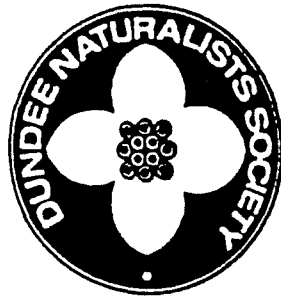


# Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



**Bulletin No 30 2005**

**DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY  
ANNUAL BULLETIN No 30  
2005**

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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, Bede Pounder, Mary Reid and Artfile.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Thanks to all members who have submitted articles and reports, it makes Bulletin production much easier, though there is always space for contributions from new authors. Thanks to Mary 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.

It is possible that proposed postal charge changes, based on the shape of mail rather than its weight, may require us to change the size of this Bulletin. We will try to keep you informed - it may never happen!

Anne Reid

# SOCIETY REPORTS

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Society's varied lecture and excursion programme continued to be well supported over the year. I would like to thank all those who arranged and led our amazing range of activities. Council members take a bow! You will delight in recalling your own sights and insights as you re-live our activities recorded in this Bulletin.

Jim Cook and Anne Reid retrieved multiple spare copies of 90-year-old 'Proceedings and Transactions' of the Society from the museum and some are still available to members – a highly recommended read. On reading these, two comparisons of the changing times came to mind.

The first concerns cash. Following the Society's reformation on 19th January 1912, the annual subscription was reduced from 5s to 2s 6d (ie 25p to 12 5p) and apparently remained at this level until 1924! Gordon Maxwell, my predecessor as President, and Dorothy Fyffe have been similarly prudent. They have obtained third party group insurance for the Society at better value (£120 v £525) and with equivalent cover. Thanks are due to both, as this was a steadily increasing expense. Following on from this change:

- (i) The Society is now affiliated to the Ramblers Association. DNS has similar associations with The Scottish Wildlife Trust and The Scottish Rights of Way Society.
- (ii) The Ramblers' Insurers require our AGM to approve two extra clauses in our constitution, viz 'Expulsion of members' and 'Dissolution of the Society'. This will be put to the AGM in March 2006.
- (iii) A commonsense approach to personal safety on excursions is outlined in the article, 'Ensuring Our Safety' (below). Council makes no apologies for stating the obvious.

The second comparison concerns imaging technology as a lecturing aid. In 1912, the Society held 'fortnightly meetings with lantern illustrations'. We have continued the lantern tradition with slide projection and this will obviously still be used. Increasingly, talks are being illustrated with digital images and this imaging method is likely to supersede slides eventually. During the current session it is noteworthy that two lectures have been disrupted when slides have jammed in the traditional projector. The inevitable crash of the digital system has yet to occur; we will endeavour to defer this happening!

Looking ahead – do pass on suggestions for outings or talks to myself or any Council member. We need to maintain our numbers, so please bring your friends to DNS events and encourage them to join the Society. Useful publicity was garnered at the Castle Green Festival in June thanks to Gordon Maxwell and Jim Cook and all the other helpers on the day. A 'Craigie Column' piece also appeared in the Courier which described dragonflies seen on the Queen's Well excursion on 20th August.

Alban Houghton

## ENSURING OUR SAFETY

Everyone in our Society wants our outings to be enjoyable, informative and **safe**. This piece summarises Council's recent review of safety issues and updates Jim Cook's excellent article in Bulletin 20 (1995). See also **the appendix to the syllabus** printed on the back of the programme cards, which is repeated below.

**Safety is everyone's responsibility.** When you are going on an outing, please use your commonsense to avoid accidents and getting lost.

Using the Ramblers Association grading, most of our walks are easy to moderate; they are usually on well-marked paths or tracks. Most hazards and consequent risk are identified to minimise the possibility of an accident. Leaders are encouraged to issue a handout with instructions about the route plus a suitable map as necessary and to change the outing if the weather is inclement etc. (This would be particularly indicated if a longer walk in hill country was planned.)

Some members may wish to walk part of the route or a shorter alternative. They are advised to tell the leader and not to go alone (see bullet points 2 and 5 below).

**What you can do:**

- Remember that roads, which may unavoidably be part of our route, are more dangerous than a pedestrian way. Take care if there is no pavement, getting on and off the bus, standing on a moving bus – best to remain seated
- Consider your own state of fitness before setting out, noting the current and expected weather conditions. Speak to the leader if in doubt. Tell the leader of any medical condition that may affect your ability to complete the walk. Take any special medication with you
- Make sure you have appropriate clothing, stout footwear, food and drinks. Walking boots are best for rough ground. Though the leader has a first aid pack, carry simple items yourself
- Know where you are going and try to remain aware of where you are at any time during the outing. Stay with the leader if you have any doubts about the route. It is desirable to carry a suitable map (eg OS Landranger 1 50,000) and a compass and know how to use them. Carry a mobile phone if you have one
- Do not wander off alone. Please stay in groups of 3 or 4, particularly if you leave the indicated track (do not stray far from this). Such small groups must inform the leader if they are following a route variation

With a little commonsense and taking reasonable precautions, you and the leader can continue to enjoy our natural history outings

**Insurance Note** Despite steeply rising insurance costs, the Society has secured equivalent cover to our old policy, at a very reasonable group rate, by becoming affiliated to the Ramblers' Association. The cover is outlined in the Appendix below. The Society is indebted to Gordon Maxwell and Dorothy Fyffe for their initiative

A condition of our new insurance is that the Society is required to add two clauses to our constitution at our next AGM

**Appendix to the syllabus, please read carefully**

"We plan our outings carefully and assess risk to minimise the possibility of accidents. However each member can help to avoid accidents by taking reasonable precautions

It is important for individuals only to undertake walks within their capabilities. Appropriate warm and waterproof clothing and stout footwear should be worn. Food, drink and a simple first aid kit should be carried, and a map and compass are desirable

The leader should be informed if members are planning to leave the party. The Dundee Naturalists' Society holds third party insurance but this does not cover members for personal accident. Those wishing to have this insurance would need to make their own arrangements "

Alban Houghton

## **TECHNICAL CONVENOR'S REPORT**

Last year members of Dundee Naturalists' Society met with Dundee Group SWT members and representatives of the Leisure and Parks Department of Dundee Council down at the Stannergate to investigate site improvements for wildlife. After agreeing a schedule for grass cutting and 'tidying up', the meeting also agreed that two descriptive signs should be placed, one at either end of the most interesting area. SWT and Nats members agreed to produce the signs and hand them over to the Council who would mount them on substantial boards and place them firmly in position.

In the event, by mid summer a work gang was cutting a wide new tarmac path straight through the middle of the area, as part of the new coastal footpath and cycle-way. At first this was greeted with considerable alarm by us and several other concerned groups but the major damage seems to have been confined to the path itself and, with luck, not much permanent harm will have been done to local wildlife. We hope that the signs will be in place by the spring of this year.

This year we organised a reduced number of the Tuesday evening study outings. These four outings dovetailed into the official evening programme, the first one of which was to St Vigeans Nature Trail, Arbroath on 24th May. A small group of us visited Darroch Bluebell Wood, near Blairgowrie on 31st May for a splendid evening of bright blue colours. In particular, Gordon, Doug and Jim recorded a considerable list of species, with help from the rest of the group. Our next evening excursion, on 7th June, was a study visit to our perennial favourite, Carsegowniemuir quarry, but the evening was rather chill. We didn't record any new species and weren't able to find any of the **damselflies**. It was obviously too early in the year.

The conditions on the final study evening, at Arbroath on 22nd June, provided a complete contrast. Fortunately the weather was kind, it was well attended and the plants and animals were in full display. Most of the party managed to reach the Deil's Heid while exploring many of the nooks and crannies along the way, while taking great care on the steep slopes and cliffs, of course. We managed to find most of the expected species, ranging from numerous breeding **birds**, **rabbits** (unfortunately), **orchids** (although no **early purples** still in flower), **purple milk-vetch**, **carline thistle**, a few **common scurvy grass** and grand displays of **sea campion**, along with many others. It proved an excellent end to the season of evening excursions before the summer.

Jim Cook

## CARSEGOWNIEMUIR REPORT

This past year only a small number of trees, ten, of several species, mostly **birches** and **rowans**, were planted in several locations in tall **rosebay willowherb**. The size of these weeds means that all holes have to be dug deep and carefully cleared of rhizomes and roots for about a metre around to give the small trees a chance to establish themselves before the willowherb re-invades their root space. Fortunately a few years ago Margaret Duncan, Ewan McGregor and others had placed three large overlapping sheets of corrugated galvanised iron on top of a large patch of willowherb and completely smothered it. It was easy to plant several of the small birches in this cleared area. They should be well established before the willowherb manages to return.

The aims of such plantings are to maintain the numbers of trees in the quarry, by replacing dead specimens, and to improve the age structure of the developing woodlands. The other project carried out was to plant six well-grown **elders** at the very far end of the quarry, facing directly into the prevailing south-westerly winds, to help form a wind break. Over the past few years eight others have been planted. The earlier ones are thriving now and some form robust bushes but the more recent ones are still struggling to gain a firm foothold. We hope that, in time, they will all grow and develop and between them form a sufficiently thick hedge to protect the more delicate species behind. As always, though, in recent years there has been a distinct lack of manpower to dig holes and to plant and protect the new trees.

The other annual tasks, of digging and mulching the smaller trees and re-cutting the paths, took place over several very pleasant summer visits. The Youngs' dogs, Pfennig and Milly, are always very keen to join us. Finally, several of us spent an evening or two pulling out **ragwort**. There is much less than there used to be ten or so years ago and a group at the barbecue on the evening of 2nd August helped to clear the rest. We all much enjoyed the food and liquid refreshments - and the dogs got their share as well!

Jim Cook

## MARGARET DUNCAN

During a visit to New Zealand in November 2005 I was able to meet up with Margaret Duncan. For the information of new members - Margaret is a past President of the Society, was a long term member, and was instrumental in the setting up of the Carsegowniemuir Reserve.

She was looking very well and is enjoying her new home near Auckland. She wishes to be remembered to all her friends in Dundee and district and hopes that more of you will be able to find your way to visit her.

Dorothy Fyffe

## OBITUARIES

### GLENDA MOIR

We were saddened, in March 2005, just before the AGM, to hear of the passing-on of a member of very long-standing, Glenda Moir. She was a Society stalwart, regularly attending the winter meetings from her home in Arbroath and joining nearly every summer outing for many years. She maintained a busy life in politics and local affairs and yet found time for the Naturalists. Although infirmity has prevented her from making the trip into Dundee in recent years, we will always remember her for her optimism, her cheerfulness and her interests in natural history and the countryside. She retained a keen interest in the Society's affairs and frequently asked to hear the latest news. We will miss her many contributions.

Jim Cook

### CHRISTOPHER NORTH

Although not a member of the Dundee Nats for very long Dr Christopher North was well known by many of us. He was a regular speaker to our society, mainly talking about his beloved Mediterranean wild plants. When he died in July 2005 he was the grand age of 87.

Chris graduated in horticulture at Reading University before serving with the RAF as a meteorologist during the Second World War. He then worked at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge. But it was in 1953 that he moved to our neck of the woods when he joined the Scottish Horticultural Research Institute at Invergowrie. He retired in 1976 as Head of Plant Breeding and Deputy Director.

Most of us, however, will remember him from his travels around the Mediterranean which he wrote up in great detail and had published, mainly in the Scottish Rock Garden Club magazine. It was these articles that led to the publication, in 1997, of his book 'A Botanical Tour Round The Mediterranean' covering Chris and his late wife Marie's plant hunting holidays from the length and breadth of the Mediterranean. In 2003 at the age of 85 he, with the help of our own Les Tucker, transferred all his data and many photographs on to CD Rom that expanded the mass of detail not possible in the book.

He was an accomplished water colourist, a keen baker of unusual breads and a knowledgeable wine drinker. He was a stimulating and generous friend to many and will be sadly missed.

Brian Allan

### DAVID HENDERSON - AN APPRECIATION

Although David was not a member of DNS, he was a very good friend of the Society and had provided many valuable services over the years. His sudden death, on the 29th December, at the early age of 61, came as a horrible shock and greatly saddened us all.

Many members of the Society had come to know David well through contacts with Dundee Museum. He was a seemingly permanent institution at the Museum (over 40 years!) and was always most friendly, welcoming and helpful. Although his interests were in geology and, particularly, the history of whaling in Dundee, he was also a fount of much local natural history knowledge.

His long tenure of posts in the Museum service meant that he had met and even knew well several Nats members of earlier times, in particular one of the great stalwarts of the middle of last century, Edwin Sturrock. David would recount with relish tales of meetings with him and others of that generation. In very recent times, David had been most helpful in locating minutes, files, photographs and other old records about this Society. We will miss him greatly.

Jim Cook

We also record the passing of Margaret Hillhouse, in May 2005, and Allan Brown, in January 2006.

## WINTER MEETINGS

### CARNOUSTIE BAY AND BARRY BUDDON

4th January

Not believing the dismal weather forecast, 46 members met for a New Year walk. It was a breezy but bright and pleasant January morning, quite dry underfoot and with just a sprinkling of snow to be seen on the Sidlaws.

The walk was round Carnoustie Bay, to where the Barry Burn meets the sea. On the beach an unusual **gull** was noticed, but not positively identified as a **laughing gull** until next day. The gull, a first year juvenile, is a vagrant from America and subsequently attracted many twitchers from far and near when it was announced to the bird world.

The more energetic continued on to the firing range and Happy Valley and before turning back got a superb view of a male **sparrowhawk** sitting on a small tree enjoying the sunshine.

Then, having worked up a hearty appetite, the group headed for the excellent repast provided by the staff at the Station Hotel, Carnoustie.

The previous week two **otters** had been seen in the burn from the bridge, but unfortunately there was no sign of them on the walk.

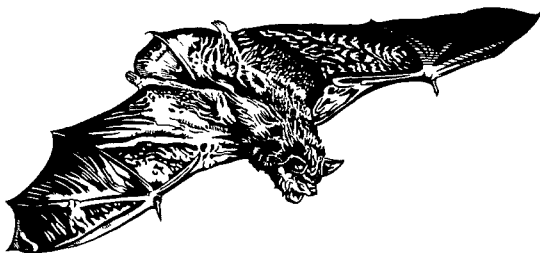
Dorothy Fyffe

## ESCAPE TO NEW ZEALAND

Daphne Macfarlane Smith - 18th January

Escape we did. For an hour or so, we all forgot the wild and windy weather outside, as our lecturer had promised. The Society's New Year's lecture series began strongly, with a wonderful description of the 'Land of the Long White Cloud'. Daphne conducted us on a tour of both the South and North Islands of this most intriguing country. She and her husband, Bill, had spent three weeks travelling widely around in April 2004, late summer in the southern hemisphere.

Daphne and Bill flew into Christchurch, on South Island, to begin their tour. Much of the surrounding area is flat and heavily farmed and few native plants and animals can be found. Exotic species abound, from **goldfinches** and **Australian magpies** to **canna lilies**

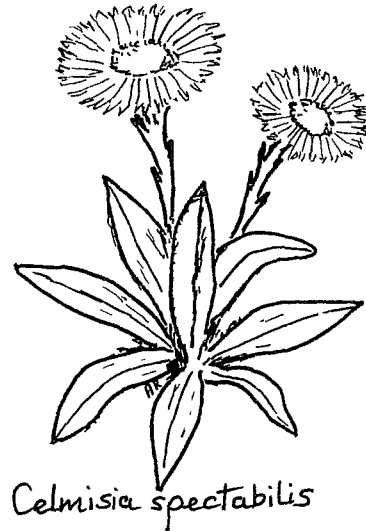


and **eucalyptus** trees, not forgetting the **sheep**, **deer**, **weasels** and **rats**. However, native species still thrive in places. **Red-billed gulls** were the most common species scavenging around the town. Areas of natural vegetation harbour **cabbage palms**, **lancewood**, **red pine** (or **rimu**), cypress-like **podocarp** trees with **New Zealand flax** plants common on the ground. Only two native mammal species

occur, the **long-tailed** and **short-tailed bats**. Much native vegetation has been cleared and the Banks Peninsula, for example, once covered by thick bush, is now arid grassland.

Offshore, native **cetaceans** are common. During a boat trip, Daphne and Bill were fortunate to see **Hector's dolphins**, a small, mottled light and dark grey species with a rounded dorsal fin. They crossed the Canterbury Plain to visit the Southern Alps and were able to find **spur-winged plovers**, **pukeko** (or **swamp hen**), **pieb stilts** and rare **black stilts**. A flight in a small aircraft provided wonderful views of both Mount Tasman and Aorangi or 'cloud piercer', the evocative Maori name for Mount Cook, with an altitude of 12,315 feet. A visit to the coast provided an opportunity to view the famous Moeraki boulders, 60 million year old spherical calcite concretions.

A few days spent at MacAndrew Bay on the Otago Peninsula reminded our visitors of the Clyde estuary, especially the days of drizzling rain! However, bird life abounded, with **spotted shag**, **variable oystercatcher**, **blue** and **yellow-eyed penguins**, **royal albatross** and **Stewart Island shags**. Daphne vividly described their visit to Lake Te Anau and the wonderful **glow-worm caves**. These are nothing like European species, being **fly maggots** that use hanging sticky threads to catch their prey. Their bioluminescent guts lure flying insects. Beside Lake Gunn they found such native species as **common mountain daisy**, (*Celmisia spectabilis*), several *Senecio* species, **swordgrass**, (*Aciphylla* species), **clubmosses** and **Mount Cook lily** (*Ranunculus lyalli*). Milford Sound is spectacular but perhaps best admired after heavy rain, which allows numerous spectacular waterfalls to braid the surrounding cliffs. The pair travelled north, past woods of **southern**



*Celmisia spectabilis*

**beech** (*Nothofagus*) species, and **tree ferns**, but few birds although the **sandflies** found them - and feasted heartily. From their B'nB they could see the Fox Glacier, which has advanced and retreated 2,000 feet in the last two decades. We were treated to good slides of such species as **white-fronted terns** and **black-billed gulls**. An early start on a whale-watching cruise from the port of Greymouth was rewarded by close views of five **sperm whales**, with **wandering albatrosses**, **cape pigeons** and **westland petrels** feeding on the sea surface.

