

# Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



**Bulletin No 31 2006**

**DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY  
ANNUAL BULLETIN No 31  
2006**

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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, Brian Allan, Christine Reid, Mary Reid, and Arfile.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Thanks to all members who have submitted articles and reports, it makes Bulletin production much easier, though there is always space for contributions from new authors. Thanks to Mary and Christine Reid for typing and other computing help, and to Jim Cook, Colin Reid and the girls for proof reading and helpful comments (Mary via e-mail this year!)

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

We have decided to keep the current format, even in the light of postage changes. A half size would probably have been too thick to qualify for the basic letter post-rate, even without all the extra items usually included in the mailing. Thank you to all who hand-deliver the envelopes for us, and keep our postage costs down.

Anne Reid

## SOCIETY REPORTS

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The core activities of our society have gone well this year. Splendidly sunny summer excursions to South Cumbria and Morroon NNR really did represent the good season we experienced. Carsegowan's 20th Anniversary was celebrated, a novel evening boat trip to Perth organised by Jack Moody was enjoyed by all, a pod of dolphins took up residence in the Tay. But, and there's always a but, injuries and illness did mar some of our activities and some days were less than perfect – a damp Trossachs outing, for example. These happenings and the rest of the Dundee Naturalists' year are presented in this, the 31st Bulletin.

Numbers on our bus outings were steady albeit at the lower level of recent years. The bus fare could be reduced if greater numbers turned out! Our Excursion Secretary, Jean Colquhoun, is soon to step down with over four years of magnificent service. Council will attempt to promote a similar commitment from members to attend car outings in addition to the more popular bus ones. Reasonable numbers of folk attended Jim Cook's 'species-recording' evenings where members can learn a lot and have good fun. (See below.)

The Society's 2006 winter programmes have been entertaining and informative. Margaret McLaren is still organising these lectures in excellent fashion, but would like to step down as Secretary. Surely another Society member can take this task on? Sheila Brinkley delighted the Dundee afternoon lecture series audience with her December talk on the wildlife of northern Sweden.

I wish to thank Society members and in particular the Council for their help and support throughout the year. The Reid family are barbecue stars, and Gordon Maxwell is a tower of strength both for his fungus forays and helping at the Nats stall at the Dundee Food and Flower Festival, which Jim Cook organised. Thank you all.

Alban Houghton

### TECHNICAL CONVENOR'S REPORT

The Tuesday evening biological study and recording visits in spring went ahead as in previous years and most attracted good numbers of members and friends. A visit to Balgay Hill on 23rd May was sparsely attended but yielded some interesting records on the 'cemetery hill'. Brian Ballinger recorded **hart's tongue fern**, others found **hairy sedge** and Jean Colquhoun heard a **great spotted woodpecker** calling, which everyone saw later on.

Elliot dunes the following week was well attended on a cool but sunny evening. The rough grass beyond the burn produced its usual rich mix of species including **meadow saxifrage**, **yellow meadow vetchling**, **kidney vetch**, **hairy tare** and **purple milk vetch**. We failed to find the **sea pea**, despite careful searching, but did see the **great water dock** in the marsh – one of the site's notable plants.

The group which visited the Stannergate foreshore on 13th June was keen to see if all this site's specialities had survived the cycle path reconstruction the previous year. Thankfully, no species seems to have disappeared as a direct result, though we shall continue to monitor the site. The **meadow cranesbill** and **tansy** remain in large clumps, and the tiny *Teesdalia nudicaulis* is still hanging on, just, on the minute rocky outcrop beside the path.

The final visit, at the end of June, was to Carsegowan. All the usual common species were recorded but there were no signs of the **adder's tongue fern**. However, three spikes of **coralroot orchid** were found in the site by pond three and 15 spikes of **northern marsh orchid** were counted in the marshy area at the southern edge.

Tree survey It has been proposed that this coming year the Nats organise a survey of notable trees, both natural and planted, deciduous and coniferous, in and around Dundee. If you would like to join in, or have records, interesting stories about or knowledge of particular trees to contribute, please contact the Technical Convenor or any member of the Council.

Jim Cook

## CARSEGOWNIEMUIR REPORT

The year has been dominated by weather extremes. The very mild winter encouraged grass growth until extremely late in the season and some of the tree buds were showing signs of swelling. The blast of arctic air in February and March chilled the quarry for weeks and, although there wasn't all that much snow, spring growth was much delayed. The real damage, however, arrived in the summer, with the many weeks of dry and warm weather. The growth of many of the trees was affected and the newly-planted specimens suffered the most. Five of the new **elders**, planted to form a wind-break in the sandy soil at the far end, which is highly exposed and tends to be very dry anyway, dried out and died and will have to be replaced. The new trees in amongst the **willowherb**, though, benefited from the shelter and survived.

We had been through the quarry in late June, pulling the willowherb surrounding the smaller trees and using the herbage to mulch them but left the **ragwort** pulling until rather late, in September. The work had to be completed in a hurry to prevent the seeds being released and escaping all over the quarry. A visit by the Reid family in August produced two excellent new records, our first ever dragonfly record, a **darter** (*Sympetrum* sp.) and a **kingfisher**, seen by the girls on pond five. (Report on page 36)

The drought didn't break until September when the arrival of the monsoon encouraged an excellent growth of fungi - **cloud agarics**, **blewits**, several **waxcaps**, **deceivers**, **amethyst deceivers**, **witch's butter** and **yellow jelly-fungus** among others - in the quarry (and on Ronnie and Lorraine's lawn!) The main effort in the autumn was directed at the paths, making sure that they were cleared a metre or so on each side to allow walkers to move along in wet weather without being soaked and a number of stones sticking up above the surface, liable to trip the unwary, were removed from the main paths. Several man-days were spent in reconstructing the main sets of steps, particularly the ones at the cottage end of the quarry, originally and excellently built by Doug Palmer nearly 15 years ago.

The big event of the autumn was the tree planters' 20th anniversary celebration on Saturday 25th November. Twenty members and guests turned up and all were impressed by the progress in the quarry and enjoyed the occasion. (Report on page 41)

Jim Cook

## FLOWER SHOW

Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd September

The Society maintains a policy of running a stand at the Dundee Flower Show every two years. On intervening years we attend the marine festival in July on Broughty Ferry Castle Green. Although the flower show attracts thousands of visitors and is a good place to meet lots of potential members, many are from other parts of Scotland.

Our stand was in a good location in the main display tent, near one of the entrances and opposite the beekeepers' stand, yet with enough room in the walkway between the stands to prevent severe congestion. We were sharing the space with the Dundee Group of the Scottish Wildlife Trust and together the two stands formed a significant display. Margaret McLaren, Gordon Maxwell, Davy Stein and others gathered on the Thursday evening to put together the display. Several of the existing boards were used and Gordon and Davy provided a number of excellent new photographs to liven up the display. Jim Cook arranged a number of sea shells for visitors to examine and Gordon and Davy spent an hour or so on Friday morning finding a number of fresh fungi to draw in people passing by the stand.

As always, the success of the stand depends on the members who volunteered to come in and spend time talking to visitors. We are very grateful to Dorothy Fyffe, Brian Ballinger, Gordon Maxwell, Margaret McLaren, Marjory Tennant, Davy Stein, Jean Colquhoun, Peter Middleton, Tom and Mary Harwood and Katy Smith for their time and help. Dorothy Fyffe had the good idea to provide a thousand or so small leaflets of the winter syllabus to hand out as fliers to as many of the interested passers-by as possible. We took the names and addresses of a number of interested visitors and Margaret McLaren, our secretary, has written to them. A few, even, have joined the Society.

Jim Cook

## OBITUARIES

### DR KURT LIEBSCHER

In February 2006 we heard of the sad passing of Dr Kurt Liebscher, who had originally come to Scotland from Austria. For many years Kurt and Friedel with their daughter Veronica were regulars on our summer outings. Kurt was a teacher in Perth and when he retired the family moved to Ayrshire. They had bought a house with a large bit of land near Kilmarnock and worked tirelessly to make it eco-friendly by planting trees and studying and recording the wildlife that flourished there. In a letter to us this past Christmas it was clear that Friedel is continuing this good work. We always pass on the good wishes of the Society when we write at Christmas.

Brian Allan

### PFENNIG - AN APPRECIATION

Members will be sorry to learn that the 'Youngs' lurcher, Pfennig, Carsegowniemuir quarry operative in chief and an important 'associate member' of the Nats, died this past June. She was 14, a good age for a lurcher. Those of us who went up to the quarry to plant trees in the early 90s will remember her as a puppy looking like, as someone once rather unkindly described her, "a large hairy rat" but always so pleased to see us. Pfennig was excellent company and did her level best - although usually not highly successfully - to help with the rabbit problem. She dug holes with the best of us, and often seemed to be heading for the Antipodes by the direct route, but no-one ever could persuade her to dig where we wanted to plant a tree! Her other attribute of note was to demonstrate the way to vault across a fence or a stile with at least several feet to spare. She lies now in her favourite place, very appropriately the quarry, with a small plaque on the stone above.

In the early autumn the Youngs acquired another lurcher, Purdey, part Bedlington and part whippet, as a companion for Milly. Once again, visitors to the quarry are welcomed by two enthusiasts eager to enter their - and our - favourite location!

Jim Cook

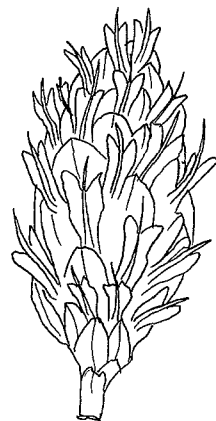
## WINTER MEETINGS

### CROMBIE BARBECUE

3rd January

After some uncharacteristically complicated arrangements with two cars and picking up Jim and Marjory, the Reid family set to and got the barbecue ready to light. Doug arrived in good time to put his superior incendiary skills to work. After all the usual New Year greetings, and mulled wine from Brian and Jenny, most people set off on a walk with their quiz sheet in hand.

There had been snow the previous week so the requirement to find plants in flower met with little success, but most people managed to bring back or list at least five different kinds of **cones**. We had envisaged **Douglas fir**, **Norway spruce**, **Sitka spruce**, **larch** and **pine** cones with a few 'exotic' conifers from the tree trail but several people also brought **alder** cones. Very little was seen in the way of bird life, though the small birds were around the feeders by the lodge when the throng around the barbecue did not put them off. The winner of the quiz has not been recorded. (Not important - the Reid family was lined up again to do one for 2007! - Ed)



The weather stayed fair and the usual mixed feast was produced and cooked or heated on the large, half oil drum barbecue provided by the rangers. We almost ran out of charcoal but added the collected cones and some fallen branches from nearby and had enough heat to cook everything. Our thanks go to Lesley and the other Crombie rangers for their help and cooperation.

Anne Reid

## FLOWERS OF SCOTLAND

Keith Skene - 17th January

In his lecture on the flowers of Scotland, Keith chose to focus down on Scotland's best known flower, *Calluna vulgaris*, our native **heather** or **ling**. His enthusiastic and clear informative style soon showed why he is such a popular lecturer at the Dundee University Department of Biology.

He started by introducing us to the world-wide family of Ericaceae, exploring their distribution in arctic, temperate and tropical zones, with special mention of the amazing diversity of the South African **fynbos** and the jungle of **tree heathers** in the **cloud forests** of Gomera in the Canary Islands.

*Calluna vulgaris*, the only member of its genus, is naturally a forest remnant plant, where it can grow up to a metre high. Its distribution is all across Europe, and it has even naturalised in North America, possibly through seeds from the mattresses of the early Scottish settlers. It is perhaps at its most beautiful on our Scottish moorlands, which are in fact a man-made environment. Keith then made even the least scientific of us understand how **ling** is so successful, and the devious tactics it employs to do this, with chemical and biological warfare.

It is able to grow at low temperatures in waterlogged, nitrogen-poor environments by co-opting **fungi** or **mycorrhizae** to fix nitrogen. The Ericaceae have fine hair-like roots with an Ascomycete mycorrhiza. These fungi can work at quite low pH levels in acid soil. Other plants including **birch** and **pinus** use a different **ectomycorrhiza** and some use the fungi to fix phosphates.

The cunning Ericaceae also use biological toxins. Their shoots are rich in phenols and lipids which inhibit the growth of other plants, by releasing aromatic and aliphatic acids, which acidify the soil as they decompose. This is why, when heathers have been grown in our gardens, the soil needs to be changed if we then wish to grow other types of plant. It is also why we have the pure stands of heather covering our hills. Where the soil becomes more acidic the hill grass *Festuca ovina* can out-compete the heather.

Heathers have a natural life cycle in nature, which our moorland management interrupts.

Years 1-7	Heather plus other pioneers, quite species rich
Yrs 7-15	Mainly heather with only a few other species
Yrs 14-25	Mature high heather with more gaps and other species appearing
Yrs 20-30	Old woody stems with lots of lichens and bryophytes

Keith also told us how other types of plants, such as **legumes** and **insectivorous plants**, get round the same nitrogen supply problem and why nitrogen pollution from fertilisers, artificial or sheep-produced, can allow the **grasses** to take over.

Liz Houghton

## MEMBERS' NIGHT

31st January

Around 45 members gathered to see what fellow members had brought by way of entertainment and illustration. As usual, Brian Allan guided us through all the photographs and exhibits. Gordon Maxwell brought a dazzling and fascinating selection of **rocks** and **minerals** from his collection and these attracted a lot of interest at the end of the meeting when most of

those present crowded to the front for a good look Margaret McLaren brought her prints of Australia (and of her baby grandson) and laid these out on the front table We were going to use an **epidiascope**, newly acquired by the society, to project images of the prints for all to see, but it proved to be not bright enough to use

We then moved on to the slide presentations, with one significant difference Bob McCurley, ever keen to embrace new technology, had transferred his slides to a powerpoint presentation Those who showed 'slides' were

Bob McCurley Birds etc A selection of birds including **little ringed plover** breeding in Angus, a **rosy starling** at Carnoustie and some rare vagrants Hibernating **small tortoiseshell** and **peacock butterflies** and **herald moths** in a World War II bunker at Lunan Bay and a **fox** on the beach at Barry Buddon

Alban Houghton Look Back and Look Forward Inverness weekend shots of *Oxytropis halleri* near the beach at Ballintore, an **eyed ladybird** at Culbin and the Ballingers' Garrick Wood **Puffins**, **kittiwakes** and **fulmars** at Fowlsheugh and **serrated wintergreen** at Dinnet **Spotted flycatcher** chicks in a garden nestbox and a taster of **twinflower** for the Haremyre outing

Jim Cook Miscellaneous A **sheep tick** on Gordon, with a warning to all of us about Lyme Disease (See Bulletin 2005, page 40) A **speckled wood butterfly** at Craig Wood near Dingwall, with **dingy skipper**, **serrated wintergreen** and **interrupted clubmoss** at Culbin A **large heath butterfly** above Alyth

Brian Allan South Africa Scenery from a wide-ranging trip in late 2005 and a selection of flowers, many endemic, including **proteas**, **pelargoniums**, **geraniums** and **orchids**

Gordon Maxwell Various Natural History **Osprey** and **redshank** from a hide at Kinnordy Loch A **shield bug** eating a **caterpillar**, and a **brown china mark moth** at Barry Buddon

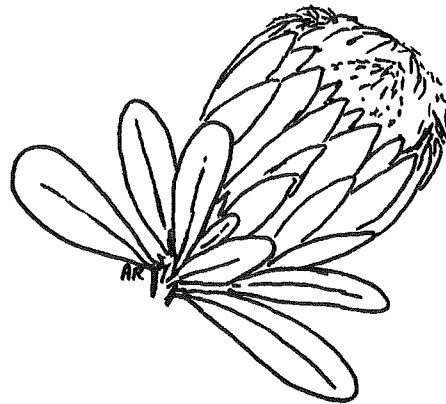
Various fungi including **chicken of the woods** at Dunkeld and the fascinating, leathery **ear-pick fungus** (*Auriscalpium vulgare*), with its offset stem and spines instead of gills, on **pine** cones at Tentsmuir

Brian Ballinger Morrich More This is the bombing range near Tain where Brian and Barbara have been site monitoring for plants for SNH, at weekends, and only after a safety briefing and being issued with a radio! The site consists of **sand dunes**, **mud flats** and **forestry**, plus **eelgrass** on the estuary mud outside the ranges Interesting plants include **seaside centaury** (*Centaureum littorale*) and **Baltic rush** (*Juncus balticus*) with **crowfoot** (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*) in the water in bomb craters **Sand martins** nest near the ranges and various **fritillary butterflies** are found

Marjory Tennant Crete, April 2005 On a trip with seven Nats found specialities including the **birthwort** *Aristolochia cretica* with its amazing flowers and *Arum cretica* *Tulipa saxatilis* was found in a ditch and also the four inch high *Tulipa cretica* Further west in a 'rock garden' were *Orchis pauciflora*, *O italica* and *O laxiflora* with a third **tulip**, *T doerfleri*, in a meadow nearby On the Omalos Plain was *Tulipa bakeri* and, finally, the very rare *T goulimy* was found

All present enjoyed the excellent slides on such a wide variety of subjects, and Brian Allan was thanked for compering the evening, as he has done for a number of years now

Anne Reid



## THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Dr Alastair Lavery - 14th February

Imagine taking the air on a windless evening on a southern hemisphere island which looks vaguely familiar An island that is almost Scottish (it is after all at an equivalent latitude to Edinburgh) with low and sometimes rocky hills and heaths Yet, there are no **midges** or any

biting insects and there on the beach are **penguins**! You would be in the Falklands, a few hundred miles east of Tierra del Fuego

Alastair Lavery is clearly charmed by the Falkland Isles and gave the Society a masterly account of their natural history. The two largest islands, East and West Falkland, plus a few hundred smaller ones, occupy an area half the size of Wales. Most of the 2,700 inhabitants live in Stanley, the capital, situated on East Falkland. Sheep farming has been displaced as the chief earning industry by Fisheries Licensing (mainly **squid** for the Asian market) and tourism.

The islands were part of the southern supercontinent, Gondwanaland, 180m years ago and are mainly composed of **quartzite** and **shales**. Huge, 20 mile-long 'stone runs' are periglacial features formed 10,000 years ago. Alastair warned that one had to take care not to meet with an aggressive **seal** when walking along **seal**-paths through the 3 metre high **tussock grass** which flourishes near the sea. The dominant heath, *Empetrum rubrum*, rejoices in the name **diddledee**. There are also large fern communities of *Blechnum* sp. and bright green hummocks of **balsam bog** in the uplands. A dominant **white grass** covers most of the 300 square mile plain of Lefonia – more plant species-diversity has arisen there since sheep were removed. Other notable species include endemic **snake plant**, **Falklands calceolaria**, **single-flowered sundew** and **vanilla daisy** which smells of custard creams! The Flora of the islands would be quite a slim volume.

The four commonest **penguin** species are **magellanic** which nest in burrows, **gentoo** in more open colonies and much reduced, possibly due to 'red-tide' **algal** poisoning, handsome **king penguins** and the punk-like **rockhopper penguin**.

