Dunadd called on all resources available, and with a grin and a giggle, and the aforementioned push, arrived at the top of this mountainous molehill of an Iron Age fort.

The view of the surrounding Moine Mhor and snaking convolutions of the River Add were quite spectacular and well worth the effort. The outcrop, an ancient fortress and monument, said to witness the birth of the Scottish Nation, surrounded by the waters of the River Add had been a port of some importance. It was a centre for trade and commerce. Metals and precious stones were brought from far and near and fashioned into metal artefacts.

and jewellery Our forebears were clever and cultured and their navigational skills were well advanced

With climate change the great moss of Moine Mhor was formed and the river retreated to a narrow stream It is now a wonderful nature reserve where I spent some time waiting for the dragonflies But, between peering around to catch sight of this bird and that, I missed them all

On our way to Carsaig Bay we met one of the locals who suggested we visit the graveyard to the left of the bay I noticed particularly the gravestone of Alfred Goering He had been a German sailor drowned when his ship went down in the Dorus Mor The story goes that he was discovered by some locals who were astonished and not a little afraid seeing this figure apparently standing upright and floating towards them The sailor had tied his oilskins at the wrists with string which helped keep the air inside his clothing His sea boots had filled with water and this had weighted him and kept him upright He was then buried in Carsaig graveyard The stone was put up by his brother who came from Germany and was able to identify him by the buttons on his jacket which gave the name of his ship, the June of Pilau The date was 1864

I thoroughly enjoyed this beautiful weekend The weather was perfect, the scenery glorious, and the outings fascinating and interesting Thank you all who were involved It was very special

Roma Miller

LOCHORE MEADOWS

6th June

Thirty six members visited Lochore Meadows Country Park in Fife As it was a Sunday the traffic was light and we got there earlier than expected, arriving 20 minutes before the opening time of the café The staff kindly opened early for us, earning extra marks for Lochore

We were met by Dallas Sievwright, the Ranger for the park and he spent the day with us, providing an excellent tour of the area Lochore is a remarkable example of reclamation, as most of the park was covered with coal mines and associated waste until the 1960s In the more distant past there had been a loch on the site which had been drained for agricultural purposes

Members split into two groups, one led by Dallas Sievwright doing the longer walk over Harran Hill (walk A), and the other led by Margaret McLaren following the shorter route around the Loch (walk B).

Walk A We first passed the preserved pit head, now a listed building, and the nearby colliery steam locomotive Just behind was a vigorous patch of **northern marsh orchid** (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*), a plant that has found many homes in Lochore, and nearby Gordon



Maxwell found a **burnet moth caterpillar** We then climbed up through an area of old grassland, with evidence of rig and furrow cultivation from long ago and now covered in **pignut** (*Conopodium majus*) with scattered old trees

A track took us past the "Kissing trees of Lochore" (a pair of old **sweet chestnuts**) and into Harran Hill Wood, which is now regarded as ancient woodland There was probably a wood on this site by 1300-1400 and perhaps long before The wood is being improved, mainly by volunteers, undoing some of the previous planting of non native trees Coppicing is being developed and **hazel** populations are increasing The **bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were past their best and had been a glorious sight two weeks before, as this is one of the best bluebell woods in Fife The variety of ferns included **lemon-scented fern** (*Oreopteris limbosperma*) and Pat Gaff found many **galls** on some of the plants The shale on the path contained ancient plant fossils although the rocks probably came from elsewhere

The meadows at the bottom of the wood are used for hay

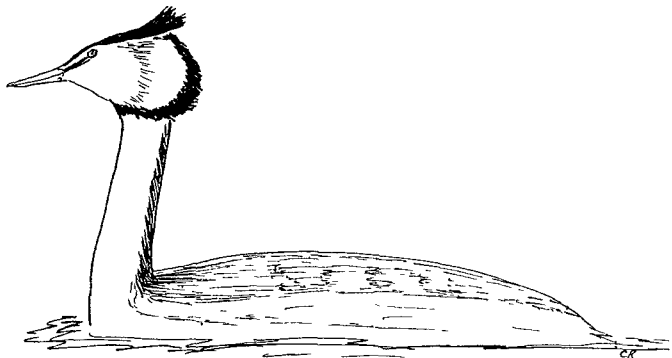
and were in glorious bloom with **northern marsh orchid**, **yellow rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*) etc. Nearby Jim Cook confirmed the identity of a vigorous patch of **hairy sedge** (*Carex hirta*) and there was a large area covered with delicate **wood horsetail** (*Equisetum sylvaticum*). The air echoed with the sounds of **willow warblers**, **chiffchaffs** and **blackcaps** and a few birds kindly posed on lines for viewing. **Orange tip** and **small copper** butterflies were seen in various places.

On the south side of the loch **mute swans** stood guard on the bank and **blue-tailed** and **common blue damselflies** presented photographic opportunities. The Clune area is a **basalt** outcrop with acid grassland, lowland heath, an interesting bog and an old plantation which we did not visit on this occasion. On one bank there was a large patch of **rockrose** (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and elsewhere **pansies** were in evidence (probably *Viola lutea*).

A rumour had spread that the café closed at 4pm, but after a frantic rush we discovered an ice cream van that kept longer hours. An enjoyable outing ended with a drive past the Lomond Hills bathed in sunshine.

Walk B Since a full round of this site, taking in both the woodland and the lochside, demands a walk of well over 6 miles, some of them rather steep, a shorter walk of between 3 and 4 miles around the loch shore was arranged for the less fleet of foot and led by Margaret McLaren.

This group set off along a path through mown grass which soon became a first-class meadow carpeted by **yellow rattle** and **meadow buttercup**, with patches of flowering **silverweed** competing for the yellow section of the show. Everywhere were patches of **mouse-ear**, **germander speedwell**, **cow parsley**, **field forget-me-not**, **ground elder**, **bush** and **common vetch** and one or two specimens of **yellow vetchling**. The path soon meandered past damp and wet ground and this, aided and abetted by the colliery waste which lies at no small depth below the surface hereabouts, encouraged the growth of **northern marsh orchids** which soon showed up literally by the hundred. A few paler varieties of these were found and showed, by the discovery of one or two **common spotted orchids**, that they were probably hybrids. There was plenty of **meadowsweet** along the edges of the loch and in wetter patches of the meadow, some **valerian** not yet in flower and at least one good example of **figwort**. It was obvious that we had chosen just the right time of year for this visit for there was plenty of evidence that everything would soon be choked by **rosebay willowherb**. We were continually aware of **common blue damselflies** resting on warm rocks or darting like ghosts past the corners of our eyes. One or two of these insects were of the **blue-tailed** variety.



Near the western end of the loch we took a short uphill diversion to sample the delights of the wood. These were of course much less spectacular than those offered by the meadow but we did see plenty of **herbs bennet** and **robert**, **red campion**, **foxgloves**, **woundwort**, **speedwells**, **creeping buttercup** and **greater stitchwort**.

After a short diversion to the bird hide from which we saw a few **mallards** and **tufted ducks** along the edges of the **common reed** and **reedmace** stands, we left the wood and began to head eastwards along the southern edge of the loch towards a picnic stop. Here, all was balmy and pleasant and in no time we were so replete that no-one could resist the temptation to turn the site from a picnic site to a 'picnap' site. Only with great effort could we raise heavy eyelids to watch the **mute swans** and their cygnets, the **coots** and a **great crested grebe** as they floated idly on the loch.

From here on the path passed through wooded sections and wide expanses of well grazed grass. There were also a few tricky rocky sections, and in one place there was a sudden and almost dramatic change in the ground flora which must have reflected an equivalent change in the geology underfoot. Here the dominant flora was **tormentil** and

heath bedstraw, with quite a lot of **pignut**, but we also found **water mint** and a few more **orchids** near the water's edge. At length, with the prospects of tea and ice cream getting even nearer, we accepted the fact that we had not ventured far enough up the hill to find the **rock rose** we had been told about, but a sighting of a **small copper butterfly** flitting among **common cat's-ear** and **mouse-eared hawkweed** partially made up for that.

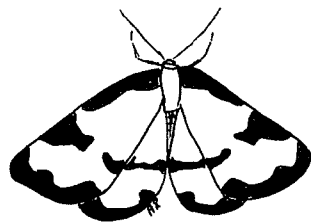
The walk ended with a short stroll through a wood in which there were carpets of **comfrey**. It had been an excellent and rewarding outing, well thought out, well researched and most ably led.

Brian Ballinger and Bede Pounder

QUARRY BARBECUE

15th June

Over thirty members and friends assembled at the quarry on a perfect June evening for our summer barbecue. It had been very dry in the previous few weeks, so we had buckets of water strategically placed near to the barbecue itself which, thankfully, were not needed. While the charcoal was getting up to full cooking temperature Jim gave a 'guided tour' for those not already familiar with the layout of the quarry. The trees are now getting to the stage



Clouded-border Moth

where our goal of creating woodland is bearing fruit. Perhaps there will soon be enough shade to restrict the growth of the all-pervasive **willowherb**.

There were enough children present (for once) that some pond dipping was tried in ponds 3 and 4. **Mayfly larvae** were found in both ponds and **damselfly larvae** in pond 3. The appearance of several species of damselflies in the quarry in the last few years is one of our major success stories. A wander with an insect net later on in the evening produced several dusk-flying **moths** including **clouded border**, **silver ground carpet**, **green carpet** and **gold swift**. We also disturbed a roosting **small heath butterfly** from the long grass.

The variety of food brought to be barbecued seems to get more imaginative every year but everyone seemed to be hungry and thirsty and a good sociable time was enjoyed by all present. On returning towards the cottage a **grasshopper warbler** was heard from the field and four **bats** put in an appearance over the steading.

Anne Reid

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

In the late evening, just as we were leaving the barbecue at Carsegowniemuir Quarry, I was fortunate enough to catch a whisper of a faint rapid ticking. It couldn't be a **grasshopper warbler**, could it? I listened carefully in the stillness and, yes, there it was in the distance. A rapid clicking call, a bit like a free-wheeling bicycle, came from the other side of the large grassy field to the south, sheltering at the edge of Wilstead's Wood. Wonderful! It was definitely a grasshopper warbler, the first I'd heard in central Angus. More Nats came past and stopped to listen. We tried to find the culprit through binoculars but it was too far away and the light was fading fast.

A fortnight later, a few of us were back doing some maintenance work at the quarry. In the afternoon I was up a large elder tree, cutting back some of the branches to give a small oak underneath a better chance of growing up straight, when I heard the bird calling again in the distance. There was the same reeling song. Terrific, at least one **grasshopper warbler** was hanging around and perhaps could even be breeding. Again, it was somewhere along the edge of Wilstead's Wood but we couldn't locate it precisely. We'll have to keep our ears and eyes wide open this coming year!

Jim Cook

NIGG BAY AND SCOTSTOWN MOOR, ABERDEEN

19th June

For those who know Aberdeen only for its shopping, theatre, parks and University this visit would be a great surprise. It was one of those 'chilly for June' days of sunshine and squally showers so a hot drink at Duthie Park made a good start before a drive through the harbour area and out to Torry Point Battery. This was the main coastal defence for Aberdeen from 1862 to 1953 and from the high walls there was a superb view, not only of the coast but of the distant hills. In the shelter of the walls grow **purple orchids** (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*).

The main party, led by Jim Cook, walked the rocky shoreline round the point by the lighthouse while some of us did some quiet birdwatching (**arctic skua**) before all meeting up on the shingle beach of Nigg Bay. Here we were fortunate to find **oyster plant** (*Mertensia maritima*), the greyish, fleshy leaves showing off the pink/blue flowers.

We had to race back to the bus for lunch when we were overtaken by one of the heavy showers. Naturalists' luck held and by the time we reached our afternoon venue the sun was shining once more.

Scotstown Moor (or Perwinnes Moss) lies north of Aberdeen and was once an extensive area of common **heathland**. We were met by the Ranger, Rob Rowe, who explained the history and ecology of the area as he led us through the different habitats. The Moor has been greatly reduced by road building, housing and agriculture. However, what remains is now an SSSI and is managed as a nature reserve. Footpaths criss-cross this mosaic of habitats – **bog, dry heath, grassland, plantation and ponds** – all of which support a wide range of plants, birds, insects and mammals.

We enjoyed the walks long or short, high or low and it only rained once! Many of us came away with a new appreciation of Aberdeen.

Marjory Tennant

SPITTAL OF GLENSHEE

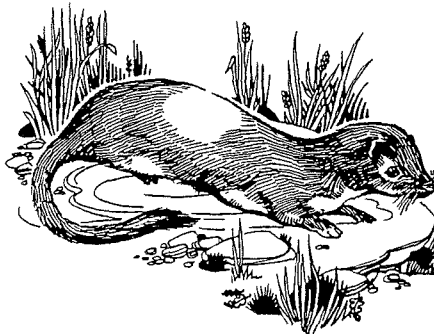
30th June

Twenty six people ventured out for our mid-week walk along lovely Glen Taitneach in the Spittal of Glenshee. Unfortunately the weather was not good, but we were well prepared with waterproof clothing. To pass time, in the hope of drier conditions, we all filed into the hotel on arrival where we had coffee and cake. Alas after a very brief dry spell the rain came on again, but undeterred we donned our waterproofs and got on our way.

Stands of **melancholy thistle** (*Cirsium helenioides*) greeted us as we arrived at the gateway to the glen, but our first treat was a plant of **spignel** (*Meum athamanticum*), as well as **ragged robin** (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and masses of **valerian** (*Valeriana officinalis*) on the shingle by the burn. We saw a **common sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*), **grey wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*), a **chimney sweeper moth** (*Odezia atrata*), a **mountain ringlet** (*Erebia epiphron*) and a **painted lady** (*Vanessa cardui*) at various stages along the track. Visibility was down to just over the 2000ft level, allowing reasonable views of the surrounding scenery with mighty Ben Gulabin on our right. Above its lower ridges we saw two **peregrine falcons** (*Falco peregrinus*) and further along we were delighted to see a herd of **red deer** (*Cervus elaphus*) on the mountain ridge.