After a stormy 14-mile ferry crossing to North Island, Daphne described a visit to the wonderful Kapiti Island nature reserve. All **possums** and **rats** have been cleared from the island and native birds thrive. We saw slides of **New Zealand pigeon**, **whitehead**, **NZ robin** and **pipit**, **tui**, **weka** (a type of **rail**) and a **kaka** (a species of **parrot**) that was so determined to obtain a free meal that it bit Daphne's hand. A visit to the volcanic area of Taupo in central North Island provided a medley of wonderful sights and smells, of the three volcanoes, the highest being Mount Ruapehu, the beautifully-coloured Devil's bath tub, the Lady Knox geyser and stinking pools of boiling mud. A trip north of Auckland to the Bay of Islands was a little disappointing, but allowed sightings of **wrybill** and **paradise shelduck**. In Auckland, Daphne and Bill dropped in on former member Margaret Duncan and, in the last few days of their trip, visited Tiritiri Matangi island to see the work of reintroducing native plants and birds such as **red-crowned parakeet**, **weta** and an excellent **takahe** (like a very large **moorhen**). The last excursion that Daphne described was to Muriwai **gannet** colony on a large offshore rock. Their holiday had been a resounding success and the Society was delighted by her amusing and graphic commentary to the wonderful variety of slides.

Jim Cook

## SOCIAL EVENING

Stovie Supper and Scottish Night  
28th January

A change of venue for our Social Evening this year brought 42 members to the Queen's Hotel in Dundee, in party mood and sporting colourful tartans. We were welcomed into a large, warm room where Margaret McLaren had prettily decorated the tables with bright spring flowers.



Wynn Tennant had arranged a full programme of fun and games including 'Pass the Haggis' and a light-hearted Scottish general knowledge quiz. With great gusto Bede Pounder read some Scottish verse - getting his tongue round impossible words was no mean feat. Shelagh Gardiner gave a lively reading from Winnie the Pooh and then delighted us by reading one of her own poems.

Stovies and oatcakes were served and enjoyed, even by the sceptics who were among those asking for second helpings! This was followed by delicious trifle and coffee. The raffle prizes were many and various so there were lots of lucky people. Our thanks to everyone who made a most enjoyable evening.

Marjory Tennant

## MEMBERS' NIGHT

1st February

Once again our slide supremo, Brian Allan, presided over the filling of the projector magazines and organised everybody. Eleven members brought slides on the usual wide range of subjects and Daphne Macfarlane Smith's prints and books of the Western Isles were much admired by no fewer than fifty members and friends.

Those who brought slides were

Brian Ballinger Easter Ross - Vice-county 106. Brian and Barbara are the VC recorders for the BSBI (Botanical Society of the British Isles) and collate all plant records for this mostly remote area which contains 25 Munros. Notable species include *Oxytropis halleri* on the coast and **toothwort** (*Lathraea squamaria*) near Dingwall. A full account appeared in the 2004 Bulletin on page 35.

Alec Rollo North American Birds. Taken while working in Portland, Oregon for two years, slides included garden birds such as **varied thrush** (winter) and **Anna's hummingbird** (summer) and waterfowl including **cinnamon teal** and **wood duck**. A shot of a **common loon** (our **great northern diver**) from above showed just how far back its feet are positioned which makes it so ungainly on land.

Gordon Maxwell A Natural Selection. Everything from **porcelain fungi** at the Lade Braes, St Andrews, and **velvet shank fungi** (*Flammulina velutipes*) to clouds and a **sun dog** (rainbow in the clouds) via a **wren** on a post and some uptailed **whooper swans**.

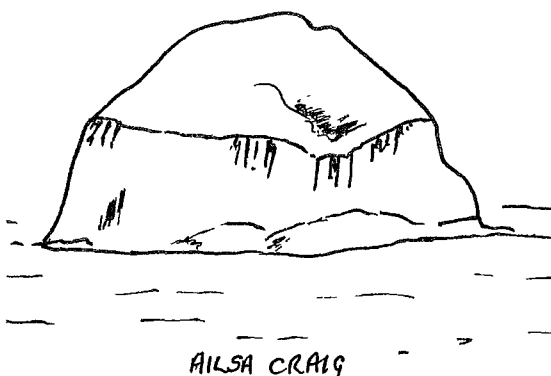
Bob McCurley Mile High Club in Denver. Angus and Dundee Bird Club is twinned with the Denver Field Ornithologists. Ten visiting ADBC members saw a variety of local birds and we were shown **mountain bluebird**, **common nighthawk**, **western meadow lark** and **bald eagle**. Also red and yellow **cactus** flowers. Denver itself is one mile above sea level - hence the title (and not what you might have thought!)

Jim Cook Ailsa Craig on the Waverley. A trip from Ayr on the world's last ocean-going paddle steamer to 'Paddy's Milestone'. **Gannets** flying, vertical sea bird cliffs and the unmanned lighthouse, now powered by large photovoltaic cells.

Brian Allan A Grand Tour. Flower photos from across Europe. Rare **crocuses** in Greece and *Narcissus tazetta* in Italy. **Orchids** from various places, including a happy *Ophrys argolica*, where the markings looked just like a smiley face.

Marjory Tennant Where Nats Went. A selection of slides to remind members of past outings - from Forfar Loch to Lochore Meadows via the Kilmartin cairns and Dunadd on the Crinan weekend.

Daphne Macfarlane Smith Western Isles. After landing on the beach on Barra (the only tidal airport in Britain!) Daphne progressed north through the Uists to Harris and Lewis. On the way she encountered a **common sandpiper**, photographed from the car, a **heronry** on a



scrubby cliff and a **corncrake** at Balranald. We were assured that a toothless comb and a credit card produced a passable imitation of this very loud bird, and were given a demonstration. A few slides of **butterflies** were added to finish, including **mountain ringlet** and **small** and **large heath**.

Peter Ellis French Pyrenees. A trip in March to look for migrating **ring ouzels**. An Angus-ringed bird had been seen in the Pyrenees and Peter saw some mixed flocks containing both the nominate and alpine races together. Various alpine plants were also photographed including **hepaticas**, **dog's tooth violets** (*Erythronium dens-canis*), **oxlips** and **spring gentians** (*Gentiana verna*).

Jim Cook (again) Crinan Weekend. Views from Loch Sween to Taynuilt. **Damselflies** near Taynish and **caterpillars** suspended from **oak** trees by their own silk. A **speckled wood butterfly** and views from Dunadd and around Kilmartin.

Alban Houghton A Miscellany. Including **kingcups** at Kellas and **bluebells** in the **oakwoods** at Taynuilt. Calendar shots of Jura and Dunadd and **spleenwort** and **fairy foxglove** (*Erinus* sp.) on Kilmartin walls. The linear series of cairns at Kilmartin and those at Temple Wood nearby. Back nearer to home were **orchids** at Lochore and **crowfoot** on the Dighty.

Everyone enjoyed the varied subjects and excellent photographs of all our contributing members, and all were warmly thanked for their willingness to share them with us. We rounded off with a vote of thanks to Brian for his organisation of the evening.

Anne Reid

## THE MAGIC OF PLANTS

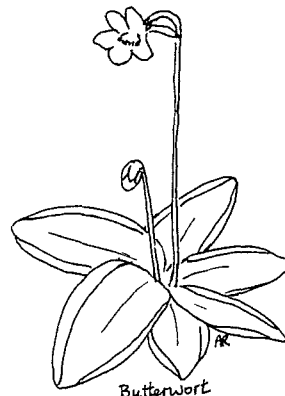
Leslie Bisset - 15th February

The lecture promised by Leslie Bisset was eagerly anticipated and a large audience (of around 50) was not disappointed. Les firstly explained that his love of plants was kindled early on in his career when he started work at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh where he met a botanist, Bill Burt. It was while at RBG Edinburgh that Les rose through the ranks to become Assistant Curator. Les then went on to explain that Edinburgh was a great place to work and he quickly became interested in not just plants, but their origins, their uses and how truly magical they can be.

After 18 years at Edinburgh he developed itchy feet and was determined to open a garden centre, but fate took a hand and he became Curator of Dundee University Botanic Garden on the retirement of Eddie Kemp. At Dundee he started with only two staff and a very small budget, but with a combination of skill and a little scrounging the garden developed to what it is today, a great asset to Dundee and Tayside. Teaching of young school children in the open air was one of Leslie's favourite aspects of the job and the Dundee garden makes an ideal classroom. We were all amused by the many anecdotes and stories Les seemed to recall with ease.

The entertainment then moved on to the slide presentation and we were guided through the many aspects of plant life that have interested Les during his illustrious career. We saw parasitic plants like the **strangler fig** that go on finally to kill their host tree and other plants that have symbiotic relationships with hosts, where a certain amount of give and take takes place enabling both parasite and host survive. **Dodder** and **mistletoe** have similar methods, beating the odds of survival. We moved on to look at insectivorous plants such as the **sundews** and **butterworts** which secrete enzymes that dissolve insects providing essential nutrients for the plants.

Seed dispersal, pollination and disguise were the next pieces of plant magic we were to wonder at. We looked at plants like the **Australian trigger plant** - when an insect lands on the flower it sets off the trigger and the unlucky insect is hit with a dose of pollen. **French lavender** has insignificant flowers but large flags which attract pollinators. Other flowers with explosive mechanisms spray seeds in all directions.



Those that were not at this lecture may think this talk was heavy on the technical side, but, with large doses of humour, Les had us all enthralled from start to finish and we were all caught in the spell of Mother Nature's magic tricks

Brian Allan

## BIODIVERSITY IN TAYSIDE

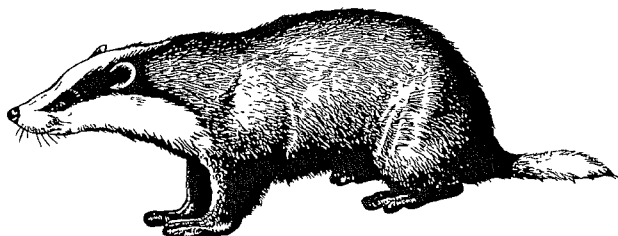
Catherine Lloyd - 1st March

Catherine Lloyd is the Tayside Biodiversity Coordinator and is based in Perth. She gave us a talk on the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan. This followed on from the 1992 Earth Summit and the National Biodiversity Action Plan, which sets out a series of species and habitat plans. Catherine commented that biodiversity is not an ideal word, but it is the only one we have which encompasses the total variety of living things, having a wider meaning than wildlife. The new Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) endorses the Scotland Biodiversity policy document and all public bodies now have to consider biodiversity when making plans. Many natural habitats and species have been in decline, so there is a lot to do.

Tayside started work on its own local biodiversity action plan in the year 2000 and it was published in 2002, although more is to be added. The work involved a wide range of statutory and voluntary bodies and many individuals. We have 89 national priority species in our area, as Tayside has a particularly rich and diverse wildlife. Tayside now has 18 habitat action plans, including natural habitats such as **coastal sand dunes**, **calcareous grassland** and **mesotrophic lochs**. There are also local priorities such as **golf courses** (of which we have many), **businesses with land** and **stone dykes**. These recognise the importance of wildlife associated with human activities.

There are action plan targets for **restoring native pinewood cover**, **restoring calcareous grassland** and **raising public awareness of nature conservation**. Local projects include a **barn owl** survey, a **green Kirk and graveyard** initiative and the control of invasive alien species such as **Japanese knotweed** (*Fallopia japonica*) and **giant hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

A real drawback is the lack of a full Tayside Biological Records Centre and we must continue to press for this. Everyone can contribute to the local work associated with the plan and we are encouraged to fill in local patch surveys and set up our own projects.



The Biodiversity Partnership will soon publish further action plans for such habitats as **ponds and lochs**, **reedbeds**, **cereal field margins**, **school grounds** and **hospital grounds**. There will also be more species plans which will include

**bats, badgers, red squirrels, brown hares, water voles** and the **great crested newt**.

Catherine Lloyd was thanked for her stimulating talk and we will do our best to keep in touch with the progress of the local plan and do all we can to help.

Brian Ballinger

## QUARRYMILL PARK, SCONE

12th March

Members met at the Quarrymill car park in Scone on a dry but cold Saturday morning. The park is a wooded den lying on either side of the Annaty Burn. The group set off at a leisurely pace, enjoying their surroundings. Many other walkers were out that day using the pathways and it was not the quietest of days to really see the wildlife. We did, however, see an abundance of **grey squirrels** which were very entertaining and quite obviously used to seeing folk and dogs.

Due to the cold and wet there was very little ground cover although **bluebells**, **celandines** and **water avens** were just showing through the ground. On arriving at the Coupar Angus end of the park we went into the churchyard and viewed the memorial to David Douglas, of **Douglas fir** fame. It was erected in 1841 "by the lovers of Botany in Europe" to remember the great plant hunter who died, and was buried, in Hawaii.

We made our way back to the cars by a different route and found that the wind had strengthened and it was much colder. On arrival back at the car park the bird feeders beside the visitor centre were covered with **long-tailed tits**. I counted over 20 of these delightful birds.

We then made our way to the Isle of Skye Hotel where we all enjoyed a carvery lunch. Judging by the happy faces it was a successful outing.

Peter Middleton

## SUMMER OUTINGS

### DOLLAR GLEN

23rd April

For our first outing of the season the day dawned bright, calm and clear. After a slight technical hitch at the start (the late arrival of the leader!) we had a pleasant drive to the Inn at Muckhart where coffee and scones were temptingly laid out for our arrival.

Dollar Glen was a new area for many of our members and it certainly was at its most attractive, with trees heavy with blossom and **daffodils** lining the entrance to the glen. It was a lovely sight to see the laddies barefoot in the burn, probably searching for lost golf balls to sell on for pocket money.

Many new paths and bridges have been built at Dollar Glen and this allowed us to walk above Kemp's Score which was deeply carpeted with **mosses** and **ferns** – a wonderful sight. **Dippers** were seen in the burn and the woods yielded records of **tits** (all four species), **goldcrest**, **robin**, **blackbird** and both **green** and **great-spotted woodpecker**. Woodland plants were at their best – **lesser celandine**, **wood sorrel**, **primrose**, **ramsons**, **greater stitchwort** and **sanicle** being among the species found. **Opposite-leaved golden saxifrage** positively glowed beside the burn in the dull light of the wood and the **wood anemones** nodded demurely. **Peacock** and **orange-tip** butterflies were also glimpsed.



Everyone had a sense of achievement as we finished the climb to Castle Campbell, where we enjoyed our picnic lunch and the view down the glen. Ken Tullis, the custodian, gave us a short but interesting talk on the history of the castle. The little pond provided a great deal of interest and Bede Pounder saw young **smooth newts** which brought back memories of his youth.

Dollar Glen was described to me on the day as 'a hidden gem'. Returning by Glen Devon, we all had a happy day of simple pleasures.

Wynn Tennant

## ST VIGEANS NATURE TRAIL

10th May

Just under thirty Nats gathered at the small car park between the railway and the Brothock Burn on a beautiful spring evening. The bird list was nearing twenty species before we even set out up the path – the most memorable being several **thrushes**, **goldfinches**, and plenty of **swallows** overhead.

The path uses the route of the disused Arbroath to Forfar railway line and mostly follows the burn. In a flooded field beyond the burn there were two **mute swans** looking very much at home and a **heron** and some **mallard** were spotted in the longer grass of the flood nearby. Those at the front of the party saw **rabbits** diving for cover and numerous small birds including **chaffinches** and **blue** and **great tits**.

The bright blue flowers of **green alkanet** were admired and **herb bennet** lined much of the path, though only two or three flowers had opened yet. A few **primroses** were still in flower in shady places on the embankments under the rapidly expanding leaves of the trees.

It came to light that Peter Middleton had attended the nearby St Vigeans primary school, now closed. He provided us with a wealth of local information including sites of railway level crossings and background to the Letham Grange golf course further up the path.

Most of the party turned for home after admiring the (caged) **ornamental pheasants** but a few went to the far end of the walk where it meets the road near the entrance to Letham Grange. Despite this being a local nature trail a high proportion of the Nats present had been unaware of its existence and many vowed to come back now that they knew about it.

Anne Reid

## INVERNESS WEEKEND

19th - 21st May

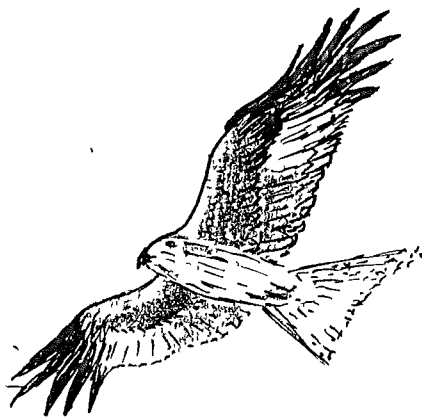
On the way up to Inverness the heavens opened and we all gloomily contemplated thoughts of a very wet and miserable weekend. We had arranged for the bus driver to have a half hour break at the Discovery Centre before leaving Dundee, to overcome the delays en-route last year. As a result the bus stopped for only 15 minutes in the rain at Ralia. However, there was enough time to check for the unusual *Taphrina* **gall fungus** on **alder cones** and for Pat Gaff to find **white wood-rush**, *Luzula luzuloides*, beside the car park. And the rain in Inverness was heavy enough to cause some of us to wonder if the Waterside Inn was high enough above the River Ness.