A subspecies of our **wren** and the **tussock bird** have escaped **rat** predation on some of the smaller islands. New Zealand rat-catchers are attempting to eradicate **rats** in several areas. Other birds include the magnificent **black-browed albatross**, **Falklands thrush**, **military starling**, the rare **striated caracara** and the **crested caracara**. There are many **duck** and **goose** species **flightless steamer** and **Patagonian crested ducks**, and **upland**, **kelp** and **ruddy-headed geese**.

**Seal** populations are very much reduced on the islands, despite an apparently well-regulated fishery. Three species breed **southern sealion**, **elephant seal** and **fur seal**. The **Falklands wolf** was exterminated within 30 years of European settlement but it may have been brought by earlier settlers. There are many introduced mammals including **house mice** and **brown rats**, which menace ground-nesting **birds**. There are also **European** and (American) **cottontail rabbits**, **brown hares**, **guanaco**, **Patagonian fox** and **reindeer**. In addition, **porpoises**, **dolphins** and **whales** are sometimes seen offshore.

Alastair is a **spider** expert and he showed us many Falkland species, suitably pickled in 70% alcohol. Three images were of *Platnickia bergi* plus the 'well-known' **green spider** and a rediscovered, though common, '**fossil spider**' and lots of others (whose names I can't spell anyway!) He has greatly added to the spider species list, 42 at the last count. When he finds an illustrator he will produce the definitive Falklands **spider** monograph.

The Falkland Islands are remote and thinly populated, with limited resources and much of the basic ecology of the islands remains to be elucidated. When this is known in better detail, more effective conservation measures can be put in place to protect such a unique habitat. Darwin remarked of the Falklands 'an undulating land with a desolate and wretched aspect'. Alastair showed us that this was definitely not the case and his knowledge and understanding opened our eyes as to what these islands have to offer. He intends to return soon to follow up his studies of 2001 and 2004. Jack Moody thanked our speaker for such an enthusiastic presentation on behalf of those present.

Alban Houghton and Jack Moody





## SOCIAL EVENING

24th February

The Social Evening has become an annual 'beat the winter blues' affair and 34 members met in the Queen's Hotel to have a jolly time

We were welcomed by our President, Alban Houghton. Wynne Tennant had devised the entertainments, with just a little help from myself, and we began with a nature quiz. This was followed by a very active pass the parcel. Supper, consisting of stovies followed by trifle, was then served, always a very popular part of the evening.

Helen Blackburn read one of her poems, a parody on 'The Owl and the Pussycat', which left us all in fits of laughter. There was more laughter while teams attempted to twist balloons into fabulous wildlife shapes. We then had a quieter interlude while Bede Pounder sang 'Jock o' Hazeldean' accompanied by Jenny Allan on the guitar. Then Jenny sang 'Blooming Heather'.

With great enthusiasm Jim Cook raffled a wonderful display of gifts and we then enjoyed a final sing-song with Jenny and Bede. Gordon Maxwell thanked everyone and we ended with 'Auld Lang Syne'.

Marjory Tennant

## WILDLIFE AND THE LAW

Douglas Ogilvie - 28th February

Constable Douglas Ogilvie from Tayside Police introduced his talk on wildlife crime with slides of birds, flowers, insects and views of the countryside to stress the things which might be lost through wildlife crime. Police wildlife work is voluntary and is carried out in addition to everyday police work. There are five Wildlife Officers in Angus, six in Perthshire and one in Dundee and their main job is liaising with and educating the public to prevent wildlife crime.

Though it is preferable to prevent crime, Tayside Police has a significant enforcement role, with a number of cases being reported annually in offences from egg theft to hunting with dogs. On the education side they run a wildlife crime project with local school pupils where the children carry out individual projects including nature diaries, wildlife drawings, short stories and quizzes. It is hoped that, by educating the next generation, there will be less wildlife crime in future.

Constable Ogilvie's presentation was most informative, interesting and entertaining and provided discussion points and questions which he ably answered. There were also leaflets available for us to take away to spread the message.

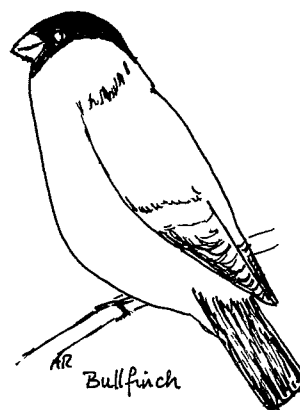
Peter Middleton

## LETHAM DEN WALK

4th March

March had 'come in like a lion' so that blowing snow had blocked roads north of Montrose. Fortunately, Letham escaped most of the snow which had come from the north-east. Twenty four Nats braved the cold to walk in the Vinney Den.

We teetered down the snowy slope from Ashmount, where **woodruff** grows out of the wall and a **dipper** was spotted at the sluice gates of the old mill dam. Two hundred years ago there were several types of water-driven mills along the Vinney Burn including a sawmill, a lint mill for linen spinning, and corn mills, but all are now gone. Davy and Gordon saw a **wren** and then eight **bullfinches** feeding in a



**blackthorn** thicket (presumably on emerging buds)

Moving on past sledging children and **highland cows**, we stopped at the Feuars' Green where flax was retted and linen bleached. The built and natural heritage of this place has been destroyed by unthinking management. Pointless straightening of the burn has destroyed an old dam where **kingfishers** once nested. When a light grazing régime was replaced by regular mowing, the semi-natural grassland was destroyed. Plants such as **meadow saxifrage**, **northern marsh orchid** and **hay rattle** are no longer seen.

Other sightings included another **dipper**, a **buzzard** (twice), and **long-tailed tits** and **yellowhammers** in a mixed **finch** flock. We returned in pleasant sunshine via 'the Muir' woodland path to lunch at the hotel. Alban was wished 'A Happy Birthday' by the assembled company.

Alban Houghton

## SUMMER OUTINGS

### GLASGOW AND THE BOTANIC GARDENS

22nd April

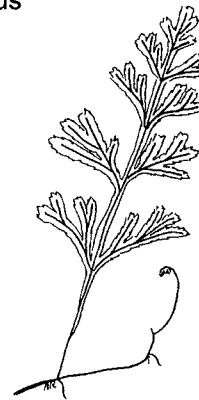
In a last-minute change of plan (due to the advertised 'largest water fight in the world'), the party visited Victoria Park in the morning (well before the start time!) to admire the fantastic **fossil forest**. The fossil grove, protected by a shed, consists of the casts of large stumps of giant tree-sized fern-like plants, of the type deposited to form coal seams, from the Carboniferous era approximately 330 million ago. Each stump was a metre or so high with a spread, several metres across, of curiously bifurcated roots. The shape of a fossil fallen trunk confirmed the size of the original trees, up to about 20 metres in height. We spent a short time exploring the gardens around the cutting and then returned to the bus.

Once in the Botanic Gardens, the party spread out and settled down to that most vital activity of all good naturalists – lunch. Most members then gathered around the eastern greenhouse entrance to meet deputy keeper Ewan Donaldson. He had kindly agreed to open the filmy fern house for us and soon led the way. It is always a magical place to experience, dripping wet, heavily shaded and absolutely festooned with many species of thin delicate **filmy ferns**, both temperate and tropical, as well as a variety of other fern types.

The party spread out and began to explore the wonders of the other greenhouses with their packed displays of plants from many parts of the world. Unfortunately, the other main attraction, the wonderfully curved Kibble Palace, was closed for complete refurbishment. However the annual **orchid** fair was being held in a long marquee in front of the greenhouses and most members spent time examining the displays and trying to resist the temptations on offer (unsuccessfully in a number of cases).

Soon after, a group of keen plant hunters went to search for that strange parasitic plant, the **purple toothwort**, *Lathraea clandestina*, with its claw-like bright purple blooms emerging directly from the ground. We soon found it and many members were able to photograph good specimens. Someone also pointed out another sign of wildlife, although the garden staff were unaware of it. On a bench overlooking the River Kelvin, a small metal plaque reads

"On this very spot,  
On this very bench,  
A handsome poet,  
Made love to a buxom wench "



There must be much more wild life in the Botanic Gardens than we know about! Most of the party finished the visit by a short tour of the garden extension down beside the river. To round off an excellent day, the rain didn't start until we were all back on the bus

Jim Cook

## FIFE COASTAL WALK

6th May

On a beautiful late spring day our first identification was of the bright red Rosyth Ferry returning to berth. Stuart Bonar of the Fife Ranger Service met us at North Queensferry just under the foundation pillar of the Forth Rail Bridge - a truly imposing sight from this viewpoint. The many interesting buildings, lanes and even pavements of North Queensferry were pointed out by the ranger. Bird lovers were well pleased with a list which included **goldfinch**, **robin**, **maggie**, **chaffinch**, **greenfinch**, **swallow**, **swift** and **willow warbler**. Looking shoreward, and beyond, we added **oystercatcher**, **turnstone**, **cormorant**, **sandwich tern**, **red-throated diver**, **curlew** and **eider**. Other seabirds were scarce due to the time of year and lack of local breeding habitats.

During sunny spells a few **butterflies** showed up, including **orange tip**, **peacock** and **green-veined white**. Davy Stein spotted, and identified, a parasitic **ichneumon wasp**. These wasps seek out other insect larvae in order to lay their own eggs on or near them as food for their own larvae. This is no mean feat when the said victim larvae may be a few inches into more-or-less solid wood.

Some members then returned to North Queensferry while others walked the coastal path to Aberdour. The Ranger pointed out a large red door on a heavily secured house and assured us that, despite no name, the shade of red was a dead giveaway for Gordon Brown.

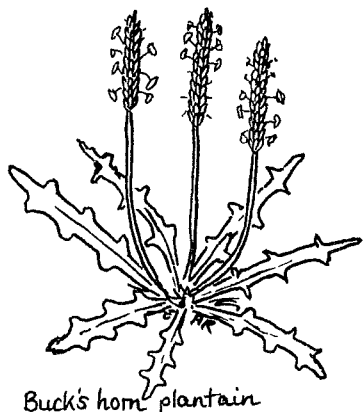
In Inverkeithing Margaret McLaren found an **eleven spot ladybird**, confirmed by Pat Gaff. Unfortunately we did not find **purple milk vetch** (*Oxytropis halleri*) which occurred here before the road bridge was built. We hoped it was just too early for it to be in flower, but fear that it has been lost here. **Knotted clover** (*Trifolium striatum*) and **wall rocket** (*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*) were found and two **bumblebees**, **red-tailed** (*Bombus lapidarius*) and **buff-tailed** (*B. terrestris*) were seen. At Aberdour many of us enjoyed churches and graveyards while we waited for the two groups to meet up before our return to Dundee.

Wynn Tennant

## ARBROATH CLIFFS

Tuesday 16th May

It was a rather chill and damp evening but a good number of members gathered at the end of the promenade. Well wrapped up, we set off along the cliff path and soon ticked off all the expected species and also noted numbers of **snails** (mostly **white-lipped**) and black **slugs** along the path.



Buck's horn plantain

We attracted quizzical looks from other walkers as members gathered round to closely inspect some of the patches of tiny plants on heavily-trodden ground, including such species as **ribwort**, **buck's-horn** and **sea plantains**. The cliffs were decorated by abundant clumps of **sea pinks** and **common scurvy grass**. Although we kept an eye out for **Danish scurvy-grass**, nobody spotted any. Some folk dropped out, but most of the party made their way past the deep inlet of Dickmont's Den - keeping their eyes peeled for **early purple orchids**, but not seeing any, although **primroses** were abundant on the slopes, too steep even for **rabbits**, which also were abundant. Once past the Deil's Heid the party spread out to examine the

best patch of seaside vegetation in the area, the damp **maritime heath** on the flat ground above the path. We found **sedges** and **rushes** and, on the steeper slopes close to the sea, several dried heads of **carline thistles** and 42 flowering spikes of **early purple orchids**. As the rain had stopped, a few members had enough time to make their way along to Carlingheugh Bay before returning as the light faded.

Jim Cook

## LOCH OF THE LOWES

27th May

Thirty four members attended the outing to Loch of the Lowes, where the new visitor centre had been finished and opened just in time for the hatching of this year's clutch of **osprey** eggs. The first egg had hatched only the previous Tuesday and the third egg had hatched only the day before our visit, so the chicks were still very small. We were, however, able to see them on the CCTV in one of the hides.

Unfortunately we were not so lucky as to see the **otters** on the loch. It had been reported that there had been as many as seven pups seen at one time, probably from two families. However, there were wonderful close up views of **red squirrel**, **great spotted woodpecker** and numerous **siskins** feeding on the nuts and seeds outside the windows of the centre.

Afterwards we took the Fungarth Path over to Dunkeld, crossing the hillside and getting beautiful views across the loch and beyond. We passed Craig Wood, which was a magnificent sight carpeted with **bluebells**, before descending into Dunkeld. Some of the party took the opportunity to pay a visit to the cathedral or to continue the walk up river.

Dorothy Fyffe

## HARE MYRE AND STORMONT LOCH

6th June

Fifteen Nats enjoyed a beautiful, warm, calm summer evening and we did see **twinflower**! A few **gnat**-like creatures, namely **mosquitoes** were mildly annoying.

Two dogs (not ours) explored the shallows of Stormont Loch more thoroughly than our party but we did find **celery-leaved buttercup** and non-flowering **tufted loosestrife**. Similarly, it was too early in the season to see **creeping lady's tresses** in bloom.

As well as the same Stormont **waterfowl** species, Hare Myre holds a colony of **black-headed gulls** and their usual squabbling and gossiping made quite a racket. A north east Scotland stock of **twinflower** (*Linnaea borealis*) was apparently transplanted to the pinewood site at least 30 years ago. Margaret counted 18 twinflowers – so tiny and delicate. Introducing a nationally scarce plant is definitely justified since it has declined 60% since 1970 and consequently is one of the species in SNH's Action Programme.

Returning to the carpark, we heard a drumming **great-spotted woodpecker** and admired a **lapwing** and chicks.

Alban Houghton



## SOUTH LAKE DISTRICT WEEKEND

9th -12th June

Brian Allan knows the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty very well indeed and so we really missed his guiding hand over our four day weekend excursion. He did have a decent excuse for his absence though, having undergone cardiac surgery a mere 11 days before our departure date! I am indeed grateful to several members of the party who helped out over the weekend.

The scorching hot weather and wall to wall sunshine built up from Tuesday and lasted right through the weekend. It rained during Sunday night, but fortunately stopped when we reached Smardale on Monday. We agreed with Duncan, our driver, that two stops were just fine as we progressed south to our hotel at Crooklands on Friday. We admired the **waterfowl** at Strathclyde Country Park before a longer stop at Aira Force by Ullswater. The mixed woodland by the falls was most attractive with swathes of **common cow-wheat** under the **oaks**. A **wood warbler** was trilling away and **pied flycatcher**, **tree creeper**, **orange tip butterfly** and **sanicle** were noted. The overall impression coming over the Kirkstone Pass was 'blue sky, white **hawthorn** blossom and yellow **buttercups** – magic'. After we had settled into Crooklands and were fed and watered, many of the 38 members walked along the Kendal canal, where large **tench** were spawning vigorously. Fledgling **spotted flycatchers** (thanks, Pat) and **pipistrelle bats** were seen here on a later evening.

Stephen Bradley, the National Trust Warden, showed us the limestone delights of Heathwaite meadow, adjoining Arnside Knott. We walked through woodland first where Gordon spotted a fluffy **tawny owl** chick some distance away in a patch of sunlight. A **green woodpecker** was yaffling. Our species list was an impressive one and included **common rockrose**, **salad burnet**, and **dropwort**. The ranks of **cowslip**, **early purple** and **green-winged orchids** were over but **fly**, **northern marsh**, **fragrant** and **lesser butterfly orchids** strutted their stuff. Many butterflies from the Arnside list of 27 were seen - **brimstone**, **green hairstreak**, **common blue** and **painted lady** plus a **blood-veined moth**. An Arnside specialty, the **high brown fritillary**, and the **Scotch argus** fly later in the season, so a return visit is indicated. I find it hard to believe that I grew up less than 30 miles from this place - Dundee Naturalists be praised for opening my eyes.

The planned visit to Arnside Promenade and Gubbins Wood was aborted when there was no room at the inn (the coach park of Ye Old Fighting Cockerel). We ignored the English World Cup frenzy with massed flags and the like, and went on later to Dalton Crag limestone pavement – the southwest corner of Hutton Roof Crag. Special plants seen were **lily of the valley**, **Solomon's-seal**, **limestone oak fern**, and **limestone buckler fern**. Insects included **common hawker dragonfly** and **cinnabar moth** plus several **butterfly** species.

On Sunday we visited Leighton Moss RSPB reserve and some members joined a 'Springwatch walk'. One expected treat was hunting **marsh harriers**. A posing **reed warbler**



Ruddy duck

singing lustily was another. Two unexpected sights were a **red deer** stag in velvet and a **ruddy duck** – a conservation cull has obviously not attained 'the final solution' i.e. the elimination of this introduced North American duck. The **bitterns** had stopped booming before our visit and Pat noted a **reedling** (**bearded tit**). In the afternoon, the Dorwards walked to Morecambe Bay to see many waders, including **avocets**. The majority group walked to nearby Trowbarrow Local Nature

Reserve, where Margaret McLaren found a solitary **fly orchid**. Some old plant-hunting friends we met in the quarry confirmed Brian's suspicion that there has been a steep decline in the species at this site. There were numerous **common spotted orchids** and **common twayblades**. **Common newts** were in a shallow pond and **speckled wood butterfly** and **blue-tailed damselfly** were also present.

On Monday the party set off for home in rain via Smardale. This Cumbria Wildlife Trust and National Nature Reserve is worthy of a full day's attention but our time was limited by our long drive home. We parked, as in 1992, at the end of Friar Bottom Farm lane, courtesy of Mr & Mrs Ousby, who run the garden centre opposite the lane-end. Though the rain had stopped for the day, some members stayed at the garden centre. We duly saw *Saxifraga tridactylites* on the farm wall and followed the sign to Smardale. This approach

involves a down and an up which meant that some members did not reach the easy walking along the old railway line. Unfortunately, Hazel Gair gashed her shin when straddling a barbed wire fence to gain the railway line. She was escorted back to the bus after her leg was bandaged. (I am pleased to report that Hazel healed well and came on the Morrone/Braemar outing in July.)

Our depleted party proceeded along the old railway track to the lime kiln and a view of the Smardale Gill viaduct. The star attraction, *Primula farinosa*, was growing in the ditch. **Bloody cranesbill**, **moonwort** and several **orchid** species were also noted and a **redstart** was seen and heard at the limekiln. As there was insufficient time to divert off the main road to New Lanark, we did not call at SWT's Falls of Clyde Reserve. Dorothy saw a **red kite** as we passed near Doune. A forest of wind turbines is being erected on the Braes of Doune for debate!

Alban Houghton

## DAVID MARSHALL LODGE

Wednesday 21st June

After a very pleasant drive along the Carse of Stirling the party had a break of half-an-hour at the Lodge where we watched CCTV pictures of **osprey** chicks on the nest. We also went to the window and observed **squirrels** and many different woodland small birds enjoying the peanuts that were put out for them.