We all got wetter by the minute but stoically settled down for our lunch in the rain, surrounded by lovely treats like **marsh lousewort** (*Pedicularis palustris*), **wood cranesbill** (*Geranium sylvaticum*), as well as **carnation sedge** (*Carex panicea*), **pill sedge** (*Carex pilulifera*), **quaking grass** (*Briza media*) and **wavy grass** (*Deschampsia flexuosa*).

The weather improved for our return journey, along the south side of the burn, where we saw more **spignel** plants and large colourful patches of **mountain pansies** (*Viola lutea*). We saw a **stoat** (*Mustela erminea*) run along the drystone dyke and observed a **spotted flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*) on the telegraph wire above. We enjoyed our walk in



this lovely area, with its impressive scenery, atmosphere and wildlife. Unfortunately the wet conditions dampened our spirits a little and discouraged us from stopping for any length of time to peer at the lovely plants, but we did have an enjoyable day and appreciated this area with its fine mountain views and clean air.

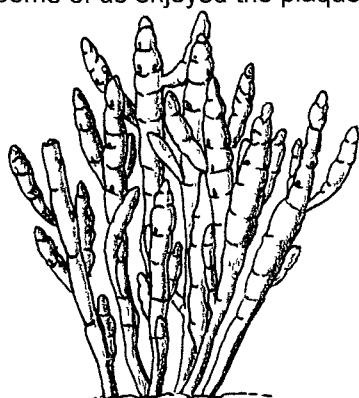
Joy Cammack

DUNBAR AND BELLHAVEN BAY

10th July

Our trip to Dunbar proved to be one of the more popular of our summer excursions and members of the Dundee CHA were very happy to be able to join us. After an early start we had our usual coffee and comfort stop at Kathleen's in Keltie.

Despite threats of heavy traffic we made very good time to Dunbar and Nats were soon to be seen enjoying the interesting harbour area with its **basalt columns** and historical ruins. The John Muir Birthplace and local history museum were well laid out and informative. Some of us enjoyed the plaque commemorating Black Agnes, Countess of Dunbar in the 14th



century. Many members just chose to walk the cliffs and take in the natural beauty of Dunbar. There was lots to see – sandstone deposits, seashore birds and plants. The general opinion was that Dunbar has lots to offer and may be worth another visit.

The Countryside Ranger Service provided us with two knowledgeable young women to take us on a walk through the salt marshes and dunes of the John Muir Country Park. They were willing and able to answer our many questions and introduced our male (and female?) members to herbal remedies for baldness which would have them smelling of mouse pee! We were also encouraged to sample some of the edible sea shore plants

such as **marsh samphire** (also known as **glasswort**) which I can highly recommend. We saw great swathes of **vipers bugloss**, **common blue butterflies** and **burnet moths** – some of them just stretching their wings for the first time as they emerged from the pupae. We spent a short time on the shoreline, picking up a variety of shells. Some interesting fungi were found. The rangers also told us of the history of the area and its previous use as a race course. It has built up considerably since those days and some of our members could confirm how much it had changed.

Safely back at the bus at 5pm we had a wonderful view of the Red Arrows Flying Display from nearby East Fortune airfield. Was it just for us? We had a grandstand view. It was interesting to note that this caused more 'oohs' and 'aahs' than the displays of nature.

Wynn Tennant

ISLE OF MAY / ANSTRUTHER TO CRAIL

24th July

Unfortunately, concerns about the wind were justified as the skipper of the 'May Princess' decided against sailing to the Isle of May in view of the 22 knot south-westerly forecast. This was a bitter disappointment but at least this time we got our money back. The coffee shops in Anstruther did a good trade before we set out on our walk to Crail and, with the wind on our backs and bright conditions, it was generally agreed this was preferable to being tossed about on the waves!

A **grey seal** popped its head up in the harbour, while **gulls** (**lesser black-backed**, **herring** and **black-headed**) rested on the surrounding wall. Heading east through narrow streets lined with attractive traditional East Neuk cottages, we passed one with **English stonecrop** growing in the gutter and another called 'Taeping', which at one time was the abode of Captain Alexander Rodger. He was the owner of a famous tea clipper, the Taeping, which won the 'tea race' in 1866, taking 99 days from Foochow to London and arriving only 20 minutes ahead of its rival!

At Cellardyke harbour, several birds were seen including an **elder** with young, **redshank**, a **rock pipit** and a juvenile **pied wagtail**. Emerging onto the coastal path, there were flocks of young brown **starlings** flitting about the rocks and seaweed while, over the Forth, flew **sandwich terns** and **gannets**. The Isle of May stood out clearly and looked no distance away but seeing fishing boats lurching about with spray flying over them, confirmed it was a day best spent on solid ground! The bird list soon increased, including a particularly fine male **linnet** 'in the pink' at the caravan site, and there were early signs of autumn migration with sightings of **wheatear** and **common sandpipers**.

Numerous plants were noted with Jim Cook pointing out features of salt-tolerant ones and drawing our attention to the bright red **corn poppies** (*Papaver rhoeas*) with round capsules, in contrast to the paler orange-red flowers of the **long-headed poppy** (*Papaver dubium*) commonly found in our area. He also pointed out *Atriplex littoralis* and **yellow oat-grass** (*Trisetum flavescens*) which we don't often see in Angus. A plant unfamiliar to me was **henbit deadnettle** (*Lamium amplexicaule*) in which, as the name suggests, pairs of leaves clasp round the stem.

We paused to watch wee spotted **piglets** scurrying after their mums (Margaret McLaren's name for them was 'Harlequin pigs' but Jim Cook suggested they were 'Gloucester Old Spots' – any other suggestions?). During our lunchbreak in the lee of a wall, Bill noticed a colourful cream/red/brown caterpillar feeding on a dock leaf and it was identified by Gordon Maxwell as that of a **knot grass moth**. (The only other members of Lepidoptera we saw were **green-veined white butterflies**.) Callum McKay found a **green shore crab** and later a **common green grasshopper**, which was pink as well as green.

Natural rock gardens were seen en route - with **harebells**, **eyebright** and **thyme** making a particularly colourful and attractive combination. We also passed the amazing pink and buff eroded **sandstone** formations at the Caipie Caves, which archaeologists believe were inhabited as far back as 2000BC.

After our leisurely four mile walk, we had time to enjoy ice-creams in Crail before boarding the bus to head home, passing ten **herons** on the playing fields near the Old Course Hotel, St Andrews, and stopping for a short time at Guardbridge to look for birds about the River Eden from the bird hide and the old bridge. We had good views of a **black-tailed godwit** in its reddish summer plumage, **dunlin** with their black bellies, a **greenshank** – elegant as always – and a **red-breasted merganser**, diving in the shallow water and emerging, more often than not, with a small fish in its beak.

Overall 46 birds and 117 plants were noted, which compensated somewhat for the enforced change of plan. Hopefully we'll get to the Isle of May next time – third time lucky?!

Daphne Macfarlane Smith

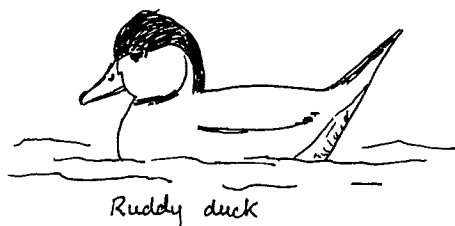
FORFAR LOCH

3rd August

It started to rain, heavily, at about five o'clock, with no obvious sign of stopping in the near future. Mary and I looked at each other and resigned ourselves to getting wet in the cause of the Nats! We wondered if anyone else would brave the elements and became increasingly pessimistic as the rain was still doing its worst when we got to the Forfar Loch ranger centre just before 7pm. I knew that Margaret McLaren and Jim Cook were coming and was pleasantly surprised to find Evelyn Mitchell and her two grandchildren had also decided to brave the elements.

So this select group of seven set off, with six umbrellas, to walk around the loch. Most of the birds on the water were **coots**, of various ages, and **mallard**, with a scattering of **black-headed gulls**. We also spotted the unmistakable silhouettes of a couple of **ruddy ducks** amongst the other birds, and an apparently ever-changing number of **mute swans** further up the loch (average about 30, but we never got the same count twice!).

We didn't take the detour to the sailing club buildings, due to the rain, even though there were **swallows** nesting above the porch and a **common sandpiper** had been seen on the



shoreline there the previous day amongst the **oystercatchers**

The rain eased off a bit and Jim took a boyish delight in showing the children how the seed dispersal of **Himalayan balsam** (*Impatiens balsaminifera*, also known as **policeman's helmet**) worked. If you find a suitably ripe seed pod and touch it all the seeds are catapulted out explosively. This plant is a serious pest on stream and loch sides and some measures have been taken at Forfar to reduce its spread as anything growing underneath gets shaded out.

As we rounded the far end of the loch six year-old Isla started to take a close interest in the names of common plants so we lingered amongst the **buttercups**, **daisies**, **knapweed** and **woundwort**. It was very refreshing to go back to basics like this with such a young enthusiast that I didn't mind too much when we had to run to catch up with the others – Isla may have been fitter but my legs were longer which made up the difference!

Back near the Leisure Centre the feral **geese** waddled towards us hoping that we might have food for them. They soon drifted away again when they found that there was nothing on offer. All had enjoyed the walk, despite the rain, and though we would have noticed more on a fine evening there was still plenty of interest to see.

Anne Reid

BARRY BUDDON JOINT OUTING

8th August

For this ever popular annual outing, 68 members from the five local conservation and birding groups turned out. This included members from as far afield as Aberdeen, Stirling, Perth and Fife. Barry Buddon and its wealth of natural history diversity ensured that everyone enjoyed their day out.

The birdwatchers, botanists and lepidopterists were all well-catered for. Highlights on the birding front were sightings of **whimbrel**, **greenshank** and **common sandpiper** from a total of 63 species spotted. Amongst the nine **butterfly** species seen, records of **grayling**, **dark green fritillary** and **ringlet** were made, despite the dull conditions. The botanists, as always, had a field day with findings of Barry Buddon specials – **gypsy-wort**, **wild basil**, **water dock** and **lesser butterfly orchid**.

Lunch was taken in the lighthouse area and the Courier photographer made a timely arrival to catch the well-satisfied, happy faces of the assembled throng. To sum up – the day's event was voted another resounding success. Thanks to all who helped to bring this about.

Bob McCurley

ONE ENCHANTED EVENING

31st August

What links a **yellow underwing**, the **summer triangle** and an aromatic **kebab**? The answer, of course, is a Nats evening barbecue. Over 40 members gathered in one of our favourite feeding frenzy spots of recent years, Dorothy Fyffe's garden in Carnoustie. The weather was kind, relatively mild with just a gentle breeze off the sea. Some of us had arrived early and been up Craigmill Den to spread a delicious-smelling 'sugar mixture' of warmed syrup, treacle and beer on a few trees beside the path. Meanwhile, Anne and Mary had been setting up a light trap in the garden, ready for the late evening.

Dorothy dragged out a large piece of wire mesh and we soon had a good fire going underneath. Doug lit the smaller barbecue just after and before long the Nats were gathered round the sausages, burgers and kebabs toasting over the glowing coals. Jenny and Brian kept us well supplied, as usual, with 'Chateau Allan' mulled wine and Roma's fried onions spiced the air. Within a short time our feasting had cleared both grills and nearly all the plates and boxes. As darkness gathered a well-satisfied party set off in convoy for Craigmill Den.

There were enough torches between us to provide reasonable lighting for the group on the path and we were quickly able to locate the first 'sugared' tree. It was rather disappointing, though, having attracted only a couple of **earwigs** and a single common **woodlouse**. The next two trees were rather better, with three **moths** between them, all

brown spot pinions, and some more **woodlice** feasting on the mixture. However, the last tree before the open clearing halfway up the Den had attracted a total of 12 moths, of three species. There were nine more **brown spot pinions**, two **large yellow underwings** and a **garden carpet**. Anne caught some of these in display containers and they were passed around for everyone to examine before being released unharmed. Beside the path, late heads of **red campion** glowed in the torchlight.

As the party reached the clearing, the thin clouds cleared and a marvellous vista of sky and stars opened above our heads. We quickly picked out the **Plough**, **Polaris** the **North Star**, **Aquila** the eagle and **Cygnus** the swan. The summer triangle of stars, made up of **Vega**, **Deneb** and **Altair**, was identified and the **milky way** glimmered in an arch overhead. Most of us made it up to the bridge at the top of the Den, but only the first few saw the ripples in the stream that signified the presence of a substantial **fish**.

It was nearly eleven pm before we arrived back at the house, to find Anne checking the catch in the light trap. There was another **large yellow underwing**, a **sallow** and a **double-striped pug**. It had been a fabulous and fascinating evening.

Jim Cook

Footnote. In the secure location of Dorothy's garden we set up the trap again before we left and I went back in the morning to retrieve it and see whether there were any more moths. The total haul was yet another **large yellow underwing** (they are very common), a **flounced rustic** and two **silver-Y moths**. This brought the total for the garden to five species, with an extra two up the Den. This is a rather better result than many recent attempts at moth trapping at Nats barbecues. The clear bright weather that makes for a good barbecue is not ideal for moth trapping as the temperature falls too fast and the moths are reluctant to fly.

Anne Reid

GANNOCHY FUNGUS FORAY

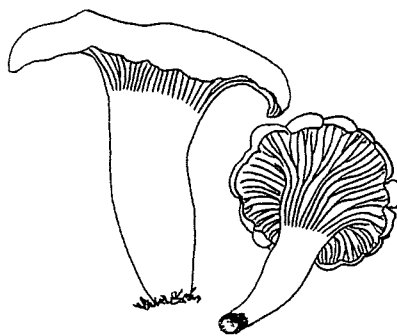
11th September

The day started rather dull as the bus left Albert Square, bound for Edzell and Gannochy Bridge for the customary fungus trip. As the previous months had been rather wet, hopes were high for a good turnout both of members and fungi and after picking up a few members on route, a few more turned up at the Gannochy Bridge to bring the numbers to around the 40 mark. Most then elected to head downstream on the south side of the bridge and were soon finding a good selection of fungi including *Amanita verna* (the **destroying angel**). A few edible types were also turning up such as *Boletus edulis* (**penny bun**) and *Boletus erythropsus*, a similar blue staining species. Another common find was *Oudemansiella mucida* (**porcelain fungus**) growing in large numbers on **beech**, its exclusive host. Another species common with the beech was the attractive *Laccaria amethystina* with its deep purple colour.