Saturday morning, though, seemed much more promising. Dawn was bright and clear. We were due to meet our guides, Brian and Barbara Ballinger, well-known Nats' members and, not entirely coincidentally, botanical recorders for East Ross, at 10 o'clock at their own patch, Garrick Wood. There was lots to see – an excellent range of plants, from a good variety of **lichens** and **mosses** to plentiful stands of **common sundews** (*Drosera rotundifolia*). There were scattered flowers of **chickweed wintergreen** (*Trientalis europaea*) and one or two **lesser twayblades** (*Listera cordata*). We looked for **damselflies** at a small pond and Brian took us over to see one of the few nests of the **wood ant** (*Formica rufa*) but some of the wildlife found us – **sheep ticks** (*Ixodes ricinus*). One or two members apparently were particularly attractive, or at least their clothing was, and they picked up numerous small ticks. The leader reminded the party to check very carefully in the evening! We were fortunate, though. Nobody reported finding any ticks 'stuck in'!

The bus took us down to the seaboard village of Balintore for lunch, in beautifully sunny conditions but with a stiff breeze. Excellent – we wouldn't have to retreat to the wet-weather alternative of the large hide overlooking Nigg bay and the Cromarty Firth. After an hour's break, Brian and Barbara led us south along the seaside path towards the cliffs. A rich variety of species presented themselves, **carline thistle**, **rest harrow**, **purple milk-vetch** and many others.

What we were really after, though, was **purple mountain milk-vetch**, *Oxytropis halleri*, and on the cliffs we found it in flower. A wonderful sight, with its rich blue flower clusters, one of those wild flowers that would look great in a garden – but this one is rare and fully protected!

Our last visit of the day was to the North Kessock visitor centre and its video recordings of a local **red kite** nest. The area between the centre and



Red kite

the Tore round-about is well known for the possibilities of seeing a **kite** and we all kept our eyes peeled. No luck, though. At the centre we were given a short talk on the birds and spent a short while studying the leaflets and information on display. Because of the dual carriageway, the bus had to return to the Tore round-about to take us home – and there, as if on cue, was a **red kite** hanging in the sky. Its characteristic forked tail, its light gliding flight and the reddish-brown colour were all so distinctive. It was, we thought, a wonderful end to a superb day. But there was more to come.

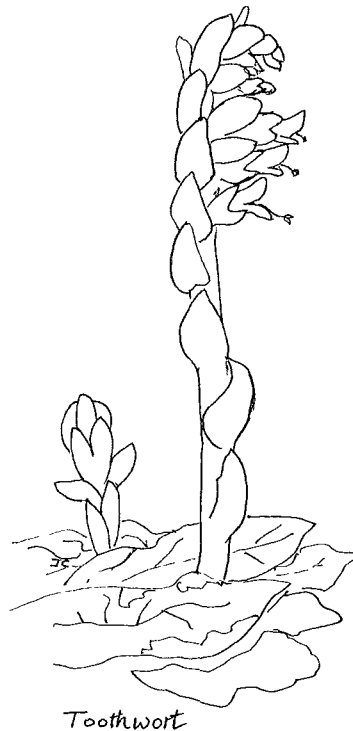
After dinner most of the party took advantage of the fine weather to take a walk beside the River Ness. A considerable variety of plant life crowded the river banks and **blackbirds** and **robins**, **blackcaps**, **finches** and **tits**, **swallows**, **house martins** and **swifts** were either seen or heard. The most interesting wildlife sighting, though, was a **Daubenton's bat** that skimmed up and down a branch of the river – in clear daylight. Many of us were able to obtain excellent views. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite bright enough to try taking photos of the fast-fluttering bat.

Our first stop on the Sunday morning was Craig Wood on the outskirts of Dornoch. A few **bluebells** remained to colour the woodland floor, but what we were really after was **toothwort** (*Lathraea squamaria*). And after a few hundred metres there it was, with its strange cream or pale brown flower spikes pushing directly out of the bare soil. We counted more than a dozen spikes under **oak** and **hazel** trees. Most of them, however, were looking rather tatty and brown, obviously having finished flowering. It's a highly unusual plant, with an almost unique way of obtaining energy. It is symbiotic with **fungi** in its roots. They obtain organic nutrients for the plant from the surrounding soil, supplying enough energy so that the plant has no need of leaves. On the way back to the bus several members of the party were lucky enough to spot a couple of **speckled wood butterflies** flitting in and out of the dappled sunlight.

After a quick lunch at the Brodie Country park visitors' centre, we set off along the road to the Wellhill car park, the entrance to the fascinating Culbin Forest. Ranger Rose had arranged to meet us there and she soon led us off on a fascinating tour of some of the most interesting parts of the forest. Extensive sheets of *Cladonia* species **lichens** covered the dry ground in places under sparse conifer cover. A variety of typical conifer woodland insects were quickly found but several of us were fascinated to see an unusual butterfly, **dingy skipper** (*Erynnis tages*). **Green tiger beetles** (*Cicindela campestris*) also were common. Gordon Maxwell and Doug Palmer spent some time trying to identify several interesting beetles. The party was guided to the shore line but didn't really have time to explore. On the way back we were very pleased to be shown the sites for **serrated wintergreen** (*Orthilia secunda*) and **inundated clubmoss** (*Lycopodium inundatum*). Culbin forms a most interesting series of habitats, well worth further explorations.

Our last visit was a short stop in the handsome little town of Forres to admire the most spectacular Pictish standing stone of all, the so-called Sueno's Stone. It stands roughly 5 metres tall and is densely carved to depict an ancient conflict, but whether it marks a victory over some Viking group, perhaps led by a chieftain called Sven (hence the name), is impossible to say. It was a most impressive object. Meanwhile heavy clouds around about threatened rain but held off to allow us to admire the magnificent Stone. Just to remind us of our luck with the weather, within half an hour our bus was ploughing through a surprising two or three inches of snow as we crossed over the high ground on the A939 while heading for Grantown on Spey.

It was Wynn Tennant's good idea to stop for an hour or so in Aviemore to allow everyone enough time to have a bite to eat. That had given us the time to pack in the visits to Culbin forest and to Forres in the late afternoon. On a normal weekend, when the bus has to leave no later than two o'clock, we wouldn't have been able to manage such a full programme. The bus eventually arrived back in Dundee at 9 pm.



Toothwort

Our sincere thanks are due Wynn and to Margaret McLaren for their organisational skills and, particularly, to Brian and Barbara Ballinger for their expertise, local knowledge and generosity in the time and effort they put into making the weekend such a great success

Jim Cook

## FOWLSHEUGH

4th June

Having read this week of the experts' concerns for the possible failure of the seabirds breeding for another year it was with apprehension that we visited the spectacular cliffs at Fowlsheugh, not knowing what would be found

At first sight everything seemed in order. The cliff top path was a blaze of colour with **red campion**, **thrift** and **scurvy grass**. **Guillemots** and **kittiwakes** lined the cliff ledges by the thousand, along with **razorbills**, **fulmars** and **herring gulls** in smaller numbers, but there was not the frantic activity usually found in June when both adult birds are usually busy collecting food for their chicks



Scanning the cliffs we could find only one or two eggs and no chicks. In fact, out of the thousands of birds only three **herring gull** chicks were spotted. Twice we saw large flocks of **kittiwakes** on the clifftop gathering pieces of turf for nesting material. Perhaps, because of the recent wet and cold weather the birds are delaying laying eggs. Let's hope that this is the case and that within the next few weeks the cliffs will erupt with new life as before.

Two **great skuas** were spotted on the water below the cliff, they had caught and killed a **kittiwake** and were fighting over it. We thought it was unusual to see **skuas** here at this time of year. We also had good views of at least four **dolphins** seemingly enjoying the company of two small boats.

Our outing concluded with a visit to the old church of Kinneff. Here, in 1651, the Scottish crown jewels, having been smuggled out of Dunottar Castle, were concealed under the floor of the church for safe keeping, hidden from Cromwell's forces which were besieging the castle.

Dorothy Fyffe

## FOWLSHEUGH BREEDING SUCCESS 2005

After our outing Dorothy asked the RSPB warden, Scott Paterson, to let her know how well the birds did compared with previous years. This was of especial interest since many northern seabird colonies failed this year, probably due to a shortage of **sandeels**.

Monitoring of **kittiwake** breeding at Fowlsheugh was undertaken by Anne Saunders and Katherine Puttick of the RSPB. The first laying date was 2nd June, three weeks later than usual, so Dorothy's hunch was correct. Breeding success from 367 nests was recorded as an average of 0.91 young fledged per pair, slightly better than in 2004 when the figure was 0.83 young per pair. Most chicks were large and ready to fledge by the first week in August.

Other species, such as **fulmars** and **auks**, also had a reasonable breeding season with numbers on various survey plots showing some declines and some increases in success. Also there did not appear to be much mortality among chicks which indicates that the food supply was adequate. The effect on the Fowlsheugh population as a whole will become apparent when a 5-yearly, full colony count is done in 2006.

Summarised by Anne Reid from information provided by Scott Paterson, RSPB

## NEWTYLE PATH NETWORK

14th June

A good turnout of Nats endured very heavy rain at the start of our evening walk around Newtyle Wellies, waders and an assortment of coats and hats were duly pulled on and off we went

We followed the old railway track with its **willow**, **hawthorn** and **elderberry** giving us some shelter from the wind Due to the conditions we didn't see much in the way of bird life

On coming out into open country, the weather improved and the late evening setting sun appeared By this time the **swallows** were flying overhead On leaving the pathway and making our way back to Newtyle, the roadside gardens were of great interest to many members Although the weather was against us it was an enjoyable night and would be well worth a return visit in better weather

Peter Middleton

## BURN O' VAT, MUIR OF DINNET

18th June

We started our visit to the former National Nature Reserve of Muir of Dinnet at the Burn o' Vat car park Unfortunately the Visitor Centre is closed until Kinord estate and SNH agree a management plan This is said to be imminent

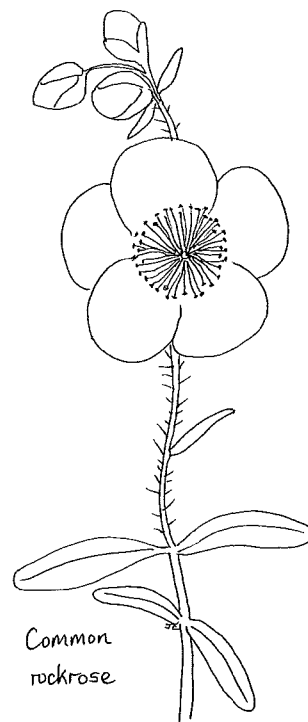
The spectacular Vat is an enormous glacial pot-hole and most folks teetered over the burn stepping stones into the inner sanctum A few intrepid botanists scrambled up the slope by the waterfall to see a colony of **serrated wintergreen** (*Orthilia secunda*) with a few spikes in bud Lunch by the Vat Burn was a delight on a hot and humid day **Small pearl-bordered fritillaries** and **large red damselflies** were seen but no **wood warblers** serenaded from the **pine/birch/juniper** wood Several **fern** species and **heath-spotted orchids** (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) grew by the path

Our afternoon walk circled round through **birch** woods and heathland and along the shore of Loch Kinord The twin lochs, Kinord and Davan, are kettlehole lochs, formed from large, remnant chunks of glacier When the bus arrived at the eastern car park a keen-eyed Nat spotted a **cuckoo** on a wire It put in further appearances, had it changed its tune in June? Pat Gaff noted a **redstart** and a **jay** The **great-spotted woodpecker** chicks seen on the 'recce' had flown the nest and several species of **waterbirds** were absent too A **common blue damselfly** and an **orange-tip butterfly** were noted

Plants recorded included the lime-loving **common rockrose** (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and **bulbous buttercup** (*Ranunculus bulbosus*). Other species seen were **blinks** (*Montia fontana*) **yellow rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*) **common cow-wheat** (*Melampyrum pratense*) and a stand of fluttering **aspen**.

The returning bus stopped in Aboyne for many members to enjoy a cooling ice-cream Fortunately, there was no repeat of the morning traffic-jam at the Banchory show

Alban Houghton



Common  
rockrose

## LOMONDS AND BIRNIE LOCH

30th June

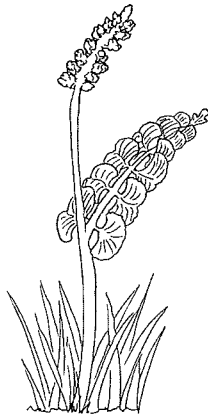
This Thursday outing to the Lomond Hills and Birnie Loch attracted 26 members The first challenge was to get the coach along the narrow road through Falkland past parked vans, but our driver squeezed through with about an inch to spare The minor road up to the



Craigmead car park, between East and West Lomond, was speckled with **northern marsh orchids** (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) and, after a brief coffee stop, we set off up the hill towards East Lomond

We were accompanied by Kate Morrison, a Fife Ranger, and two of her colleagues and they suggested that we might try to locate some locally rare plants known to grow in the meadows, but not seen for several years. We went through the first gate that opened and, as we entered the field, dense cloud and mist descended. We had some difficulty finding our bearings and keeping the party together, but, after a visit to an interesting marsh, we fanned out across the rich grassland to look for our target plants. Jim Cook found the first patch of **adder's tongue fern** (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and soon there were shouts from distant parts of the meadow as other populations were located.

Brian Williamson found just a single but fine example of the other elusive small fern, **moonwort** (*Botrychium lunaria*), which the rangers thought had not been seen in this part of the Lomonds before. We failed to find the other species on the list, **field gentian** (*Gentianella campestris*), but we were likely to have been too early in the year. The meadows were sprinkled with **pansies** (*Viola lutea*), **hares** were seen speeding away and **snipe** were heard calling. Daphne Macfarlane Smith saw **reed bunting** and **stonechat**.



As we neared the end of our search, the mists began to disperse and we caught our first glimpse of the volcanic summit of East Lomond. The other members of our party were located from the colour of Margaret McLaren's bright green anorak. A stile led us into the interesting lime kiln area over a new board walk and we were greeted by a host of wild flowers including **common twayblade** (*Listera ovata*) and more **northern march orchids**.

After lunch we proceeded to Birnie and Gaddon Lochs, a local nature reserve created from old gravel and sand extraction sites. Great progress has been made here over the last few years. The weather was improving steadily and the air was filled with clouds of **butterflies** and **damselflies**. The most common butterflies were the **ringlets**, but there were also **common blues**, **meadow browns** and a probable **fritillary**. The **damselflies** were mainly **blue** and **blue-tailed**.

This was a relatively quiet time for birds, but the ranger opened the hides and species seen included **tufted duck**, **great crested grebe**, **sand martin** and **heron**. A family of **swans** glided by and Gordon Maxwell spotted a **burnet moth**.

**Orchids** were once more in evidence, including a few **common spotted** (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Gaddon Loch was covered with white sheets of **water crowfoot** in flower, but we could not get close enough to make a firm identification. Some of our number went for a vigorous walk around both lochs, whilst others had a more gentle afternoon viewing the scene from seats and tables, but all enjoyed their visit.

Brian Ballinger

## BARON'S HAUGH

9th July

We set off from Dundee towards Motherwell not knowing if we would reach the RSPB reserve at Baron's Haugh. Having witnessed the thousands of demonstrators on TV during the week, protesting at the G8 summit at Gleneagles, we feared that the road would be very congested. However, our fears were unfounded and all had dispersed, leaving the road clear. There was plenty of traffic going the other way though, heading for T in the Park at Balado. We hoped that they would all be settled and enjoying their music by the time of our return!

After carrying out a full recce in March (See page 31), we felt fully prepared for the outing. The reserve was officially opened in 1988 by well known TV personality Jimmy McGregor. It consists of a very good, level-walking footpath network on the Clyde floodplain and the habitats are very varied, including marshland, meadows, parkland, woodland, scrub and the River Clyde itself. Such a wealth and variety of habitats ensures an enjoyable visit for the birdwatcher and general naturalist. This is exactly what the 34 enthusiasts present in the party found, on what turned out to be a glorious day in every respect.

Over the next four to five hours we explored and enjoyed many natural history delights. This included sightings of 44 bird species, including **great spotted woodpecker**, **blackcap**, **chiffchaff**, **grasshopper warbler**, **whitethroat** and **bullfinch**. There were very few birds on the loch, but a **water vole** was seen. Jim recorded the impressive botanical diversity and his list, of almost 200 species, was sent to Mike Trubridge, the RSPB area officer, to update the reserve flora list. Amongst the list were four 'lifers' for Bob - **enchanter's nightshade**, **salad burnet**, **blue sow thistle** and **hoary willowherb**. For the lepidopterists we had sightings of **common blue**, **meadow brown**, **ringlet**, **green-veined white** and **painted lady butterflies** and **red underwing** and **six-spot burnet moths**.

Everyone agreed that it had been a great day out and well worth a repeat visit some time in the future.

Bob McCurley and Dorothy Fyffe

## ST MONANCE TO ELIE COASTAL WALK

23rd July

The morning was a little overcast as we set off from St Monance to follow the Fife Coastal Path to Elie. The tide was very low which made the complicated geology of the shore fairly easy to see and Jenny was on hand to point out the many features we were to see on our journey.

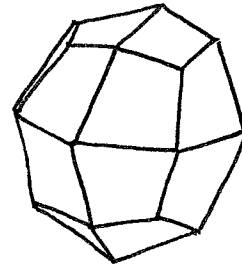
By lunchtime, as is normal for the Nats, we had spread out along the path and with the sun now bright and high in the sky many took the opportunity to do a spot of impromptu sun bathing.

Many coastal plants were observed not least the fine show of *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, the **pyramidal orchid**, at Ardross. One spike in particular was noted which had an unusually large lip that made it easy to see the two shields at the entrance to the spur that guide the pollinating insect's proboscis into the long slender spur.