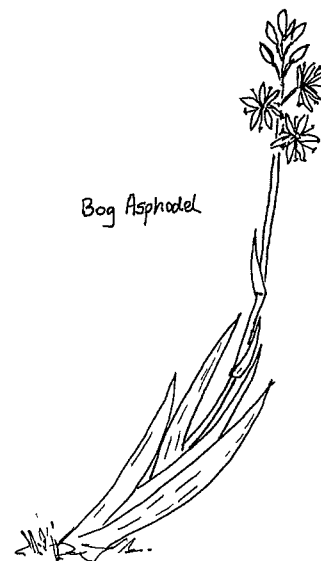
On our walk to the waterfall we were surprised to find **piri piri burr** along the edge of the footpath. We watched **damselflies** hatching in the boggy area where there were **heath spotted orchids**, **asphodel** and **sundew**. At the waterfall there was a beautiful stand of **Norway spruce** and the banks of the burn were covered in lovely fresh green **ferns** - **hard fern**, **male fern**, **scaly male fern**, **woodrush**, **wood sorrel** - all very beautiful like an outdoor cathedral. This is where the party split - the main party headed up to the quarry and ten went for the woodland walk.

The main party made for the Highland Boundary Fault (HBF), following a forest road gently uphill. **Mosses** and **horsetails** were in profusion in the ditch and **blueberry** on the forest floor. There was a patch of **dog violets** beside an outcrop of **Leny Grit**. Unfortunately the weather then deteriorated and the views were veiled by cloud. When the sun popped out again we saw **white butterflies** and a **speckled wood butterfly**. As the fitter party reached the quarry, they had crossed the HBF with outcrops of **Achray sandstone** and entered the Highland Border Complex. Flowers in the quarry were **early purple orchids**, **twayblades**, **cuckoo flower** and **marsh marigolds**. It was too wet underfoot to climb to the top of the hill.

The line of the old railway made a steep descent. This railway, which worked on a pulley system, had carried the trucks of stone from the quarry down to the low level. The line actually follows the HBF. We followed the path down and joined up with the small group at the bottom of the hill and returned to Marshall Lodge.

The small group had had a very interesting woodland walk and had a good list of plant life, including **ramping fumitory**, **foxgloves**, **cowberry**, **cow wheat**, **bluebells**, **enchanter's nightshade**, **meadowsweet** and **bottle sedge**, to name but a few. They had also turned off the main path to the **bat** house - unfortunately no bats were seen, but everyone enjoyed the beautiful **beech** trees before going over the burn to the edge of the **oak** wood. Everyone had enjoyed the lovely walk and looked forward to a pleasant cup of tea at the Lodge and thoroughly enjoyed the view.

Marjory Tennant and Margaret McLaren



Bog Asphodel

## ABERLADY BAY

1st July

After a fairly long bus journey to Aberlady, on a very sunny day, we arrived at the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) Resource Centre. Those members who wished a leisurely day were able to spend time at the centre and enjoy the short walks nearby.

The main party continued along the coast to be met by Ian Thomson, the Aberlady Bay Ranger. After crossing the wooden walkway Ian said a few words about the history of the area and what plants we were likely to see. Most of the breeding birds had left and those remaining were now in moult. **Plants** (see below) were the main objective with Ian leading the way with great enthusiasm. After about two hours steady walking we reached the headland overlooking the bay and just around the corner we found a nice spot for our lunch stop. The sun was beating down and some members were slow to get moving after their break - they were too comfortable and enjoying the sunshine.

We were pleased to have a welcome breeze as we walked along the sand dunes and our well versed Nats were still finding unusual plants. Several **butterflies** were seen here including **small tortoiseshell**, **dark green fritillary** and **common blue**, and also **six-spot burnet moths**. On returning to the wooden bridge over the water Ian was thanked for a very informative and interesting day.

Returning to the SOC it was very pleasant to get out of the heat of the sun and to see this excellent new building with all its facilities. Dave Allan, the man in charge, thought we all looked a bit weary and had tea and coffee rustled up for us in no time at all. This was very much appreciated by our members and Dave was thanked for his kindness in "opening up" an hour early to accommodate us and helping to ensure that our day was varied and enjoyable.

Peter Middleton

## PLANTS AT ABERLADY BAY

Walking across boards, on leaving the coach, to reach the Nature Reserve, salt marsh plants were much in evidence and invite further study in the future.

Almost immediately alongside the main path we spotted a magnificent plant of **white bryony** (*Bryonia dioica*) which is not often seen in Scotland. It is not related to the more common **black bryony**, and is a member of the **gourd** family.



The enthusiastic warden shepherded us around his chosen sites where we could do least damage underfoot, and yet see some wonderful plants. Thus, visiting a marshy area, I had my first introduction to **greater bladderwort** (*Utricularia neglecta*). This is a rootless aquatic with striking bright yellow flowers and floating branched stems bearing many tiny leaves and minute bladders. The latter are capable of sucking in tiny animals, when a hair trigger is activated, which gives the plant a nitrogen boost.

We were shown how **juniper** has taken a firm hold on the reserve and is increasing rapidly. Drastic measures have been taken to keep it under control and other plants are thus given a chance to grow. In the same way another area of controlled grazing has allowed special plants to grow in very short turf. These included the small, pale pink **bog pimpernel** (*Anagallis tenella*), an unusual **horsetail**

(*Equisetum variegatum*) and **twayblade** (*Listera ovata*).

Walking back through dunes from the shore we admired **common centaury** (*Centaurea erythraea*), and two Scottish rarities **blue fleabane** (*Erigeron acer*) and **houndstongue** (*Cynoglossum officinale*), the latter supposedly smelling of mice!

Other plants noted during this successful day were **weld** (*Reseda luteola*), **frog orchid** (*Coeloglossum vinde*), **moonwort** (*Botrychium lunaria*) and **purple milk vetch** (*Astragalus danicus*).

Sheila Brinkley

## MORRONE BIRKWOOD

15th July

Our return visit to Morrone Birkwood, by Braemar was blessed by fine weather and, if anything, it was almost too hot. En route we admired the **melancholy thistle** (*Cirsium heterophyllum*) at the roadside as the bus climbed up Glen Shee and wet flushes showed the bright colour of **yellow mountain saxifrage** (*Saxifraga aizoides*). A brief stop was made at the ski centre, where **common twayblade** (*Listera ovata*) was in flower by the burn.

The restrictions on coach access meant that we had a short uphill walk, but the ancient **birch** and **juniper** wood was soon reached. We were greeted by the brilliant colour of **bell heather** (*Erica cinerea*) and, right at the beginning of the path, **intermediate wintergreen** (*Pyrola intermedia*) was seen which, although generally scarce, is the commonest wintergreen here. A **golden-ringed dragonfly** flitted across and **dark green fritillaries** showed bright flashes of colour. By the mountain indicator board Dorothy Fyfe identified **coal, blue** and **long-tailed tits** and **siskins** were seen later on. At this point, Liz Houghton and Gordon Maxwell headed off on the much more energetic task of climbing Morrone Hill (a Corbett).

Along the path **rockrose** (*Helianthemum nummularium*), **cow-wheat** (*Melampyrum pratense*) and **wood cranesbill** (*Geranium sylvaticum*) were widespread. **Mountain pansy** (*Viola lutea*) was at its finest.

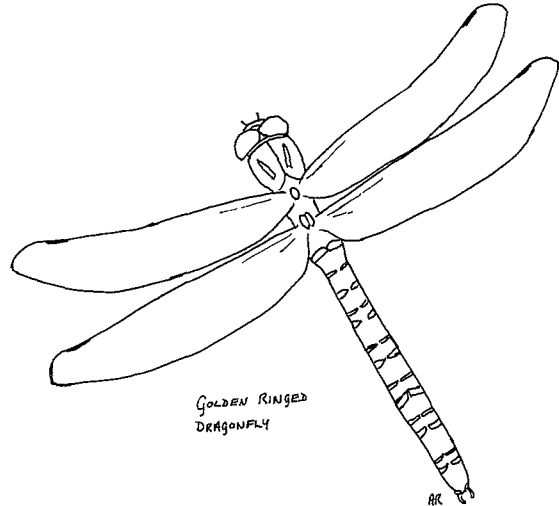
Jim Cook was recording plant species and there were so many that he had trouble keeping up with the rest of the party (more than 280 vascular plant species are known in the reserve, as well as many lower plants). The **wood ants** were busy in their nests by the side of the path and **toads** jumped out of our way. We kept mainly to the path and hence avoided much contact with the less welcome inhabitants of the wood, the **deer ticks**.

Jim and Alban made a diversion up the steep and rough slopes to the crags and were rewarded by the sight of **twinflower** (*Linnaea borealis*), **frog orchid** (*Coeloglossum viride*), **holly fern** (*Polystichum lonchitis*) and **serrated wintergreen** (*Orthilia secunda*). Further round the trail a wide panorama of mountains and Upper Deeside opened up. Bright flashes of **petty whin** (*Genista anglica*) were frequent by the more open parts of the path.

A smaller group led by Margaret McLaren followed a shorter route to the beginning of the wood and down to the river bank where they were fortunate to find six young **red deer** stags at close range. Dave Stein walked counter clockwise round the trail in search of insects and Pat Gaff went on a **moth** hunt.

At the end of the walk Orkney ice-creams were enjoyed by some and a few sought stronger beverages. The group (deserted by its leader who travelled northwards) headed back to Dundee at the end of a successful outing.

Brian Ballinger



## LEITH WATER

Silvery Thread in a Ribbon of Green

29th July

The coach dropped us off just short of the Water of Leith Visitors' Centre and our leader soon took us up to the viaduct over the busy road. To most members' surprise, a haven of tranquillity appeared above the level of the speeding traffic. It was an extension of the Union Canal, with a peaceful towpath lined with **reed, sweet-grass, mints** and **irises**.



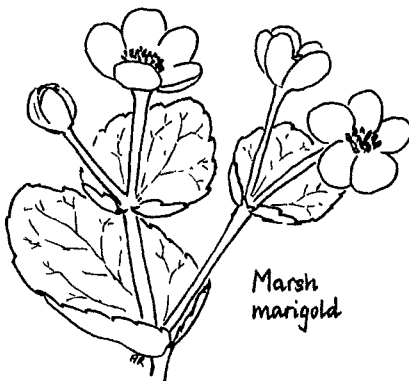
**Narrow-leaved bur-reed** floated out in the still waters of the canal. Even Jean Colquhoun, who knows the City well, didn't know about this site.

A species list had been provided and Brian Ballinger, Pat Gaff and several other keen botanists were able to identify and point out a variety of interesting species including **common enchanter's nightshade**, **dark mullein**, **pick-a-back plant** and **mugwort**.

Margaret McLaren led some of the less active walkers off on a separate path and was able to meet the coach a short distance further on. The network of paths proved fascinating to explore with several small bridges over the river providing a variety of interesting views up and down the valley. The main path followed the route of the old Dalkeith railway line and provided an almost level graded surface for excellent walking. It was obviously popular with the locals, as we met numerous walkers and cyclists.

The smooth sound of a piston aircraft engine caught the attention of some of the party and there over our heads purred a Spitfire. Of course! It was the day of the airshow at East Fortune Airfield.

Some time later a Dakota came over, with the Spitfire and a Hurricane in formation. We saw a good collection of other flying forms more appropriate to naturalists – **magpies** and **jackdaws**, **dippers** and **grey wagtails**, a **heron**, various **warblers**, **finches** and **tits** but the highlight was definitely the **kingfisher**. It was first picked out by Stuart Mackenzie near the motorway bridge over the Water of Leith and a number of us were fortunate to catch the brilliant blue flash as it sped by. Along the water's edge were **water mint** and **water cress**, **reed canary grass** and **reed sweet-grass**, **marsh marigold**, **marsh ragwort**, **nettle-leaved bellflower** and **branched bur-reed**. Perhaps the most interesting species to us was rayed **tansy**. Further down the path Brian Williamson identified the **kingfisher** sitting on a branch over the water and most of the party were able to obtain good clear views from a handy little bridge.



We left the main path at a spot marked by several large boulders blocking the movement of vehicles and walked up to the village of Juniper Green. There was time enough before the bus arrived for some welcome refreshments - ice cream or a visit to the Railway Inn for a cooling pint. Only at this late stage were we threatened by heavy clouds but the coach came along to pick us up before the shower started.

Jim Cook

## BARRY BUDDON JOINT OUTING

13th August

A large turnout of over sixty enjoyed another Open Nature Day on Barry Buddon Training Area with excellent weather playing its part. This large gathering of enthusiasts was made up of members of at least five local conservation and birdwatching groups and was welcomed by Camp Commandant Captain Tom Graham.

The birdwatchers again produced another excellent total of 68 species which included four **raptors** **peregrine falcon**, **sparrowhawk**, **kestrel**, and **buzzard**. The lepidopterists also enjoyed an outstanding day with no less than 15 butterfly species being recorded, with Eric McCabe producing the "find of the day" with a very late **small blue butterfly**, a rare speciality of Barry Buddon. In addition five **dragonflies** and **damselflies** were noted including a rare sighting of a **common hawk** actually eating a **ladybird**!

The botanists too had a field day seeking out, and finding, Barry Buddon's special plants such as **gipsywort**, **wild basil** and **water dock** to name just a few. They were ably led by Jim Cook with his infectious enthusiasm. The plants were, perhaps, not as good as in previous years due to the very hot weather of recent weeks.

A new attraction this year was the setting up of the ADBC **moth** trap on the Saturday evening which produced an excellent catch of over 40 species. Three of these were found to be migrants, not previously trapped, Hugh Bell informed me.

Everyone present agreed it had been another successful outing on the Barry Buddon MOD estate and thanks have been accorded to Captain Graham and his staff for making available the camp facilities to the group outing

Bob McCurley

## RIVER TAY BOAT TRIP

15th August

Thirty two members boarded the *Girl Catherine II* at Broughty Ferry Harbour for an evening excursion up the Tay estuary. The weather was overcast but dry with a light westerly breeze and good visibility. As if to mark the day, **dolphins** appeared off Broughty Ferry beach before we even set off. As we moved upstream, **gulls**, **guillemots** and **razorbills**, often accompanied by juveniles, were seen in large numbers in the lower estuary and were a delight to observe from the boat at close quarters. Past the Rail Bridge the estuary broadens and in a stretch of water between Wormit and Balmerino, a colony of **seals** was observed on a sandbank close to the southern shore. In this area many **terns** were seen with their characteristic foraging flight. We also saw **mallard** and **shags**, skimming the water in flight. On reaching Newburgh a **bear** was observed on the hillside (This is carved into the ground! - Ed.) Past Newburgh, the estuary narrows and the woodland edges on the southern shore gave way to purple bloomed **common reed**, the magenta shades of **Himalayan balsam** and many bright yellow patches of **coneflower** (*Rudbeckia* sp.). Occasionally we saw **giant hogweed**. On this intimate stretch of water, an **osprey** was encountered, and many **grey herons** and several **mute swans** with **cygnets** were seen.

We eventually turned round at 8pm just past the Friarton Bridge. As the light faded, countless **swallows** criss-crossed the river flying low over the water. More than had been seen all season. One felt, perhaps, that an on-foot exploration of the southern shore around Elcho Castle should be particularly rewarding. As darkness fell, it was a little chilly and all was quiet. On the return trip, the Newburgh bear could no longer be seen. We finally disembarked at Broughty Ferry at 10 30pm and headed for home.

Many thanks are due to our skipper, Mr Alex Smith of Arbroath and to all the experts on board who made this a memorable occasion.

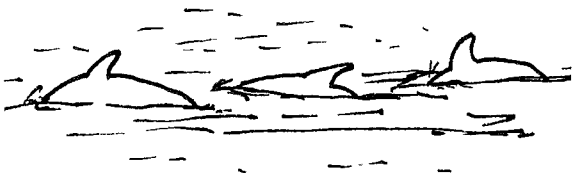
Jack Moody

## DUNDEE MYSTERY TOUR

26th August

Thirteen Nats, plus the leader, turned up for this meeting. The Gods were smiling, sending us fine weather and a feast of pleasures. The event was divided into three parts, the different locations being as follows:

1 Broughty Ferry Dorothy Fyffe and Bob McCurley set up telescopes opposite the Barnhill Rock Garden to let individuals look for any interesting birds lurking in the estuary. This part of the coast is excellent for birdwatchers. They were rewarded with sightings of some birds (the tide was not in our favour) but more interestingly with **dolphins**.



The gardener at the Rock Garden gave a short talk about the origins and aims of the 'Friends of the Garden' which was more interesting than I would have expected. (Here I noted Jim muttering incantations which sounded like **piri piri burr** - it's a sort of warning sound of a possible attack.)

I then led the troops along Shiell Street Nature Reserve where it was impossible to stop Margaret from eating the **cherry plums**. Jim pointed out a **horseradish** plant which has been in its present position for well over 60 years. A novelty for Dundee grows here - **hops**!

2 Templeton Woods and Clatto Reservoir This gave people a chance to give their legs a good stretch. We walked through Templeton Woods and out to Clatto returning by the farm road. I believe a few were surprised at the size of this reserve. As I know, this is an area always well worth a half day for exploring the wildlife.

Unfortunately I led them through the children's playpark. We spotted a long overhead line running down the hill on supports, and dangling below was a seat attached to a piece of rope. We saw Jim working out the physics of this piece of equipment and challenged him 'to have a go'. He did, much to the obvious glee of the onlookers. Not to be outdone, Marjory jumped into the driving seat and whizzed down the hill. I could see where all this was leading, so I suggested that it was the end of playtime. We had another appointment elsewhere.

3 Dundee University Botanic Gardens We were met by a member of staff at the gardens who gave us a conducted tour accompanied by an account of what was being planned for the gardens and how far down that road they had already journeyed. I would advise anyone interested to pay close attention to the changes envisaged, they look very interesting. Having walked around the gardens everyone was relieved to repair to the restaurant for restorative beverages. I was grateful to note that those in attendance on this meet really did enter into the spirit of things - as if anyone could hold Marjory back!

Pat Gaff

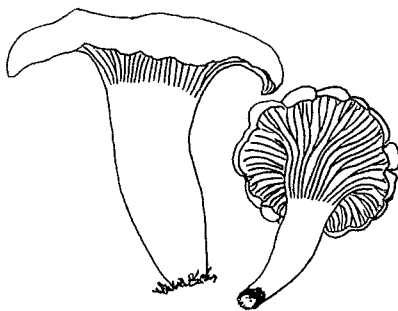
## INVER AND THE HERMITAGE

Fern and Fungus Foray  
16th September

Over thirty souls left Albert Square at 9am sharp, intent on exploring the mysterious world of ferns and fungi. A rather hazy sky improved as we neared Dunkeld, in line with the reasonably optimistic forecast. After a tight squeeze into Inver car park, Sheila Brinkley led the fern hunting part of the outing (see below) up to the Hermitage to meet up eventually with most of the fungal forayers who had moved on ahead.