With mushrooms coming from all directions the leaders were now hard-pressed trying to identify them but we had a short break as we crossed the bridge to see what lay upstream on the other side. We were not disappointed and many more species presented themselves for our attention. Among them were a few *Cortinarius violaceus*, a very attractive and rare mushroom, found by Pat Gaff. More edible types were found including **chanterelles** and **hedgehog fungi** (some quite large). A surprising revelation was that many fungi had passed their 'sell by' date which I was convinced was caused by the damp weather before the foray.

Apart from a brief shower the weather had held up quite well and a good time was had by all trying to identify the unidentifiable and most went home having at least scratched the surface of the mysterious world of mushrooms.

Gordon Maxwell



AUTUMN MEETINGS

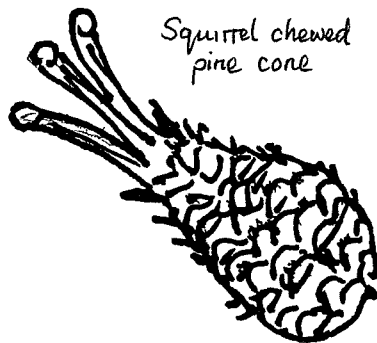
SQUIRRELS IN THE CITY

Kate Farrar – 12th October

Many Dundee Naturalists will have seen squirrels in the city. These Dundonian native red squirrels are well worth protecting from the invading American grey, since Dundee is the only city in Britain with a substantial population of this protected species. Kate Farrar explained with slides and a video how this can be achieved through the Dundee Red Squirrel Project (DRSP), launched in 2002. Wider protection is called for in the Biodiversity Action Plans of Tayside and the UK, and the SNH's Species Action plan.

Facilitators of the DRSP include the Park Ranger Service, SNH, SEPA, Scottish Water, the Police Force and members of the public. Interestingly, Dundee bobbies have reported 350 sightings to Kate's team. Were any grey squirrels taken into custody, I wonder? Favoured red squirrel territories all have suitable woods: Camperdown, Clatto, Templeton, Downfield, Caird Park and Liff. Reds are now absent at Balgay, the Law and Ninewells Hospital grounds. By contrast, greys are everywhere.

Scotland holds three quarters of Britain's 160,000 red squirrels, whereas Scotland's greys make up only 10% of Britain's total of around 2 million. Why are reds in decline while greys thrive? What can be done about it? Well, successful



reds find year round food in mixed coniferous woods (characteristically chewed pine cones reveal their presence). They feed on shoots, berries and fungi too but they breed only once a year, the kittens appearing in April. The bigger greys, however, prefer broadleaved species and are able to digest acorns and beech mast more easily. So greys increase at the expense of reds. They can find more food if broadleaved trees are present, they breed twice a year and they carry a parapox virus which is fatal to the red squirrel.

The prevention of fragmentation of conifer woods and sympathetic planting can help the red squirrel. Road-kills have been reduced by installing a ropeway over the Coupar Angus road. The Dundee City gamekeeper helps reds by culling 100 greys a year. More culling in the city and surrounding area would help even more. Could DNS join in the cull and offer grey squirrel dishes at our barbecues? The DRSP (through SNH funding) will supply grey squirrel traps to anyone who can catch and dispatch them.

Please send your sightings of squirrels to Kate at the Dundee Ranger Service

Alban Houghton

CANYONS, COYOTES AND CONDORS

Carol James – 26th October

With a background in botany and currently studying geology our speaker was well qualified to show us a wide range of natural history, and also included birds and bugs. Her talk covered a trip from Phoenix, in Arizona, north to the Yellowstone National Park through many States and habitats. We were led from **petrified forests** of **fossil trees** and **painted deserts** of layers of coloured **sands** to strange **rock formations**, **pillars** and **arches**.

The journey continued from Meteor Crater to the Grand Canyon with its awesome depth, and from **grasslands** to **hot springs** and **geysers**. All the while we were given a broad picture of habitat, plants, birds, animals and insects. We saw the result of natural erosion over millions of years which has given us the land as we know it today.

Marjory Tennant gave an enthusiastic vote of thanks on behalf of all present for an enthusiastically presented and beautifully illustrated talk.

Marjory Tennant

UNDER SCOTTISH SKIES

Brian Kelly – 16th November

On a dark and rainy evening local astronomer Brian Kelly delivered a fascinating talk on astronomy, concentrating on phenomena that can be observed with simple equipment, or none at all

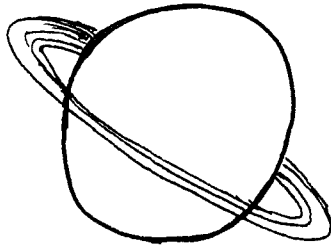
He began by discussing the nature of the subject and emphasising links with geology and geography. As yet there is no firm evidence of “astro-biology”, but he believes that it is *very likely that evidence of life elsewhere in the universe will be found in time*. He told us that one way of distinguishing planets from stars in the night sky, was the tendency of the latter to twinkle, because they are small points of light affected by atmospheric fluctuations.

Many of us in the modern world are less aware of the night skies than our ancient ancestors and some ancient monuments are aligned with the sun. Less usual is an arrangement based on movements of the moon such as is likely with the Callanish standing stones on Lewis.

The **moon** is interesting to observe, reflecting the sun's light and also the earth's reflection (“earth-shine”). The moon reflects much less of the light falling on it (about 17%) than the earth with its surrounding clouds. The crescent of the moon always points at the sun and this arrangement is often pictured erroneously by artists. The dark edge of the crescent is often useful for observing the moon's craters with binoculars, as long shadows are cast. The full moon is a surprisingly small object in the sky, although its light interferes with observations of the stars by astronomers and some observatories close for a few nights around full moon.

Our speaker went on to show striking images of recent **eclipses** of the **moon** and **sun** which are, alas, often obscured by clouds. The moon is just big enough to cause a brief complete eclipse of the sun occasionally, but partial eclipses are more usual.

Five of our planetary neighbours are visible to the naked eye, including the rocky planets **Venus**, **Mars** and **Mercury**. The other visible planets, **Jupiter** and **Saturn**, are quite different, being gas giants. Although relatively far away Jupiter and Saturn have rocky moons, some of which are larger than the planet Mercury and can be easily seen with binoculars. The other planets require a telescope to render them visible and the tiny faraway **Pluto** has recently had its planetary status queried, being threatened with demotion to asteroid status.



Comets are occasional visitors to our skies and the remnants of their tails give rise to meteors at a later date if the earth crosses their path. Man-made objects such as space stations and radio dishes have recently been added to the visible wonders of the heavens.

The **sun** is of great interest, as it is the only star that can be studied at relatively close range. Gas may break free from the sun giving rise to the solar wind which reaches our planet. Most is deflected by the earth's magnetic field, but some produces the beautiful **aurora borealis**, which some of our members had observed during the previous week in the local area.

Finally we had the chance to see some actual **meteorite** fragments. One small piece, thought to have originated from Mars, contains crystalline traces which just might indicate ancient primitive life.

Brian Kelly was thanked for his excellent talk and as we headed out into the night we agreed that we should all look upwards more often.

Brian Ballinger

DUNDEE CITY WILDLIFE

20th November

We were all well wrapped up – and needed to be. It was a bright but distinctly chilly morning and twenty naturalists gathered to locate and identify some of the local wildlife – no, not *that* type, but the birds and variety of small plants in and around the city centre. Within the city square itself we recorded **common chickweed** (*Stellaria media*), a few small sprigs

of **common meadow grass** (*Poa pratensis*) and a variety of **mosses** and **lichens**, including *Bryum argentum*, several crusty grey *Lecanora* and bright orange *Xanthoria* lichen species, and leafy grey *Hypogymnia physodes* on the bark of several nearby trees



Along the High Street the group found a surprising range of **weed** species, although nearly all were tiny plants growing in cracks in the pavement and in the spaces around planted trees. These included **broad-leaved dock** (*Rumex obtusifolius*), **shepherd's purse** (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), **procumbent pearlwort** (*Sagina procumbens*), **ragwort** (*Senecio jacobaea*) and even **nettles** (*Urtica dioica*). We explored the areas of grass around the City Churches and, among others, recorded **yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*), **daisies** (*Bellis perennis*) and **slender speedwell** (*Veronica filiformis*). Trees included **sycamores**, **birches**, **cherries**, a **noble fir**, **cabbage palms** and **Norway maple**.

The next area we explored was the Howff, Dundee's old graveyard. Members found the meeting point for the Nine Trades, a rather small upright stone, admired the carvings on a number of ancient gravestones and looked around for plants and birds. In the oldest wall, on the western side, were **wall rue** (*Asplenium rutamuraria*), **black spleenwort** (*Adiantum-nigrum*) and **ivy-leaved toadflax** (*Cymbalaria muralis*), with several good stands of **polypody** (*Polypodium vulgare*) on large flat tomb stones. A large **crane fly** (*Tipula* species) battered about in the sunshine. The best finds, though, were by Dorothy Fyffe and Margaret McLaren. They identified, at a distance, several hungry **fieldfares** feasting in a large old hawthorn and a **redwing** hopping along a quiet path. We all enjoyed good clear views in the winter sunshine. At the same time a **robin** and a couple of **blackbirds** had good views of us.

On the way down through the town the party spent a few minutes looking at the variety of **rock types** in the pavements and building stones. We also spotted **butterfly bush** (*Buddleia davidii*) on chimney tops and parapets, **knotgrass** (*Polygonum aviculare*) in the cracks in between cassettes, and **oriental rocket** (*Sisymbrium orientale*) at the base of an old wall.

The area around the Harbour proved to be rich in wildlife, with **maidenhair spleenwort** (*Adiantum trichomanes*) on the harbour wall and **pineapple weed** (*Matricaria matricarioides*) and **sticky mouse-ear** (*Cerastium glomeratum*) in muddy patches along the roads. **Mugwort** (*Artemisia vulgaris*), **rats tail fescue** (*Vulpia myuros*), **sticky groundsel** (*Senecio viscosus*) and **coltsfoot** (*Tussilago farfara*) thrived in rough patches of ground. Along the river frontage, now thankfully clear of sewage, heavy fringes of **seaweeds**, particularly **egg wrack** (*Ascophyllum nodosum*), sheltered along the sea wall. A number of **cormorants**, a few **eiders** and a single **goosander** were seen in the river. The usual loose gangs of **black-headed gulls** squabbled with each other along the top of the sea wall while **pied wagtails** flitted across the grass around the end of the road bridge.

Mid-day lunch at Discovery Quay beckoned, but not before we stopped briefly at the plaque commemorating the epic flight of the flying boat 'Mercury' which reached Durban in South Africa. It had been carried piggy-back on 'Maia' and launched in mid-air above the Tay. Our meal was substantial. The whole party was accommodated on one long table – and some of us didn't finish until 3pm!

Jim Cook

THE EDEN ESTUARY CONFLICT OR COOPERATION?

Les Hatton – 30th November

After a political science degree and work in the probation service and as a psychiatric nurse, Les Hatton has had an unusual route to becoming a Countryside Ranger for Fife Council. He has had responsibility for the Eden Estuary since 1990 in addition to covering other areas of Fife, and is a licensed bat handler and enthusiastic bird ringer.

The Eden Estuary is a local nature reserve, with its own bylaws, where some carefully monitored shooting of wildfowl is permitted, in season. The wildfowlers are usually very good naturalists themselves and help to provide Les with information on the area, including detailed records of what they actually shoot.

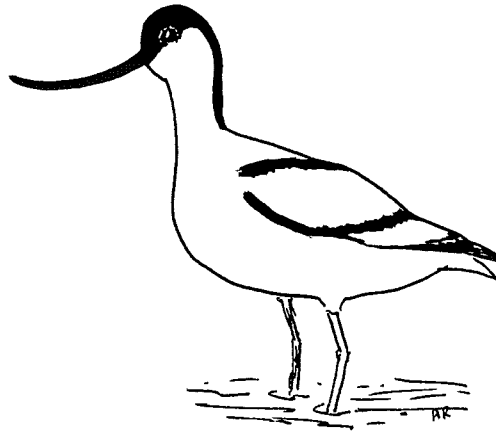
Les described his many duties on the reserve, including **crow** control, sea erosion control, ensuring that wildfowlers and fishermen observe the rules, **ragwort** control and keeping an eye out for egg collectors. In addition he has to liaise with RAF Leuchars on such things as aircraft overflying the estuary, to prevent unnecessary disturbance to the birds and to avoid any danger to the planes and their crews from birds over the runways.

The estuary is one of the richest in Scotland for food suitable for a wide variety of bird life. The range of species found on or around the estuary includes **black-tailed** and **bar-tailed godwits**, **redshank**, **greenshank**, **ruff**, **common sandpiper**, **curlew sandpiper**, **dunlin**, **sanderling** and various **plovers** and predators, such as **buzzard**, **peregrine**, **sparrowhawk**, **kestrel** and **merlin**, attracted by the abundant waders.

Mammals on the estuary include **fox**, **roe deer**, **stoat** and plenty of **rabbits** to feed two of the previous three and the **buzzards**. Recently, rarities have been seen, including four **avocets**, a **marsh harrier**, three **otters**, a few **brent** and **barnacle geese** and an **American golden plover**. Les also described the efforts being made to protect nesting **terns** on shingle beds within the reserve which were having some success.

Much of the erosion control is in the area of the estuary adjacent to the golf courses. The St Andrews golf authorities have paid towards dune study and alteration. Obviously submarine golf has no appeal to the members!

In the vote of thanks Les was commended for his obvious enthusiasm, and for a fascinating insight into what is involved in the management of such a large and varied area as the Eden Estuary.