By the time we reached Elie the day was very hot and a visit to the local beer garden was the order of the day. However, we were not to leave the area without the hotly contested competition to find the largest and highest number of '**Elie Rubies**' from a special area near to the Elie Ness lighthouse. Jenny explained that eroded dykes of **monchiquite** have weathered into fine black **volcanic sand** that contains crystals of **pyroxene** (black), **feldspar** (pink) and **red garnet**, otherwise known as **pyrope**. The latter have acquired the local name of '**Elie Rubies**'. They are very tiny and glassy and easy to spot in sunlight, which makes them sparkle. After some success, and the rejection of some beer bottle shards, prizes were awarded to worthy winners before it was back to the harbour area for a well deserved ice cream.

To round off the day we took delight in seeing the **heronry** in trees on the edge of Elie, a fitting end to a great day out.

Brian Allan



A GARNET CRYSTAL

## QUARRY BARBECUE

2nd August

All the usual stalwarts, and a few more, turned out for this year's evening quarry event - around 40 people attended. Jim's ulterior motive was to get the remaining **ragwort** pulled, with the reward of food to follow, but in the event much of the dreadful weed had already been dealt with by earlier working parties so the task was not too onerous.

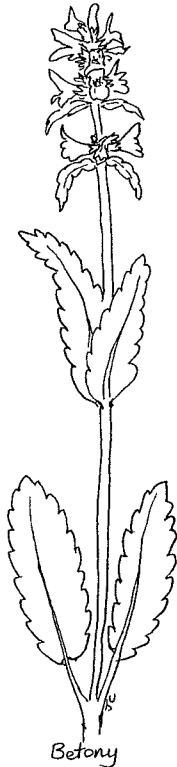
As usual, most people went for a walk after they arrived and while the barbecue got up to temperature. Not a lot of natural history was seen, though the **buzzards** put in an

appearance overhead, and there were signs that the **foxes** had been visiting. Everyone was amazed to see how well the **trees** were growing now - the quarry will be a proper wood before long.

Our newly bought, slightly larger, barbecue performed well - it only cost £10 in the Tesco summer sale! The buckets of water taken from the pond (as a safety precaution) were covered in **duckweed**, and, if we had bothered to investigate, were probably teeming with pond life too. It was a lovely clear evening so we didn't set out the moth trap - when the temperature drops they are reluctant to fly.

The Youngs and Milly and Pfennig joined us later on and everyone enjoyed the social side of the evening in such informal surroundings.

Anne Reid



## BARRY BUDDON JOINT OUTING

14th August

This annual open day attracted members of at least six local groups, including Dundee Nats, RSPB, SOC, Angus and Dundee Bird Club, Perth Society of Natural Science and the SWT. Individuals had travelled from as far afield as Aberdeen, Perthshire and even Newark, Nottinghamshire.

All these wildlife enthusiasts had a field day with a record number of **bird** sightings for this event - no less than 73 species - a truly amazing total. Not to be outdone, the entomologists recorded 13 **butterfly** species and four **dragonflies**. For the botanists the day was made memorable by the first ever record in Angus of **betony** (*Stachys officinalis*) which is generally uncommon in Scotland as a whole.

This popular annual outing has become a fixture in the summer programmes of all the local groups and was attended by over 60 people this year. We are grateful to the MOD for their unstinting cooperation in enabling the general public to explore Barry Buddon and to enjoy its wildlife.

Bob McCurley

## GLEN MARK

20th August

Brian Allan planned to lead this excursion but was laid low with labyrinthitis. Thankfully, he has since recovered from this head-spinning horror. When he ordained an Edzell elevenses in his handout, he must have known of the car boot sale on the Muir. Eventually, when those clutching bargains returned to the bus, we started wending our way up Glen Esk.

Our day was very warm with clear blue skies, contrasting with the very wet conditions on the last Nats' trip to the Queen's Well in late June 1998. Though it was late in the year for many flowers, the **heather** and other **heaths** looked bonny in the sunshine. **Emperor moth caterpillars** in their pink-spotted, bright green livery crawled on the path and over the **heather**. The sunshine brought out lots of insects: at least 6 species of **butterfly**, **common darter** and **common hawker dragonflies**, **common blue** and **blue tailed damselflies**.

Most members were content to picnic by the Water of Mark, where Ruth Arnold spotted an **adder** and I saw a **lizard**. Sheila Brinkley disturbed a **snipe** near an old shieling and Pat Gaff found **mare's tail**, (*Hippuris vulgaris*) in Carloch of Mark. There were few birds other than **meadow pipits** by the track, but **buzzard**, **kestrel**, **raven** and **wheatear** were noted.

A small, energetic party reached Balnamoon's cave, which necessitated a fast walk to return to the bus, but everyone was on time. Since the closure of the shop at Tarfside, there is now one less place of refreshment in the glen. A cool drink or an ice-cream would have been welcome.

Alban Houghton

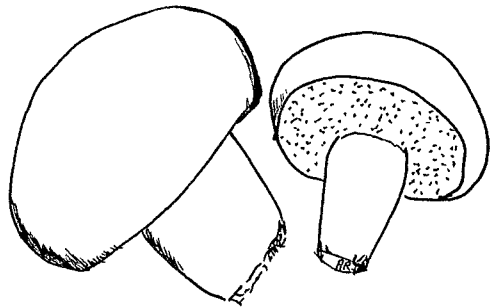
## TENTSMUIR FUNGUS FORAY

17th September

The Society's fungus foray was approached with some trepidation. The weather had been very dry in the previous weeks before this outing. Other popular areas had been almost bereft of good quality specimens. However, a quick look around the conifers near the car park area proved that at least *Russula* species were there in reasonable numbers. As the foray's 20 plus pairs of eyes scoured a wider area a fair number of specimens were added to the haul. Some sought-after fungi, special to the locality, such as *Sarcodon imbricatum*, **toothed fungus**, were absent for the first time in over three years, possibly due to the dry conditions.

Despite the absence of some of the less common mushrooms, there were still some interesting finds. One of these was *Rhizopogon luteolus*, an **earthball** which grows in association with **Scots pine**. These were found in fairly large numbers where I have only previously found one other specimen - one to look out for in future.

One advantage of a lean fungus year is that one is not overwhelmed by numbers, so the opportunity is there to devote more time to the identification of the awkward ones, of which there are always plenty. Everyone appeared to enjoy the day and came back with a good selection of specimens.



Gordon Maxwell

## AUTUMN MEETINGS

### COSTA RICA – TROPICAL WILDLIFE PARADISE

Alban Houghton and Dorothy Fyffe - 18th October

This was a combined lecture by Alban and Dorothy describing their visits. They were in Costa Rica only a few months apart and, though they covered much of the same ground, we were shown the country from different angles which gave us a broad picture.

Costa Rica is about the size of Wales and has an interesting geological history. It is a young country, forming part of the isthmus between North and South America and lying between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea with a year round temperature of a pleasant 70°F.

The broad central plateau, featuring active volcanic ranges, rises above thick forests which give way to cultivation and on down to beautiful beaches. Bananas, pineapples, coffee and palm oil are the main crops and beef and dairy cattle are reared. There is little industry, but eco-tourism is very important as the country has very high biodiversity, about 6% of the world total.

Roads are few and a National Park was reached by river boats through the forest. There are 850 bird species and Dorothy's camera captured a great many including the national bird, the **clay-coloured robin**. Her splendid photographs, and a few she had bought (birds can be hard to photograph!), showed an amazing diversity of colour and shape. Her phrase 'kids' paintbox colours' summed this up very well.

Alban's pictures of some of the 10,000 plant species, his landscapes, seascapes and cameos of daily life complemented the birds and gave us all a tempting taste of Costa Rica. A Paradise indeed.

Marjory Tennant

## HARDY BRITISH FERNS

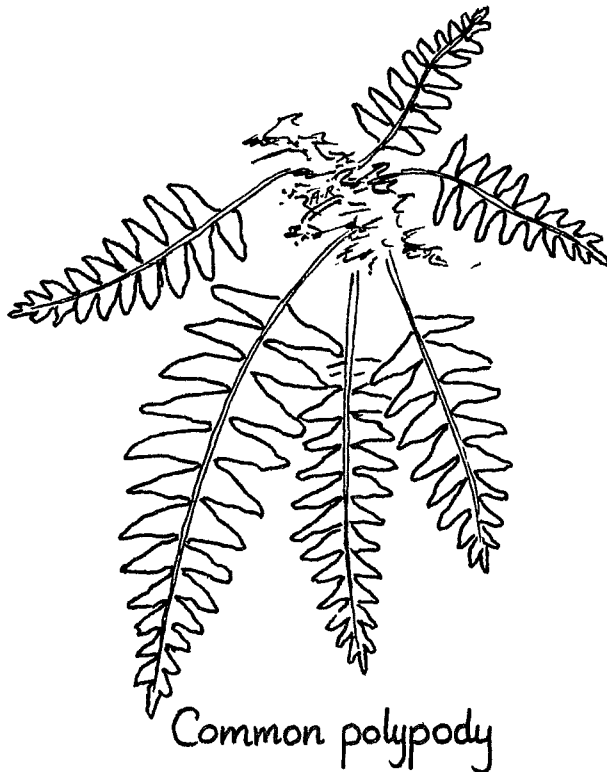
Sheila Brinkley -1st November

Sheila Brinkley, who has been interested in ferns for many years, gave us a fascinating review of many of the British species. She illustrated her talk with slides, old drawings, works of art and specimens and demonstrated their subtle beauty.

She began by describing the non-native **tree ferns**, cultivated in the south, but intolerant of our frosty climate. Perhaps our best known native fern is the tall **bracken** (*Pteridium aquilinum*). This can now be invasive on light and acid soils but formerly had many uses, including making potash, brewing and packing fruit.

Other common and familiar ferns include **male fern** (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), the harder **scaly male fern** (*Dryopteris affinis*) and the lacy and less frost resistant **lady fern** (*Athyrium filix-femina*). The bolder looking **buckler fern** (*Dryopteris dilatata*) thrives in damp woodland with plenty of humus and can take over the understorey.

**Parsley fern** (*Cryptogramma crispa*) is less common in Scotland than in the Lake District and North Wales, but can be found in our uplands and has two different fronds on the same plant. It grows well in the old slate quarries of the Sma Glen. **Lemon scented fern** (*Oreopteris limbosperma*), as its name suggests, has an attractive smell when crushed and the sori are near the edge of the pinna. The more elusive **holly fern** (*Polystichum lonchitis*) gives the appearance of having prickles.



Common polypody

**Hard shield fern** (*Polystichum aculeatum*) is tough and widespread in some places such as Den of Alyth. Sheila wondered if some of our Scottish plants differed genetically from their English counterparts. **Common polypody** (*Polypodium vulgare*) is widespread on walls and banks and sometimes grows as an epiphyte on trees. It was once used as a basis for a soothing cough medicine. The attractive **harts tongue fern** (*Phyllitis scolopendrium*) may be found on walls and caves, often near the sea, and is to be seen in Dundee.

Fern collecting by pedlars ("Botany Bens") and others during the 19th century fern craze depleted some attractive species such as **black spleenwort** (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), but this is now recovering. The majestic and colourful **royal fern** (*Osmunda regalis*) also suffered from collecting in the past and is said to have been named after a boatman who hid his daughter from the Vikings in the tall vegetation. It is now sometimes cultivated in gardens.

**Hard fern** (*Blechnum spicant*) is very widespread on acid Scottish soils and may taste bitter to **deer**, who leave it alone. Sheila is particularly fond of the delicate **oak fern** (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*), widespread in some woods, as by Bridge of Cally, but the **limestone oak fern** (*Gymnocarpium robertianum*) is very rare in Scotland, perhaps partly because limestone is scarce here. **Brittle bladder fern** (*Cystopteris fragilis*) is another wall and cave fern seen fairly often, but the rarer **mountain bladder fern** (*Cystopteris montana*) can only be reached in its remote sites by vigorous effort.

**Wall rue** (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*) and **maidenhair spleenwort** (*Asplenium trichomanes*) are common on walls and similar places and are to be found in the streets in Dundee near the University. Sheila also illustrated the rarer **sea spleenwort** (*Asplenium marinum*), only to be found close by the sea and the locally scarce **rusty-back** (*Ceterach officinarum*) formerly used to treat liver complaints.

The delicate **adder's tongue fern** (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and **moonwort** (*Botrychium lunaria*) are always a joy to find and many of us recall a successful hunt for them in the Lomonds earlier in the year.

The talk finished with works of art based on the **maidenhair fern** (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) a British species which is not to be seen in Scotland. Sheila Brinkley's presentation helped us to look at this familiar group of plants in a new way.

Brian Ballinger

## KINSHALDY TO EARLSHALL WALK

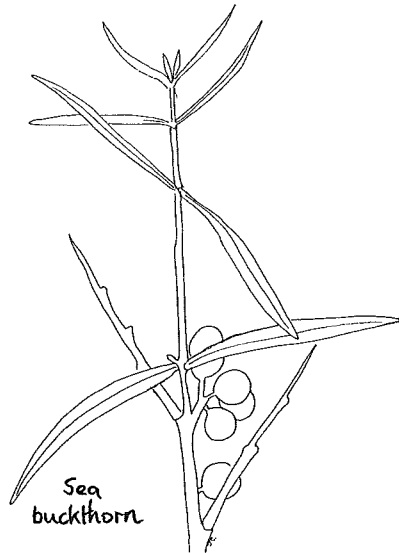
12th November

Countryside Ranger, Les Hatton, having talked the talk in November 2004, walked the walk with 23 Nats a year later. We were pleased that Gordon Corbet, our Honorary President, joined our walk from Kinshaldy to the Earls Hall pools. There was a blustery wind but it remained dry. Les approached his Eden Estuary Local Nature Reserve from the north since the 11.30am high tide prevented the intended south-shore exploration.

Gordon Maxwell saw **bullfinches** in the **sea buckthorn** while scouting for dune fungi with Jim. A large flock of **linties** on the beach did not appear to contain any **twites**. A group of **grey plovers**, which is an Eden speciality, wheeled around with the other waders – possibly alarmed by the large metal predators swooping into Leuchars airbase. The Society surely must return to the dunes here in summer if only to see the spectacle of massed spikes of **grass of Parnassus** which are not nearly so pretty in November. A **snipe** zipped off from the pools.

Our group fitted nicely into the Guardbridge Hotel dining room and enjoyed lunch. Greetings were sent to Margaret Duncan in New Zealand via courier Dorothy and Jean Colquhoun's birthday was saluted too. Some folk visited the Eden Estuary Centre which the LNR leaflet describes as 'Excellent for viewing **black-tailed godwits**, many **waders** and **wildfowl**. A **peregrine** often hunts the area in winter.' That summarises exactly what we saw.

Alban Houghton



## FEATHERS AND FOWLS

Basic bird biology

Jim Cook - 22nd November

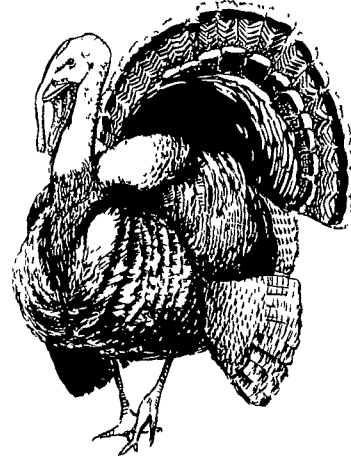
As with most of Jim Cook's lectures, the titles are always intriguing, and tonight's was no exception. Jim, although a self-confessed botanist, showed us the range of his encyclopaedic knowledge of bird biology and the theory of flight. On the face of it, to some, this might seem a somewhat dry and boring subject. However, Jim's simple and humorous

presentation held us spellbound throughout the evening. The facts and figures appeared endless.

He began by explaining the different types of feathers found on birds, primary, secondary, coverts, contours, down and bristle, all with their own fascinating effects on the birds' abilities to adapt to the world. Some adaptations are for flight, some for temperature control, and some simply for attention. Also there are many more adaptations we had never even thought of. The wing shapes were then discussed, long and narrow for soaring long distances, like the **albatrosses**, short broad wings for manoeuvrability, like **owls** and **pheasants**, long broad wings for catching the thermals, like **vultures** and finally long sickle wings for fast flight, for example **swifts** and **swallows**.

The next topic was the skeleton and how it differed from our own bones. Birds' bones are lightweight, being either hollow or with a sponginess inside. The ratio of bone to weight was a surprise, in a 6kg bird the bones weighed only 40g. Other statistics were equally amazing, the smallest flying bird, the **bumblebee hummingbird**, weighs 3g and the heaviest, the **kori bustard**, a massive 19kg. The slowest, the **woodcock**, achieves a mere 8mph whereas a **peregrine** can reach 55mph in level flight and, when stooping on its prey, it can reach an incredible 170mph.

Scattered throughout Jim's talk were numerous funny anecdotes, not least the tale of the dead **woodcock** artfully replaced, with some difficulty, in a leafy bed to illustrate to his students the extraordinary camouflage of this species' feathers. Finally, as was said on the night, carving the Christmas **turkey** will never seem the same again.



Brian Allan

## BATS AND COMMERCIAL FORESTRY PLANTATIONS

Garry Mortimer - 6th December

Garry entertained the meeting with an enthralling talk on one of his favourite topics, the **bats** of Scotland and particularly those of Tentsmuir Forest. We learned about the lives of the most common of Scottish species of bats. All our species are **insect** feeders, unlike many tropical bats, which specialise in a wide range of foods, ranging from **nectar** and **fruit** through **insects** and **spiders** to **frogs** and even **fish**. **Pipistrelles**, our smallest **bats**, eat huge numbers of tiny **midges** every night by flying through clouds of them and catching them on the wing. In contrast, **long-eared bats** specialise in picking **moths** and other large insects off leaves and twigs and their huge ears enable them to detect their movements on the vegetation.