The weather had been kind to us on the weeks previous to the trip, which in fungal and fern terms means that it had rained! One of the first species recorded was **honey fungus** in large quantities, most past their sell-by-date. This mushroom is very destructive to trees and the large numbers do not augur well for the area's forestry. However, we were there to examine fungi, and the fungi thrive on rotten vegetation, so we couldn't complain. To the right of the path to the Hermitage large numbers of the **earthball** *Scleroderma citrinum* were much in evidence. This potato-like fungus is not really edible but has been passed off as **truffles** by unscrupulous dealers.

At the Hermitage, most forayers sat down for a break and, even there, a sharp eye noticed an attractive species which proved to be *Pleurotellus porrigens*, a pure white fungus which is mainly found in highland Scotland. A few well-known edible types were found, including **chanterelle**, **hedgehog** and one or two of the edible **boletes** such as *Boletus edulis* and *B. erythropus*. A nice **beefsteak** bracket was also seen, but no one was brave enough to test its culinary properties.



As is the norm at the end of the day, the colourful bounty was laid out on a suitable bench before the assembled group. The usual views on what was what and what was not were expressed, before a threatening shower decided the outcome and caused everyone to hurry back to the bus.

Perhaps, at the end of the day, most were not much wiser on the subtleties of ferns and fungi, but at least I'm sure that they could appreciate the attractions of the Perthshire location.

Gordon Maxwell

## FERNS AT DUNKELD

At the same time as Gordon's fungus foray a small group made a complementary search for hardy British ferns. Twelve species, including **bracken**, were identified between Inver car park and Ossian's Hall.

We got to grips at first with differing features of four common large frond ferns - **male, lady, broad buckler and scaly male ferns**. After covering about one third of the distance we then came across **hard ferns** in quantity indicating the subtle change to more acidic soil conditions under conifers. Two more low pH lovers were the beautiful **oak** and **beech ferns** and one lone plant of **hard shield fern** was holding its own. To round off the morning three different ferns were noted on Ossian's Bridge itself - dainty **maidenhair**, **spleenwort** and **brittle bladder fern** - with **common polypody** nearby.

Sheila Brinkley

## AUTUMN MEETINGS

### CONSERVING PLANTS IN SCOTLAND TODAY

Deborah Long - 17th October

Deborah Long, the conservation officer of Plantlife Scotland, gave us an illustrated talk on the work of this charity. Plantlife is an international organisation with 700 Scottish members and two staff based in Stirling.

Part of the work consists of the protection of vulnerable native species. Threats include human activities, habitat loss, climate change and invasive non-natives. The list includes **mosses, lichens, algae** and **fungi** as well as **higher plants**. The new Red Data Book of vascular plants has placed an increased emphasis on threat.

Plantlife runs 23 nature reserves in Britain, although only one, at Munsary in the far north, is in Scotland. This however is the biggest and Plantlife hopes to acquire a further Scottish reserve. The "Back from the Brink" programme focuses on 101 species and 60 of these are to be found in Scotland. Deborah described some of these special plants.

**Juniper** (*Juniperus communis*) is still relatively widespread, but does not seem to be regenerating well and older trees are dying. Surveys and research are being carried out and advice is given to landowners to try to reverse this trend. **Twinsflower** (*Linnaea borealis*) is a Scottish pinewood speciality to be found particularly in Speyside. Plantlife has been looking at the effects of forestry practice on the conservation of this beautiful and elusive flower.

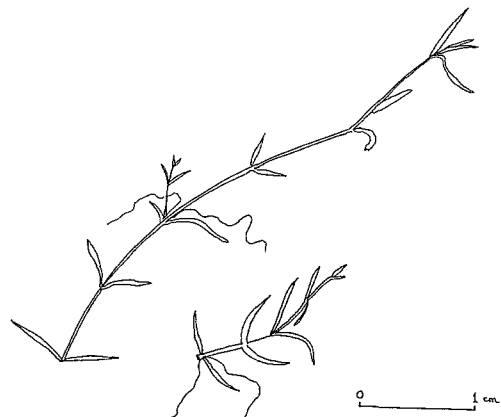
The small water fern **pillwort** (*Pilularia globulifera*) has also been the subject of concern. Many sites have been lost, although others have come to light with the use of snorkelling surveys. It probably needs some disturbance and water level changes, so habitat management is important. Other projects have focused on rare **seaweeds** and **liverworts**.

Plantlife has also taken an interest in gardens and their management, including discouraging the use of peat. The sale of inappropriate water plants such as *Crassula helmsii* has also been a problem, as has the import of endangered species.

Invasive non-natives are a matter of major concern. Although attractive when in flower, *Rhododendron ponticum* is a major problem in western Scotland, overgrowing rare mosses and lichens. **Himalayan balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*) has been in the wild since the 19th century and tends to spread along rivers, where it is invasive, although a good source of pollen for insects.

There is general agreement that **New Zealand pygmyweed**, sold as a pond oxygenator, is a threat in water bodies and, once present, almost impossible to eliminate.

There are probably some non-natives that we will have to



learn to live with Good examples from the past include **sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplanatus*) and **butterfly bush** (*Buddleja davidii*)

Plantlife has been working to develop widespread public involvement in plant conservation and part of the programme has included the use of a variety of surveys for widespread and common species As well as promoting interest, these provide valuable information

Plant conservation has to be considered on a worldwide basis A new international project has defined important plant areas and we were privileged to be amongst the first see the Scottish map, which had arrived earlier that day

Brian Ballinger

## THE BERNESE OBERLAND

Julia Corden - 31st October

Judging by the high turnout, our members were expecting great things and Julia Corden from the Scottish Plant Hunters Garden in Pitlochry did not disappoint Since 1982 she has made ten visits to the Bernese Oberland, this most accessible part of the Swiss Alps, and she showed slides covering all these visits She concentrated her talk on the area between Murren and Grindelwald

Starting at the screes below the mighty Eiger and Jungfrauoch and the area around Kleine Scheidegg, we were treated to slides of the rare *Viola cenisia* as well as more familiar alpenes like **creeping azalea** (*Loiseleuria procumbens*), and **moss campion** (*Silene acaulus*), both Scottish natives She was bedding us in gently



Moving to The Secret Valley near to Lauterbrunnen we were delighted to see so many *Cypripedium calceolus*, the stunning **lady's slipper orchid**, growing together with **alpine columbine** (*Aquilegia alpina*) and the **black vanilla orchid** (*Nigritella nigra*) In the wooded areas close by were more orchids, including **greater butterfly orchid** (*Platanthera chlorantha*), and **coralroot orchid** (*Corallorhiza trifida*)

Also shown were **mountain avens** (*Dryas octopetala*), **one-flowered wintergreen** (*Moneses uniflora*), and the **May lily** (*Maianthemum bifolium*)

The next location was the area between Wengen and Männlichen where during late May Julia found a number of **primroses**, *Primula auricula*, *P. elatior*, *P. farinosa*, and the pink flowered *P. hirsuta* Also found here was a pure white *P. hirsuta* together with an uncommon hybrid between *P. auricula* and *P. hirsuta*, the yellow **pasqueflower** (*Pulsatilla alpina*) and a striking yellow **lousewort** (*Pedicularis* sp.)

Our next port of call was the area between First and Grindelwald where we were shown a dazzling **crimson-tipped lousewort** (*Pedicularis oederi*), and a couple of **snowbell** species, *Soldanella alpina* and the tiny *S. pusilla* The *S. alpina* was actually flowering bravely through lying snow as its growing tip is warm and able to melt enough snow to push itself through

The last location was aptly named the Valley of Flowers and it certainly lived up to its name The species here were as spectacular as they were numerous They included the white *Ranunculus aconitifolius*, the tall **monkshood** (*Aconitum napellus*), **spiked rampion** (*Phyteuma spicata*) and an unusual yellow **bellflower** (*Campanula thyrsoidea*) Also here were *Crocus vernalis*, the **round-headed orchid** (*Traunsteinera globosa*) our old favourite **lesser twayblade** (*Listera cordata*) and the rather showy **St Bruno's lily** (*Paradisea liliastrum*) Julia then proceeded to make me extremely jealous by showing us slides of the ultra-rare **ghost orchid** (*Epipogium aphyllum*) which she found during a rainy walk to Lauterbrunnen Most appropriate for Halloween

Julia's tours are not all plants, plants, plants Trips on one or two of the local lakes and numerous scenic rail journeys are all part of the service, not to mention the many stops for beer and ice cream

After questions we had the opportunity to study a number of rare **earth star fungi** that had mysteriously appeared in Dorothy Fyffe's greenhouse

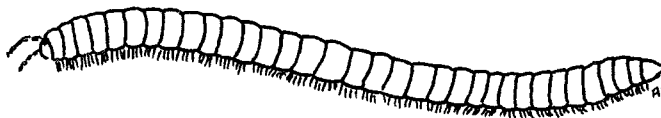
Brian Allan

## BACKMUIR WOOD AND THE ROUNDY

4th November

It was rather a chilly morning but a total of 17 keen members gathered at 10am in the small car park at the southern end of the wood. We set off, each with a prepared list of fungi from the site, to see if the recent frosts had left any for us. Gordon Maxwell and Davy Stein, Mike Knight and others soon found several interesting species, including **the charcoal burner**, (*Russula cyanoxantha*), **the blusher** (*Amanita rubescens*), several *Mycena* and *Collybia* species but no **chanterelles**! The most interesting find was a good specimen of the **beefsteak fungus** (*Fistulina hepatica*), which was much photographed and then sampled for the table. (And it was very tasty!)

We had been pleased to welcome Gordon Corbet, our Honorary President, and he spent time investigating numerous small invertebrates under stones and fallen logs. One fascinating species that he taught us to recognise, by its dark body, white legs and the alternating pattern of delicate ridges on the segments, was the black, fast-footed **snake millipede** (*Tachypodoiulus niger* - how's that for a name?) How could anyone forget it?



Dorothy Fyffe and several other members were, as usual, keeping their ears and eyes open and saw or heard a variety of woodland species - **chaffinches**, **blackbirds** and several **tit** species. Perhaps the most interesting sighting was a **jay**, heard by several, but Nancy Middleton got a good view. On the way back we met Sheila Brinkley who'd been unable to find us earlier and then, once in the Birkie Inn, met up with two veteran members, Frances Towns and Edna Slidders. The lunch, unfortunately, was not as outstanding as the company. After the meal we left the cars in the car park and walked to The Roundy, opposite the Inn. Although showing numerous signs of vandalism, there was still a lot to interest us. A natural feature, it shows possible signs of fortification at some time in the past and certainly provides an excellent viewpoint. Not many flowering plants could be found but a number of fungi were in evidence, including an excellent specimen of *Polyporus varius*.

Jim Cook

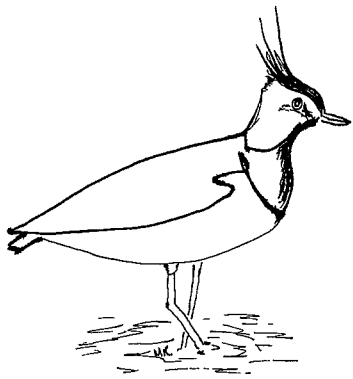
## RIVER TAY AND KINNORDY RESERVES

Alan Leitch - 14th November 2006

For RSPB Tayside Reserves site manager, Alan Leitch, the start to his presentation probably seemed like a nightmare when he struggled to get his powerpoint material to work with Dundee University's terminals in T9! Eventually we were introduced to the Loch of Kinnordy, an RSPB reserve since 1974. In the past, the reserve was well known for its variety of **wildfowl** and **waders** but in recent years several species of breeding birds have been in decline. With up to 600 pairs of **black-headed gulls** in the 1980s, the gulls are now virtually absent. **Black-necked grebes**, once a Kinnordy speciality with 11 breeding pairs in 1994, have not bred since 1997. Angus and Perthshire used to be their stronghold but now there are only about 60 pairs breeding in the UK.

The reserve also has important aquatic vegetation species like **nodding bur-marigold** (*Bidens cernua*), **greater spearwort** (*Ranunculus lingua*) and **cowbane** (*Cicuta virosa*), but other aquatic species have become invasive with **willow** scrub taking over the marshy area to the west end of the Loch and **branched bur-reed** (*Sparganium erectum*) invading areas of shallow open water. In the past there was little active management of the vegetation but Alan explained the principles of the RSPB's new programme of management, involving the removal of willow scrub from the marsh, removal of aquatic vegetation and the introduction of a grazing regime using cattle and sheep. With the help of dedicated volunteers much of the willow scrub has been cleared and burnt and, with the use of specialised excavators, the removal of some 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of aquatic vegetation has been achieved. Since 2003, four Highland cattle have been grazing on the reserve and the following year a number of Hebridean sheep were introduced.

The combined measures have helped to suppress the invasive vegetation and there are already positive signs that the new management regime is working, with numbers of breeding **redshank**, **snipe** and **lapwing** increasing from their low levels of recent years. The next big project is to remove a quantity of silt from the Loch bed in a manner already tried out by the RSPB at their Leighton Moss reserve.



Alan then went on to explain the Society's recent involvement in the management of part of the Tay Reed Bed system. At 400ha, this is Britain's largest reed bed of which, since 2005, the RSPB has managed 175ha. The area is a key habitat for **bearded tits** with 15% of the UK's breeding population, although there has recently been a sharp decline in their numbers. The birds first colonised the Tay Reed Beds in the early 90's and reached a peak of some 95 pairs by 2000. A long-term study by members of the Tay Ringing Group has shown that numbers have fluctuated regularly but slumped in 2005 when only 42 birds were caught. 2006

showed an increase to some 50 - 60 pairs.

The reed beds are also important as a breeding habitat for **marsh harrier**, **sedge warbler**, **reed bunting** and **water rail**, and in autumn attract large numbers of roosting **sand martins**, **swallows** and **starlings**. **Marsh harriers** first bred in the late 80s, since when over 100 chicks have been ringed and wing-tagged. In 2005 a tagged bird was tracked by satellite to West Africa. Interestingly, none of the wing-tagged birds have been seen back on the Tay. The population of **sedge warblers** remains fairly stable but numbers of **reed buntings** have fallen by 15% in Scotland over recent years. For **water rail**, this is the UK's most important site with 156 pairs recorded in 2005. **Bittern** are rare passage visitors, **osprey** and **kingfisher** can be seen regularly and **shelduck** occur in large numbers. Recently, **reed warbler** have bred here at what is now their most northerly regular breeding site in the UK.

Mammals are represented by **common seal**, **roe deer** and **otter**, and there have been two recent sightings of **pine martin**. **Grey squirrels** are now invasive, as are the plants **Himalayan balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*), **Japanese knotweed** (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) and **giant hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Until 2005, an area of 60-70ha was harvested early each year producing up to 100,000 bunches of dressed reed for thatching. Graham Craig, former owner of the Tayreed Co., is now employed by the RSPB who have introduced a management regime of cutting, rolling and burning of some 40ha of reed.

The RSPB is now monitoring the response of wildlife to the management regimes on both these sites, so that refinements to the process can be implemented to provide the best long-term benefits for wildlife.

Peter Ellis

## MARINE MAMMALS

Dr Dave Thomson - 28th November

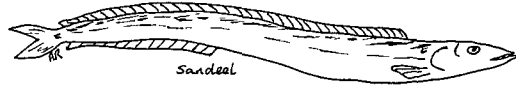
Having worked on marine mammals for 20 years, Dr Thomson admitted that he had almost too much interesting information to enable him to talk to us for just one hour. His solution was to give us a summary and overview of the subject, peppered with interesting facts.

There are three main groups of marine mammals, **cetaceans** (**whales** and **dolphins**), **pinnipeds** (**seals**) and **sirenids** (**manatees** and **dugongs**). A fourth group, which Dr Thomson termed 'hangers on', includes such creatures as **polar bears** and **sea otters**. We were given a run through of the dentition of the various groups, as a means of working out diet, and learned that seals were, effectively 'bears with flippers', as they are mostly fish eaters. The **crabeater seal** is the exception with a diet of mostly **krill** and, amazingly, is the most abundant large mammal on the planet, after **humans**!

Adaptations to marine life were also discussed. The most productive oceans, for food, are cold and this results in many large or very large marine mammals. Most also have thick layers of blubber which act as a food store as well as insulating against the cold. **Sea otter** fur 1cm thick is equivalent to 7cm of blubber as an insulator.

It was these large quantities of fat which led to the commercial hunting of whales, and though no species of whale actually went extinct as a result, some species came very, very close. **Elephant seals** and **penguins** were harvested for their oil when whales became scarce. Most of the affected species are now showing signs of increased numbers after commercial whaling stopped.

We were also given an insight into the feeding behaviour of our local **grey** and **common seals**. Satellite tracking and data transmission has shown that even juveniles seem to be able to navigate to good feeding areas, though how they navigate is not understood. Some routinely make journeys as far as the Farne Islands and beyond in search of the **sand eels** which form a large part of their diet.



With such a wide subject there were plenty of questions at the end of the lecture, and a lively discussion. Peter Middleton thanked Dr Thomson on our behalf for such an informative and well illustrated lecture.

Anne Reid

## SEARCHING FOR SOME SCOTS IN SWEDEN

Sheila Brinkley - 6th December

An enthusiastic audience gathered in the Tower Lecture Theatre of Dundee University to attend this, the Nats' contribution to the Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series, with its intriguing title. In effect it was a botanical subject and Sheila was informing us that many rare plants of the Scottish Highlands can be found in Arctic Sweden, and often in greater abundance.

Attention was drawn to the variety of plants to be found in the Abisko National Park in Sweden, 120 miles north of the Arctic Circle. This park lies alongside Lake Tornatrask and comprises a range of habitats from bog and birch forest to montane areas with partial permanent snow cover. In past times, Northern Scotland and Arctic Sweden were part of the Laurentian Shield and share many geophysical characteristics with acidic soils.

Slides of over 60 wild plants were presented to illustrate the lecture. The sub-shrubs **crowberry** (*Empetrum nigrum* ssp. *hermaphroditum*), **cowberry** (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) and **blaeberry** (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) were of note since their berries, in season, are prized by the native fauna and the Swedes themselves.

Among the flowers present in the Abisko National Park, it was gratifying to find **grass of Parnassus** (*Parnassia palustris*) and the **twinline** (*Linnaea borealis*) which seems to be decreasing in Scotland. The less common **alpine bartsia** (*Bartsia alpina*) and **highland saxifrage** (*Saxifraga nivalis*) were also present along with such UK rarities as **alpine catchfly** (*Lychnis alpina*) and **snow gentian** (*Gentiana nivalis*). In addition, willows such as **net-veined willow** (*Salix reticulata*), ferns such as the **alpine lady fern** (*Athyrium distentifolium*) and clubmosses such as **fir clubmoss** (*Huperzia selago*) were also to be found. Furthermore, some plants were present such as **arctic bramble** (*Rubus arcticus*) and the **white butterwort** (*Pinguicula alpina*) which are extinct in Scotland.

It was pleasing to note that so many of our Scottish plants are present and thriving so far to the north of Scottish shores. The slides presented were of a very high quality and the lecture gave tremendous pleasure to all those in attendance. Sheila is to be congratulated on a *tour de force*.