Gordon Maxwell

SCOTLAND'S PRESENT NATURE AND PAST NATURALISTS

Alban Houghton – 8th December

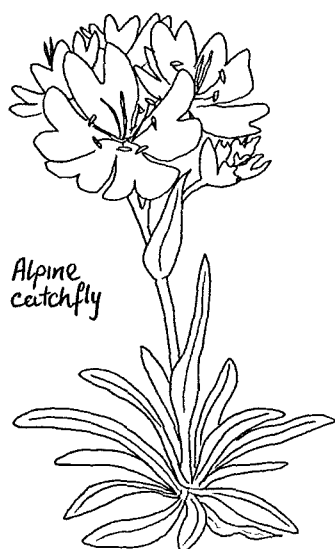
Alban Houghton gave the Dundee Naturalists' contribution to the Wednesday afternoon lecture series to an audience of about 50 people from the various societies. He based his talk on the contribution of five naturalists of the past, some of them doctors like himself. They were, Robert Sibbald in the 17th century, Carl Linnaeus and George Dempster in the 18th and George Don and Charles Darwin in the 19th century. Charles Darwin had withdrawn from his medical studies after witnessing surgical operations without anaesthesia, and medicine's loss has been biology's gain. We must be grateful that he took this decision.

Some physicians of the past managed to combine professional medical and biological roles. This is no longer possible in our increasingly specialist age, although some may regret it. An example of the relationship of the fields is the observation that some drugs derived from plants have contributed to the development of anaesthetic practice, for example **opium**, **atropine** and **cocaine**.

In Alban's talk the history was skilfully linked to a sequence of fine wildlife photographs and observations, mainly from the Tayside area. He described the local habitats, starting at the shore with **shags**, **guillemots** and **terns**, flowers such as **cowslips** (*Primula veris*) and **early purple orchid** (*Orchis mascula*) and butterflies including **grayling** and **meadow brown**.

A move to inland arable areas found **corn marigold** still lingering in odd corners and the drained Dunnichen Moss briefly re-appearing as wetland after heavy rain. We were

reminded of the beauty of other butterflies, such as **small tortoiseshell**, **dark-green fritillary** and **speckled wood** (the last named is not usually seen in our region, but it is spreading)



Carl Linnaeus' favourite flower was **twinline** (named after him as *Linnaea borealis*), and it is still to be found in Glen Doll, although most of its associated woodland is lost. Until recently **capercaillie** could be seen (and photographed with a bit of luck and skill) in woods near Letham, but, alas, they are no longer there. The rare **bog orchid** (*Hammarbya paludosa*) was shown to us - this tiny plant, which is so hard to find, may be commoner than we realise. **Blue damselflies** and **black darter dragonflies** were shown mating and emerging from their pupae.

Alban's interest in wildlife has been linked to his enthusiasm for hillwalking, which has paid dividends, as some special Tayside plants are near the high summits. Angus and Perthshire are considered to have the finest mountain flower sites in the UK at special places such as Ben Lawers and Glen Clova. George Don was the first to find the **yellow oxytropis** (*Oxytropis campestris*), still only known from three places in Scotland, two of them in our area. The **alpine catchfly**, a very beautiful plant, is still only known from near Glen Doll and one place in England, and **purple coltsfoot** (*Homogyne alpina*) has its only known British location in our nearby mountains, although some suspect that Don planted it in a moment of over-enthusiasm.

Alban was thanked for his well presented and splendidly illustrated talk.

Brian Ballinger

ADVENTURE IN CHILE

Brian Ballinger – 21st December

A splendid sixty members turned out for this, our Christmas meeting, to hear Brian's account of the trip that he and Barbara took to Chile in January 2004. They had managed to see a wide range of habitats and places in this long, thin country and seemed to have sampled, and photographed, the whole range from north to south.

From Antofagasta in the north to Punta Arenas on the Magellan Strait in the south their route covered all the places in Chile renowned for wildlife. The Atacama Desert had **guanacos** and **geysers** with herds of **vicuna** at high altitude and **Andean geese** which nest at up to 3,000ft. There were also rabbit-like **viscachia** which have very warm fur and use the sun to help regulate their body temperatures, domesticated **llamas** and three species of **flamingo**.

At Puerto Montt, on the coast, there were various **gulls** and easy access to the Forest National Park, which is a temperate rain forest. Growing here were *Fitzroya cupressoides*, various species of **southern beech** including *Nothofagus dombeyi* and an **escallonia** very similar to those grown in gardens in Britain. **Insectivorous plants** were also in evidence including two **butterworts** and a **sundew**.

In the far south in the Torres del Pini National Park the weather was like Scotland, but more so, with four seasons in a day. Here there were lots of plants and butterflies and an **Andean condor** with its 3m wingspan was seen over the mountains. The males of the flightless **lesser rheas** have several females and look after all the eggs and young, often with heavy losses to **foxes**.

Under the hole in the ozone layer at Punta Arenas, it was 7°C, windy and rainy, so not too much UV was getting through! On the coast there were **blackneck swans** and **magellanic oystercatchers**, both recognisable birds similar to our own species.

After such a whirlwind tour of so much of Chile everyone set to and enjoyed the Christmas fare so kindly provided by members. There was only just enough tea to go around, but for the best of reasons, and everyone got at least one cup.

Anne Reid

MEMBERS' ARTICLES

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS 2004

This compilation is intended to let people know what has been seen locally. All contributions are welcome. Each entry is followed by the initials of the recorder. The location of garden records for frequent contributors is noted on the list below.

Brian Ballinger	BB	Dundee, West End
Joy Cammack	JoyC	Birkhill
Jim Cook	JC	Broughty Ferry
Monica Edwards	ME	Invergowrie
Andrew Ferguson	AF	Monifieth
Pat Gaff	PG	
Ben Herschell	BH	Crombie Country Park, Ranger
Alban Houghton	AH	Letham, Angus
Bob McCurley	BM	
Daphne Macfarlane Smith	DMS	Broughty Ferry
Margaret McLaren	MMcL	Broughty Ferry
Gordon Maxwell	GM	
Peter Middleton	PM	North Corston, Kettins
Anne Reid	AR	Monifieth
Colin Reid	CR	
Christine Reid	ChR	
Mary Reid	MR	
Chris Stamp	CS	Dundee, West End near Invergowrie

1st January Notable sightings on Barry Buddon were nine **crossbills** and a **whooper swan**. PG

2nd January A **kingfisher** on the Craigie Burn adjacent to South Inch Street, Perth caught a fish. Also on the Tay nearby **goosanders** and **goldeneye**. GM

2nd January Saw a **great spotted woodpecker** in our neighbour's **birch tree** and hoped that it would come into our garden so I could include it in the BTO Garden Bird Survey, but it failed to oblige! DMS

6th January The first **snowdrop** appeared at the back of the house. The same plant as the early one in 2003, but even earlier than last year. JC

6th January A pair of **otters** at Kinochtry Burn, Kettins. PM

8th January In the evening, at Dundee College, Kingsway, a **robin** trilled a short snatch of full song a few times, almost as if warming up. JC.

10th January A male **smew** on Forfar Loch. PG (This bird was still there on 6th March when the Nats walked around the loch. Ed.)

17th January In late afternoon I looked up to see a small flock of probable **finches** flying towards the garden. They all landed in one of our very tall **Norway spruce** trees and, on inspection with binoculars, turned out to be 19 **linnets**! We got an excellent view of them in the low sunlight. A larger flock of 23 birds was seen the following Saturday (24th) again landing briefly before wheeling off en masse, presumably looking for somewhere to roost. AR

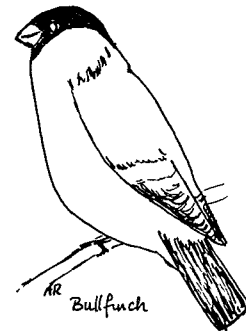
20th January Twenty plus **long-tailed tits** queuing up and taking turns on the peanut feeders in the garden. PM

21st January A traumatic incident in the garden. A male **sparrowhawk** caught one of 'my' **blackbirds** and took ten minutes to kill it - not a pleasant sight - I thought they could kill with one bite to the neck! The first time I have actually seen one in the garden. DMS

24th January A female **drone fly** (*Ernstalis tenax*) seen in the garden after a week of unseasonably warm weather. MR



- 25th January** The RSPB Garden Birdwatch day I noted one male **house sparrow** and pointed out that it was not usual It was the first I had seen in the garden since July 2003. DMS
- 26th January** **Hazel** catkins in flower in Caird Park, Dundee. Also a large, red **rhododendron** in flower in Clepington Road PG
- 28th January** After a prolonged snow shower in late afternoon a single hungry **fieldfare** landed in the garden It sought out the **cotoneaster** bush, removed the last visible berry (the **blackbirds** had cleared the rest weeks ago), looked around and then flew off. It was just outside the window so I got a very good, close-up view. AR.
- 2nd February** 30 **goldcrests** at Easthaven **Primroses** in flower, flocks of **siskin** and two **dippers** in Craigmill Den. PG
- 7th February** A dead **leatherback turtle** on the beach near Crail approximately 5 feet long These turtles can measure up to 7 feet long and weigh 900kg GM
- 9th February** Flocks of **finches** at Auchmithie Over 100 each of **yellowhammers** and **reed buntings** The **fulmars** which had returned to the cliffs by late January had all vanished after recent storms PG
- 11th February** **Bumblebee** and **honey bee** in the garden with the latter feeding on *Iris reticulata* ME
- 13th February** Seven **blackcock** north of Auchterhouse Hill Also three small flocks of **bullfinches** (10, 10 and 20 birds) plus three **roe deer** PG
- 15th February** Five **siskins** were on the peanuts together when normally there is only the occasional one DMS
- 16th February** Pair of **peregrine falcons** on Cox's Stack GM
- 17th February** Driving near Pitkenney on the way home from the Quarry, early afternoon, a **jay** seen flying over a field to a patch of woodland AR
- 21st February** Male **smew** on Forfar Loch and a **magpie** flying overhead GM
- 24th February** Puzzled by a soft warbling song from shrubs near our garage To my surprise, the singer turned out to be a **chaffinch** (In the past I'd felt privileged to hear the quiet 'sub-song' of a **robin** and a **blackbird** but didn't know other species performed them too) DMS
- 3rd March** A wet afternoon was brightened up by seeing a pair of **bullfinches** feeding on **cotoneaster** berries at the far end of the garden for a short time Despite being partly against the light their rounded shape and black heads were obvious enough to make me find the binoculars to check. Never before seen in the garden MMcL
- 5th March** Two days after first put out feeder of sunflower seeds (purchased from Peter Ellis) I counted 12 **greenfinches** in the garden – previous maximum was six, back in December – so definitely worth providing **Hedgehog** was out on the patio at 10 30pm DMS
- 6th March** First **blowfly** (*Calliphora vomitoria*) in the house (!) after a warm spell Very much earlier than last year JC.
- 7th March** Thrilled to see a handsome male **brambling** at the new sunflower seed feeder (There were two more males on 14th and a female on 20th) DMS
- 8th March** A **bumblebee**, probably a **buff-tailed**, flying around the garden probing some early flowers JC
- 8th March** Plenty of waders returned to the upper Glens Large numbers of **lapwings** and **oystercatchers** in Glen Clova and plenty of **curlews** and 17 **golden plovers** A large flock of **twite** and another of **brambling** also seen. PG
- 9th March** On a reasonably warm morning, a **red-tailed bumblebee** was buzzing around in, of all places, Peter Street in the city centre (lane beside Marks & Spencer) JC
- 13th March** First **bumblebee** of the season, a **buff-tailed**, seen in garden on **hellebore** flowers It had been a slightly warmer day after a cold spell AR
- 13th March** Around 40 **frogs** spawning noisily in our small garden pond, attracted the attention of the local **cats** and a **squirrel**. Unfortunately the curiosity of one cat overcame it and it fished out a frog and made off with it. CS



16th March **Frog spawn** appeared in our very small pond for the first time. The pond has only been there for two years, but was stocked with spawn from a nearby garden as soon as we had it ready. AR

16th March First young **blackbird** (with the short tail and broad gape) of the year that I've seen, in the garden outside the lab window of the Kingsway Centre, Dundee College. It was calling almost continuously for food from its harassed parents. JC

23rd March A **great grey shrike** seen in Montreathmont forest. PG

26th March **Blue tits** seen 'inspecting' our nest box. DMS

27th March The first **butterfly** of the season in my garden, a **white** which didn't stop to be identified, flitted past in the warm morning sunshine. Also the first **moth** of the year, a **double-striped pug**. The temperature on the previous day had reached 15°C. AR

28th March A short walk at Balkello, on the edge of the Sidlaws, gave sightings of **yellowhammers**, a male **reed bunting** and the now ubiquitous **buzzards**. There was also **frog spawn** in two of the ponds, not very far behind that in more lowland ponds. AR

30th March A female **blackbird** stuffing its beak with grass and moss from the lawn ended up with a very large 'moustache'. DMS

3rd April Four **avocets** on the Eden estuary at Guardbridge which stayed for over a week. GM

4th April Two **snow buntings** on Mid Hill, Glenisla. JoyC

4th April Heard breaking glass. Turned out that a **homing pigeon** (a regular in the garden for the last ten weeks) had smashed through an end pane of our greenhouse, probably after being chased by a **sparrowhawk**. Having noted its ring number, I released the bird which appeared to be unharmed. (According to the PDSA no-one would have been interested in recovering the bird as it was seven years old.) DMS

6th April A **wheatear** and a **red kite** at Carn Chois, South Turret. JoyC

8th April Two **chiffchaffs** at Barry Buddon. PG

9th April In garden, a queen **buff-tailed bumblebee** (*Bombus terrestris*). AH

11th April A **red kite** seen near the summit of Tully Murdoch pass between Den of Alyth and Glenshee road. JoyC.

11th April On a pleasant spring walk saw two **green-veined whites** at Barnhill rock garden – our first butterflies of the year – then two **peacock butterflies** near the Dighty. In the same area heard a **great spotted woodpecker** and saw a pair of **dippers** entering a hole in a fallen tree trunk, presumably their nest site. DMS

17th April Not best pleased to see a **grey squirrel** trying to dislodge the peanut feeder. I chased it off and was amazed to see that it could hang on to the harling of our garage. DMS

25th April On a day feeling more like summer than spring, one **peacock** and two **painted lady butterflies** seen in Bughties Road, Broughty Ferry in mid afternoon. AF

26th April One **orange tip butterfly** seen at the Guardbridge hide. GM

26th April A male **orange tip** flying across the road five miles west of Muirhead. JoyC

28th April A **whinchat** on Auchterhouse Hill and a **cuckoo** being chased by three female **chaffinches**. A second **cuckoo** heard calling further down the hill. JoyC.