Garry's particular interest was in **Natterer's bats** and he studied their movements, feeding, roosting and breeding behaviour in Tentsmuir forest. His technique was to pick out a bat unhurt from one of the many **bat boxes** in the forest and then attach a miniature radio transmitter. He would drive a van with a directional aerial into the forest at night and await developments. In this way he was able to track the movements of individual bats through the forest in pitch darkness. Garry told us that a bat would emerge from a bat box and possibly fly a kilometre or so to a good feeding location and then return to the same area near dawn, perhaps to the same box but often to a different one. The bats seemed to have a 'mental map' of the area and could navigate well around the forest.

In addition to boxes, the **Natterer's bats** use tree roosts, especially Corsican pines where there has been a double leader which results in a cavity at the fork. The breeding females with their young tended to be found in separate boxes. In winter they disappeared, presumably into deep cold tunnels or caves to hibernate. These locations have proved very difficult to locate. We ended with a fascinating question and answer session on bats and their habits and habitats, a most informative evening.

Jim Cook

## WILLOWS AND THEIR USES IN SCOTLAND

Les Tucker - 7th December

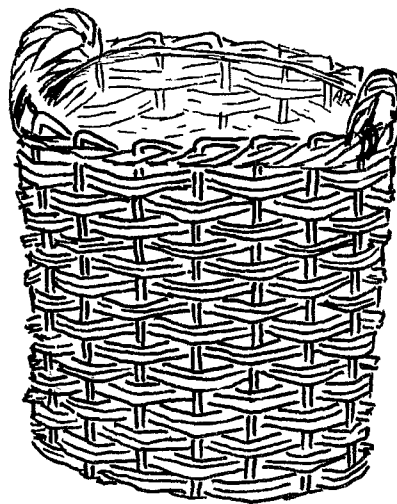
This was the Nats' contribution to the Wednesday afternoon lecture series, held in the University of Dundee. Our speaker showed his considerable knowledge of the subject despite having to overcome daunting technical difficulties caused by a recently installed, electronically-controlled slide projector system.

The technical problems got off to a good start, even before our President Alban Houghton had time to introduce the speaker, when, despite having taken much care beforehand in mastering the subtleties of the computer electronics arrayed before them in the lecture room control console, the slide system failed to operate and Alban had to seek technical assistance. Fortunately for Les, a modern version of an epidiascope was working allowing him an opportunity to start his talk with an impressive account of how he uses complex charts to help in the identification not only of *Salix* species, but also their seemingly infinite numbers of hybrids. We were interested to learn that both Angus and the Angus botanist Don featured in the willow hybrid nomenclature, and wondered how long it would be before Les himself would be honoured by this means. It was absolutely clear that Les Tucker's studies are carried out using rigorous scientific methodology, and woe-betide anyone who might wish to question any of his conclusions without the assistance of at least an equal degree of prior study.

While the audience listened intently to this part of the discourse, they were entertained by 'voices off' which emanated from the slide projector cabin high up at the back of the lecture room, in which Alban and a technician were wrestling with the projection problem. For the benefit of any Nats member who might at some future event be tackling a similar problem, I would point out that any utterance in that small cabin is clearly audible to an audience below. We were fortunate in having a President who, despite working under so much stress, managed to maintain a gentlemanly composure throughout!

When the projection problem was eventually solved, Les was given a late introduction and enabled to give an illustrated account of what the different species and hybrids looked like in a very extensive range of habitats from coastal sand dunes to the high inland hilltops. However, two further technical glitches occurred but Alban managed to get things going again despite having to work in the dark.

The last part of the talk was devoted to the uses of willows, and many examples of wicker-work or 'teuchter-ware', all made by Les himself, were exhibited. These ranged from small, beautifully crafted household items exhibiting intricate artistic designs to formidable baskets and creels once used by farm workers and fisher folk. We were shown, with the aid of a beautifully made wooden 'cleave' and an impressive example of manual dexterity, how a willow rod could be split into three lengths suitable for plaiting or weaving. It would have been interesting to see how, with the aid of the epidiascope, these strips could be plaited together. Unfortunately - yes you've guessed it - the epidiascope, while continuing to provide Les with a colour picture on his monitor screen of whatever he presented to it, steadfastly refused to allow the audience anything on the screen visible to them!



This was an impressive and memorable lecture that had taken much time to prepare. As well as the obvious botanical and ecological content, it included information on a range of peripheral topics including social history, bio-fuelled electricity generation, linguistics and even golf. What a pity it had not had the technical and electronic back-up it deserved. Les Tucker is to be congratulated for the way in which he coped with difficulties and especially for his ability to adapt the structure of his lecture to suit the varying circumstances. Despite all the problems, this was a worthy Nats contribution to this season's Wednesday Lecture series.

Bede Pounder



## WEE RUSS CALLS THE BURDS

Russell Nisbet – 20th December

Our Christmas meeting attracted around fifty members to hear the talk and enjoy the festive goodies (or was it the other way round?)

After an introduction to the uses of calls and songs to the birds, for contact, territory and alarm, we were also reminded that they are useful to us as an aid to identification. Some birds, including **peewits**, **chiffchaffs**, **cuckoos**, **kittiwakes** and **curlew**, call their own names which makes identification easy. Others are easy to remember by association with the 'little bit of bread and no cheese' of the **yellowhammer** and the grasshopper-like trilling of the **grasshopper warbler** being good examples.

After this you just have to learn the calls as the transliterations in bird books are not always a lot of help. The best way is to go out with someone who knows bird calls and learn from them, but Russell then proceeded to demonstrate the calls and songs of birds ranging from **ringed plover** and **green sandpiper** to **bullfinch** and **song thrush** via **ducks**, **geese**, **woodpeckers** and **wood pigeons** and a lot more besides. No tape recorder here either, all the calls were either whistled or 'sung' apart from the comb used to imitate a **corncrake**. As a finale we were asked to imitate birds found on the Isle of May - **guillemots**, **eider**, **kittiwakes** and **puffins** - and to do it all together - to remind Russell of time he spent working on the island. The result was a suitable cacophony which did bear at least some resemblance to sea cliffs in May!

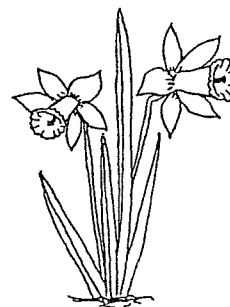
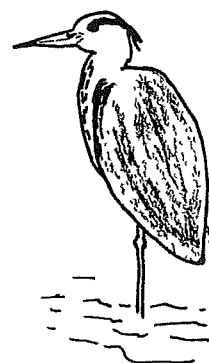
After Russell had been warmly thanked by Brian Ballinger we moved on to the finale of the evening. What appeared to be large quantities of baking, so willingly provided by members, disappeared very rapidly, all washed down by tea and coffee. Everyone enjoyed the chance to sit and chat before heading for home (to practise bird calls??!)

Anne Reid

## MEMBERS' ARTICLES INTERESTING SIGHTINGS 2005

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.

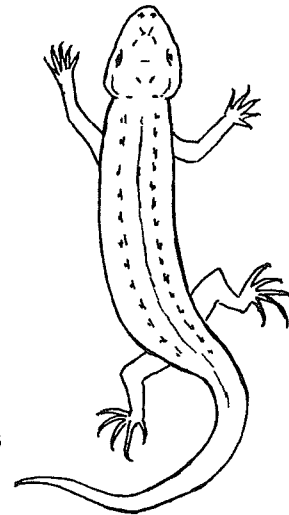
Ruth Arnold	RA	Invergowrie
Brian Ballinger	BB	Dundee, West End
Joy Cammack	JoyC	Birkhill
Jean Colquhoun	JeanC	Dundee, West End
Jim Cook	JC	Broughty Ferry
Monica Edwards	ME	Invergowrie
Peter Ellis	PE	Barry Mill
Andrew Ferguson	AF	Monifieth
Alastair & Ina Fraser	A&IF	Monifieth
Pat Gaff	PG	
Ben Herschell	BH	Crombie Country Park, Ranger
Alban Houghton	AH	Letham, Angus
Bob McCurley	BM	
Daphne MacFarlane Smith	DMS	Broughty Ferry
Margaret McLaren	MMcL	Barnhill
Gordon Maxwell	GM	Lochee
Jean McKenzie	JMcK	Monifieth
Jack Moody	JM	Barnhill
Anne Reid	AR	Monifieth
Colin Reid	CR	
Mary Reid	MR	
Marjory Tennant	MT	Broughty Ferry
Wynn Tennant	WT	



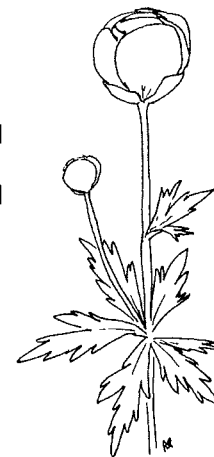
- 1st January** About 170 **waxwings** in Dundee city centre BM
- 1st January** Hazel in flower at Forfar Loch PG
- 2nd January** Two **roe deer** seen on the beach half way to the lighthouse on Barry Buddon from the Monifieth end They appeared to have been disturbed by another walker CR
- 3rd January** **Snowdrop** in the back garden out in flower – even earlier than last year JC
- 4th January** First **aconites** out in the garden The earliest noted since 1989 DMS
- 5th January** A walk up Craigmill Den in windy and intermittently wet conditions was not notable for birds, but a lot of **primroses** were in flower on a sheltered bank AR
- 8th January** A flock of 50 **redwings** in Princes Street, Dundee PG
- 10th January** A party of six or seven **long-tailed tits** visited the garden and stayed for about fifteen minutes feeding on the nuts and fat ball provided These delightful birds have never visited me before, so such a good view was much enjoyed MMcL
- 12th January** At Carlingheugh Bay found **white butterbur** (*Petasites alba*) in flower PG
- 13th January** An extremely early **small tortoiseshell butterfly** out of hibernation and sunning itself on the south-facing wall of the house JC
- 17th January** Two **dippers** seen in Craigmill Den **Primroses** in flower (see above) PG
- 18th January** A female **blackcap** in the garden A male was seen three days later ME
- 21st January** Three **waxwings** seen on a **cotoneaster** bush in a neighbour's garden, West Grove Avenue, near Blackness Road JeanC
- 21st January** An unexpected celestial light show, in the form of the **aurora borealis**, seen in the northern skies at 7pm Not many colours seen, with pale green predominating and a little red Still going, weakly, at 10pm AR
- 21st January** While watching a good display of the 'merry dancers', an **aurora borealis**, I heard distinct and deliberate rustling in the undergrowth I couldn't see the culprit but it wasn't a **cat** or a **dog** and definitely not a **fox** Could it have been a very early **hedgehog**, out in the mild weather? JC
- 25th January** I saw a maximum of about 10 **redwings** feeding on the berries of my 'Golden King' holly DMS
- 26th January** My first bumblebees in the garden on an early flowering **cherry**, *Prunus subhirtella* One was a queen *Bombus terrestris* (**buff-tailed**), the other appeared to be a worker with full pollen sacs and was probably a *B lucorum* (**white-tailed**) DMS (See also article on page 29 Ed )
- 30th January** The first moth of the season, a **double-striped pug**, found near the front door in the middle of the day It has been unseasonably warm this winter The same moth was 'first' last year, but two months later AR
- 31st January** **Honeybees** feeding on **mahonia** 'Charity' ME
- 3rd February** Twelve **goldfinches** in the garden The largest number so far this winter ME
- 11th February** Saw 13 **chaffinches** in the garden – the highest number this winter Also a male **blackcap** on the peanut feeder until scared off by a pushy **greenfinch** DMS
- 14th February** There it was – close to my foot – a tiny little **wood mouse**, nibbling on a fallen morsel of food, on the path in the grounds of Ninewells Hospital WT
- 15th February** There was so much **gorse** in flower on Red Head that the air was heavily scented PG
- 17th February** About 70 **siskins** on a **sycamore**, visible from my back window, flying off and returning with much twittering GM
- 18th February** In Dundee city centre, by the bushes at the Marketgate Nethergate junction, I saw a **house mouse** eating a discarded banana (without peeling it!) It was at the edge of the path and seemed unconcerned by passers-by CR
- 22nd February** A **treecreeper** seen in the garden JoyC
- 23rd February** With almost two inches of snow on the ground a flock of 22 **fieldfares** landed in my neighbour's **cherry** tree DMS
- 23rd February** An exciting new record for Crombie Country Park was made on a snowy morning A **pine martin** moved away up the steep bank ahead of me It would not have been noticed if there had not been snow on the ground BH
- 25th February** First **daffodils** in flower on the south facing bank near Stannergate Some years these don't come out until April DMS (They are the variety 'February Gold')



- and some years they make it in their name month, but often not until March or April Ed )
- 27th February** Ten **snow buntings** seen near the summit of Badendon Hill, Glen Isla JoyC
- 3rd March** **Frogspawn** and more than 25 **frogs** in my garden pond Five days later than last year BB
- 8th March** A lovely sunny day, and quite warm, tempted a **small tortoiseshell butterfly** out into the garden ME
- 9th March** An unexpected visitor, a **red-legged partridge**, appeared in our garden It is amazing what can turn up, especially in spring A&IF
- 10th March** A young **waxwing** (hatched '04) was caught and ringed at Kinloch Street, Carnoustie The same bird was recaptured on 6th April in Bridge of Don, Aberdeen PE
- 11th March** Our first **frogspawn** appeared this morning AR
- 14th March** A **red squirrel** in our garden JoyC
- 16th March** First **frogspawn** in the garden pond AF (A week later than mine, only a street away Ed )
- 16th March** First young **blackbird** that I've seen out of the nest this year Being fed by a parent on the lawn at Dundee College JC
- 16th March** On a night time (10pm) visit to Barry Buddon (to deliver my army cadet to the camp) there were **amphibians** all over the road Mostly **toads**, I think, as they seemed to be walking, but hard to tell by car headlights We also saw two **rabbits** and the obligatory **roe buck** AR
- 17th March** A **lizard**, fat with eggs, warming itself in the sunshine beside the track up Auchterhouse Hill JoyC
- 19th March** Saw first **peacock butterfly** of the year, near Morton Lochs, and a **pipistrelle bat** flying at 11am! DMS
- 25th March** While walking the Ba Whelps circuit, Glen Isla mountains, we saw two pairs of **golden plover**, three large **deer** herds and over 30 white **mountain hares** JoyC
- 26th March** Near Inchdowrie, Glen Clova, found the bodies of 150 **toads**, flattened by vehicles, over a 450 metre stretch of road PG
- 2nd April** The first **swallow** of the season seen at Pugston, Montrose BM
- 2nd April** Two patches of **eyebright** in flower to the north of the Sidlaws This seems very early JoyC
- 2nd April** Two **red squirrels** seen in the conifer wood at the junction of the A90 and the A968 (Lumley Den and Glamis road) Examination of **gorse** bushes revealed active **capsid bugs** and a **gorse shield bug** (*Piezodorus litaratus*) PG
- 12th April** I had given up all hope of seeing **waxwings** this winter, when I spotted a group of 25 in a bare **rowan** in a neighbour's garden Early April has been the time when I have most often seen these delightful birds in the past – presumably as they gather before flying back to Scandinavia to breed AR (I saw another, single, bird on a tree along Balgillo Road on 14th April )
- 12th April** A great display of **hairy violet** (*Viola hirsuta*) on Lundie Crag, its only known site in Angus PG
- 16th April** At about 10 30am Seen from car on the upper road of the Glen Clova ring - a **weasel** holding a small **rabbit** clear of the ground ran across the road and dived for cover JM
- 19th April** A **peacock butterfly** on the lower slopes of the Sidlaws JoyC
- 22nd April** More migrating **waxwings** – seven this time – seen near the Honda garage, Queen Street, Broughty Ferry, in mid-morning AR
- 29th April** While in the car near Sainsbury's in the evening saw the first **swift** of the year MR
- 8th May** Near Kinshaldy, found **orange tip** eggs on **cuckoo flower** (*Cardamine pratensis*) – one per flower head DMS