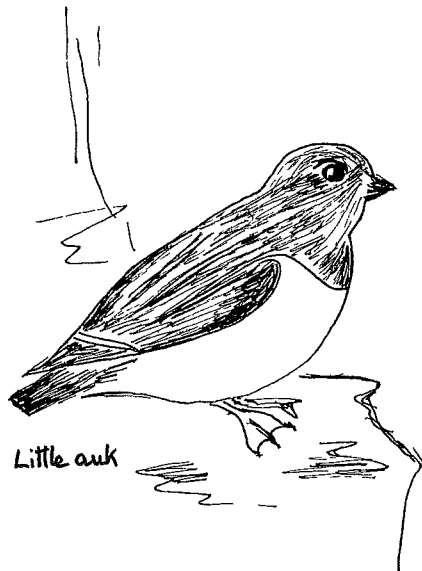
Jack Moody

## GREENLAND - BEARS, BERGS AND BLOOMS

Alban Houghton - 19th December

Alban and Liz had spent one week in July 2005 on a ship-based trip which included the east coast of Greenland. Their travel plans were changed slightly due to ice conditions,





Little auk

but the journey up the coast was truly spectacular. We were shown ice in many forms from **glacier** to **sea ice**, and some of the associated wildlife including flocks of **little auks** and **seals** on ice floes. On one occasion everyone was woken at the unusually early hour of 3am when **polar bears** were spotted on the ice. Being so far north it was, of course, full daylight and we were shown the resulting photographs of a mother bear and her two large cubs. Initially the presence of the ship scared them off their **seal** kill, but they returned and ate their fill.

The party landed several times and saw a wide range of arctic plants, some, including **moss campion**, **dwarf willow**, **roseroot** and **alpine catchfly**, being familiar to us. **Frost polygons** amongst the stones and a **musk ox** skull were memorable images. Two **butterflies**, a **fritillary** and a 'yellow one', were seen along with enormous **bumblebees**. Nesting **arctic**

**skuas** and **snow bunting** were also seen. There were a few photographs of Iceland on the way home from the trip, but Alban did not finish his talk with a sunset as the high arctic in summer knows no such thing!

After questions, Alban was thanked by Anne Reid for this fascinating talk. We were all agreed that we would have been happy to see much more of Greenland. The social side of the evening then took over, with a magnificent spread provided by members. All was much enjoyed, washed down with tea and coffee, and everyone enjoyed the chance to sit and chat.

Anne Reid

## MEMBERS' ARTICLES

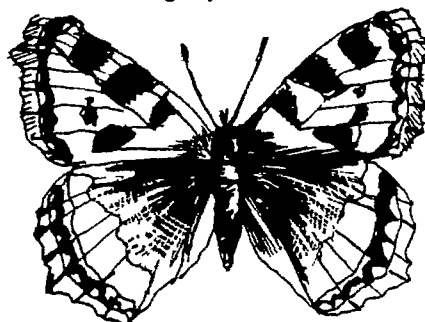
### INTERESTING SIGHTINGS 2006

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.

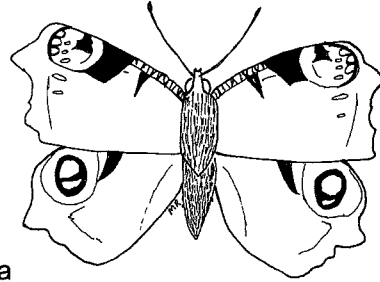
This year there was an influx of **hummingbird hawkmoths** which were noted by a number of people, below, and also made it into the Courier on several occasions. The dearth of records in June and July reflects the very hot weather we had which was not so good for our wildlife.

Brian Ballinger	BB	Dundee, West End
Sheila Brinkley	SB	Meigle
Joy Cammack	JoyC	Birkhill
Jean Colquhoun	JeanC	Dundee, West End
Jim Cook	JC	Broughty Ferry
Dorothy Fyffe	DF	Carnoustie
Monica Edwards	ME	Invergowrie
Peter Ellis	PE	Barry Mill
Alban Houghton	AH	Letham, Angus
Gordon Maxwell	GM	Lochee
Nancy Middleton	NM	
Bob McLeod	BM	Dundee, Johnston Gardens
Bede Pounder	BP	Dundee, Forfar Road
Anne Reid	AR	Monifieth
Colin Reid	CR	
Christine Reid	ChR	
Mary Reid	MR	

- 1st January** A **barn owl** seen on a fence post near Spittalfield village (en route to Dunkeld) at 1 30pm An unusual sighting for this time of day, in sunny weather NM
- 10th January** Six **goldfinches** in my back garden on a **sycamore** tree brightening up a dull, damp day GM
- 11th January** The first **snowdrop** appeared in the garden, nearly a week later than last year JC
- 18th January** Two adult **stoats** seen chasing each other on the track towards Morton Lochs There was a **buzzard** on a fence post further on and numerous **teal** on the loch Near the hide was a **great spotted woodpecker** and a **red squirrel** and two **treecreepers** were seen on the feeders at the hide GM
- 19th January** A pair of **peregrines** seen on Cox's Stack, Lochee at 9 30am Are they going to nest? GM
- 22nd January** At least five **siskins** on the peanut feeders Very few seen in recent years and sorely missed - they are such pretty little finches Another long-term absentee, a male **blackcap**, seen the following day, again on the peanuts AR
- 25th January** I had an **otter** sighting (a male I think), the third sighting in 2 weeks, in front of the Balgavies hide at 3 15pm Most sightings seem to be in the afternoon Two **otters** were seen on 14th Jan plus two on 28th Nov 2005 - perhaps there will be little 'uns in a few weeks! AH
- 29th January** Three male and one female or juvenile **goosander** on the lower Dighty, Monifieth CR
- 3rd February** I got out of the car to hear excited, high-pitched squeaking in the **buddleia** and the **lilac** It turned out to be two **goldcrests**, chasing each other, the male with his orange crest raised Spring must be near - I hope they nest in the garden again AR
- 5th February** A **great spotted woodpecker** and **red squirrel** in the garden at the same time JoyC
- 5th February** A female **kestrel** caught and ringed on Barry Buddon, Monifieth end A **skylark** singing at the same place PE
- 8th February** Four **roe deer** seen in the Sidlaws JoyC
- 10th February** 51 **whooper swans** on an ice-covered Kinnordy Loch GM
- 10th February** Three **grey partridges** in a field of winter wheat, near Craigie Farm on the minor road to Tentsmuir Forest MR
- 17th February** A large, hairy **caterpillar**, probably a **garden tiger moth**, crawling across a path on the dunes at Tentsmuir Point Sunny but not warm ChR
- 18th February** Nine **maggies** and a large flock of **fieldfares** in a field slightly north of Lintrathen Loch JoyC
- 20th February** A **blackbird** singing strongly just before dawn JC
- 27th February** First **frogspawn** in the pond BB
- 4th March** A pair of **crossbills** on an isolated **alder** at the seaward edge of the dunes near Tentsmuir Point AR
- 7th March** Over 40 **small tortoiseshell** and **peacock butterflies** found hibernating in a World War II coastal defence concrete bunker at Lunan Bay DF
- 10th March** A male **great spotted woodpecker** came to the peanut feeder beside the south hide at Morton Lochs and fed for a while He then moved to the wooden back of the feeder and just rested there, immobile, with drooping eyelids, for a few minutes AR
- 18th March** Two **otters** visible at Loch of the Lowes at noon Later on saw a flock of **snow buntings** with at least five **Lapland buntings** at Amulree Hall DF
- 18th March** Woke up early to hear a rather ragged **dawn chorus**, but the first I'd heard for several weeks It has just been too cold JC
- 19th March** One **otter** seen crossing Forfar Loch DF
- 23rd March** After nearly three weeks of cold weather, with some snow, we finally had a sunny day The result was my first **butterfly** sighting of the year, a **peacock**, seen basking on the road, and flying, on Dock Street near the Tay Bridge JeanC
- 23rd March** A brief visit to the garden by a **red-tailed bumblebee** ME
- 25th March** At last, **frogspawn** in my pond After the cold weather and a very dry garden the **frogs** were finally tempted to move by a night of rain AR
- 26th March** Two **wasps** flying in the Swamp Hide at Kinnordy Reserve DF



- 29th March** About 40 individual **frogs** in my pond for the past week with no coupling and no **spawn** yet All waiting for something to happen! Lots of spawn appeared by the following day JeanC (Probably all males or females - Ed )
- 31st March** Not the usual number of birds visiting the garden this winter until well into March - then **goldfinch** and **siskin** coming every day and, occasionally, **long-tailed tits** ME
- 31st March** Two **short-eared owls** on ground between East and West Lomond GM
- 1st April** At last, a sunny warm day which dried the grass enough for its first cut of the year and tempted out a **small tortoiseshell butterfly** and a **buff-tailed bumblebee** AR
- 1st April** A beautiful sunny morning when we had **peacock** and **small tortoiseshell butterflies** in the garden ME
- 5th April** I could hear a fluster of high-pitched trilling calls from the garden, looked out, and there was a small flock of **goldcrests** in the **conifer** trees Great! They aren't often seen in suburban gardens round these parts JC
- 6th April** Two **swallows** at Loch of the Lowes DF
- 11th April** An **osprey** seen taking a large **pike** (estimated weight about 4lb) from behind reed beds at Kinnordy Later, on the disused rail line between Glamis and Kirriemuir saw a **red squirrel** on **Scots pine** and seven **peacock butterflies** in open areas GM
- 14th April** Two pairs of **golden plover** and lots of white **hares** on Ba Whelps ridge above Glen Isla JoyC
- 14th April** A **peacock butterfly** appeared in the garden for a few minutes in the late afternoon The first real sign of spring after a long cold spell JC
- 16th April** **Sand martins** in good numbers at Broughty Ferry Esplanade around the built nesting holes MR
- 19th April** Three **peacock butterflies** in the garden JoyC
- 21st April** A **grey squirrel** in the garden showed its climbing prowess, when chased, by climbing the walls of the house and then leaping to a nearby tree CR
- 23rd April** Large flock of **snow buntings** on Monega summit JoyC
- 4th May** I got a twenty second view of a female **redstart**, of all things, in my garden Just long enough to get the binoculars on it to be certain of the identification of a bird I had never had a clear view of anywhere else, let alone in the garden! AR
- 5th May** A pair of **ravens** performing aerobatics above Lundie Crag GM
- 7th May** My first **swifts** of the year over the garden, spotted when hanging out the washing AR
- 9th May** A male **orange tip butterfly** in the garden, after one seen in Brownie Wood, Gauldry the previous day BB
- 13th May** Many plants of **sweet Alison** (*Lobularia maritima*) noted on the disused railway line at Ardler SB
- 15th May** Four **grey herons** in the field opposite Dronley wood JoyC
- 23rd May** An **orange tip butterfly** in the garden BM (Unusually urban - Ed )
- 28th May** Two **ptarmigan** at An Socash, Glenshee JoyC
- 31st May** Five young **goldfinches** fledged from their nest in the garden at Barry Mill PE
- 31st May** As I was cycling along a country road a **stoat** darted across my path and screeched in terror as it did so Made me wonder if they do this when they run out in front of a car We wouldn't hear this being in the car! JoyC
- 31st May** Three **orange tip butterflies** at Balkello Community Woodland, one at Couston (near Newtyle) and one at Laird's Loch, Tullybaccart GM
- 6th June** Four **lesser redpolls** caught and ringed on Carnoustie Golf Course PE
- 7th June** A **red squirrel** darted across the Coupar Angus road during early rush hour A lucky escape indeed JoyC
- 11th June** An amazing 21 **blackbirds** caught and ringed in Melanie and Alex Rollo's garden in Kirkwalk, Carnoustie PE
- 14th June** Six **orange tip butterflies** at Morton Lochs, near Tayport A lot seen this year, they are still spreading GM
- 18th June** Six **great spotted woodpeckers** (an adult male and five juveniles) caught and ringed at Barry Mill PE (See article on page 42)
- 25th June** A **ptarmigan** with about 10 chicks and a **dotterel** on a nest of three eggs on a mountain above Loch Garry up the A9, at The Pass of Drumochter Dotterel left the



nest and did the broken wing trick which enabled me to quickly peek at the nest Don't know if I should be revealing this!!! JoyC

**26th June** Over 50 **small blue butterflies** seen on a short walk at Barry Buddon Later, found a **hummingbird hawkmoth** and a **magpie moth** at Auchmithie DF

**27th June** An adult male **jay** caught and ringed on Carnoustie Golf Course PE

**6th July** A **hummingbird hawkmoth** on **red valerian** A very warm sunny day ME

**9th July** **Hummingbird hawkmoths** visiting **sweet william** flowers in the garden I cannot recall seeing this species since living in Sussex prior to 1953! SB

**10th July** A total of 40 adult **puffins** was counted around the Auchmithie cliffs There were no young birds visible, presumably still hidden inside the nesting burrows JC (See article on page 34)

**16th July** In the Ledcreeff Wood and Lundie Crag area, saw numerous **damselflies** at the loch and six **butterfly** species on walk through the wood Two **six-spot burnet moths** at the turn off before crags (normally a coastal moth in this area) GM

**16th July** A family of **long tailed tits** in the garden for a short time BM

**25th July** At Barry Mill we saw a **kingfisher** on the main burn just above the top weir It flew off upstream MR

**5th August** A **stoat** seen on rubble opposite the Eden Estuary hide It was observed by a **buzzard** on a nearby fence post The **buzzard** swooped, but the **stoat** was too quick for the bird and disappeared into the rubble GM

**6th August** Two **painted lady** and several **small tortoiseshell** and **peacock butterflies** in the garden DF

**7th August** Looking at the **moon** and watching **bats** flying around the garden Suddenly an **owl** flew over - probably a **tawny** The first time in eight years that I have seen (or heard) one in Invergowrie ME

**11th August** About 120 female **goosanders** near the Dighty outflow Also 25 **ringed plovers** on the beach GM

**12th August** Two **common lizards** seen by the path between the Hermitage, Dunkeld and Rumbling Bridge GM

**14th August** All at the same time, a total of five **peacock butterflies** cavorted almost drunkenly among the abundant purple flowers of **buddleia** bushes in the back garden JC

**19th August** A **grayling butterfly** was well camouflaged while sunning itself on the pavement of The Fairway road, Monifieth When disturbed it flitted up, moved along the road edge a short distance and then landed and again almost disappeared on the tarmac JC

**22nd August** A **reed warbler**, uncommon in this area, caught and ringed on Carnoustie Golf Course PE

**26th August** A female **common hawk dragonfly** laying eggs in the pond in the garden DF

**29th August** I had just got home after a Nats Council meeting, at about 11 30pm, when I heard the 'keewick' of a **tawny owl** I had never even heard one nearby in the 15 years we have been here, so I rushed outside to find that it was 'keewicking' from the top of one of our **spruce** trees It only stayed for a minute or so, but I saw it fly silently off towards the Dighty AR

**29th August** A Spanish-ringed female **blackcap** retrapped in the garden of Barry Mill This would have been a local bred bird which had been caught and ringed on migration through Spain Still waiting for details to come through from the Spanish bird ringing authorities PE

**30th August** A **common darter dragonfly** in the garden DF

**10th September** Around 6 30 in the evening a **hummingbird hawkmoth** feeding on *Verbena bonariensis* in the garden ME

**10th September** On a warm sunny morning there were six **red admirals**, two **small tortoiseshells** and a beautiful **peacock** all flitting around the **buddleia** in the back garden, sucking eagerly on the last flowers There was considerable competition and several times one butterfly shoved another off the choicest blooms JC

**11th September** A **hummingbird hawkmoth** in the garden, Forfar Road BP

**19th September** Over 14 **earth stars** (*Geastrum striatum*) appeared in the greenhouse DF

**23rd September** A **grey wagtail** on my telephone wire The only one I have ever seen in the Lochee district GM



**23rd September** 500 **red deer**, two **wheatear** and about eight to ten **golden plovers** at Ba Whelphs ridge above the Isla JoyC

**25th September** On our way up the path, at Barry Mill, we saw half a dead **cormorant** down by the main burn. When we looked at it again, on our way downstream, we saw an **otter** swimming away from the corpse, upstream. We had obviously disturbed the main meal of the day. Peter said that the cormorant had been around for about a week previously, but it was obviously no match for a hungry otter. AR

**26th September** An exciting record of a **comma butterfly** seen from the Guardbridge hide. They have been slowly spreading north in recent years. GM

**8th October** At 5.30pm on a very grey afternoon I was very surprised to see a **hummingbird hawkmoth** on the **verbena** right outside the window. This is the fifth one I have noted in the garden this year. ME

**13th October** A **hummingbird hawkmoth** on **Verbena** in the garden. DF

**18th October** Over 30 **red admiral butterflies** on ivy flowers in the garden. DF

**20th October** At St Cyrus saw a male **common darter** and several **red admirals** on a warm sunny day. There was also **clustered bellflower** still in bloom. AH

**21st October** Beautiful sunny day. **Red admiral** on **Michaelmas daisies** in the garden and, later, another on **sedum** - it may have been there all the time. Still two red admirals the following day. ME

**22nd October** A **skylark** was heard singing for several minutes in a field beside Carsegowniemuir Quarry. Several **small tortoiseshell** and **red admiral butterflies** were seen in the quarry as well. At the same time **fieldfares** and **redwings**, newly arrived from the north, could be seen in the vicinity. A new living record for the quarry was a nest of the common **wood mouse** along with two anxious and very live adults under a large stone near pond two. JC

**23rd October** Excellent specimens of fungi found on the path alongside the Tay at Dunkeld included the **beefsteak fungus** (*Fistulina hepatica*) on **oak**, two **magpie inkcaps** (*Coprinus picaceus*) and *Ramaria stricta* and *R. formosa* in great quantities. SB

**28th October** Several **red admiral butterflies** flitted around and basked in the warm sun shining on the front of the house. JC

**29th October** A late **silver-Y moth** feeding on **valerian** in the garden. ME

**29th October** A **hoodie crow** (now regarded as a separate species), a most uncommon sight for Angus, was seen on the road leading to Carsegowniemuir Cottage. It lifted off over the fence and landed only 20 metres into the field. Even when we stopped and opened the window it didn't seem particularly alarmed, most unusual compared with hoodie crows on the west coast. Was it a naive young bird or, perhaps, an escaped tame one? JC

**1st November** I found a hibernating **peacock butterfly** in my garage, on the shears which I wanted to use. I gently moved it to the wall nearby, where it remains. Later in the day I saw a **red admiral** flying in the warm sunshine in Monifieth. AR

**7th November** 66 **small tortoiseshell**, 16 **peacock butterflies** and three **herald moths** hibernating in World War II coastal defence bunker at Lunan Bay. DF

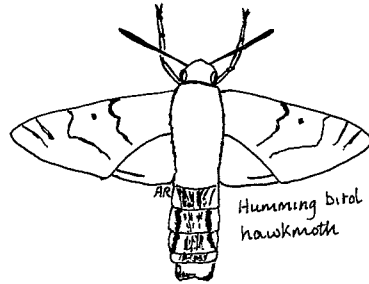
**18th November** 31 **greenfinches** caught and ringed in Melanie and Alex's garden in Kirkwalk, Carnoustie. PE