April & May Large number of **black grouse** near Glen Moy, en route to regular visits to Dog Hillock. Lots of movement made it difficult to get accurate count, but estimate between 25 and 30 pairs. Past two years saw only two pairs so vast increase this year. JoyC

2nd May On a lovely sunny morning an **orange tip butterfly** on Bowles Mauve (wallflower) in the garden. ME

8th May In the garden, a **coal tit** nest with young was detected in the drystone dyke during the garden club plant sale. Despite bargain hunters milling around the nest, the tit



parents kept up their furious feeding. The young avoided marauding **cats** too and fledged successfully. AH

9th May First **swift** of my season seen over the garden, early morning. AR

12th May An **emperor moth** seen and photographed on the heather at Peddieston Wood, Crombie. Also large numbers of **garden tiger moth** caterpillars crawling out of the crevices in the banking beside the reservoir. This species overwinters as a caterpillar, and these individuals may have been forced out of their hiding places by the rising water levels in the reservoir which is now nearly full again. BH

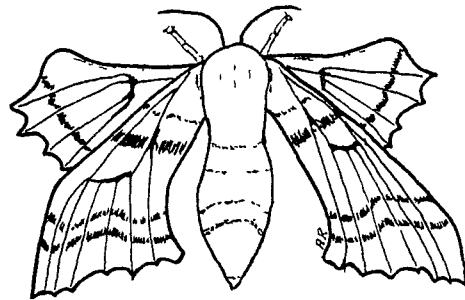
15th May An **orange tip butterfly** seen at Wedderswell Wood, Crombie. BH.

15th May I was sitting in the sun in the garden, at about 11am, when I saw a **wood mouse** using the bottom rail of our fence as a pathway. It seemed to be carrying something and soon afterwards it retraced its steps along the fence. Two or three minutes later it went back again and this time we could see that it was a baby that was being carried. It must have been moving its family to a safer nest site. ChR

16th May While leading a walk along the St Vigean's nature trail, Arbroath, I found a **poplar hawk moth** 'pretending' to be a leaf near the path. It was duly admired by those present. BH.

17th May Both **red-tailed** (*Bombus lapidarius*) and **garden** (*B. hortorum*) **bumblebees** seen in the garden. AH

22nd May At Kilmory Gardens, Lochgilphead, on a calm warm evening, hordes of hungry **midgies** feasted on the visiting naturalists. They seem to be out in larger numbers than usual this early in the year! (Midgies or Nats?? – Ed I) JC



Poplar hawk moth

22nd May A pair of **wheatears** at McRich Hill above Backwater Reservoir. JoyC

2nd June A **bufftip moth** on *Viburnum* in the garden looking just like a birch twig. Very pretty when its wings are open. ME

2nd June In the garden, a pair of **spotted flycatchers**, apparently busy making a nest in an open box. They disappeared one week later. Was it the cold snap? On the same day a **red admiral** appeared. Was this an overwintering adult or a very early migrant? AH

2nd June A **red squirrel** and a **great spotted woodpecker** in the garden at the same time, both eating from bird nut containers. Both seen regularly, and together, until 15th June. JoyC

5th June I heard "feed me" type squeaking from our big **Norway Spruce** tree and went to the window to investigate. I was hoping for a **great tit** as I hadn't recorded one for the week, but could only partly see a bird amongst the branches. When it finally showed itself my first identification was **coal tit**, my next was **great tit**. I then got the binoculars and a juvenile **great tit** came far enough into the open for a firm identification. Then, to my amazement, a coal tit appeared and fed the great tit! I hurriedly called on Mary to come and confirm what I was seeing and we both saw the adult coal tit feed the baby great tit several more times before they moved off through the trees. Presumably the parenting instinct had overcome the species divide. AR

9th June Three **painted ladies** chasing each other in the front garden. ME

9th June A **hedgehog** on the lawn at 10.40pm. DMS

21st June A female **redstart** in a garden in Marchfield Road, Invergowrie. ME

21st June A **merlin** being chased by a **crow** above the car park opposite St Saviour's High School, Forfar Road. JoyC.

6th July Eight **peacock butterfly caterpillars** marching across the lawn – presumably looking for somewhere to pupate. Unfortunately I was not able to see where they went. ME

10th July Saw a **bat** flying to and fro over the garden at the north side of our house. DMS

12th July A neighbour reported seeing a **fox** going along Holly Road, Broughty Ferry. DMS

13th July **Ringlet butterfly** feeding on Bowles Mauve wallflower in the garden. Also a **small tortoiseshell**. The first butterflies for several weeks. ME

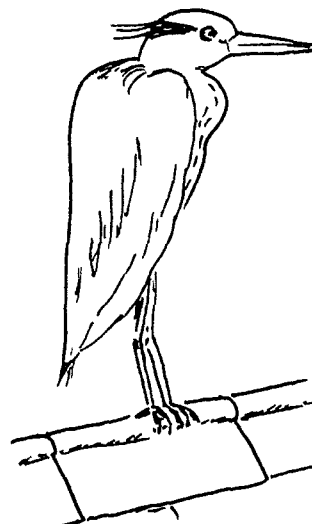
16th July A **tawny owl** seen at The Dron, near Fowlis Easter. JoyC

23rd July A large party of **swifts** (about 80) seen at Arbroath cliffs. BM

- 23rd July** My first **red admiral** of the season, in the garden DMS
- 24th July** At St Cyrus beach there was a pair of **peregrines** on the cliffs, **pinks** (*Dianthus deltoides*) in flower below the cliffs, **northern brown argus butterflies** on grassy slopes at the NE end of the beach and **sandwich terns** were diving into a rock pool for a large shoal of **sandeels** at half tide GM
- 26th July** A **kingfisher** seen at the Lurgies, Montrose Basin BM
- 29th July** While walking along my butterfly transect at Kinshaldy, counted 29 **grayling butterflies**, more than any other species during the summer DMS
- 31st July** A group of *Phaeolepiota aurea* mushrooms (very attractive and uncommon) at the side of the track up Craigower Hill, Pitlochry Butterflies seen included **Scotch argus**, **common blue**, **ringlet** and **meadow brown**. GM
- 12th August** The beginning of the autumn migration produced a **wryneck**, a **red-backed shrike** and six **pied flycatchers** at Mains of Usan near Montrose, and a **greenish warbler** nearby BM
- 13th August** Three **red admirals** and three **peacock butterflies** on **buddleia** – unfortunately the flowers going over already DMS
- 15th August** A lovely sunny day after the heavy rain and flooding in the week saw a **painted lady** and five or six **small tortoiseshells** on *Verbena bonariensis* and a **small copper** on the soil in the sun Also a huge number of **bumblebees**, **honey bees** and **hoverflies** ME
- 29th August** At high tide at Rossie Spit, Montrose Basin, we observed a juvenile **peregrine** going through the motions (or so we thought) of dive-bombing the large wader flock assembled there. Suddenly, without warning, it swooped down and plucked an unfortunate **redshank** from the water and flew off with its prey BM
- 29th August** Maximum of seven **peacock butterflies** and one **red admiral** in the garden Definitely not as many as seen last year DMS
- 30th August** 33 **peacock butterflies** on **white buddleia** in the front garden JoyC
- 30th August** A **short-eared owl** was seen hunting, over the rough, at Drumoig golf course DMS
- 30th August** A **yellow-browed warbler** seen at Ethie Mains. BM
- 1st September** While playing golf at Drumoig (again! – Ed) counted 12 **grey partridges** walking rapidly across a fairway – possibly parents plus young DMS
- 5th September** A high-flying flock of **hirundines** over the garden was accompanied by a single **swift**, possibly all moving south as they were only visible very briefly The last sighting of swifts was about three weeks earlier AR
- 5th September** On a very humid and hazy morning saw six **peacock butterflies** feeding on *Verbena bonariensis*. Also visits from **long tailed tits**, **blue**, **coal** and **great tits** ME
- 10th September** First **red admiral** of the season in my garden JoyC
- 11th September** As dusk fell and the nearest street lamp to Dawson Park came on, a tiny shape flitted in and out of the shadows. It was a small **bat**, a **pipistrelle**, a rare sight around this part of Broughty Ferry in recent years JC
- 13th September** Lovely view of a **goldcrest** in our autumn-flowering **cherry**, having had a **treecreeper** going up it yesterday Never seen the latter in our garden before DMS
- 21st September** Leaving the house in the morning on the way to school, just before 8am, saw two skeins of **geese** – the first of the winter MR
- 23rd September** A **grey squirrel** in the small patch of bushes between the Marketgait underpass and Nethergate in Dundee city centre CR
- 24th September** Heard my first **pinkfeet** of the autumn flying over Broughty Ferry DMS
- 26th September** I had just said to Bill that there was nothing much to see in the garden when I turned around to look out again and was stunned to see a **great spotted woodpecker** feeding on the peanut holder! Only the second seen in our garden in 21 years DMS



- 29th September** In Glen Unich there were big gangs of **ring ouzels** devouring the remaining **rowan** berries prior to migration. A guarding **mistle thrush** didn't stand a chance
AH
- 1st October** Amongst the usual wealth of birds at Montrose Basin were 37 **pintail ducks** and a flock of around two thousand **golden plover** BM
- 8th October** A total of twelve **little grebes** seen on the Denfind pond at Monikie BM
- 12th October** In town in the early evening, a soft thin 'tisp, tisp' whispered down from the darkness overhead. It was the first **redwing** calls I'd heard this autumn. Isn't it wonderful that these little birds are able to fly from Iceland over the chill wastes of the North Atlantic to reach us? JC
- 12th October** A **storm petrel** seen, from Mains of Usan, flying north. BM
- 17th October** A **may fly** type insect, with two long tails, was on the window but it flew off before I could get a photo DMS
- 17th October** Three late **swallows** seen at Craigmill Den BM
- 23rd October** Just east of St Fillans an **otter** shot across the road 30m in front of my car, before plunging into the River Earn AH
- 29th October** After a night and morning of rain, a female **sparrowhawk** was seen trying to dry off in the rather weak sun. She kept turning to face the sun to get maximum benefit JoyC
- 29th October** Skein after skein of **pinkfeet** flew over just before 6pm – an approximate count came to a thousand, the most I've ever seen at one time from our house DMS (I, too, have been impressed by the huge numbers of **geese** this autumn. I agree that there have been more than usual Ed)
- 29th October** A flock of over 50 **fieldfares** seen eating **rowan** berries at Blairfield Road at the edge of Templon Woods JoyC
- 30th October** While golfing at Drumoig, noticed **crows** gathering on a house roof and, as they called, more and more flew in until there were 22. Then a few moments later they'd all vanished – weird! DMS
- 31st October** Two pure white **mountain hares** and two predominantly white **ptarmigan** at Carn a' Gheoidh, west of the Cairnwell, and not a snowflake in sight JoyC
- 3rd November** Coming home late in the evening I caught a glimpse of a small shape running along the pavement. It was a young **hedgehog**, still out hunting for food. Although the weather was mild, it should have been hibernating, safely tucked up under sheltering vegetation. The poor creature was rather too small to have much hope of surviving through the winter JC
- 5th November** I opened the bedroom curtains to see a **grey heron** eyeing up the goldfish pond from the top of a neighbour's roof JoyC
- 7th November** Good views of **aurora borealis** around 9pm. Very red for a couple of minutes amongst the green ME
- 9th November** A **red admiral** landed on the sunny south-facing wall of my house for five seconds – rather late in the year. Also saw two **goldcrests** in the garden JoyC
- 13th November** Six **jays** together in an **oak tree** near Mill Dam, Dunkeld. Also four **goosanders** on the loch GM
- 13th November** A party of **long tailed tits** on the feeders – six together on the peanuts ME
- 13th November** Four **roe deer** and a **hen harrier** seen on the lower hills to the north of Auchterhouse Hill JoyC
- 14th November** A **grey squirrel** seen in Shaftesbury Road, Dundee BB
- 15th November** Nine **waxwings** in our garden BB
- 16th November** It was a dull morning but the bright spot of colour and movement in a **Lawson's cypress** attracted attention. It was a **goldcrest**. Then another appeared, and another, a small flock of foraging birds. They flitted around the trees for a few moments and then disappeared JC
- 22nd November** I stepped out to check the weather in the late evening and almost instantly the quiet chill was split by a harsh screech from the **ash tree** at the back. It was the cry of a **heron**, which must have been perching at the top of the tree. Perhaps it had been visiting some local garden ponds JC



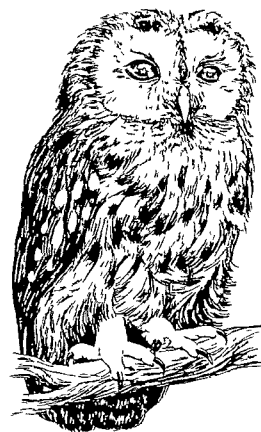
6th December A **tawny owl** called, once, at 2 15pm on a reasonably bright, mild and calm day from Wilstead's Wood, just south of Carsegowniemuir Quarry Also a small number of **widgeon** on pond 5 JC

12th December Three **small tortoiseshell butterflies** flitting about in the warm sunshine, on a surprisingly warm day – most unusual for December Also a **bluebottle** (*Calliphora vomitoria*) flew into the house and had to be 'sorted' with a rolled up newspaper An active **blowfly** in December is also very unusual JC

18th December Two **goldfinches** were on the peanuts – the first since June, though we'd had them regularly from January to April DMS

25th December I came in at the back gate to find a magnificent male **pheasant** in the garden He seems to like the food I provide and has appeared several times since MMcL

29th December Eight **waxwings** feeding on pink berries of ornamental rowans and a charm of **goldfinches** close by The usual guarding **mistlethrush** absent Drummiermont Farm on north edge of Letham, Angus AH



SOME PREDECESSORS TO THIS BULLETIN

The *Dundee Naturalists' Society Annual Bulletin* has been a long-lived publication, with its 30th birthday just a couple of years away, but it is not the first such periodical to have been produced in the city The Society launched what was intended to be a prestigious scientific series of *Proceedings and Transactions* over 90 years ago, but it suffered from unfortunate timing, with the first shots of World War I just weeks away by the time it was printed – only two parts were ever published