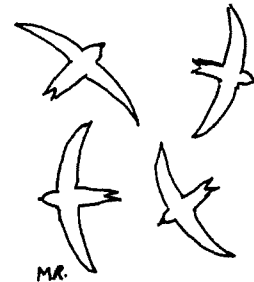


- 12th May** A **wheatear** seen in a field at Birkhill for two days Not seen after the field planted the following day JoyC
- 12th May** **Green hairstreak butterflies** seen on hill by Tullybaccart PG
- 14th May** A **water vole** seen on the bank of a burn on high wet ground north of Glen Isla JoyC
- 15th May** A male **orange tip butterfly** seen on the lower Dighty, Monifieth in bright sunshine at midday MR
- 15th May** While going round butterfly transect near Kinshaldy, thrilled to see a total of nine **green hairstreaks**, including a mating pair Also saw **small coppers**, **green-veined whites** and **orange tips** DMS
- 23rd May** A **fox** seen in a field at Bridgefoot JoyC
- 24th May** Two species never before seen in our garden flew in today – a male **orange tip**, and a **short-eared owl** which was encroaching on our resident **crow's** airspace AH
- 24th May** **Rock samphire** (*Crithmum maritimum*) was found growing on shingle in a bay to the north of Auchmithie. The leaves of this plant are succulent and smell distinctly of old fashioned furniture polish Leaves used to be pickled and eaten PG
- 26th May** The persistent squeaking in the vicinity of the **goldcrest** nest, in a small conifer adjacent to my washing green, suggested that the young might be about to fledge Total silence in the afternoon confirmed this (or something worse) Later on the squeaking reappeared in a different tree and I managed to count five hungry babies demanding food from their overworked parent (I only saw one adult) AR
- 26th May** A **roe buck** seen crossing the River Tay about ¼ mile upstream of Dunkeld Bridge Despite the river's high level it crossed the 120yards in about a minute and a half, without any apparent difficulty Also saw two **peacock butterflies**, one **orange tip** and a fine specimen of the fungus *Laetiporus sulphureum*, known as **chicken of the woods** GM
- 30th May** A **borage** relative, **madwort** (*Asperugo procumbens*) was refound at its only known Angus site at Auchmithie Counted 24 **puffins** here – a very good place to observe them close up PG
- 30th May** **Little terns** bred for the first time in nine years at Ferryden beach, Montrose BM
- 3rd June** Another new species for the garden, a male **orange tip butterfly**, lingered briefly at the **honesty** flowers Another one seen the following day AR
- 6th June** **Blackbirds** making a terrible racket out in the garden I looked out and was astonished to see a **fox** not far from their nest It ran off when I went out, but the blackbirds' alarm calls continued for another half hour DMS
- 6th June** Found **house sparrow** nesting in old **house martin** nest at Elephant Rock, near Boddin Point With help from Dorothy Fyffe counted 40 nests occupied by house martins here Found **alexanders** (*Smyrnium olustratum*) at Easthaven on the way home PG
- 12th June** Lovely show of **globeflower** slightly north of Auchterhouse Hill JoyC
- 17th June** The **maiden pink**, *Dianthus deltoides*, in flower on Red Head PG
- 20th June** A **fox** was seen rushing out onto the Eden estuary mud to kill six **shelduck chicks** of the eight in the brood It was a precision operation, the chicks being laid out in a line, to be picked up on the way back, presumably to be fed to the hungry **cubs** which had also been seen previously GM
- 20th June** I first noticed a pair of **spotted flycatchers** in the garden Two days later they were sitting on eggs in an open fronted nest box I was pleased that they raised a brood this year as they failed due to cold weather last year AH
- 20th June** A **wood warbler** using our television aerial as a perch JoyC
- 26th June** Six **dolphins** seen off the 'Deil's Heid', Arbroath Many **northern marsh** and **heath spotted orchids** also seen along the cliffs GM
- 26th June** A **water shrew** spotted swimming in the Mill lade near the shed PE
- 30th June** At 2pm on a weekday afternoon I turned the car up North Balmossie Street to see a young **fox** casually stepping over a low wall into a garden I have seen one occasionally at the Dighty, not too far away, but never in such an inhabited area, nor in broad daylight AR



Globe flower

- 2nd July** At Kingoodie, at around midday, we could see large flocks of over 100 **lapwings**, and a few **curlews**, flying over the reedbeds down river Was this the end of the breeding season for them, and the beginning of their preparation for winter – already?  
JC
- 4th July** In the hills to the west of Spittal of Glenshee saw large herd of **deer** hinds and calves Also **ring ouzels**, **wheatear**, **golden plover** and **ptarmigan** JoyC
- 9th July** An **otter** crossed the road in Glen Creran, north of Oban, near the sea loch JoyC
- 10th July** A **great spotted woodpecker** ringed at Barry Mill - one of nine different individuals caught there this year Also a **blackcap** A **kingfisher** was seen on the Mill Dam two days later PE
- 14th July** A **red squirrel** seen in my garden JoyC
- 20th July** A number of **six-spot burnet moths** on the banks of the Tay, under A9 flyover near Dunkeld Is this mainly coastal species (in Scotland at least) spreading further inland now because of G----I W----g? (I refuse to say it, because everyone seems to jump onto that bandwagon ) GM
- 23rd July** On a sunny evening, a **red admiral** and two **peacock butterflies** flitted round the **buddleia** The first I've seen in the garden this season JC
- 26th July** For the second year running a **little egret** present at Montrose Basin BM
- 28th July** On the early morning train from Invergowrie – saw six or seven **herons** in the trees beside the upper pond ME
- 1st August** First **small tortoiseshell** seen at home this year DMS
- 1st August** Another first for the garden – a large **hawker dragonfly** (*Aeshna* sp ) landed on the washing It flew away too soon and too fast to be able to distinguish the species These dragonflies range far away from water looking for prey but I don't think it found our very overgrown pond! AR
- 3rd August** **Grey squirrel** in the garden – Bill chased it off DMS
- 5th August** In the evening a **bat** flew round and round the garden to the north of our house while 22 **swifts** flew in circles high above DMS
- 12th August** Late at night, caught a glimpse of a large **fox** just entering the garden by the gate, by chance caught in car headlights First time I've ever even seen a fox in this area of Dundee, let alone in the garden JC
- 13th August** First ever **small copper** seen in the garden A stunning combination on a red **geranium** (*Pelargonium*) DMS
- 14th August** A **peregrine falcon** on wrought iron work on the top of Clement Park House and only about 150 yards from my back window The first sighting since the breeding season Usually seen on Cox's Stack GM
- 15th August** A young **buzzard** landed on a road-side post beside the football area at the west end of Caird Park in the late afternoon JC
- 16th August** A large **wood-wasp**, the **horntail** (*Urocerus gigas*), landed briefly on a hot motor mower on the grass beside Old Glamis Road, just before 9am JC
- 20th August** Maximum number of **butterflies** in garden – three **peacocks**, one **small tortoiseshell**, a **red admiral** and a **large white** – disappointing compared with recent years Numbers of butterflies on my Kinshaldy transect were, however, much greater than last year (928 to 393) DMS (My garden butterflies also not so plentiful as last year Ed )
- 26th August** One **swift**, probably the last of the season, and six **swallows** at Kinshaldy DMS
- 27th August** A **golden eagle** seen from Morrone Hill above Braemar JoyC
- 1st September** A sighting of a **yellow-legged gull** near Montrose Very rare on our coast BM
- 2nd September** I saw the second ever, and second of this year, **dragonfly** in the garden Once again it was on the washing but this time it was a **darter** (*Sympetrum* sp ) AR
- 6th September** Surprised to see a **robin** trying to feed from the peanut holder DMS
- 16th September** Six **red squirrels** seen in Caddam Wood, by Kirriemuir, in a conifer plantation Often foraging on the ground GM
- 20th September** Ringing at the corner where the Carnoustie Golf Course practice ground adjoins Barry Buddon This is a 'Constant Effort' site for the BTO ringing scheme



and is visited regularly over the season Of 54 birds of 13 species no less than 27 were **lesser redpolls** PE

**21st September** Heard **pinkfeet** over Broughty Ferry though I believe others had been noticed a week or more ago DMS

**23rd September** A **buzzard** heard and seen above my garden, in addition to a pair seen previously Probably lured into town by the numerous **rabbits** within Dundee on grassed areas GM

**24th September** A rare North American species, a **surf scoter**, seen at Lunan Bay BM

**25th September** Just as the sky was darkening on a calm still evening, with only the roar of the distant traffic to spoil the peace, a **pipistrelle bat** was seen hawking up and down under the trees on both sides of a quiet road near Kingoodie It was catching lots of insects and several times flew so close that the fluttering of its wings could be faintly heard JC

**29th September** A **painted lady butterfly** feeding on *Ageratum* in the grounds of St Andrews Museum My only sighting of this species this summer in Scotland ME

**1st October** Two **red admirals** in the garden, I guess the last butterflies of the year DMS

**1st October** A **kingfisher** seen on the Barry Mill Dam Another sighting on 25th October PE

**4th October** A juvenile **great spotted woodpecker** arrived in the garden (8 30am) and proceeded to feast on the peanuts In the 15 years we have been in Monifieth I have never even seen one nearby Probably no coincidence that the school (next door) was on holiday and the neighbourhood much more peaceful than usual AR

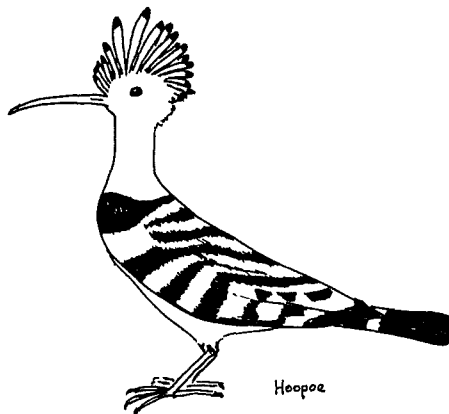
**12th October** A **hoopoe** found sheltering by the **pine** trees beside the Monifieth football field An infrequent visitor on migration last recorded in Angus about 5 years ago PE

**15th October** Some small **fungi** were taken home for identification from the SWT outing to Murton Reserve near Forfar These were *Agrocybe vervacti*, *Entoloma porphyrophaeum* and *Calocybe carnea* (*Tricholoma carneum*) PG

**16th October** A **kingfisher** on the River Braan near the junction with the Tay Also a **dipper** in the same area. GM

**21st October** Saw some **redwings** in the garden MT

**23rd October** Bird numbers have been slowly increasing this week and when I opened the curtains on a very grey morning there were at least 12 **blackbirds** in the garden Also **blue tit**, **great tit**, **coal tit** and **goldfinch** as well as a **robin** and a **redwing** About an hour later a flock of **long-tailed tits** came through and a number of **fieldfares** were feeding on the railway embankment at the back of the garden ME



**25th October** I discovered a hibernating **hedgehog** in the base of a pruning pile destined for the bonfire I added more leaves and left it in peace AH

**27th October** A **small tortoiseshell butterfly** was around for ages on this gloriously warm sunny day in the middle of a very wet week ME

**7th November** 215 **barnacle geese** counted at the Eden Estuary hide, the largest ever number They stayed for a few hours, not too far from the hide GM

**10th November** Bird ringing at Barry Mill caught 70 birds Of these around 40 were already ringed including 20 **blue tits**, and nine **great tits** Among the new captures were a **blackcap** and a **tree sparrow** PE

**12th November** Six **waxwings** seen in a **cherry** tree in Forfar JoyC

**19th November** While walking near the lower Dighty saw a **great spotted woodpecker** JMcK (The only other Monifieth sighting I have heard of See 4th October entry Ed)

**20th November** Ringing near Happy Valley on Barry Buddon captured a passing flock of **titmice** and associates 25 **long-tailed tits**, 21 **goldcrests**, 13 **coal tits**, 12 **blue tits**, nine **great tits** and three **treecreepers** Also caught a **sparrowhawk** which was recaptured the following week in a garden in Carnoustie PE

**28th November** **Redwings**, **fieldfares** and a **mistle thrush** in our garden this week BB

- 10th December** A queen **tree wasp** (*Vespula sylvestris*) found buzzing around the house  
Other **wasps** (**tree** or **common** – I couldn't catch one) still coming and going from the  
airbrick under front of house AR
- 11th December** While bird ringing at Dalmore, Barry Station, a **weasel** ran past me PE
- 16th December** Five **snow buntings** seen near the summit ridge of Deuchary Hill, about  
two miles east of Spittal of Glenshee JoyC
- 17th December** Four **long-tailed tits** on the peanut feeder They're rarely seen in our  
garden and always a delight to watch DMS
- 25th December** A **barn owl** seen gliding over fields to the south of Barry village at 4 30pm  
(dusk) PE
- 26th December** In a neighbour's tree, delighted to see a **brambling** amongst a flock of  
**chaffinches** It failed to visit my garden DMS
- 29th December** Two additions to my species list for the year appeared in the snow-covered  
garden A male **siskin** fed on the peanuts for a short time and, while I was watching  
it, a **fieldfare** landed in the (berryless) **rowan** and stayed for a couple of minutes  
AR
- 30th December** In my Invergowrie garden I watched a flock of 50+ **fieldfares** having a whale  
of a time on my berry-laden **holly** tree I saw one bird devour nine berries RA
- 31st December** Five **redwings** feasting on our '**Golden King**' **holly** berries DMS

## BUMBLEBEE RECORDS

WINTER 2004/05

I had noticed the occasional **bumblebee** in November and early December 2004 and made a mental note that this was unusually late When I actually started looking out for bees I managed to see at least one on many of the warmer days (air temperature above about 5°C) over the winter

We had no prolonged periods of hard frost here in Monifieth, about half a mile from the Tay estuary, and the lowest reached (as far as I know) was -5°C on a few nights Many plants remained in flower in the garden, including some of the 'annual' *Lobelia* and *Bidens* in pots beside the front door Miniature, fragrant **cyclamens** (non hardy) also flowered well here and provided a good pollen source **Primroses** (*Primula vulgaris*) were added to pots in late February Plants seen being visited by bumblebees are noted with individual records

Bumblebee species were identified where possible, but brief stops were often not long enough for positive identification The two species of bee recorded were **white-tailed bumblebee** (*Bombus lucorum*) and **buff-tailed bumblebee** (*Bombus terrestris*)

**7th December** - Worker sized bumblebee, probably *Bombus lucorum* or *B terrestris*, at cyclamen and *Lobelia* flowers at front door

**8th December** - Worker again on **cyclamen** with pollen in sacs Very mild spell

**9th December** - Queen ?*B lucorum* on cyclamen

**10th December** - One high-flying bumblebee seen

**12th December** - Worker at **cyclamen** with full pollen sacs

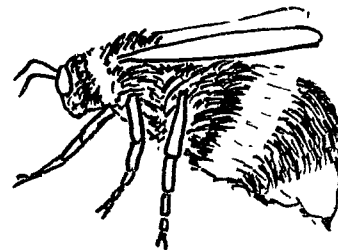
**15th December** - 11 15am, worker bumblebee, at **cyclamen** and *Bidens* with full pollen sacs Sunny after 2 dull days 11 35am returned with empty pollen sacs and proceeded to fill them from the **cyclamen**

(Cold spell – down to -5°C for two nights Sat/Sun)

**22nd December** - 11 15am, worker *Bombus lucorum* on *Viburnum x bodnantense* flowers Full pollen sacs Seen at **cyclamen** at 1 30pm Sunny and warm, 12°C max

**23rd December** - 2 20pm, worker *B lucorum* on *Viburnum* with pollen in sacs Sunny, 8 5°C

(Cold spell over New Year)



**3rd January** - 10 20am, bumblebee on *Viburnum*, about 5°C, some sun 11 30am, briefly at *Viburnum*, sunny about 9°C 12 00 noon, briefly on *Viburnum* again, very little pollen in sacs 2 30pm, flying near front door 'seeking' flowers  
**15th January** - 11 30am, one bumblebee flying 10°C no sun  
**16th January** - 10 00am, queen *Bombus terrestris* near front door and under bushes, looking for a hole? 11 00am, worker ?*B lucorum* flying 11 45am, worker flying 12 05pm, worker *B lucorum* with pollen in sacs on **cyclamen** and nearby *Helleborus orientalis* (No temperature recorded)  
**27th January** - Late morning, large worker/small queen *B lucorum* with full pollen sacs, systematically working the flowers of *Lithospermum* for a minute or so Sunny and still, 8°C  
**29th January** - 11 45am, worker *B lucorum* with full pollen sacs on *Viburnum* Sunny, 8°C  
**20th February** - 10 15am, probable *B terrestris* flying and hit window Frosty and snow showers overnight, ground hard, sunny morning, 3°C 11 20am, queen *B lucorum* at *Iris unguicularis*, *Helleborus* and **winter jasmine** flowers in various parts of garden Also seen at base of tube on jasmine flowers Air temp 4°C but warm sun

(Snow and ice all week but temperature not below -1°C)

**26th February** - 9 30am, queen *B terrestris* flying past window Sunny intervals, about 5°C  
**27th February** - 9 15am, worker sized bee flew past Sunny, 4°C 9 45am, queen *B lucorum* on *Viburnum* flowers  
**1st March** - 12 20pm, queen *B lucorum* on **primroses** at front door Snow on ground, sunny, about 5°C  
**4th March** - 12 10pm, queen *B terrestris* on *Bidens* flower Sunny, 5°C  
**5th March** - 12 20pm, small queen/large worker *B. lucorum* in front border Sunny intervals, about 5°C  
**6th March** - 12 45pm, one bee flew past Loud enough to be *B terrestris* but not seen Sunny, 6°C  
**7th March** - 11 45am, one bee flew past Sunny and still, 8°C  
**8th March** - 11 30am approx, 2 bumblebees heard while hedge trimming Sunny, still, 9°C

At this point I stopped making individual records as Spring appeared to be well under way My bumblebees had obviously ignored the textbooks and kept colonies going all winter

Anne Reid

## FIRST FOOT 2005

January 3rd was rather cold and dark At about 3pm our doorbell rang and happy laughter outside indicated the presence of my daughter, hopefully armed with a New Year offering, as she would be our first foot But such was not to be, for something at her feet caught her eye She glanced down to see what had attracted her attention, and there at her feet, struggling to cross the threshold and beating her into the house by a good inch, was a beautiful **peacock butterfly** I did the only thing possible in the circumstances by wishing the creature a 'Happy New Year' and lifting it to the top of a nearby tall wardrobe where it could find shelter beneath one of several boxes until the spring

Bede Pounder

## ST VIGEANS SURPRISES

Thursday 13th January

Tuesday night had seen the worst gales for many years with the Tay Road Bridge completely shut all night – an unprecedented occurrence The forecast for Thursday promised no more wind and plenty of sun, so I planned to take advantage of the good conditions An early morning look through the window confirmed that the day would indeed start sunny, as predicted, so I braved the roadworks to Arbroath and aimed at St Vigeans



I had walked the southern part of the old railway line nature trail before, but not since the girls were quite small, so we hadn't got very far. My intention was to spy out any promising sights to show the Nats on our evening walk in May and, incidentally, get some much needed exercise.

My walk had hardly started when it stopped again. There was a **heron** standing in the burn, just upstream of the bridge, and to such a depth that his tail feathers were actually trailing in the water. He took off, in a huff, to look for his breakfast elsewhere – though finding anything in the muddy waters of the rain-swelled burn can't have been easy. The heron's departure alerted a **moorhen** to my presence. All I saw was a dark bird swimming for cover under the bank, with a confirmatory squawk.