**19th November** A **barn owl** seen flying at dusk over the cycle path near Cowbyres on Barry Buddon. PE

**23rd November** More than 100 **ladybirds** hibernating on the gatepost at Brownie Wood near Gauldry. Mainly **7-spot**, but a few others. BB

**8th December** A small ball moving around the road at the junction of Abertay Street and Camphill Road turned out to be a **common shrew** scuttling around on the road surface in broad daylight. After a near miss by a car it safely reached the pavement. MR

**8th December** I decided that it was time the **dahlias** came out of the ground. We had still had no frost so their leaves had gone through various autumn shades of brown and faded away, instead of the usual frost-blackening. They were so wet at the roots that I feared for them if we did have frost. (There was ground frost overnight, 8th/9th.) AR



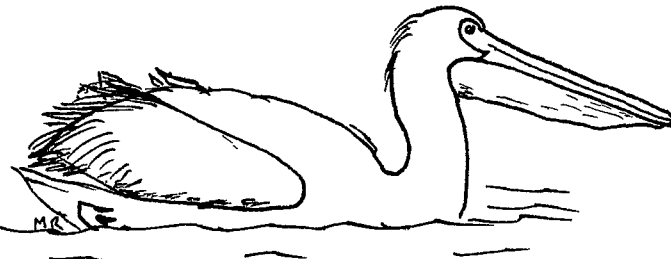
- 14th December** A male **snow bunting** flew across the road as I was cycling along below the Sidlaws at the Craigowl end JoyC
- 16th December** A pair of **blue tits** giving one of our nest boxes a very thorough examination on a sunny morning after a ground frost A bit too early (or late) for nesting AR
- 17th December** A rather unseasonal **peacock butterfly** fluttered about and then landed on a sunny outside windowsill Despite the bright sunshine there had been a frost the night before Was it rather belatedly looking for somewhere to hibernate, or had it been disturbed? MR
- 25th December** A Christmas visit to the garden by a male **blackcap** ME
- 25th December** Extra heating in the church had brought a **peacock butterfly** out of hibernation and it fluttered around during the Christmas morning service We also found a **seven spot ladybird** crawling around in the house, while we were opening presents, later in the day AR
- 27th December** A substantial late crop of the **stinkhorn fungus** (*Phallus impudicus*) in Brownie Wood, near Gauldry BB
- 28th December** A fine view of a female **sparrowhawk** as it perched on the fence adjacent to the hide and feeders at the Eden Estuary It has done this more than once and is becoming bolder GM
- 31st December** Two **long-tailed tits** seen flying from trees in East Whale Lane car park over to trees in the car park opposite I was driving at the time so couldn't stop and look around they are usually in larger flocks JoyC

## CULLED FROM THE COURIER

This year has produced more than its fair share of natural history articles in the Courier newspaper It is to their credit that these things are deemed worthy of inclusion, but they are also often of great interest to Nats, not all of whom hear about things on the 'bush telegraph'!

A **sunfish** was washed up on the Broughty Ferry foreshore at Douglas Terrace on 2nd September It was about three feet long and had apparently 'been dead for some time' These large, oval ocean fish have not been seen locally before, though there were sightings in the Moray Firth earlier in the summer and significant numbers off Cornwall Their presence in British waters is being attributed to increased water temperatures due to global warming - the explanation for many unusual phenomena these days

The **pelican** which appeared at Balmossie on about 10th September caused even more of a stir Angus and Dundee Bird Club members, who are also Nats, got their picture in the paper in addition to a front page article and photo of the bird itself Television crews in wellies pursued it at low



tide for the national news broadcasts and a steady stream of people were attracted to the shore to see it over the week or so before it decided to move on The pelican was apparently attracted down by the presence of the large flock of **mute swans** which is present at Balmossie all summer and seemed quite content to remain amongst them Attempts to find whether the bird was a natural vagrant or escaped from a collection proved inconclusive

An even less likely record was reported in the paper on 8th November Tree felling and tooth marks on stumps at Sandyknowes Fishery at Bridge of Earn were attributed to a **beaver** The animal had not been seen, but the ideal habitat, plentiful **willows** and islands suitable for the building of a lodge all added up to the possibility of an escaped or released beaver

Throughout the summer and early autumn the paper was also inundated with reports of **hummingbird hawkmoths** from bemused members of the public There were certainly a lot about, several of them seen by Nats and reported in the Interesting Sightings listing (above) I seem to have been one of the few people who did not see one of these marvellous moths!

Anne Reid

## CLOSE-UP GOLD

5th March

It was a bright but bracing day at Cambo, in north Fife, and the drifts of **snowdrops** were still worth seeing, although many flowers were starting to go over. Close beside me a tiny ball of fluff flitted onto the wire fence only a few metres away. I had been leaning on a gate looking out to sea but the bright streak of colour on its head immediately caught the eye. It was a **goldcrest**, and so close. Wonderful! I didn't dare move a muscle. The minute bird hopped a few times along the wire and then flew towards me and alighted on the wooden rail of the gate itself. It perched there for a few seconds, giving me the best view I've ever had of this beautifully coloured and striped creature, with its tiny sharp beak and bright beady eye.

A few minutes later, further along the trail, a **treecreeper** hopped up the trunk of an **ash** tree less than ten metres away. Again, we had excellent views for a few minutes but then two men came along, chatting to each other, and the disturbed bird flew off. Did they notice? Did they heck! They were totally oblivious of the wonders of nature around them. There was still more to come, though. Nearer the sea, a **birch** rang with the calls of a tree-full of **greenfinches**.

On the sea itself, just off the rocky shore in a small sheltered inlet were numbers of elegant male **eiders**, vigilantly escorting small numbers of drab females, and several **mallards**. A **heron** stalked the foreshore pools and calling **redshanks** and **turnstones** flitted and probed around the seashore rocks. Further out, in rougher waters, were a **goldeneye** drake and duck, and a few **wigeon**. It was great to be out watching such a wealth of wildlife in such conditions.

Jim Cook

## STILLNESS

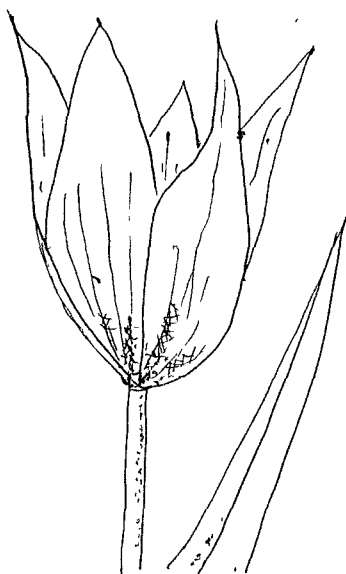
19th March

The alder tree stood tall, proudly wearing its trailing dreadlocks. Nothing stirred, all was still in the pale afternoon sunshine. The bare trees around were silent. The fat yellow catkins drooped.

I flicked one of the long tassels causing an explosion of pollen, but there was no response from the tree.

The alder was waiting.

Marjory Tennant



## A THIRD TULIP SPECIES FOUND ON CYPRUS

Until now Cyprus boasted only two species of **tulip**, *Tulipa cypria*, the deep purple flowers found high on the Akamas peninsula, and *Tulipa agenensis*, the bright red flowers found growing in cultivated fields and orchards. But in mid March 2006 Sid and Maggie Clarke and myself were photographing *Orchis troodi* and *Orchis quadripunctata* in another remote area of Akamas. While we were snapping away Maggie found a single flower of an orange/red tulip a little way from us. When we saw this plant we knew straight away it was nothing like the two species known from Cyprus. We then climbed up a gully finding more and more tulips until we stumbled on a huge enclosure obviously built to protect these tulips from roaming **sheep** and **goats**. The flowers seemed remarkably similar to flowers of *Tulipa orphanidea* we have found in the Peloponnese.

Since this was the last day of our trip we had no time to ask a botanist friend if he was aware of these plants, but as soon

as we were back in Scotland we e-mailed the question 'What's the story about the third Cypriot tulip?' Back came the answer 'They were found in 2004 and the Forestry Department had built the enclosure. They had contacted an expert on tulips but, to date, much to their frustration, he has not determined the tulip's origins'. We explained we were convinced the plants were *Tulipa orphanidea* or possibly a sub-species of it and he said he would pass this information on. We will now have to wait and see. I'll keep you posted.

Brian Allan

Note: Specialist Brian Matthew, ex Kew, initially thought that this might be the **Iranian tulip**, (*T. montanum*) but now thinks that it is possibly a new species. The leaves are too narrow to be the Iranian tulip, so he will pass judgement in the summer, once he has seen the plant. Ed

## UNEXPECTED PLEASURE

27th March

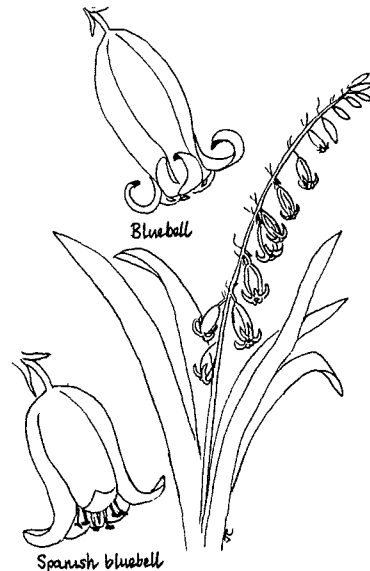
While sitting in the car waiting for Jim to get information on and permission to visit the Kinclaven **bluebell** wood, a beautiful wee face popped out of the dry stane dyke beside me. I sat absolutely still, and the next minute a **stoat** nipped out, ran down the wall and then across the road. He then skipped along the road in front of me to the many interesting walls and hiding places in the farm yard. He was a most beautiful rusty brown with a black tip to his tail, dark ear tips, and his white chest sparkled on a miserable damp day. It was good to see him right beside the gamekeeper's house.

Margaret McLaren

## BLUEBELLS

British **bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) (formerly *Endymion non-scripta*), form one of the glories of British deciduous woodlands in spring. The intense purple-blue of the flowers contrasts superbly with the deep green of the leaves and **ferns** on the floor of an **oak** or an **ash** woodland in mid-spring, before the trees come into leaf. The extreme western edge of Angus, bordering the river Isla, harbours only one small area of good bluebell woodland, perhaps because our county is a little too dry and cold, but eastern Perthshire and Fife shelter several excellent bluebell woodlands. These include Darroch Wood near Blairgowrie, Kinclaven Wood on the opposite side of the Tay from Meikleour and Craighall Wood near Ceres in Fife. Balmerino Woods along the south bank of the Tay estuary also shelter a few good patches of the plants. If you haven't been to bask in that deep blue shade, one or more of these woodlands is well worth a visit in late April to early May.

Western Perthshire is even better, with a number of good bluebell woodlands, which become even more numerous in Argyll. In western England good bluebell woodlands are relatively common and they occur in the south as well. In fact our British woodlands are the best in Europe for excellent displays of bluebells. Several authorities consider that one explanation, as well as our moist mild climate, is the lack of free-roaming **wild boar**. At one time, no doubt, these must have rooted up and eaten huge quantities of the bulbs. Perhaps the extermination of wild pigs from the British Isles in the Middle Ages allowed the development of large and dense growths of bluebells. In recent times, however, the burgeoning populations of the secretive and diminutive introduced **muntjac deer** in southern and midlands counties of England seem to be damaging considerable areas of bluebells. Eventually, this tiny deer may even spread up into Scotland.





By the way, do you know how the plant gained its scientific name? A Greek legend tells of the god Apollo killing a man named Hyacinthos. Flowers grew and bloomed where his blood spilled onto the ground, and they were graced with the victim's name. Our western European bluebell resembles the *Hyacinthus* plants and the 'oides' ending to the name means 'like or resembling'. The Greek flowers have a mark on the petals that, with a little imagination, resembles a letter of script. The British plant, a separate species, carries no marks on its petals – hence the specific epithet of '*non-scriptus*'.

The **Scottish bluebell** (*Campanula rotundifolia*) is a very different species, not even closely related and best known as the **harebell**. For a start, it belongs to a very different plant family, the **bellflower** family or Campanulaceae, unlike true bluebells which are **lilies**, family Liliaceae. Bluebells have narrow purple-blue flowers, live in deciduous woodland habitats and flower in spring. Harebell flowers form wider paler-blue bells, appear in mid and later summer and usually occupy more open, grassy habitats.

A much more troubling confusion may arise with imported **Spanish bluebell** bulbs (*Hyacinthoides hispanicus*) which, unfortunately, are being sold to the unwary by garden centres as 'bluebells'. They are able to interbreed with our native bluebells and dilute their colour and form. As naturalists, we should be careful to try to limit the spread of this introduced species and eliminate it from our woodlands if at all possible.

Our native bluebell can be distinguished because the flowers are narrower with creamy-coloured anthers, are nearly always deep blue or, rarely, white in colour, never pink or lilac, and the lobes of the petals are definitely turned back. The flower spike is one-sided, the flowers hanging down distinctly on only one side of the flower stalk. The leaves are narrow, some 7 to 15mm wide. The Spanish species' flowers carry blue anthers, may be blue, pale blue, lilac, pink or white in colour, have a more open bell shape and the petal lobes are not turned so far back. The flower spike is more erect, the flowers hanging down on all sides of the flower stalk, and the leaves are broader, up to 35mm in width. The hybrids may look rather like native bluebells but hang down on all sides of the flower stalk.

Jim Cook

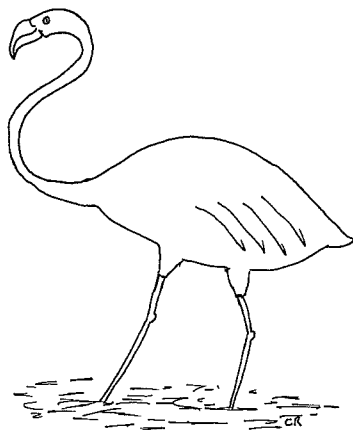
## LESVOS - A BIRDWATCHER'S PARADISE

4th - 11th May and 11th - 18th May

### First Week

Seven members of local natural history groups set forth on their first visit to this beautiful island which lies on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea and is only a short distance from the coast of Turkey (5 - 8 miles). It is the second largest Greek island behind Crete, discounting Evia, which is technically a peninsula. Virtually unaffected by mass tourism, Lesvos is the perfect place to visit for people who want to experience the real Greece. The island is 70km long and 45km wide and its landscape is a bird-rich habitat and haven of lush fertile valleys, plains and mountainous, rock-strewn areas on its western side.

Our party travelled by coach to Manchester, during which we had the pleasure of the company of Russell Nisbet, who was leading a party to Lesvos. We flew to Mytilene, Lesvos and were taken by taxi transfers to Hotel Malemi in Skala Kalloni, an hour's drive away. After a late lunch we visited the Kalloni Two Pools, literally just around the corner, which, although suffering from lack of management, still produced **purple heron**, **great bittern**, **garganey**, **black-winged stilt**, **wood** and **green sandpiper** and **glossy ibis**. The group actually saw 44 species in a very short period before darkness came down.



On day two our destination was the Achladeri and Derbyshire Salt Pans area where our target species were **Krüper's nuthatch** and the **short-toed treecreeper**. We managed to see these with little difficulty and enjoyed the added bonus of watching the nuthatch feeding young. This day proved to be outstanding as we added 45 new species to our list, amongst which were, **great snipe**, **red-necked phalarope**, **black stork**, **greater flamingo**, **ruddy shelduck**, **Montagu's harrier**, **stone curlew**, **collared**

**pratincole**, **avocet** and **Kentish plover** plus no less than six **tern** species - mind boggling stuff!

A range of sites on the third day led to special highlights of **Cory's shearwater**, **Levantine shearwater** and **Isabelline wheatear** at the famous Issy Triangle. In addition **European bee-eater**, **hoopoe**, **red-rumped swallow**, **cinereous bunting**, **Cretzschmar's bunting** and 12 **red-footed falcons** were seen.

Every day to the end of our week we kept on adding birds to the total at a steady rate. In all the final total for the week was 153 species with some of the highlights being **sombre tit**, **spectacled warbler**, **rufous bush-robin** (the bird of the trip for many), **orphan warbler**, **little crane** and **short-toed lark**. The **Baillon's crane** eluded us even though repeat visits were made to its known haunts, but we did see 17 **butterfly** species in addition to our birds. Dorothy and Doris stayed on for a second week and added a further seven birds to the total.

Bob McCurley

### Second Week

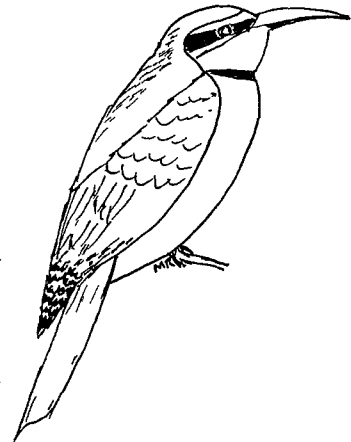
Having no transport, we walked everywhere. We met a couple, Brian and Eileen Anderson, who had been visiting Lesvos for 20 years and had published books on walks around the islands. We purchased their book on walks around Skalla Kalloni and, as a result, we were able to walk to all the good sites visited the previous week, along delightful 'donkey' tracks away from the traffic.

This, second, week was quite a contrast to the first one. The pools where we had enjoyed seeing all the **glossy ibis**, **garganey** and waders were drying up rapidly and the birds were moving on. The **white-winged**, **whiskered**, **black** and **gull-billed terns** had all departed and we only saw **common** and **little terns**. However, among the late arrivals were **spur-winged plover** and **rosy starling** and, during the week, there was a constant passage of **European bee-eaters**.

Our two weeks was probably the latest recommended time to visit Lesvos to see the birds on migration. The optimum time for bird watching and seeing the flowers would be April. We chose the beginning of May as that was the start of direct flights from the UK - any earlier and you have to travel via Athens. Other groups visiting at slightly different times in April-May in previous years had similar totals to ours but the actual species varied, so it's swings and roundabouts!

If you are interested in seeing the flowers, however, it would be essential to go earlier, in April. Although there were lots of wayside plants in bloom, by May all the specialities were over. We found it all a thoroughly enjoyable experience and one, hopefully, to be repeated.

Dorothy Fyffe and Doris Malcolm



## DEATH'S HEAD HAWKMOTH

A death's head hawk moth was found dead at Arbroath Abbey, then taken up to Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre on July 6th. I was advised of this and went up to the centre next day and was amazed to find it in such good condition. I checked on this intriguing moth and discovered some interesting Legends and Old Wives Tales about it.

The death's head hawkmoth (*Acherontia atropos*) is the largest European hawkmoth. It is a regular summer visitor to Britain from Southern Europe and Africa, but is unable to survive the winter. It has a short proboscis and therefore cannot take nectar from deep-throated flowers. Instead, it feeds on honey from bees' nests and sap from trees. It can produce a loud shrill squeak by forcing air out of its proboscis. This is supposed to subdue and control the worker bees!