Several issues of the earlier *Magazine of the Dundee Working Men's Field Club* from 1890-91 survive The DWMFC was active in the field at a time when the Dundee Naturalists' Society seldom ventured outdoors, and so some members joined both bodies Although handwritten, the magazines were duplicated using an early mimeograph, and were sold for 2d

Much earlier, in the 1830s & 40s, Dundee saw a flourishing of genuine manuscript journals, which were circulated around a small group of subscribers, each being allowed a few days before it was passed to the next reader Amongst these journals were the *Dundee Natural History [and Literary] Magazine* (1845-48), and *Lawson's Magazine of Natural-History* (1847-48) Both were founded by George Lawson, a local man who later emigrated and became one of Canada's best-known scientists The editorship of the *Dundee Natural History Magazine* passed to his friend William Ogilvie, who many years later was to be a founder member of the Dundee Naturalists' Society

A frequent contributor was William Gardiner, the botanist, who provides a connection to an even earlier local natural history periodical, the *Transactions of the Gleaners of Nature* (1828-30) Gardiner was secretary of the Gleaners, and wrote the *Transactions* in his own hand It is likely that he had also been behind the earliest natural history journal in the city, the *Journal of Observances of Nature*, which first appeared on New Year's Day 1827 In 1831 Gardiner launched *The Botanical Repository and Journal of Natural History*, which eventually ran to over 1000 foolscap pages

It is not surprising that most of these manuscript journals were short-lived – after working perhaps a 12-hour day, the effort of handwriting dozens of pages in copperplate script, sometimes with fine illustrations, in the evening by lamplight, gaslight or candlelight, to produce a single copy that would be read by a mere handful of friends would challenge our editor today That aside, many of the contents would not look out of place in today's *Bulletin*, including detailed descriptions of lectures and excursions (some to places that are still familiar, such as Buddon Ness, Tentsmuir and the Sidlaws, others long since lost), records of flora and fauna, reports of unusual natural phenomena, announcements of meetings

The early journals differ from today's in some respects – our 19th century forebears were much more likely to express themselves in verse, and although most articles were brief,

the editors did not blanch at transcribing papers that ran for many pages! Not only were reviews of books and journals included, but sometimes entire articles were laboriously copied from other publications. Appearing weekly or monthly, the journals sometimes contained reader's letters. Occasionally debates about the scientific issues of the day became heated, as they might in a modern newspaper or internet newsgroup, but generally good manners were observed – after all, the journals reached at most a few dozen individuals in total, most of whom knew each other. The journals could be remarkably frank, however, giving an insight into the characters involved, for example “ after half an hour's discussion, it was agreed by some of the members to go to the Sidlaws, the rest of the members, as usual, going elsewhere”

Manuscript circulation journals were not uncommon in the early 19th century, but it is very rare for copies to survive today. For saving so many, we must be grateful to one of our Victorian members, the historian William Lamb, whose vast collection of publications and ephemera relating to Dundee forms the core of the Local Studies Collection in Dundee's Wellgate Library. Sadly, because only single copies exist, the information which these journals contain has tended to be overlooked by later researchers. A few pages can be viewed on the Resources for Learning in Scotland (RLS) website www.rls.org.uk, but to read them it is still necessary to visit the library. To make them more accessible, I have listed the contents of several of the early journals, and I can provide these to anyone who would like to see them.

Colin McLeod

email Colin.McLeod@JNCC.gov.uk

CROMBIE IN THE SNOW

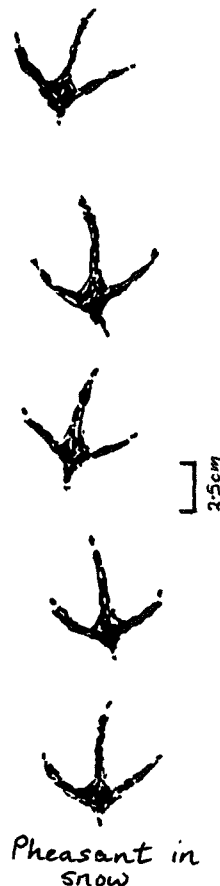
29th January

The sun was shining brightly on the fresh snow. No more had fallen since the previous evening so I reckoned that the roads would be passable, at worst, and that few other people would have ventured out before eleven o'clock. Both assumptions turned out to be correct and the road was both clear and traffic free.

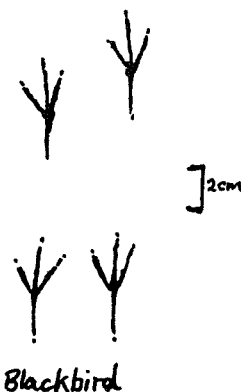
Crombie looked lovely. There was no more than a couple of inches of the white stuff but it always brings about a major transformation as to how we look at our surroundings. There were lots of animal tracks on the paths going in all directions but, as often as not, following the line of the path. The **fox** prints in particular showed that our daytime routes are taken over at night as the best way of getting about quickly. **Rabbit** tracks were very plentiful in almost every part of the park, with their characteristic hop from paired back legs and landing on front paws in sequence clearly visible.

On the main path round the partially refilled reservoir there was one set of **human** tracks ahead of me so I took a detour through the plantations, on one of the smaller trails. There were **coal tits** singing their territorial songs from high up in the **spruce** trees and some unidentified squeaking, which was probably **goldcrests**, nearby. On the flatter parts of the track were **roe deer** prints, probably more than one individual I thought, and very prone to drag their feet across the surface of the snow as they walked. Suddenly there was movement in the trees close to the path. Three **roe deer** moved away from me through the trees in what seemed more of a precautionary retreat than a flight in terror. They paused a short distance into the thick tree cover and lowered their heads to graze again.

In several places I came across groups of small birds flitting through the trees. These were mostly **coal** and **blue tits** but included a **tree creeper** and a party of **long tailed tits** swooping from tree to tree. I did see some **goldcrests** too, but more often could see only the **conifer** branches twitching as an indication of their presence as they searched between the needles for tasty morsels to sustain them.



against the cold. More than once a **wren** whirred across in front of me at knee level, scolding as it went. Bird tracks in the snow gave a very good record of gait. The large single prints made by a walking **pheasant** were very clear, with a hint of trailing tail feathers, and, when I saw it, the male bird itself looked particularly exotic when contrasted against the snow. Elsewhere were smaller pairs of footprints, possibly from a **blackbird** or a **dunnock**, hopping on the snow.



The start of the refilling process meant that, for the first time for two years or so, there was a significant amount of water in the reservoir. The **ducks** had not been slow to spot this with large numbers of **mallard** arrayed along the far edge, in the sun, and a single **pochard** on the water. There was also one **mute swan**, a welcome sight since they used to breed at Crombie before the reservoir was drained.

On the edge of the main path again, not far from the lodge, I spotted some very small, hand-like prints near the foot of a large tree and convinced myself that they were probably those of a foraging **red squirrel**. When I reached the lodge it became clear where all the birds were as they flew up from the area of the feeders when I walked past. Large numbers of **chaffinches** were vying with **dunnocks**, **blackbirds** and **tits** for the available handouts – much easier than foraging in the snow-covered woods.

The thaw set in that afternoon, so the magical quality of fresh snow disappeared almost as quickly as it had arrived. I'm just glad that I was able to experience some of that magic.

Anne Reid

MARCH SOUNDS OFF

26th March

Walking to Balgavies Loch I hear **larks** singing overhead. Some larks obviously get by in the arable monoculture. It's shirtsleeves weather in the late afternoon after a wet and windy week.

Is that a **woodpecker** tapping I wonder as I near the super-duper new hide? No, it's a **great tit** enlarging nest box number 6's entrance hole. Eventually it gains entry, inspects and comes out. I did not measure the hole but suspect that the great tit had enlarged a small hole (25mm) to its own or **tree sparrow** size at 28mm.

Later, in Montreathmont Forest, I hear tapping again. This time it really is a **woodpecker**, a **great-spotted** with a mate, excavating a nest hole in an old pine. While watching this pair I hear the yaffle of a **green woodpecker**. The rites of spring indeed.

Alban Houghton

A SWEET TOOTH?

29th March

At about 5pm, after a warm sunny day, I was watching two **blue tits** flitting around in the flower-covered **flowering currant** bush just outside the lab window. I thought they were feeding on small **insects**, perhaps **greenfly**, but they seemed to be paying more attention to the flowers themselves. I watched one bird stand on a branch and then use one foot to pull in a bunch of flowers below it and poke around in the flowers. It then repeated the action. By this time I was intrigued.

What were they doing? One of the tits flew off but the other persisted. I watched carefully and then clearly saw that the bird was pushing its beak into the flower for a second or so and moving onto the next one and repeating the action. It appeared to be sucking nectar. Having already examined the flowers, I knew they were full of nectar although some of them had been punctured in the side and robbed by **bumblebees**. After the birds had

flown I took a close look at the bushes but could find no insects. It seemed they had been sipping the nectar. Has anyone else seen insectivorous birds behaving in a similar way?

Jim Cook

SPRING SURPRISE

26th April

Early one morning about two weeks earlier our local **sparrowhawk** had dispatched a **woodpigeon** and had eaten its fill before abandoning the remains and a very generous scattering of plucked breast feathers. I started to gather evidence of nesting birds by watching beakfuls of feather being collected. The **blue tits** took some into the nearby nestbox, where I had already suspected that they were in occupation. Then I saw **house sparrows** carry off some of the larger feathers. I don't know where they are nesting, since our neighbour mended his roof last autumn, but at least they do appear to be nesting somewhere nearby. A **greenfinch** went off with a few more.

I was standing at the window when I saw another feather in transit. This time there was almost more feather than bird and my view was restricted by the twigs. It flew up into one of our large **Norway spruce** trees and vanished into the cluster of needles at the end of a branch. By this time I had the binoculars trained on the appropriate spot – just in time to see a **goldcrest** emerge from the tree. By looking carefully I could see a rounded, mossy nest hidden between the needles. I admit that I got quite excited, even though nobody was there to share my discovery! Though no more feathers flew past, the **goldcrest** flew up to its nest every few minutes for the rest of the day. I shall watch with interest.

Our garden appears to be attractive to these charming small birds in winter as we have **Norway spruce**, **blue spruce**, **cedar** and **larch** trees and neighbours have large 'Leylandii' type trees. Usually the birds depart in March or April and reappear in about October when numbers are swelled by immigrants from Scandinavia. One year we did have a pair in spring which looked all set to stay but then disappeared, as usual. There may be some breeding locally (suburban Monifieth) as I did record an obvious juvenile one summer – still very downy and small. I hope that 'my' **goldcrests** breed successfully and repeat their nesting next year.

Anne Reid

Postscript. The birds were seen up to the second week of May, but only occasionally and not in the vicinity of the nest site. In mid June there was some purposeful food gathering by adults in our trees but the birds then always flew in the direction of a neighbour's garden. The number of repeat visits and constant flight direction suggested that they had indeed nested nearby and were feeding young.

CUCKOOS

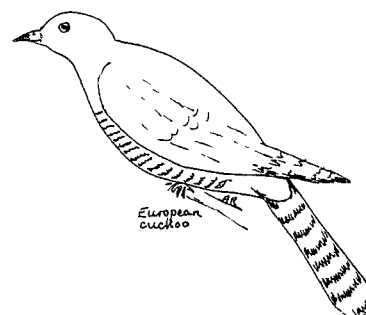
30th April

I've not heard many cuckoos in April. My first one this year was in Knoydart. A cuckoo was heard on each of two Nats outings – on 11th May at Scotston Farm, Auchterhouse and on 21st May across Loch Sween on our weekend.

Do you know the English ditty?

In April, the cuckoo shows his bill
In May, he sings all day
In June, he changes his tune
In July, he prepares to fly
In August, go he must

Alban Houghton



Footnote

The verse I heard as a child went something like

The cuckoo comes in April,
He sings a song in May.
He changes his tune in the middle of June
And then he flies away

This version is from my mother, and is of Scottish origin. It was learned from her granny in rural south Lanarkshire

Anne Reid

REPORT FROM THE NORTH - EAST ROSS 2004

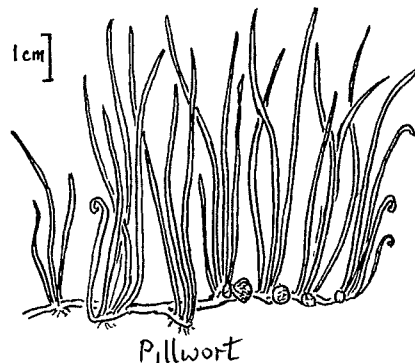
Just over a year ago Barbara and I took over as vice-county botanical recorders for East Ross (VC 106) for the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI). All the Vice-Counties (VCs) in the UK have a VC recorder who is custodian of records, contact point and co-ordinator for information about vascular plants in their area. The old VC boundaries are used, to ensure consistency when recording, and these differ considerably from modern political boundaries. East Ross is really very extensive, going near the west coast above Loch Broom, down south of Loch Mullardoch, west of Glen Cannich and north to the edge of the Inchnadamph limestone. Much high and remote land is in the area, including about 25 Munros.

We were following in the footsteps of the late Ursula Duncan, a very distinguished botanist, who lived near Arbroath and wrote the East Ross county flora. I did not feel I should add my humble notes to her splendid old record cards, which were pretty full anyway, so we have set up a new card record system for recent information and Barbara has been battling with computer records systems, including Mapmate and Recorder 2000.

We own a wood (Garrick Wood) near Tain and a flat at Fearn close by, so we know something of the area. We soon discovered that we had a great deal more to learn. We needed to get to grips with the BSBI 'local change' project, which had to be finished in 2004, and was then only half completed with 8 locations left to assess. This is a comparison of the plants present now with those found about 15 years ago in around 1000 tetrads (2x2km squares) in the UK. Sites needed to be surveyed on about 4 occasions at various times of year unless remote. This proved to be strenuous, but interesting, taking us to a variety of areas that we might not have thought of visiting otherwise. Two of our tetrads were a very long way from the roads and seemed to require an overnight stop in a tent, which would have had to be carried a long way. However we were saved by arranging a boat trip along Loch Mullardoch for one and an 8 mile return landrover journey on estate tracks at Alladale for the other, kindly laid on by the stalkers. Even then, in both instances, there was still a fair walk at the other end.