The sun was bright and visibility good with no leaves to intercept the light. It was easy to see where the burn had been re-routed during the construction of the railway in the 19th century. Its course now has a number of unnatural bends and minimal riparian vegetation. The path, on the other hand, has more than enough trees along its edges – many of them showing signs of having been coppiced a number of years ago. This was probably in the course of railway bank clearance rather than a formal woodland management plan.

A flash of colour made me stop dead again. There was a male **great spotted woodpecker** in a tree only a few metres away, unconcernedly working his way up the trunk



and along the underside of a sloping branch. This was a breathtakingly close view of a bird which more often gives glimpses of itself high in the trees or on brief, wary visits to bird feeders. I can only guess that my outline must have been broken up by one of the multi-stemmed pathside trees, lulling the woodpecker into a false sense of security.

On a mossy ruin of a wall in adjacent woodland I spotted two female **bullfinches** busily working their way along its top. They too appeared trusting and, by walking slowly, I managed not to disturb them. Shortly after this a solitary **long-tailed tit** crossed the path into some **Norway spruce** trees. Despite standing still, listening carefully and scanning with binoculars, I failed to find the usual vocal, accompanying family members – most unusual.

Near its northern end there is (another) bridge over very audible running water. On the west side of the path I was intrigued to find that this was culverted, and must have been so for the whole width of the adjoining field, with a large grille beside the embankment of the path. It was not until I returned that I peered over the eastern side of this bridge, where there is a house backing onto the path. My appearance prompted two birds to fly off, in formation, down the course of the, now free, burn where it skirted the back of the garden. The amazing thing was that those two birds were a **dipper** and a **kingfisher**. The glimmering turquoise of the latter looked particularly bright against the muddy water of the wooded, shady burn course.

Though not a particularly good time of year for birds my few exciting sightings more than compensated for the lack of variety. Most other birds seen were **great tits**, **chaffinches** and **blackbirds** with a few **blue tits** thrown in for good measure, though there were also 30 **oystercatchers** in a small field between the railway and the road. I hope that our walk in May produces some good bird sightings, though I fear that few will rival my January ones.

Anne Reid

## A SCOTTISH NUTHATCH

21st March

On a recce for the Baron's Haugh outing I had the pleasure of the company of Dorothy and Doris. On arrival at the reserve, near Motherwell, we were met by Jimmy Maxwell, the RSPB warden. With his great local knowledge he prepared us very well for the forthcoming outing.

Amongst the many highlights he outlined was the discovery of a pair of **nuthatches** which had taken up residence in January 2005. To the delight of Jimmy, and other

birdwatchers, the nuthatches took a liking to a large **bat box** which had been attached about 10 metres up a tree trunk. During our visit they obliged by visiting the area around the box and giving us excellent views. This lovely bird is slowly spreading north and has already been reported for Perthshire. I would be most interested to hear of any sightings in Angus.

We really enjoyed our visit, and especially the nuthatches, which, incidentally, bred successfully.

Bob McCurley

## MOUNTAIN RESCUE

26th June

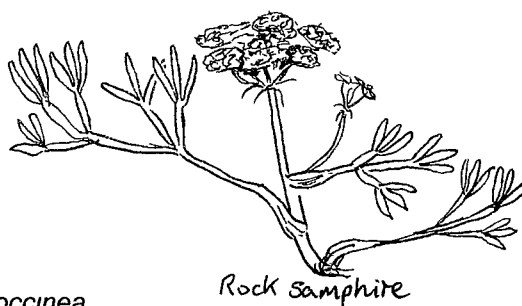
On a mountain walk in Ardgour, above Loch Linnhe, we rescued a distressed, wailing **feral goat**. It was wedged upside down in a rock crevice. We managed to pull its legs up so far and it then did a flip in mid-air, landed on very shaky legs and trotted off dazedly, looking back often as it did so. This poor goat was not as sure footed as they are reputed to be!

Joy Cammack

## FLORA IN ANGUS

Over the past few years plants have appeared in Angus that are either completely new here or have gone unobserved for a long time. The following have established themselves to some degree.

Yellow bartsia	<i>Parentucellia viscosa</i>
Yellow vetch	<i>Vicia lutea</i>
Madwort	<i>Asperugo procumbens</i>
Rock samphire	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>
Alexanders	<i>Smyrnium olustratum</i>
Wild parsnip	<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>
Betony	<i>Stachys officinalis</i>
Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>
Marsh orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata coccinea</i>
Danish scurvygrass	<i>Cochlearia danica</i>



Rock samphire

Whether this is an indication of climate change or chance happenings tied to the movement of vehicles and landfill material, who knows! Time will tell. The whole east coast of Angus has a surprising number of less common plants and this just adds a little more glamour to the botany.

In the coming year I will be heading out to do some recording of plants in Angus. I would be delighted if anyone would like to join me on an informal basis. No prior knowledge is necessary (learn as you go), only a bit of enthusiasm and a determination to try to learn something. If anyone is interested please contact me at Nats meetings or phone 01382 860902.

Pat Gaff

## TAY DOLPHINS

21st July

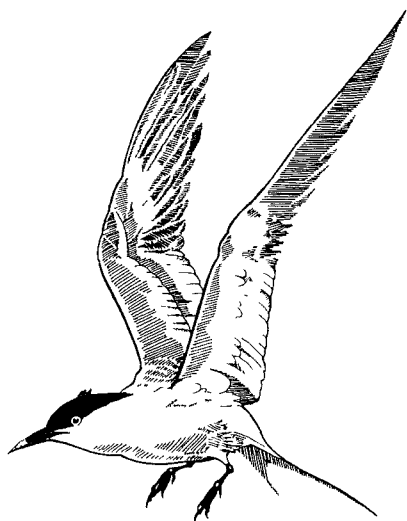
I saw two **dolphins** swimming downstream just outside the piers off Beach Crescent in Broughty Ferry at 11.30am. One was much larger than the other, so I assume that it was a mother and a calf. The larger one leapt clear of the water repeatedly, apparently playing. This was my first sighting for a year. (See Bulletin No 29, 2004, page 36.)

Alison McAdam

## HIGH DIVE

26th July

A few **redshanks** and the occasional probing **curlew** dotted the mud along the water's edge. Across the water the tiny white dots of more than fifty **mute swans** peppered the distant waters and shore line. The distinctive beak profiles of a number of **eider ducks**, many already in eclipse plumage, moved in silhouette over the bright water. Many more were roosting on the mud banks that emerged well out from the shore as the tide receded. A few **swifts** swooped and soared against the scattered clouds high overhead. I was standing looking out over the wildlife of Montrose Basin and it was one of those calm but rather chilly and well-lit evenings that are so typical of Scottish summers.



The harsh calls of **terns** came from some distance away but they weren't anywhere to be seen. I looked around and then saw, way above me, tiny specks in the sky. There were three of them, so high that they were clearly visible only through binoculars. They must have been at an altitude of at least 150 to 200 metres. By the look of the birds, and their harsh cries, they were **sandwich terns**. They swooped around and pursued each other for a few minutes and then suddenly one of them dived down very steeply and, within seconds, plunged straight into the water. Had it seen the shoal of **fish**, or even the flash of an individual fish, from that great height? I watched them chase each other for a few minutes and then two of them flew off. The remaining one, perhaps the diver, began to fish in earnest. Within a

space of about five minutes it plunge-dived into the shallow water fourteen times and skimmed down twice and caught three small fish – a success rate of nearly one in five dives. It eventually disappeared off in the direction of the Montrose Basin visitor centre. I was left marvelling and wondering about their incredible visual acuity, the sharpness of their eyesight.

Jim Cook

## MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES

I started using a small Heath trap to capture moths in late June this year. I had considerable success and have a number of people to thank for using their gardens. In all I've managed to photograph 85 different moths this season and look forward to next year. Dorothy Fyffe's garden yielded over 40 different species as well as other insects and invertebrates.

The notable butterfly record in Angus this year was certainly the result of a trip I made with Bob McCurley to look for a reported site for **green hairstreaks** near Tullybaccart. We counted over 40 butterflies on the day, but they were very lively and there were probably more to find.

My most curious find was a **brown china mark moth**. The caterpillar of this moth is aquatic. (Article in Bulletin No 29, 2004, page 38.)

Pat Gaff

## MAMMALS ON THE EDEN ESTUARY

Most people probably associate the Eden Estuary with its varied selection of birdlife, and rightly so. I have spent many an hour eyeballing mud and water for rare, and not so rare,

avian varieties. If one takes in the wider spectrum, one can, from time to time, see other residents or casual visitors. The **horses** and **ponies** on the field beside the stables opposite the hide provide a pleasant distraction, sometimes chasing each other at a fast gallop across the grass. However, I must confess that the wild mammals are of more interest to me.

Both **grey** and **common seals** are a fairly common occurrence, and, as I reported previously (See Bulletin No 27, 2002, page 40) one was seen to make a meal of an unwary **heron**. On another occasion I was privileged to have a good view of **otters**, one with a rather large **fish**, out on the mud banks.

Most people would, perhaps, not expect to see **deer** from the hide, but they are a fairly common sight to the regular observer. They frequently appear near the Leuchars airbase where they are not welcome as they sometimes stray onto the runway. Up to seven **roe deer** have been seen together. The **fox** appears occasionally and has been seen with **cubs** this year (see grisly item 20th June in 'Interesting Sightings', page 26).

A recent summer sighting of a family of **stoats** kept me enthralled as they investigated every nook and cranny in the bank opposite the hide. The agility and speed of the four was incredible to watch. Probably less popular visitors are the **mice** and **brown rats** which appear on the feeders in autumn and winter for their bonus of seed and peanuts.

On one occasion a **buzzard** swooped in, but the **rat** was too fast for it and beat a hasty retreat.



Gordon Maxwell

## FOUR FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

29th July

We were looking for the signs of a Roman camp. The two of us left the car by the roadside to cross to a gate overlooking the field containing the site, when there came a single but distinctive call. Great, an **osprey**! Up came the binoculars and there it was over to the right, perched on a solitary large **ash** tree in the middle of the field. At the same time Bede called out, urgently, "There it goes, over to the left". It took me a few moments to realise that we didn't have one osprey but two. One floated and flapped heavily around showing its distinctive wing markings while the other remained perched and calling at intervals. Everybody else piled out and we all admired and absorbed the display.

It was only when the group got back into the car to visit another signal station site that we realised there was more to see. Some one said "Isn't that a nest in the other tree?" and we pulled quickly to a halt. And sure enough, it was. We'd missed it at the first stop because it was several hundred metres away from the first tree and the nest had been hidden on the far side. I put my binoculars onto it and could see a large osprey preening its shoulder and lower back feathers. Bede remarked that he could see two of them, which puzzled me, and then said "There's another nest!" It was only then that I realised that I'd been looking at the lowermost large nest and everyone else had been watching the smaller upper one - with two, presumably young, ospreys in it. There was a total of four of the magnificent birds - the one still perched in the other tree eating a large fish, the osprey preening in the lower nest, presumably the one that had been flying around a few minutes previously, and the two in the upper nest. What luck! We'd come along for another reason and, just by chance, had stopped at exactly the right place and perfect time to catch such a wildlife spectacle.

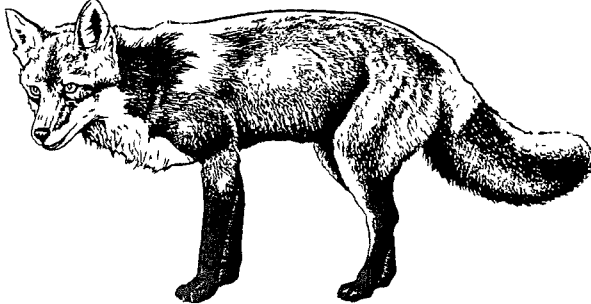
The moral of the tale is obvious. If you want to see ospreys, just go and look for a Roman site! Easy!!

Jim Cook

## THE JUMPING FOX

7th August

We'd been sitting there very quietly for an hour or so, watching the entrances to the **badger sett** in the fading light. A few breaths of air swayed the tree tops and filtered past the trunks. We were careful to sit hidden and downwind of the mounds around the tunnel entrances. Every so often a loud flapping in the conifers above announced that another **pigeon** was coming in to roost or had decided to change its position. Occasionally a few feathers drifted down into the ferns. Then, from the distant twilight came the 'kewick' of a calling **tawny owl**. Magically, a drawn-out 'ooo-oo' answered from close by. They repeated a few times and the nearer bird finished with a very long breathy call. Wonderful! At around the same time we'd heard the strange squeaking call of a roding **woodcock** flying low above the trees, surely very late in the season to be proclaiming a territory.



The wood returned to its darkening silence. And then came a slight rustling from the ferns to the right. A half-grown **fox cub** was trotting directly towards us. The week before an **adult fox** had suddenly and silently appeared in good light right over the sett about 30 metres away. It had paused and sniffed about, perhaps for any food remains, but there was nothing to attract its attention.

The large fox looked around, including straight at us, but didn't notice anything alarming and after a moment or two confidently continued down the steep bare slope and into the grassy field. Our camouflage obviously was good enough and the wind had been in our favour.

Now the fox cub came right up to about 3 metres away and suddenly caught the human scent. The little animal glanced straight up at us and leaped up 20 or 30cms in surprise and horror. Whipping round, it disappeared in an instant. We smiled in delight but moved not a muscle. Was the young fox scared to death? Not a bit of it. A minute or so later, it slipped through the ferns about 10 metres away and trotted towards the mounds of earth around the sett entrances. And, for good measure, five minutes later an adult fox glided silently past, some 20 metres away, also in the direction of the mounds. Neither seemed to notice our presence.

And the **badgers**? The most we caught was a glimpse of a low grey shape in the darkness trotting into the distance. Disappointing, but it had been a magical evening.

Jim Cook

(The title would make a good name for a pub! Ed)

## STRANGE BUTTERCUPS

During a ramble in Glenalmond in mid-August I noticed a small patch of **buttercups** by the roadside with unusual numbers of petals. The flowers were on single short stalks, about 5 - 7cm long, which were slightly grooved with fine hairs. The leaves were divided and lobed and similar to those of the common **creeping buttercup** (*Ranunculus repens*) which these plants most closely resemble. There were usually four or five erect/spreading sepals, but the numbers of petals on atypical specimens varied from six to twelve and in one case I counted 16.

These **buttercups** can be found either side of Newton Bridge and up to one kilometre upstream and are not difficult to locate. Buttercups with supernumerary petals are unusual but may not be entirely unknown in nature. All the same, it would be interesting to follow any changes in the form and distribution of these plants in this location in the future.

Jack Moody

## TENTSMUIR

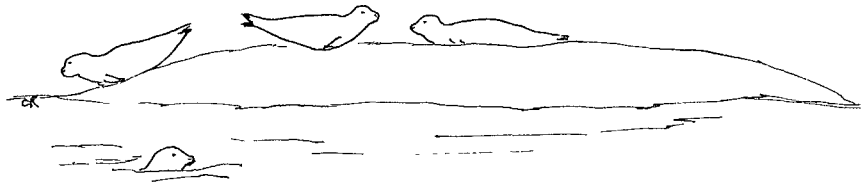
3rd October

We'd been hearing twittering calls in the tall pines beside the track but hadn't managed to catch a glimpse of the birds. After a few minutes of watching, though, several flew across the open space and perched on the tops of the trees opposite. "They're **crossbills**!" Gordon suddenly called. "I can see the orange colours on some of them." Davie and I scrambled to get a better look. There were at least 30 of the starling-sized birds. With the sun behind us, they were displayed wonderfully clearly on the tree tops, almost as if for our benefit. Some were greenish but others, the males, were bright orange, almost scarlet in the bright sun. Then one turned its head and there, you could even see the crossed bill. It wasn't distinctively large, showing that the birds were **common crossbills**, *Loxia curvirostris*. We'd been out looking for **fungi**, but this appearance was much more interesting. There'd been a reasonable range, one or two **penny buns**, *Boletus edulis*, and a few yellowish-brown scaly caps of *Tricholoma flavo-virens*, (both excellent eating!) However, even although there'd been some heavy showers, the ground was still dry and the variety and number of specimens was nowhere near as great as usual.

At the ice-house we walked over to inspect the ponds and then realised the same slightly metallic twittering sound was coming from the tall spruces close by. There, flitting around, were the oranges and greens of more **crossbills**. Again, we had excellent clear views, only some 50 metres distant. They also weren't scrambling around in the upper branches and were not feeding. But weren't they the same flock as before? We couldn't be sure but this time there were at least 50 birds. It was great to see such large numbers at close range.

The largest pond was almost dry but there was still plenty of life. Luxuriant growths of plants nearly obscured the mud. Unfortunately, the most abundant growths were of **Australian stone-crop** (*Crassula helmsii*), the recently arrived and highly invasive alien. We'll have to see how much it will affect the ecology of our ponds. Numerous tiny **snails** (perhaps one of the **mud snails**, *Hydrobia*, *Rissoa* or similar species) covered most of the exposed muddy surface and clumps of spheroidal olive-green capsules, looking like wet rabbit droppings, roughly 7 or 8mm across and filled with a solid jelly, clustered under some of the larger plants. All the while, three or four late **dragonflies** with red abdomens, probably male **common darters**, *Sympetrum striolatum*, alternately hovered and flitted low over the surface.