Because of its skull and cross-bones markings and its unexpected ability to make quite a loud noise, the death's head has been an object of terror throughout the ages. Its sinister qualities are enshrined in its name. Acheron is the river of sorrows that flows through the underworld and Atropos is the eldest of the three fates, the one who severs the thread of life.

Throughout Europe, the moth was thought to be the harbinger of war, pestilence, and death to man and beast alike. Its appearance in a candlelit room, especially if it managed to snuff out the candle, was an omen of death in the house. In France, dust from its wings was thought to cause blindness if it entered the eye. The moth brought fear and panic in Brittany when large numbers appeared at the time of widespread pestilence. The moth's awe-inspiring properties are markedly enhanced by its ability to make sounds. These have been described as a "dismal, melancholy cry" and like the "plaintive squeaking of a mouse".

In Poland, where it is known as the "wandering death bird", its cry was heard as a voice of anguish, the moaning of a grief stricken child.

The above text is based on that from a display written by Dr W A Foster, the curator of the insect collection at the Cambridge University Zoology Museum and is taken from the website at [www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/museum/moths.htm](http://www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/museum/moths.htm)

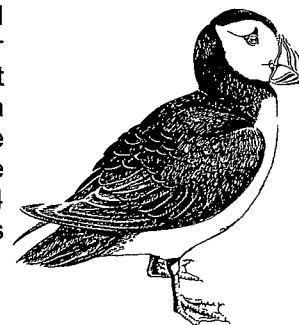
Bob McCurley

## A PARADE OF PUFFINS

10th July

The Auchmithie cliffs were basking in the light of early evening. Vegetation clung to the vertical rock: **ivy**, **brambles**, numerous clumps of **wall pellitory** (*Parietaria judaica*) and grassy tufts. On small ledges were **St John's-wort**, **stonecrop**, the tall shapes of **oil-seed rape** (how *did* they get up there?) and scruffy masses that looked like **wild cabbages**. Dense tangles of **sticky willie**, **willowherbs**, **elder** and **brambles**, with occasional clumps of **hemp agrimony** (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), prevented any approach to the base of the cliff.

The waters close to the shore were dotted with **gulls**, **oystercatchers** roosted on offshore rocks and an early pair of **curlews** flew past. **House martins** flitted and swooped up to their mud-ball nests while **fulmars** cackled on their nesting ledges, but what I was looking for was **puffins**. And there, a little further along, were the distinctive black and white shapes on small ledges about half way up the face. A quick first count revealed only nine adults, with their brightly coloured breeding bills. Fast-whirring wings propelled birds back up to the ledges and within a few minutes there were 14 puffins in sight, still a rather disappointing number. I sat down on a large rock to await developments. The birds continued their ferry flights and several were carrying small fish, probably **sand eels**, in to their nesting crevices. They were feeding chicks, presumably. I could see adults resting on the water and a third count produced a total of 26 birds. Better, but how many were there in total? Several puffins took off from the ledges, with that curious hunched attitude of theirs, and fluttered down as they gained airspeed, passing only some three or four metres over my head, a wonderfully close view. A fourth effort yielded 29 adults but another count a few minutes later produced a total of 40 puffins either on the water or on the cliff. I repeated the count several times more, but could not increase the total. There must be at least 40 birds there, a minimum of 20 pairs, on 14 separate nesting ledges or crevices, presumably with several nests at some of the sites. No chicks or juvenile birds could be seen.



Jim Cook

## A NOTE ON EAST COAST FLORA

This summer (2006) I spent time working with the Angus Vice-county Plant Recorder for the BSBI (Botanical Society of the British Isles), Barbara Hogarth. I am indebted to her for her patience and guidance. This has been a thrilling experience and an eye-opener.

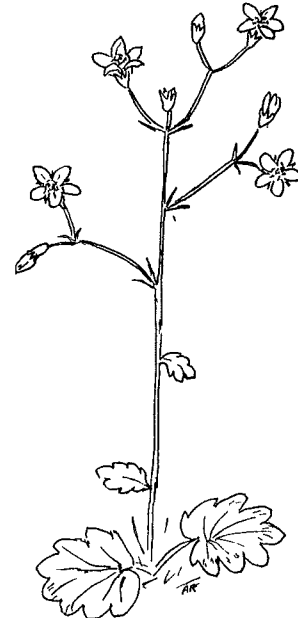
The bulk of the east coast cliff areas are classed as SSSIs mainly for the geological formations and the invertebrate fauna as well as the annual nesting sites of **kittiwakes** and three species of **auks**. The plants get little mention, whereas the plant associations along the

coast are little short of spectacular We attempted to assess, in broad brushstrokes, what the status of the plant life and its actual health were like We were delighted and appalled in equal measure

The length of the coast under review, from Auchmithie to Boddin, can be divided up into mini-bays, each with its own assemblage of plants according to rock type, direction of orientation and steepness of ground Some of these bays are rich in the less familiar plants found in Angus, including

Wild liquorice  
Purple milk vetch  
Nottingham catchfly  
Meadow saxifrage  
Bloody cranesbill  
Wood vetch  
Burnet saxifrage  
Scots lovage  
Clustered bellflower  
Sea wormwood  
Hairy violet  
Carline thistle  
Scarlet pimpernel  
Wild onion  
Early purple orchid  
Narrow-leaved everlasting pea  
Agrimony  
Kidney vetch  
Sea spleenwort  
Danish scurvygrass  
Rough clover  
Knotted clover  
Common cornsalad  
Rock samphire

*Astragalus glycyphyllos*  
*Astragalus danicus*  
*Silene nutans*  
*Saxifraga granulata*  
*Geranium sanguineum*  
*Vicia sylvatica*  
*Pimpinella saxifraga*  
*Ligusticum scoticum*  
*Campanula glomerata*  
*Serphidium maritimum*  
*Viola hirta*  
*Carlina vulgaris*  
*Anagallis arvensis*  
*Allium vineale*  
*Orchis mascula*  
*Lathyrus sylvestris*  
*Agrimonia eupatoria*  
*Anthyllis vulneraria*  
*Asplenium marinum*  
*Cochlearia danica*  
*Trifolium scabrum*  
*Trifolium striatum*  
*Valerianella locusta*  
*Crithmum maritimum*



*Saxifraga granulata*

- very rare, recent discovery - see p27 of 2005 Bulletin, 24th May entry

In one area there is a marvellous display of *Primula vulgaris* and *P. vers* with colourful swarms of hybrids

To add to the abundance of plants (there are some 300 other species recorded on this stretch) it is worth noting that there is an interesting fauna about 24 species of nesting birds (list below), many invertebrates, and **rabbits**, **roe deer** and **foxes** are not uncommon

Of the larger colonies of plants worth noting we found healthy population of **wild liquorice**, **Nottingham catchfly**, **wood vetch** and a very big colony of **sea wormwood** covering one large cliff face Most of the other plant colonies exist in very discrete packets situated on limbs of rock which have not been overgrown with **nettles**, **blackberries**, **cleavers** and coarse **grasses** - all the result of nitrate infiltration from the farmland above The ground lost to this invasive vegetation is probably not recoverable, but there appears to be no halt to the destruction of the remaining flora, except perhaps in very discrete pockets This is a great pity, for what will be lost will probably be lost for ever - that is the most worrying thing

On one section of the coast **Soay sheep** were introduced by agreement with SNH and the landowner These sheep destroy vegetation and cause considerable erosion They were confined between a point south of Ethiehaven and Redhead Unfortunately, at one particular low tide a number of these sheep managed to skirt round Redhead and into the next bay which stretches down to Prail Castle Along this stretch are typical plants of this area including **wild liquorice** but more importantly, perhaps, the largest colonies of **wood vetch** on the East Coast, or anywhere else in Angus This problem has been broached to SNH with, as yet, no response So watch this space - this is a matter which needs to be addressed The probable solution is to shoot the sheep - it is difficult to see how anyone can get these beasts up and over the cliffs - or possibly sedate them and hoist them up!

Pat Gaff  
(PTO for bird list)

Birds known to have nested on this stretch of the Angus coast There are, of course, more birds to be seen that do not breed here

Blackbird  
Cormorant  
Eider  
Fulmar  
Greater-black-backed gull  
Grey partridge  
Guillemot  
Herring gull

House martin  
Kestrel  
Kittiwake  
Linnet  
Peregrine falcon  
Puffin  
Razorbill  
Robin

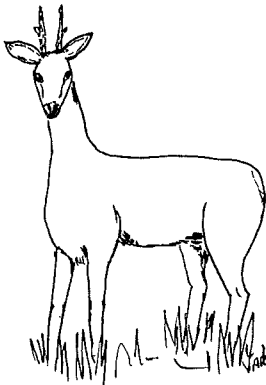
Rock dove  
Rock pipit  
Sand martin  
Shag  
Sparrowhawk (probable)  
Stonechat  
Whitethroat  
Wren

## ROE DEER ANTICS

24th July

The light was just starting to fade as we sat quietly in Brownie wood, waiting for any evening activity The wind was light but variable, unfortunately carrying our scent around **Crows** cawed harshly in the distance, loud tickings indicated that nearby **blackbirds** were moving off into cover for the night and the thin piping song of a **robin** filtered through from the dense trees behind for a few brief moments Noisy flappings in the canopy over our heads announced the arrival of **pigeons** coming in to roost A hopeful male glided heavily over to join a female silhouetted against the northern sky and, although he fanned his tail and bowed and cooed, she totally ignored him and after a minute or so flew off

About a quarter of an hour later a young **roe deer** wandered quietly among the ferns some 50 metres up the slope and then must have caught our scent because it suddenly pricked up its ears and glided off After a short while a roe buck trotted purposefully across the slope below us, this time quite unaware of our presence A few minutes later a loud crashing, sounding like a herd of charging cattle, echoed through the gloom and a female roe burst from cover behind us, leaping across the ferns just below our hiding place When only about 20 metres away, she tripped and almost turned head over heels Although she fell heavily, the doe was up in an instant and swooped fluidly on down the slope A second or two later a buck charged up, obviously with only one thought on his mind, but then must have scented us for he froze only about seven to eight metres away and stared directly at our reclining forms We didn't move a muscle The handsome animal posed for long seconds, giving us excellent clear views of his black nose and short elegant horns, and then



bounded away after the female

Jim Cook

## QUARRY SUMMER

23rd August

We had called in at Carsegowniemuir in the hope of meeting the new puppy, Purdey, and taking Milly for a walk To the disappointment of the girls, the Youngs were away and no dogs were to be seen, but we went for a walk up the quarry anyway

Being dogless had its advantages Much more wildlife than usual was spotted and the birds did not retreat until we arrived - normally, the advance party of galloping dog disturbs everything in sight There was a small flock of **house sparrows** in the trees behind pond two and two **goldfinches** were seen nearby It had rained overnight and there were **toadlets** crawling about in many places - it was difficult to avoid standing on them As we moved along the path a **painted lady butterfly** flitted past, **blackbirds** feasted on **bird cherry** and **wrens**, **tits** and **yellowhammers** were seen or heard

The water in pond four seemed particularly clear. A **diving beetle** was obvious as it moved around purposefully, but close visual searching of the depths revealed two baby **newts** in the shallows. They were about 2cm long and one still had its external gills. We left them in peace and moved on towards pond five.

Somehow I got left behind - a common occurrence for any true naturalist - and the next thing I knew was that I was being called, in a whispered shout "Come! Quickly!" Despite hurrying, I was too late. There had been a **kingfisher** sitting on a branch above the water at the far side of the pond - a very exciting record. We sat very still for a while but it had gone for good. However, both girls had a good view of it. I then made up for my disappointment with another 'first' for the quarry - a **darner dragonfly** (*Sympetrum* sp.) down near the water's edge. It did not linger either, hence the lack of firm identification, but we also saw **blue-tailed** and **common blue damselflies**.

On the way back towards the cottage we saw a **peacock butterfly** and there was a **spotted flycatcher** using a dead **elm** as a hunting perch, which made it very easy to identify. Altogether it had been an unusually exciting walk, with excellent new records for Jim's list.

Anne Reid

## AUSTRIAN GENEROSITY

While on holiday in Austria in September, I saw two **great crested grebes** on the Fuschlsee. From the lake shore they appeared identical to the naked eye. Both dived and on resurfacing, one had caught a small **fish**. The other created a commotion, whereupon, its partner swam over and fed it. It was almost human.



Jack Moody

## BACKMUIR WOOD

14th October

I was walking quietly through Backmuir Wood, looking for fungi, when a movement to the left caught my attention. There, only about 30m away, were two quietly feeding **roe deer**. They hadn't noticed me and I stood stock-still to watch them. They were a female with a buck in attendance and gradually moved around, nibbling at the sparse **grass** and browsing off some low **rowan** branches. Handsome animals, the two deer already carried thick brown winter pelts and vivid white rumps. They continued undisturbed for a few minutes but then the spell was broken. A couple appeared with a large and active Old English sheepdog. The deer immediately pricked up their ears and bounded smoothly off into the depths of the wood. The two dog lovers never even noticed.

A few minutes later my disappointment was greatly reduced when I found a good clump of well-developed **chanterelles** (*Cantharellus cibarius*). Taking a few caps, with their superb egg-yolk yellow colour and that wonderfully fragrant but faint apricot smell, I left the rest for others to enjoy. Gently fried with a little onion and a couple of beaten eggs, they made an excellent supper dish!

Jim Cook

## THE KINGFISHER

Arguably the most attractive British small bird, most people, other than keen bird watchers, have probably never seen one. Despite its vivid coloration it can be a difficult bird to spot. Its small size (smaller than a **starling**) and its habit of sitting rock steady for long periods on a perch above water, make it easy to overlook. Only when it dives for fish or takes off, almost invariably in a straight flight path close to the water, can it be easily seen. The secret is to get to know its fishing spots and scan them regularly.

The title **kingfisher** is well deserved as it seldom misses its prey, usually **minnows** or small **flat fish** where I often observe it on the Eden Estuary. Three have been seen recently there, two males and one female (the latter being told apart by having a reddish patch on the lower mandible). My impression over a number of years is that they are on the increase, possibly due to milder winters, but then it may be that I'm getting to know where to look more efficiently.

For those of you interested in sighting this spectacular wee bird, I list a few spots where it might be seen.

The Eden Estuary hide - preferably near low water

St Andrews Botanic Gardens - the pond

The Lade Braes, St Andrews - also **dippers** here

Morton Lochs - lower hide on NE side of loch

The burn at Tayport foreshore - next to Foodmech factory

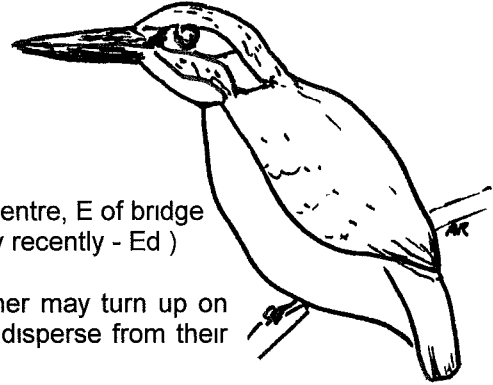
River Braan - near its entry to River Tay and Tay walk

North bank of the Tay, Perth - park near Rodney Fitness centre, E of bridge

Dighty Burn - quieter stretches (Not seen on lower Dighty recently - Ed)

Barry Mill - on mill pond and main burn, occasionally

Especially in late summer and autumn a kingfisher may turn up on any patch of fresh or brackish water as the young birds disperse from their parental territories. Happy hunting!



Gordon Maxwell

## WEE, SLEEKIT, COURIN', TIM'ROUS BEASTIES

22nd October

While trying to re-arrange a large rock to form a good seat for lunch near pond two in the Quarry at Carsegowniemuir, I found underneath it a neat little round grassy nest and two very surprised and nervous adult **wood mice** (*Apodemus sylvaticus*). They quickly dived down for cover but the stone was replaced in its original position almost immediately. It was a delight to see them, with their reddish-brown coats, pointed whiskered noses and shining bulbous eyes. Although remains of these mice have been recovered from **owl pellets** in the past, this is the first live record in more than 20 years at the quarry.

A short time before, a few distinctive calls had sounded from the perfectly still air overhead to announce the arrival of a small skein of **pinkfoot geese**. About a dozen very low-flying birds skimmed over the Quarry, less than 50 metres overhead, allowing clear views of the birds' details, their small dark heads, neat beaks and powerfully muscled bodies. Their wing-beats whistled wonderfully through the calm, quiet conditions.

A further interesting sighting, or rather hearing, occurred later in the afternoon. While working on one of the paths in sunny and quiet conditions, I was surprised to hear the song of a **flighting lark** for a few minutes. At about the same time, small groups of **fieldfares** and **redwings** could be seen flitting around the quarry. It just shows how much wildlife is confused by the unseasonable spell of warm weather.

Jim Cook

## HALLOWE'EN

What marks the beginning of winter in our part of Scotland (Frickheim, actually)? Dreich days and early dark. Cosy hats and gloves in the rucksack. Tidying up the garden and mourning the progressive loss of colour. Guisers at the door and **pumpkin** lanterns - easier than **neeps**!

Well, no to most of that. On Hallowe'en morning a blustering, edgy wind was challenged by the sun which shone for most of the day. In a sheltered spot there was real warmth, so on a walk through Arbroath to St Vigeans the cosy clothes went back into the rucksack. In the garden a **red admiral** rested on a south facing wall and fluttered shamelessly. Tiny biting horrors buzzed and swarmed as if they had a right to be there.

It got worse. Some of my **tete-a-tete daffodils** have come through, to a height of 1.5 to 2 inches, and a **rosemary** shrub is flowering. *Skimmia japonica* is in bud. One or two **primulas** have announced themselves.

But when the sun dipped behind the rooftops the sudden drop in temperature was a sharp reminder that it was the last day of October. Driving into Dundee for an evening talk with the Nats, lights sparkled, and on the way home the moon was out and the sky glistened with stars.

As I turned into my street I passed a group of hearty guisers serenading an eight-foot, inflatable, plastic ghost! All Hallows indeed.

Shelagh Gardiner



## EARLY NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS IN DUNDEE

It is an exciting time for Dundee Museums, with the McManus Galleries undergoing major refurbishment for a grand reopening during 2008. But it was also an exciting time exactly 300 years ago, as citizens wondered at the exhibits in the city's first museum. The centrepiece was the mounted skin and skeleton of a travelling elephant that had collapsed and died on the Broughty Ferry Road in April 1706. The remarkable surgeon-apothecary Dr Patrick Blair had prepared the specimen, and was the prime mover behind what was the first public museum in Scotland, and probably in Britain. Although teaching collections and private 'cabinets of curiosities' were not uncommon at the beginning of the 18th century, Dundee's museum was unique in being formed from the collections of several individuals, and housed in a "public hall", funded by "several honourable and learned gentlemen of the neighbourhood" – a full century would pass before another opened its doors to the public (the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, in 1807). Sadly, Blair became caught up in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion and the museum did not survive his ruin. (The elephant's skeleton seems to have remained somewhere locally for a few more decades, before reputedly being ground down for fertiliser.)