There were some interesting finds during these 'local change' outings, including new sites for the nationally scarce **pillwort** (*Pilularia globulifera*) and **small cranberry** (*Vaccinium microcarpum*). A few species new to East Ross were recorded, including **lesser water parsnip** (*Berula erecta*) at its most northerly mainland location. However, as always some species were not re-found in spite of searching.

Scottish Natural Heritage had asked the BSBI to help with the site condition monitoring of some special habitats and rare plant locations. We were asked to assess the Kyle of Sutherland marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest, particularly with regard to the scarce **estuarine** or **Wick sedge** (*Carex recta*). This involved venturing onto some very



boggy ground and a lot of encounters with **cleggs** and **midges**. A few miles to the east of this area we found several previously unknown populations of the **estuarine sedge**.

We are expected to work towards producing a checklist of information about nationally and locally scarce plants and we have made a start, although a final version is probably some years away. Many of the older records (and some of the newer ones) are only localised to within 10 kilometres, so a lot of detective work and some good luck is needed. Some of the sites are so remote and/or precipitous (usually both), that apart from stamina, the skills of a mountain goat are needed. We will probably never set eyes on "our" **highland saxifrage** (*Saxifraga rivularis*) for instance, although we have visited it elsewhere in Scotland.

There are some good mountain flowers in East Ross, but these are mainly about six hours walk or more from the road, although the views are wonderful when the cloud lifts. We paid our respects to the Red Data Book species **Norwegian mugwort** (*Artemisia norvegica*), which was just coming into flower in mid-July, as well as locating other plants in the limited areas of more basic rock. (GPS devices have proved to be very helpful for recording, as well as for confirming one's own location.)

East Ross has a fine coastline and we have been checking the location of special plants, such as **purple milk vetch** (*Oxytropis halleri*), **spring cinquefoil** (*Potentilla neumanniana*) and **oyster plant** (*Mertensia maritima*). The mud flats are green with sheets of **eel-grass** (*Zostera angustifolia* and *Z. noltii*) and **beaked tasselweed** (*Ruppia maritima*) occurs here and there.

So, after an interesting year, we look like being kept busy for some considerable time.

Brian and Barbara Ballinger

DOLPHINS AGAIN

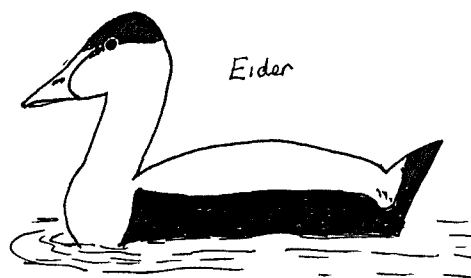
1st June

My first sighting this year of the **dolphins** off Broughty Ferry this morning was confirmed by other staffers' cries of "they're back!"

At high tide (about 11.30am) six dolphins (probably **bottlenoses** according to the description in Collins Complete British Wildlife) were seen swimming upriver in pairs between Broughty Lifeboat Buoy and the more distant channel marker. Ten minutes later they were back, one pair swimming very close inshore by the two jetties. For the next half hour what

looked like up to eight dolphins were very active, jumping and even breaching clear out of the water several hundred metres off Broughty Castle.

The passage of the pilot boat followed by a small freighter seemed to disperse them. It was a good morning for wildlife as two **eider** drakes and a **seal** were spotted as well. I am not sure the boss suspects that naturalists lurk among her staff!



Alison McAdam

FOX CUBS

Three cat-sized shapes frolicking at dusk on a West End lawn proved not to be the local **moggies** but **fox cubs**. They appeared on successive evenings in mid-June with at most four, playing pairs and proving delightful to watch. They are less welcome when uprooting a plant or digging up the grass in search of **worms**. Is the urban fox now becoming established in Dundee, this Nat wonders?

Jean Colquhoun

BUTTERFLIES IN ANGUS

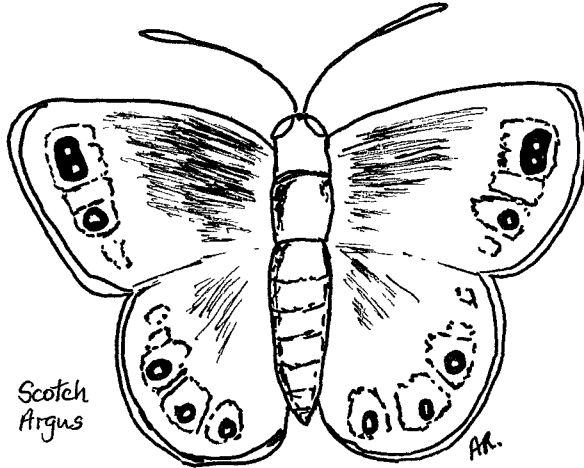
Last year (2003) there was a large influx of **painted ladies**. This year it was the turn of **peacocks**. I counted over 300 insects on a bed of **thistles** on Northballo Hill in the Sidlaws.

I was intent on tracking down **green hairstreak** butterflies which, to date, I have found elusive, but discovered several sites. I found a small number in Glen Prosen at GR 344644. At Inchdownrie in Glen Clova there was a scattering of green hairstreaks over a wider area, some almost beside the main road. The best colony was at Tullybaccart, GR 267362, where I counted 13 butterflies together. This appears to be a very strong site. Apart from **green hairstreaks** there is a good colony nearby of **small pearl bordered fritillaries** and a substantial colony of **dark green fritillaries**. By substantial I mean probably over 100. The area is a habitat for **common blue**, **small copper**, **small heath**, **green veined whites** and **ringlets**. Nearby in a bog there is a colony of *Trollius europaeus* (**globe flower**) growing which surprised me – does anyone know of *Trollius* growing this close to Dundee?

There exists a remarkable site for butterflies in general on Craig Mellon in Glen Clova. I cannot recommend this site because of the dangers from overhanging cliffs and the steep, rocky terrain. However I will mention for those who are very hardy that the following may be seen – **northern brown argus**, **Scotch argus**, **mountain ringlet**, **small pearl bordered fritillary**, **dark green fritillary**, **green veined white**, **small copper**, **small heath** and **ringlet**. Apart from this there are substantial colonies of **northern brown argus** at Inchdownrie and in gullies on the north side of upper Glen Clova. Barry Buddon is a good habitat and contains two colonies of **small blues** and plenty of **graylings** as well as other butterflies. This site is difficult of access currently because of heavy firing on the ranges. Within Dundee two **orange tips** were noted at the Seven Arches near Broughty Ferry.

I would be delighted to hear of any other good butterfly sites in Angus.

Pat Gaff



A WEALTH OF WILDLIFE

Sunday 1st August

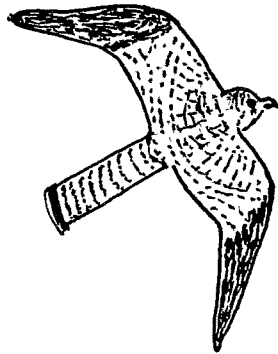
We'd been watching the largest pond at Carsegowniemuir Quarry for about 10 minutes and had counted five **blue-tailed damselflies** (*Ishnura elegans*) resting on pondweeds and floating algae, when the sun came out. Within a few minutes they were all flitting about and we gradually realised that these must all be males, patrolling over the water and sparring with rivals. Gradually other damselflies appeared. Three were pale brown **tenerals**, that is **newly-emerged adults**, and one other was a female with a pale yellow and black abdomen. One of the males soon became attached to her (literally!) and over the next half hour or so we watched the pair mate and start to deposit eggs in the plants at the water surface. In total we counted 11 blue-tailed damselflies on this small stretch of water in front of us. There must be many others on the rest of the large pond and the other smaller ponds in the quarry. It was very good to know that they were surviving and breeding well. They indicate the cleanliness and quality of the water. No other damselfly species appeared, unlike last year, but we're still hoping to see a dragonfly.

Meanwhile we kept being distracted by small swirls in the surface. We could just see shoals of small **fish**, some being tiny, about 1 to 2cm in length, and a group of 20-30 others that seemed to be about 6 to 10cm in length. They were feasting on the numerous insects,

mostly **chironomid midges** and **mayflies**. It was difficult to see the species but possibly they were **minnows** or small **perch** or perhaps both. Occasionally a larger swirl over in the deeper and darker water announced the presence of a bigger fish. Although we couldn't see the cause of the swirls, it must be perch since it's the only sizeable species present. I remarked idly that all these fish would provide a feast for a **heron**. The words were hardly out of my mouth when round the side of the large tree at the end of the pond flapped a large grey bird. The heron took one look at us and swirled heavily around to disappear as rapidly as it had appeared.

Around us we could hear calling **yellowhammers**, **chaffinches** and **tits**, with a variety of other unknown calls. A number of small yellowish birds flitted around in the trees on the other side of the pond. Clear views through binoculars revealed that they were young **willow warblers**. Frequently one zipped out to snatch a large and tasty insect. Occasionally a brown bunting with a bright yellow head, a male **yellowhammer**, undulated quickly across the pond in front of us. Young **blue tits**, with pale blue-grey backs, searched through the branches of the pond-side trees for insects. I'd been watching a distant bird, with a distinctive pale underside and speckled breast, on a dead branch of an ash on the far side of the pond for a few minutes and then realised, to my delight, that it was a **spotted flycatcher**, the first record at the quarry since Colin McLeod's note in 1985. Great! We watched it dash out at intervals to catch a passing insect. After a while, the palest teneral damselfly in front of us, presumably emerged only an hour or two before, took off and rose weakly in the warming sun to about 10 metres above the water and was gradually carried in the slight breeze across the water. Suddenly the spotted flycatcher darted out, snatched it and disappeared back in to the cover of the **ash** tree. One less damselfly! Ah well, a food chain in vivid action.

High above us circled large **gulls**, occasionally dipping and rising, presumably to catch flying insects. Even before entering the quarry in the morning there'd been, in the distance, almost continuous calls of a **buzzard**. It sounded like a cross between the cry of a gull and the usual mewing call, presumably a young one begging its parents for food. Then the direction of the calls changed and three buzzards glided low overhead. We were rewarded with clear views of the body and wing markings. The Youngs informed us that they'd often seen not three but five in Wilsteed's Wood. Was this a family of two adults and three young or were one or two of the younger buzzards last year's progeny? A few minutes later, just as we were leaving, a **sparrowhawk**



winged over the trees behind us and zoomed over to disappear on the other side of the largest enclosure. Wonderful! It had been a great way to spend an hour or so having our lunch. We were so engrossed watching all this activity that we'd hardly had time to eat!

As an added bonus, just as we were leaving the quarry in the evening, I was fortunate to catch sight of a female **kestrel** with a flock of about a dozen small birds above and behind it. They were too far away to see what species they were but the little birds were aggressively diving down and harassing the falcon to encourage its rapid flight away from the quarry. And then, back at the cottage, we heard a single but clear call of a **tawny owl** – in broad daylight.

It's wonderful to see such a variety and abundance of wildlife in and around Carsegowniemuir. Why don't you stop by and take a good look for yourself?

Jim Cook

THE BROWN CHINAMARK MOTH

Nymphula nympeata

On this year's Barry Buddon outing, in August, I came across this interesting small moth on **willow** beside the small pond by one of the crossroads (also a good place for **dragonflies** and **damselflies**). The interesting thing about this species is the larva, which lives out its life virtually underwater feeding on a number of water plants such as

Potamogeton species, **burr-reed**, **frogbit** and **water lily** It lives in a case made from the leaves of the food plant and then pupates in a cocoon spun on a plant stem Here the reference books differ – one says that it pupates a few centimetres above the water, while another says that it does this underwater This unusual moth larva can also be seen, on close examination, to have a form of gills Recently it has been thought to be responsible for eating holes in pond liners – that should make it popular with garden centres, but perhaps not with gardeners when their ponds start to leak! There are a number of species of **chinamark moth** in Britain and Europe

Gordon Maxwell

BARRY BUDDON

Barry Buddon (or Barry Links) is one of the largest and most important sand dune systems surviving in a near-natural condition in the UK. It is also one of the largest areas of largely unspoilt natural habitat in Tayside, and certainly the largest in the lowlands It owes its survival to its use as an army training area, but MoD access restrictions mean that Barry Buddon has been subject to comparatively little research, and much of what has been written remains relatively unknown The annual Barry Buddon Open Day is one of the few occasions when the public are able to explore the area In contrast, the Tay's other sand dune site at Tentsmuir has been the subject of well over 100 research projects and numerous scientific papers, and has had an entire volume, *Fragile environments*, devoted to it.

To help redress the balance, I have written an account of Barry Buddon, referring to as many existing sources as I have been able to find It concentrates on the area's history, but also considers wildlife and management issues Although unpublished, copies have been deposited with various libraries and other bodies where it will be available to future researchers I have a very limited number of spare copies of the 67-page report which I can give to anyone interested on a first-come, first-served basis. Alternatively, I can supply it electronically (in Word) either on disk or via email – please let me know if you would like to have a copy

Colin McLeod

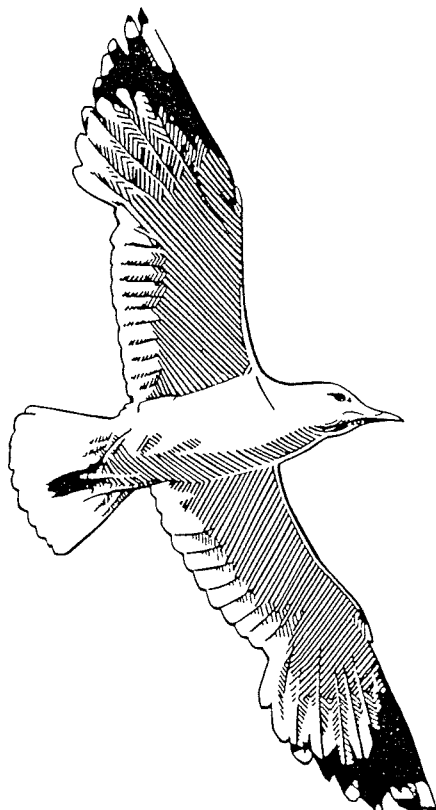
e-mail Colin.McLeod@JNCC.gov.uk

NATURE IN THE RAW

26th August

From the Redcastle hide at Lunan Bay we observed two **bonxies (great skuas)** harassing a **herring gull** in the air, trying to 'persuade' it to drop any food it was holding in its bill. The gull did just that, but not content with this, the two bonxies then dragged the unfortunate gull down to the water and proceeded to attack the poor thing viciously, at times holding the bird below the water. Eventually, after putting up a good fight, it was all over as we watched quite horrified to see the two skuas proceeding to feed off the now still herring gull – this was truly 'nature in the raw'!