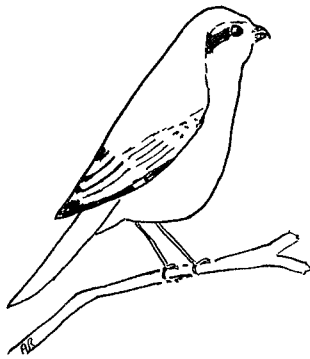
By this time our stomach alarm clocks had told us it was time for a bite and we crossed over to the beach to sit on a fallen concrete 'dragon's tooth'. Along an offshore bar less



than 200 metres in front of us a herd of **grey seals** (*Halichoerus grypus*) rested, like giant roman-nosed slugs. We estimated that there were some 250 of them lying on the sand. A number along the wave line held their tails well up, in the 'banana pose'. It looked uncomfortable but they retained this posture for ten to twenty minutes at a time. While we ate, the three of us were serenaded by a few of the seals singing, like dogs, and continually entertained by their behaviour. Offshore at least a dozen large males patrolled lazily but purposefully, presumably in search of females, although we saw no interactions. A number of the smaller males rolled and play-fought in the shallows, while the largest specimens of all lolled on the sand among the females. Now and again one or two seals caterpillared along the beach but most were content to sleep. As we watched, two of the younger males chased a female over the bar and into the large shallow pool in front of us. They came up only some 30 metres away but seemed too intent on their sport to pay much attention to our presence on the concrete block just above high water mark. Further along the shore several groups of people with dogs approached fairly close but fortunately didn't panic the seals. Gradually, though, the rising tide moved the seals on. Since our presence may have inhibited their movement ashore, we ourselves moved on and left them to it. It had been a fascinating morning.

Jim Cook

## ISABELLINE SHRIKE



Yet another 'first record' for Angus, of an **Isabelline shrike** (*Lanius isabellinus*), was made at Maryton, Montrose on 22nd October. The unusual name of this bird sent me in pursuit of its origins.

Many years ago the Queen of Spain, Isabella, was very devoted to her husband the King. Apparently, when he died she was so distraught that she said she would not change her clothing for a whole year. She kept to her pledge and, by the end of the year, the original white of her dress had become discoloured and was now a pale sandy colour, nowadays referred to as isabelline. The Isabelline shrike bears testimony to this colour.

Bob McCurley

## A TOUCH OF FROST

23rd November

A **temperature inversion** in Glengarry resulted in some very striking visual effects. In early afternoon the woods at the bottom of the glen from Killiecrankie to Bruar were completely frosted. Through the frost, individual trees were still suffused with underlying autumnal colours of yellow, brown and maroon. Two hundred feet above the floor of the glen the trees were frost free and in their usual winter garb. This must be a common occurrence in winter though, perhaps, not always so picturesque.

Jack Moody

## DANGEROUS DOLPHINS?

While out birding at Scurdiness by Montrose on 29th November I met some Angus and Dundee Bird Club members. A few days previously they had been at Usan and had watched around 20 **dolphins** attacking five **porpoises**, apparently trying to drown them. There were also two **minke whales** seen at sea off Scurdiness.

Pat Gaff

## DUNDEE NATURALISTS' ROLE IN EARLY PHENOLOGY

Phenology is the study of the times of recurring natural phenomena especially in relation to climate, for example recording the date of the first cuckoo or swallow, the first frogspawn, or the flowering dates of plants. Its importance has been realised in recent years as an indicator of the effects of climate change, and for this reason the subject has undergone a revival, with the formation of the UK Phenology Network (see [www.phenology.org.uk](http://www.phenology.org.uk) for details). Some of you are probably contributors of phenological data for the BBC's 'Springwatch' and 'Autumnwatch' surveys. Phenological observations are most valuable when they cover a time-series of many years, or can be compared with earlier records for the same locality, giving rise to the study of historical phenology.

Phenology was a subject of great interest to Dundee's early naturalists (although they did not have a name for it then). On 1 January 1827, the botanist William Gardiner Junior began a weekly diary titled 'Botanical and geological notes'. These continued until the end of

October 1827, after which Gardiner compiled from them a lengthy 'Synoptical list of the various plants that have been observed through the season, arranged according to their time of flowering', giving the date of first record for each'

In April 1831, Gardiner launched a new monthly manuscript circulation journal, 'The Botanical Repository or Journal of Natural History'. This journal continued (with some changes of title) until November 1835. The first issue opened with a paper by the editor, 'Tables of the time of flowering, for a period of four years [1827–1830] of the flowering plants indigenous to the neighbourhood of Dundee, belonging to the natural orders Violaceae, Primulaceae, and Boraginaceae'. Three tables give the dates of first flowering for a total of 20 species over this period. Later in the same issue, two other local naturalists, James Butchart and David Clark, contributed their own observations of first flowering dates for early 1831, and in issue No. 2, Gardiner proposed that other readers should keep such calendars.

The proposal seems to have gone down well, for calendars submitted by both the editor and other contributors feature in many subsequent issues, some covering fauna as well as flora. Periodically these were collated by the editor – for example issue No. 20 (October 1833) contains 'Vernal indicators compared', a tabulation of various observations with first dates for the period 1827–1833, followed by a lengthy 9-page 'calendar of nature' in diary form. Natural history books at this time seldom gave flowering dates of plants, so these really were ground-breaking observations by our forebears.

Meanwhile, west of the city, another naturalist collated observations gathered over a period of many years. In October 1847, David Gorrie read a paper to the Dundee Naturalists' Association 'Notes on the progress of vegetation in the spring, summer & autumn of 1847'. The paper contains phenological observations linked to temperature for the year 1847 and "for a cycle of years", with a comparison for 1831. In the following two years, Gorrie presented two further phenological papers updating the records to 1849. The location of these observations was Annat, Kilspindie, in the Braes of the Carse. David Gorrie was the son of Archibald Gorrie, who was appointed Gardener at Annat by 1808. (He was still in post in 1856, when he was well into his 70s.) As David Gorrie would have been aged only about 9 when the earliest records presented to the Dundee Naturalists' Association were collected, it's likely that his father started keeping these records. As early as 1822, Archibald Gorrie had donated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh the "register of the barometer, thermometer, rain-gauge and weather, for 1821, kept at Annat-Garden, Perthshire". So it would seem that there was a phenological and meteorological dataset for the estate that probably covered at least 18 years, and perhaps as much as 28 years or even longer.

Sadly, although the estate papers of the Moody-Stuart family of Annat 1792–1899 are preserved in the County Archives in Perth, the phenological dataset is not amongst them. We are very fortunate that at least Gorrie's 1847 paper survives in the Local Studies Collection in Wellgate Library. It would be fascinating to repeat Gorrie's observations today.

William Gardiner's manuscript journals are also preserved in Wellgate Library, and offer much scope for further study. It may be that few of the records are useful, since they cover many different locations and habitats within a day's walk of the city, while some of the species recorded differ from year to year. The summary tables compiled by the editor rarely identify locations, and may either average the flowering dates or just give the earliest date recorded from several years, so detailed information has to be searched for in the text – of which there is well over 800 pages! Nevertheless, it is likely that there are usable data series for at least a few of the species, which might be compared with modern data from the same area. A good indoor project for someone to work on over the winter, perhaps, before going out in spring to collect records of present-day first flowering dates?

A table copied from David Gorrie's 1847 paper, containing some specific botanical observations for Annat

Name of plant serving as natural index	1831	1847
Common coltsfoot in flower	March 6	March 20
Larch in leaf	April 5	April 26
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> [lilac] fl	May 18	May 25
Wheat in ear	June 18	June 18
<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> fl	August 1	July 31

Colin McLeod email [Colin.McLeod@JNCC.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.McLeod@JNCC.gov.uk)



## DNS OUTINGS & TICKS

**Ixodid ticks** appear to be increasing in Scotland, due probably to global warming bringing milder winters and wetter summers – they become inactive when the temperature drops below 5°C and cannot tolerate desiccation (Apologies at this point if you thought this piece was about species recording!) They have a 3 stage life cycle – larva, nymph and adult. Larvae and nymphs parasitise small **rodents** and the adult **female ticks** feed on the blood of **deer, sheep, horses and humans**. Usually in early summer and autumn, nymphs and adults (like 8 legged 2-4mm coffee beans) gain access to their host from vegetation in woodland, pasture and heath - also prime habitats for naturalists

Ticks attach to one's lower leg and then usually migrate to the warm areas of the body eg groin or armpit and start feeding after 24hrs. Provided any attached ticks are removed within this period the risk of acquiring **Lyme disease** is low. This disease is caused by a bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which may be injected by the feeding **female tick**. However, the risk of infection is low given that most **ticks** are unlikely to be infected with *Borrelia*, a bite from an infected **tick** may not cause infection and many human infections do not cause disease. So what is Lyme disease?

After a *Borrelia*-infected bite, a bullseye-shaped rash (a clear centre inside a red ring) appears within a month. You should report to a doctor if the ring is greater than 2 inches in diameter. You may feel a bit 'fluey' too. Mention finding a **tick** or passing through 'tick-habitat' (nymphs are small and can easily be missed). Don't let the doctor dismiss the symptoms or disease. A '*Borrelia* blood test' is superfluous as the above story followed by a rash warrants antibiotic treatment, furthermore, the blood test takes several more weeks to become positive. Persisting infection, maybe months or years later, can result in arthritis and various neurological disorders – certainly worth avoiding!

Naturalists can reduce the low chance of infection even further by the following measures

### Before and during a field trip

- 1 Wear light-coloured clothing, so that you can see attached ticks and remove them
- 2 Wear long sleeved shirts and long trousers
- 3 Trousers should be tucked inside wellingtons and socks. Gaiters are recommended
- 4 Applying insect repellent to skin and clothes may help

### After the field trip

- 1 Check clothing carefully and shake or brush out of doors – inspect woollens especially. **NB** ticks may stay on clothing for several days
- 2 If accompanied by a dog, comb the animal with a fine comb out of doors. **NB** ticks may stay on dog fur for several days
- 3 Carefully inspect skin for ticks, remembering that they may reach parts of the body that are not easily seen oneself! Some ticks are very small, only 1-2mm across

### Remove ticks as soon as possible

The risk of *Borrelia* infection is reduced if an infected tick is removed within 24hrs. Using sharp-pointed tweezers, grip the tick as near to its embedded mouth parts as possible and twist it anti-clockwise without pulling or jerking. Try not to squeeze the tick or leave its mouth parts. Apply alcohol or methylated spirits to the tick to encourage it to release. A plastic 'tick remover' can be purchased from vets, which might make removal easier.

Finally, don't think it won't happen to you. Several members of the Society have needed antibiotic treatment for tick infections in the last couple of years.

Alban Houghton

# DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

## SUMMER OUTINGS PROGRAMME 2006

Saturday 22nd April **Glasgow Botanic Gardens & Victoria Park Fossil Grove**

Leader - Jim Cook

**Bus 9.00am**

It's been a few years since the Society visited these fascinating gardens flanking the River Kelvin, almost in the heart of Glasgow. They provide a haven of serenity in a busy city, even more striking than in Edinburgh botanic gardens. Although not as extensive as their rivals in the capital city, Glasgow botanics hold a wide range of fascinating species, well worth a visit. We hope to be able to obtain permission to enter the filmy fern house, with an impressive array of these fascinating ferns and to find clumps of that incredible species gone wild, the purple toothwort. Why not join us for a wonderful day in the heart of Scotland's largest city?

Saturday 6th May **North Queensferry/Aberdour**

Leader - Wynn Tennant

**Bus 9.00am**

This outing will take us to parts of the ever popular Fife Coastal Path on the section from North Queensferry to Aberdour. The route includes Carlingnose Point, an SWT Reserve, with fine views above St James Harbour. The area around Dalgety Bay has many small woods and gardens and is a good birding area. The Chapel of St Bridget is very old with some rare 17th century stones. A guided visit to Aberdour Castle may be arranged (Historic Scotland) and possibly some time at Silver Sands - a blue flag beach. Return to Dundee around 6.30pm.

Tuesday 15th May **Arbroath Cliffs**

Leader - Jim Cook

**Cars**

Meet at East Whale Lane at 6.15pm or at Arbroath Esplanade (far end) at 7pm. We shall walk along the cliff path as far as Carlingheugh Bay looking out for seabirds and, perhaps dolphins. There are lots of interesting plants along the way and much of the path is now tarmac and easy walking. This popular walk is an SWT Reserve and always has something of interest.

Saturday 27th May **Loch of the Lowes and Dunkeld**

Leader - Dorothy Fyffe

**Bus 9.00am**

The SWT Reserve at Loch of the Lowes is famous for its nesting ospreys, which should be in residence, but there is plenty of other bird life on the loch and around the visitor centre. Red squirrels are also often seen on the bird feeders. In the afternoon we plan to have a walk somewhere in the Dunkeld area, possibly in the woods towards the Mill Dam, depending on weather and bus access.

Tuesday 6th June **Hare Myre, Stormont Loch**

Leader - Alban Houghton

**Cars**

Please share cars. Meet at East Whale Lane (Allen Street) car park at 6pm or SWT reserve car park (NO196423) at 7pm. The turn-off to the car park is 2km north of the Isla bridge on the A923, half way between Coupar Angus and Blairgowrie. Look for the track immediately beyond a poultry unit on the left. Habitats: nutrient-rich loch, fen, willow scrub and woodland. Bring wellies if you intend exploring the fen for uncommon species: water plantain, tufted loosestrife etc. Breeding birds include several species of warbler and waterfowl. We may see red squirrel and, just possibly, twinflower in bloom.

Should you require a lift contact leader, and should you have a spare car seat please also contact the secretary or President.

9th/12th June **South Lake District Weekend** Leaders -Brian Allan & Alban Houghton **Bus 9.30am**

The four day trip has wonderful scenery: the lakes are lovely and we shall see lots of limestone plants and possibly hear booming bitterns!

We will be based at the Crooklands Hotel, 8 miles south of Kendal on the Lancaster canal. A full itinerary will be handed out on the bus. All rooms are taken - mainly because members wish single rooms.

Weds 21st June **Marshall Lodge - Trossachs** Leaders - Marjory Tennant & M. McLaren **Bus 9.30am**  
The Queen Elizabeth Forest Park is now part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The Forest Park covers 49,000 acres of land with a mixture of semi-natural and ancient woodlands as well as the large commercial plantations these occur in a wide variety of habitats from boggy peat lands to exposed hillsides. The forest enterprise waymarked trail follows the line of the Highland Boundary Fault. The distance is 3.5 miles starting from the Marshall Lodge and car park and it is a medium grade walk. There are information boards on the geology and history of the area and this should prove a very interesting walk.

**Saturday 1st July** **Aberlady Bay** Leader - Peter Middleton **Bus 9.00am**  
Aberlady Bay Local Nature Reserve is on the south shore of the Firth of Forth about 12 miles east of Edinburgh. Noted for its winter waders and wildfowl the shore has much summer wildlife interest. The dunes, mudflats, salt marsh and wetlands hold 550 species of higher plants. There are fine shows of several species of orchid. Bog pimpernel and grass of Parnassus were in flower when the Society last visited on 28th June, 1997.

**Saturday 15th July** **Morrone Birkwood, Braemar** Leader - Brian Ballinger **Bus 9.30am.**  
The Morrone Birkwood has many features typical of similar woods in Norway and this may be the best example in Britain of a subalpine birchwood on basic soils. The wood consists of downy birch with a little aspen and juniper under-storey. There is a rich and varied flora and about 250 vascular plant species have been recorded. The wood houses a red deer population and is inhabited by a variety of birds and invertebrates.  
There are fine views of the mountains to the north. The way-marked path around the wood is about 2.5 miles long and, although hilly in places, there are no prolonged climbs. The facilities of the pleasant village of Braemar are close by.

**Saturday 29th July** **Water of Leith** Leader - Jim Cook **Bus 9.00am**  
The water of Leith is the almost private river that penetrates through the heart of Edinburgh. How many of us know of the secret habitats and haunts that it harbours, to say nothing of an excellent range of plants and animals? We intend to walk several moderate stretches along the river in the upper parts of the city. The walking is easy and fairly flat, although it can be muddy in places if the weather is wet. Please support your Society outings and join us for what promises to be a fascinating day out.

**Sunday 13th August** **Barry Buddon Open Day** Leaders - Bob McCurley, Jim Cook & others **Cars**  
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.

**Tues.15th August** **Boat Trip towards Perth** Leader - Jack Moody **Cars**  
Embarkation will take place at Camperdown Steps east of the Tay Road Bridge near to West Victoria Dock Street at 5.15pm. **Meet at 5.00pm.** Weather permitting we should enjoy wonderful scenery from a different view point. Please bring refreshments and warm clothing. Park at City Quay near the river. Interested parties should contact Jack Moody (01382 732028) leave your name and telephone number in case there is a change of plan. An alternative outing will be arranged in case of bad weather.  
Payment of £20 must be with Jack Moody by 1st July.

Sat. 26th August                      **Mystery Tour - Dundee area**                      Leader - Pat Gaff                      **Cars**  
How well do you know Dundee? A mystery trip full of pleasant surprises and we should enjoy the surrounding rich wildlife. Meet at East Whale Lane at 9am. Those members requiring lifts please phone Jean Colquhoun on 01382 668219 or Pat Gaff on 01382 860902.

1st/3rd September                      **Flower Show - Camperdown Park**  
The Society intends to have a stand this year. We need a lot of people to man the stand over the weekend and any help would be gratefully received. Any volunteers, please contact the secretary, Margaret McLaren, 01382 779422.

Sat. 16th September    **Ferns and Fungi - Hermitage/Rumbling Bridge**                      **Bus 9.00am**  
   Leaders - Sheila Brinkley & Gordon Maxwell  
We will leave from Inver and walk to the Hermitage. There are a dozen different ferns on this walk and Sheila Brinkley will help us to identify them.  
Given suitable conditions, the above areas can be an excellent venue for fungi: suitable conditions in this case being, ideally, a good wet spell a week or two prior to the outing. We should expect to see a number of specimens not encountered in our previous outing to Tentsmuir, e.g. those typical of a highland environment. In the event of it being another dry year, there should be compensation in the fine scenery, walks, waterfalls and wildlife of the area.