Bob McCurley

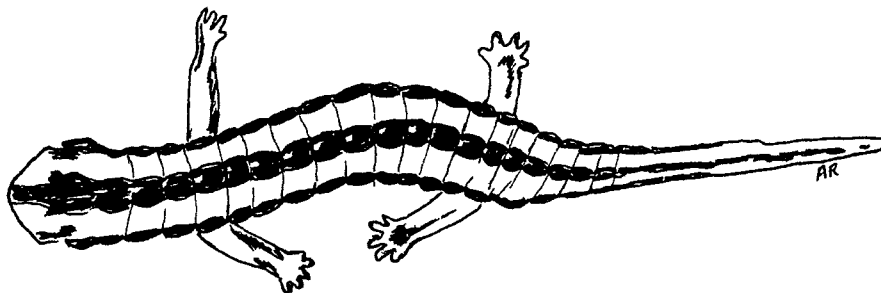


SALAMANDERS

31st August

It had rained overnight and mist and damp clung to the steep wooded slopes surrounding the Cascade du Lutour in the Pyrenees. I stepped off the path into the woods near the waterfall for a closer look and suddenly they were there. Smooth bodied, about 15 – 20cm long, with irregular longitudinal black and yellow markings, the newt-like creatures moved through the leaf litter with a deliberate, almost clockwork gait, seeking safety from the intruder. There must have been eight to ten of them within 30 metres or so. I think they were **fire salamanders** (*Salamandra salamandra*) which occur in much of mainland Europe, and from their size they were probably juveniles, tempted into the open by the cool and damp conditions. Although encounters may be quite common in the hills and mountains on the continent, they are a novelty for people from these islands. I felt privileged.

Jack Moody



A MAGICAL MOMENT

23rd September

It had been one of those days when the sun shone one minute and there was a rain shower the next. At 5.10pm on opening my front door, which gives me a wonderful view over the Tay estuary, the sky was a beautiful dark azure, the water dark turquoise and the reflection of the setting sun lit up the sky. When I looked up again a complete rainbow arced the sky from Barry Buddon to Tentsmuir. Suddenly there appeared golden leaves twisting and turning, flitting across the sky, like embers of burning wood, and I thought "Goodness, a fire in Monifieth."

Then I realised it was the setting sun making seagulls look like golden fireflies. It was a wonderful sight so I snatched my camera and phoned my neighbour opposite. Within a minute she was at my door and was amazed at the beautiful scene – the distant gulls weaving and dancing, flying in small flocks, all painted gold like a Japanese painting. It was breathtaking as a double rainbow appeared.

My neighbour next door was soon at her window too, pointing out the rainbows to her small granddaughter, but they had missed the wonderful magic of the evening sun's reflection on the birds.

The picturesque show was over – the magical moment gone – the gulls having finished their dance. Had they enjoyed the warm moment too?

Margaret McLaren

WASP AGGRESSION

5th October

I was sitting near a window in bright sunshine and was attracted by a sharp tap on the glass. There were two **wasps** rolling around and wrestling with each other on the sill. And then I realised that only one of them was a wasp (a **common wasp**, I think). The other was a **hoverfly**. Within seconds the wasp had bitten off the head of the fly, snipped off its wings and flown off with the rest. How many of us notice such aggression by a wasp? I'd only seen it a few times before.

Jim Cook

Dundee Naturalists' Society Accounts to 31 January 2004

INCOME		
Current A/c	827 63	
Deposit A/c	<u>1 73</u>	829 36
Subscriptions 03/04	1226 00	
Refund	<u>10 00</u>	1,216 00
Sale of War Bonds		36 46
Interest		
War Bonds	0 87	
Current A/c	0 35	
Deposit A/c	<u>2 10</u>	<u>3.32</u>
Equipment Fund		
AGM Profit	43.60	
Christmas Social	73.37	
Afternoon Lecture	49 00	
Donations	137 00	
Raffle	<u>34 00</u>	337 07
Badges Sold		3 00
		<u>£2,425 21</u>

EXPENDITURE		
Printing		
Bulletin	286 00	
Photocopies	17 00	
Syllabuses	<u>89 30</u>	392 30
Office Bearers' Expenses		
Secretary	70 00	
Treasurer	20 53	
Postage	<u>27 00</u>	117 53
Insurance		420 00
Rent		
T 9	180 00	
Chaplaincy	<u>35 25</u>	215 25
Lecturers' Fees and Expenses		136 65
Subscriptions		
SWT	40 00	
Scotways	60 00	
Green Diary	<u>15 00</u>	115 00
Excursion Secretary'sf Float		139 64
Miscellaneous Expenses		
Gift & Flowers		39 50
Cash in Bank		
Deposit A/c	833 16	
Current A/c	<u>16 18</u>	849 34
		<u>£2,425 21</u>

Examined and found correct and sufficiently vouched

Auditor _____ Date _____

Dundee Naturalists' Society Accounts to 31 January 2004

Weekend A/c

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
<u>Seahouses Weekend</u>			
Bank Balance at 31 1 03	1295 95	Expenses	5413 15
Balances received	4480.00	Balance Carried Forward	528 30
Lunches	<u>165 50</u>		
	<u>5941 45</u>		<u>5941 45</u>
 <u>Ardishaig Weekend</u>			
Balance B/f	528 30	Recce exp enses	52 00
Deposits Received	960.00	Balance in account	1437 20
Interest	<u>0 90</u>		
	<u>£1,489 20</u>		<u>£1,489 20</u>

Carsegowniemuir A/c

Opening Balance	528 85	Balance in A/c	529 97
Interest	<u>1 12</u>		
	<u>£529 97</u>		<u>£529 97</u>

Summer Outings A/c

Opening Balance	139 64	Expenses	1705 00
Income	<u>1663 00</u>	Closing Balance	<u>97 64</u>
	<u>£1,802 64</u>		<u>£1,802 64</u>

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

SUMMER OUTINGS PROGRAMME 2005

Saturday 23rd April **Dollar Glen** Bus 9.00am Leader - Wynn Tennant

Dollar Glen lies at the foot of the Ochil Hills and is in the care of the National Trust. At the head of the Glen lies Castle Campbell which is managed by Historic Scotland. It may be possible on the day to book a guided tour of the castle for £3 or free for members of the National Trust. (Remember and bring your card). The Burn of Sorrow tumbles down the glen and there is a good network of well maintained paths and where steep there are steps and handrails. The town of Dollar is on the level.

There are public toilets in Dollar and at Castle Campbell, and the small tea-room at the Castle should be open. The bus will park in Dollar and an hour walk up through the glen will take you to Castle Campbell.

Tuesday 10th May **St. Vigeans Nature Trail** Cars Leader - Anne Reid

Our walk will be along the St Vigeans Nature Trail which follows the old Arbroath to Forfar railway line north from the village. Meet at Allan Street car park at 6.00pm or at St Vigeans at 7.00pm. (Grid Ref = 640430) Access to the car park at St Vigeans is from the **north-east** side of Arbroath. Take the A92 out towards Montrose and then turn left into Tarry Road (signed St Vigeans) just after the petrol station and before the end of the 30mph restriction (houses on south side, field on north side). As this road curves sharply left, take a right turn, then first left - again signposted St. Vigeans. Car park is just beyond the railway bridge. Please do not approach from the west as there is little parking in the narrow street. The nature trail follows the west bank of the burn and starts at the gates near to the bridge over the burn, and is flat, easy walking.

Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd May **Inverness Weekend** Leaders - Jim Cook and Wynn Tennant

We will be staying in the Waterside Inn, Inverness, in a scenic spot on the banks of the River Ness. We leave from Discovery Point at 5pm. The venues are as described in the Weekend fly. We should be home between 8.00pm to 8.30pm on Sunday.

Saturday 4th June **Fowlsheugh & Kinneff Church** Cars Leader - Dorothy Fyffe

Fowlsheugh is south of Stonehaven. It is a number of years since we have visited this RSPB Reserve, which consists of a spectacular cliff for breeding sea birds, due mainly to lack of access by coach and very limited parking. The path twists and is steep in places, and care should be taken, especially going down the steps, but those not keen to walk along the cliff can get good sightings of the birds at the beginning of the walk.

We have decided to try a visit by private car. If willing would car owners make themselves known to Jean Colquhoun - it is suggested that the three passengers per car could reimburse the driver for the travelling expenses. Those needing transport also contact Jean. We would like to stop to visit the historic and interesting Kinneff Old Church and may stop at the Bervie Chipper on the return trip? Meet at Fowlsheugh at 10.30am. Departure from Dundee depending on car drivers' own arrangements, around 9.15 - 9.30.

Tuesday 14 June **Newtyle Pathways**

Leader - Peter Middleton

Newtyle Path Network has been well planned and there are four booklets describing the very interesting district surrounding the village. We will initially be walking along the old railway to the turntable, which can still be seen. The paths are all good under foot and link into each other. Maps will be given out but our leader will show the way. Perhaps a refreshment can be had at the Belmont Arms before we return to Newtyle? We meet at East Whale Lane car park at 6.15pm or at the car park in North Street, Newtyle, past the Bowling Green, at 7pm.

Saturday 18th June **Burn O'Vat, Muir of Dinnet**

Leader - Alban Houghton

A flaming June day to see the wildlife delights of upland Deeside is all we ask. On arrival we will take a short and gentle walk up the Vat Burn to the spectacular Vat, gouged out in the last ice age. Lunch can be taken before or after returning to the bus. A 4km circular walk skirting lochs Davan and Kinord and passing by woodland, wetland and moorland should provide lots of interest in the afternoon. SNH have declassified Dinnet oakwood as a National Nature Reserve but it is still an SSSI. (Caenlochan and Inverpolly NNRs have been similarly declassified) Toothed wintergreen and an adder were seen when the Nats last visited in July 1994. A stop for tea (fish and chips?) on the way back is planned.

Thursday 30th June **Lomond Hills** Bus 9.30am. Leaders - Brian Ballinger & Margaret McLaren

The Lomond Hills are included in a Fife Regional Park and are visible for miles around on a clear day. The main peaks of East and West Lomond are plugs from old volcanoes and are surrounded by extensive hill and moorland. There is also a well preserved lime kiln and several reservoirs. East Lomond shows the outer defences of an Iron Age Hill Fort.

The varied nature of the Park provides habitats for interesting plant, bird and invertebrate life and we should see a sample of this with short walks guided by the ranger. We expect to start from the parking area between the two Lomonds and, given suitable weather, there should be good views of the surrounding countryside. There is also the possibility of a visit to a meadow area in the south of the Park.

Saturday 9th July **Barons Haugh, Motherwell** Bus 8.30am Leaders - Bob McCurley & Dorothy Fyfe

The Barons Haugh RSPB Reserve was officially opened in 1988 by Jimmy McGregor accompanied by the then Warden - Russell Nisbet. There is a very good footpath network and the distance around this floodplain is about 1.5 miles. The habitats are very varied and include wetland, marshland, open fields, parkland, the River Clyde, woodland and scrub. This leads to a wide variety of birdlife, the best time being in July. We hope to see breeding gadwalls, shovellers, grasshopper warblers, kingfisher, great crested grebe and occasionally lesser whitethroat and willow tit. July is also the time for passage waders with black tailed godwit, ruff, greenshanks and green sandpipers commonly visiting. The butterfly list numbers 15 species with the Camberwell beauty having been recorded. The ringlet is the most common. A flora list is being supplied to Bob by the RSPB representative Mike Truebridge in time for the outing and they have requested we let them have plant records from our visit. There is a very good website on www.baronshaugh.co.uk.

Saturday 23rd July **St Monance to Elie** Bus 9.00am

Leader Brian Allan

The walk from St Monance to Elie has become a firm favourite with the Nats over the years. We start at the old church at the south end of the village and follow the coastal path to the delightful harbour at Elie. On the way we will see a number of interesting geological features as well as many coastal wild flowers. The highlight of the walk for many, not including the pub at Elie Harbour, is the traditional search for the mystical Elie rubies at a small patch of black sand just north of Elie. There will be a small prize for the largest ruby found!

Tuesday 2nd August **Carsegowniemuir BBQ** Cars

Leaders - Jim Cook & Anne Reid

Come and see how the quarry is growing. Possible moth trapping and guided walks. Bring your own food and drink. Meet at Carsegowniemuir at 7.00 pm or East Whale Lane at 6.00pm. Directions and lifts, if required, from Margaret McLaren 01382 779422.

Sunday 7th August **Barry Buddon Open Day** Cars Leaders Bob McCurley, Jim Cook and others

Another opportunity to gain access to Barry Buddon with its wide variety of interesting plants, birds and insects. This is a joint outing with RSPB, SWT and SOC. Meet at Monifieth Football Field car park at 10.00am or at East Whale Lane at 9.30am.

Saturday 20th August

Glen Mark

Bus 9.00am

Leader Brian Allan

This outing is a gentle walk from the car park near the head of Glen Esk to the Queen's Well. We will stroll alongside the water of Mark to the well Queen Victoria had built as a stopping place on her numerous sorties from her beloved Deeside. On the way we should see a number of moorland birds and flowers. For the energetic the track carries on beyond the well towards Mount Keen. This popular walk is not very steep but a bit rough underfoot in places, walking sticks advisable.

Saturday 17th September **Tentsmuir Fungus Foray** Cars

Leader Gordon Maxwell

Tentsmuir Forest is classical fungus country and has been on the Nats foray list for a number of years. A large number of species, including many uncommon or rare ones, have been found. Being a low level, coastal location the area is unaffected by the hard frosts experienced elsewhere and therefore the season tends to be long, with fungi being found well into November. Red squirrels are also found in this area and seals and seabirds are usually seen from the beach. Meet at East Whale Lane car park at 9.00am, Tay Bridge car park (south end) at 9.20am or Kinshaldy at 10.00am,