Many years were to pass until Dundee again had a public museum, but, in 1832, the botanist William Gardiner wrote "We know of only two museums in Dundee – that in McNicolls Tavern, Hilltown, and the private collection of Mr W. Jackson, Scouringburn. The former cannot be seen except through the medium of porter bottles and pie-crusts, but the proprietor of the latter, we believe, is gratified by the visits of his friends. It is a tolerably extensive and highly diversified collection, embracing specimens of most of the native quadrupeds, birds and insects, besides many foreign ones also reptiles, fishes, shells, sea productions, fossils, minerals, seeds, living plants &c. If Mr Jackson would furnish his friends with a catalogue of his collection, systematically arranged and state what times would be most convenient to him to admit visitors, he would confer upon them a boon deserving of their gratitude." There is no indication that William Jackson senior, a master tailor, compiled one, so most citizens probably had to make do with the collection in McNicolls Tavern. At that time, many towns had a tavern with a shabby museum to attract customers (there was another example in Forfar) – a reminder survives today in the occasional stag's head or angling trophy hanging over the bar.

Fortunately, the city was soon to have a public museum in more sober surroundings. In 1835 the Dundee Watt Institution purchased a site in Constitution Road to erect its own building, and Gardiner wrote "a collection in natural history has already been begun, and Mr [Charles William] Boase has appropriated a room in his own house for its reception." It benefited from a large number of donations from local gentlemen and sea captains. Space for the museum was found in a spare classroom at the Public Seminaries (now Dundee High School) until 1845. William Jackson was its curator throughout this period. It then moved to the Institution's own building, where, despite the inevitable competition for space, it flourished, and outlasted the Institution itself. With an entry charge of 1d, it was often crowded on Saturday evenings.

In 1868, the Watt Institution collections were handed over to the city and became the nucleus of the present Dundee Museum, housed in the Albert Institute. A few years later, in 1874, the Dundee Naturalists' Society was founded, one of its objects being "the formation of a library and museum." The Society's constitution prudently contained a provision that "if at any



time the Society shall be dissolved, the specimens and other property shall be handed over to the Public Museum in Dundee and it shall not be in the power of any General or other Meeting to alter this rule " As ever, space for a museum proved hard to come by, but the Free Library Committee allowed the Society to use a room in the Albert Institute, on condition that the museum should be open to the public The Society's collections remained in the Albert Square building, gradually expanding and becoming more intertwined with the City's collections, until 1923, when the Society abruptly removed them to the University College The reason for this break-up is unknown, but the separation was to be only temporary (The collection was re-located again to the Training College, Park Place in April 1934 Ed ) Half a century later, and nearly 100 years after the DNS began to build up its collections, the surviving specimens (some by then rather battered through age and repeated relocation) were formally donated to Dundee City Museum

Dundee University College had its own museum almost from its inception Professor D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (an important figure in Dundee Naturalists' Society) founded a Zoology Museum immediately he was appointed in 1885 In October that year he wrote "Additions to my Museum are numerous Within the last week I have had a porpoise, two mongooses, a small shark, an eel 8ft long and 150lb in weight, a young ostrich and two bagfuls of monkeys all dead of course" The university museum continued to grow throughout the three decades that Thompson spent in Dundee, and the city's whaling fleet ensured that it had particularly important collections from the arctic regions At the same time as Thompson was establishing a Zoology Collection, Professor Patrick Geddes (also significant in the Dundee Naturalists' Society) was forming a university herbarium In Victorian times museums had an important role in university teaching, but changing needs meant the University Zoology Museum later fell into neglect, and when the old zoology building was demolished in 1956 to make way for the University Tower Building, much of the collection was dispersed What remains is open by appointment, though it is probably best-known today through temporary exhibitions and its website [www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/zoology.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/zoology.htm)

In the early 19th century, there were also travelling museums, run as commercial enterprises In 1832, Gardiner gave "Some account of the Leverian Museum" noting "In the catalogue, this collection is termed the Leverian Museum, some years ago, it appeared in this town under the name of 'Seaman's Museum'; and last November it again visited Dundee as 'Hunters Museum' It is an extensive and elegant collection of zoological subjects " Gardiner goes on to list a few of the more interesting specimens, beginning with various foreign and British mammals, then foreign and British birds, starting with "the stately ostrich, 6 or 7 feet high, with a skeleton of the same ", "a vast variety of British birds", reptiles, fish, and "a choice collection of shells and insects, both British and foreign" "Attached to the museum is a small menagerie " "There is however one subject in this museum which would have been much better kept out, viz – a Mermaid! This is evidently an artificial production but it is apt to deceive common observers"

Despite Gardiner's criticism of the 'mermaid' (created from a monkey and a fish), it is clear that this travelling museum (not to be confused with the Leverian Museum in London, nor the Hunterian Museums in either London or Glasgow) was mainly serious in content, and not an extension of a fairground freak-show, as such commercial establishments are now often assumed to have been The establishment of permanent public museums in Victorian times probably drew away their customers, and any that survived were perhaps forced to exploit the less reputable end of the market

Colin R McLeod

## FOXES IN MONIFIETH

Imagine the scene - you glance out of your patio doors and see your tree-fringed garden bathed in early spring sunshine It all looks normal until you spy a red furry form lazing in the shade of a small bush Yes, it's a young **fox**, happy to be clear of the den and out in the clear spring air This young fox is from a family of foxes holed up in a garden that fronts the main Broughty Ferry road The foxes seem to regularly use the large gardens of Church Street to gain access to a strip of woodland that runs south of Grangehill Drive They have even been seen in the middle of the road outside Seaview Primary School, albeit long after the children are safe in bed It's nice to find these native mammals on your doorstep but they

share their newly found habitat with a number of **grey squirrels**, the incomers responsible for the demise of our native **red squirrels**

Brian Allan

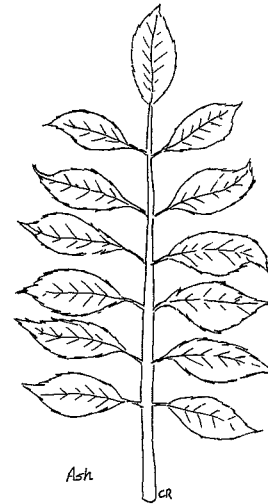
## CARSEGOWNIEMUIR 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Saturday 25th November

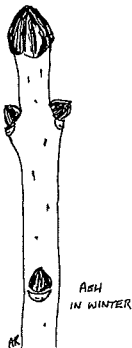
Which long-running project has your Society sustained over the last 20 years? That's right, the tree planting and environmental improvements at Carsegowniemuir Quarry, near Aberlennno

Margaret Duncan (who returned five years ago to her native New Zealand) was the tree enthusiast and promoter-in-chief who was largely responsible for the creation of the quarry project. After more than a year of surveying and planning, the Society began with a mass planting of more than 100 trees over two weekends at the end of November and the start of December in 1986. We invited as many of the original tree planters as we could find and 20 of them, with guests and friends, turned up. We were gratified that both John Compton, the original owner, and Harold Jackson, who was the local FWAG president at the time and a great supporter, were both able to come.

The party gathered at Carsegowniemuir cottage to a great welcome from the owners, Ronnie and Lorraine Young and Milly and Purdey, their lurchers (and the *real* quarry enthusiasts). Those of us who remember Pfenning with affection were saddened to learn of her demise only last June. Before setting off, we were treated to a warming mug of mulled wine, courtesy of Brian and Jenny Allan. Although we were lucky that the weather was calm and dry, the festive effects of the wine were most welcome. The party was taken on a tour of the quarry and stopped to plant a celebratory **ash** tree in area C, one of the original planting areas. One of our most veteran members, Frances Towns, arrived in time to give a hand. While Dorothy Fyffe, Mary Galloway, Doug Palmer and others took photographs of the event, we remembered some of those planting stalwarts who were unable to be with us – Margaret Duncan, of course, but also Pat and Bob McLeod, the Dundee Tree Group organisers to whom the quarry had at first been offered by John Compton, Margaret McLaren, Neil Burford, Alastair Fraser, Ewan and Ken McGregor, Davy Stein, Ron Lawie and Barbara Tulloch.



Mamie Bruce-Gardyne conducted Frances back to the cottage and the rest of the party continued on to the far end. They stopped at intervals to admire the sizes of the trees. Marjory Tennant, Ruth Arnold and Jean Colquhoun, among others, hadn't visited the quarry for several years and were able to appreciate the way that most of the trees had grown. One of



the **ash** trees planted by Harold Jackson was pointed out to him. It towered above the **willowherb**. "I remember planting that one" was heard at times from several members but the more common question was "Which ones did I plant?" followed by "It's so long ago I haven't a clue". Wynn Tennant, however, was able to find the trees she had recently planted with Margaret McLaren. Colin McLeod reminisced about the early survey work undertaken by him and the late Steve Fulford, and Peter Ellis went on ahead to look at areas he had worked on. Gordon Maxwell kept his eye open for interesting fungi and Jenny and Brian soon headed back to the cottage to start heating more 'warming mixture'. Ronnie Young remarked that the south-facing sheltered glade near the far end was developing well while all admired the dense growths inside the small enclosures planted between 15 and 12 years ago. We listened while Jim explained the recent work of planting **elders** at the exposed far end in an attempt to create a protective hedge and saw the remains of the fence constructed as a wind-break in the early '90s by Peter Ellis, Anne Reid and her daughters Mary and Christine, with help from Barbara Hogarth and Neil Burford.

On the way back, just as the light was beginning to fade, the group splashed down a muddy side path to admire the now-large **aspen**, planted by Margaret Duncan in 1987. We

listened to descriptions of the **holly** plantings, the loss of most of the **elm** trees and some of the difficulties in the early years and then stopped off to view the first two trees planted, back in '86, by Dorothy Fyffe and the late Joan Thomson

Back at the cottage, the party met up with Margaret McLaren and was welcomed in to a spread of cakes and biscuits and more liquid refreshments. The highlight was the anniversary cake baked by Wynn, decorated by a pair of candles in the shapes of the numbers two and zero. We finished by collectively presenting the Youngs with a cast model of a pair of horses in appreciation of their help and support over the years.

One of the original thoughts behind the project was to encourage active participation in planting and other environmental work in our own area. This aim has been more than fulfilled with, over the years, more than 60 Nats members helping to plant trees, mulch them or clear paths and pull **ragwort**, perhaps build fences, and even construct enclosures.

The quarry is thriving and developing very well into a fine nature area. To see it for yourself at the best time of year, we invite you to join us at the 21st birthday barbecue that will be organised there this coming June (Saturday 20th June 2007, from 2pm. Ed.)

Jim Cook

## WOODPECKERS AT BARRY MILL

After catching an adult male and five juvenile great spotted woodpeckers on 18th June, I then caught another six on 9th July. This time it was the same adult male and two of the previous juveniles plus three new juveniles. At the end of the year I found that I had caught 19 different great spotted woodpeckers at Barry Mill in 2006 - 12 juveniles, one new adult and six other adults ringed in previous years. The number of juveniles caught suggests three breeding pairs, though only one nest was found - between the mill dam and the weir on the Barry Burn.

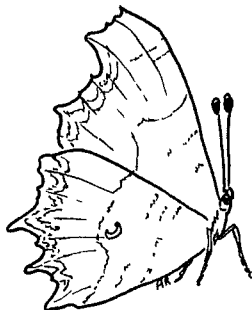
One of the re-trapped adults was the very first woodpecker that I caught at the Mill on 14th April 2002 when she was already a full grown female. Another bird, a male, has now been caught on ten separate occasions since he was first ringed as a juvenile on 22nd August 2004.

Peter Ellis

## MUSHROOMS AND BUTTERFLIES

One might ask - "Why include two completely different subjects in the same write-up? What do they both have in common?" - the answer is - "Very little, except for one common influence. They have almost certainly been affected by this year's weather conditions."

Butterflies - and moths - thrive in the sort of weather conditions we have had this year.



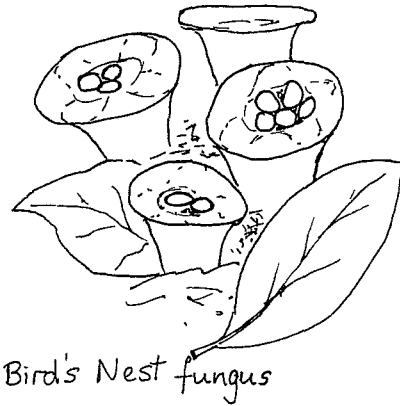
The **peacock**, for instance, has increased to the level where it is now possibly the most common species in and around Dundee. Another species, the **orange tip**, continues to increase, I have counted 15 on seven separate sites this year whereas they were almost unknown in the Angus area only a few years back. Rare summer visitors have also been seen widely, in particular the **hummingbird hawkmoth**, a fascinating creature seen by myself in Fife and by a number of members in and around Dundee. Another moth, the **six-spot burnet**, has increasingly been found away from its more common coastal environment. Another notable rarity, the **comma butterfly**, seems to be establishing itself and has been recorded from Angus and Fife this year.

Fungi have also had a prolific year but for different reasons from the above. The hot summer was followed in autumn by a rainy period just prior to the main fungus season and, as the Nats foray would testify, resulted in the best crop of mushrooms for many a year. There

were too many to list here, but notable were a number of the rare **earth stars** (*Geastrum striatum*) found late in the season by Dorothy Fyffe in her garden. Two species, *Geastrum triplex* and more *G. striatum*, were found at the end of December at the Barnhill Rock Garden. Pat Gaff also found yet another, rare, sand dune **earth star** on Barry Buddon, probably *Geastrum schmidelii*. A keen-eyed Margaret McLaren spotted **bird's nest fungi** (*Cyathus olla*) on a Nats Saturday, post-lunch walk around Forfar Loch.

I look forward to another successful season in 2007, summer sunshine followed by a few downpours (preferably overnight for the benefit of the butterflies) just before the fungus season - surely not too much to ask!!

Gordon Maxwell



PLEASE TURN OVER FOR PRIZE CROSSWORD

# PRIZE CROSSWORD

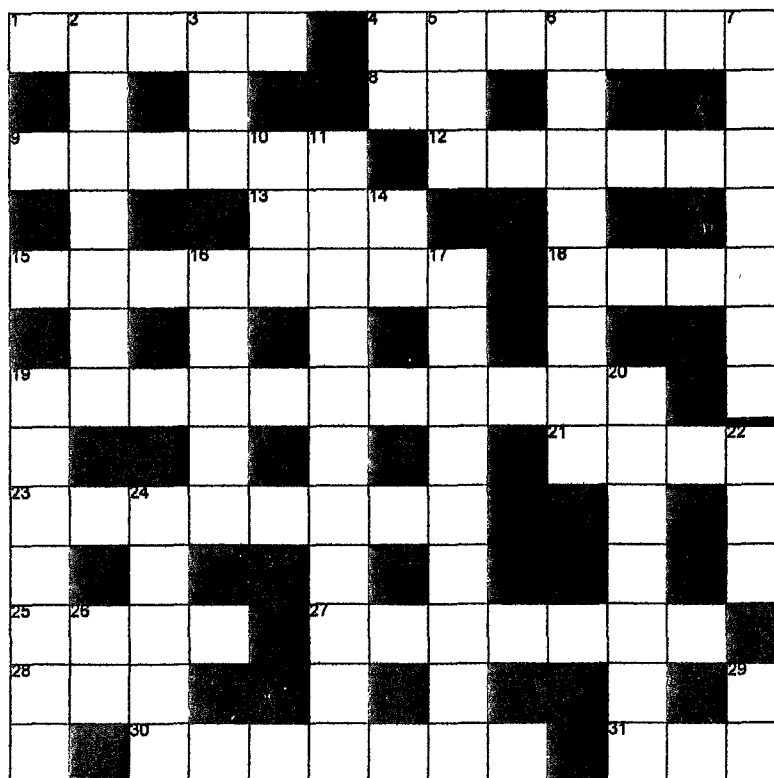
This crossword has been compiled by Jim Cook and Margaret McLaren. For the chance to win a Naturalists' prize, please return your completed entry to the secretary by 1st June 2007. The first correct answer out of the hat will win.

## Across

- 1 Fruit of the oak (5)
- 4 Generic marine bird (7)
- 8 Less than a bull (2)
- 9 Gaelic water dogs (6)
- 12 Aural hair piece (6)
- 13 Wing pairs of flies (3)
- 15 Maritime heather (3,5)
- 18 – foil. Wing shape (4)
- 19 Bishopweed (6,5)
- 21 Embryo food supply (4)
- 23 Correct bullrush (8)
- 25 Number of petals in *Rosaceae* (4)
- 27 Correct (Latin) name for sweet smelling flower (7)
- 28 Earth friendly group (acronym) (3)
- 30 Cockerel (7)
- 31 Dung beetle (3)

## Down

- 2 Weed for feline hearing (4,3)
- 3 Eastern European cereal (3)
- 4 Acid rain elements (1,1)
- 5 Devon river (3)
- 6 Uncommon dabbling duck (8)
- 7 Cast on the beach (7)
- 10 Deer (3)
- 11 Fire breathing flowers? (11)
- 14 Alien (1,1)
- 16 Large dog (5)
- 17 Green or stinking plant (9)
- 19 Tallest mammal (7)
- 20 What birds did overnight (7)
- 22 London gardens (3)
- 24 Young eel (5)
- 26 Jupiter moon (2)
- 29 Heat rays (abbr.) (1,1)



Name. ....

Address.. ..

..

19 MAR 2007

## DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

### SUMMER OUTINGS PROGRAMME 2007

#### **Saturday 21st April Craighall Den, Ceres and St Andrews Botanic Gardens**

Leaders: *Sheila Brinkley & Margaret McLaren* Bus

The route alongside the burn from the car park offers a wide variety of spring flowers: and there are woodland birds to watch out for. We proceed through the Nature Reserve to the large Lime Kiln, and return to Ceres by a different route. Please bring a picnic or visit the Coffee Shop or Meldrum Arms. It may be necessary to book in advance. In the afternoon we plan to visit St. Andrews Botanic Gardens where there is always so much of interest.

#### **Tuesday 1st May Murton Nature Reserve Leader: *Brian Ballinger* Cars**

The Murton Wildlife Trust Centre is an interesting new nature reserve and environmental education facility recently established on the site of a former sand and gravel quarry. The site covers approximately 90 acres and includes ponds and various other habitats, as well as observation hides. Already interesting wildlife species are moving in.

We will be met by the ranger at the car park and there is a £2.50 charge to help support the work of the reserve. Meet at Murton Nature Reserve new car park, NO 492511 access from the A932 Arbroath road about 2 miles out of Forfar at 7pm. (Sign on the road). Usual East Whale Lane pick-up at 6.15pm.

#### **Saturday 12th May Lady Mary's Walk, Crieff Leaders: *Jack Moody & John Campbell* Bus**

Lady Mary's Walk at Crieff, is a scenic path along the River Earn, through mixed woodland, which has been popular with local residents since 1825. At the time of year, quite a variety of plant and birdlife can be expected along the route, including aquatic birds in some stretches of the river. Energetic members may wish to return to Crieff via Laggan Hill. Remember and tell leaders of your intentions.

#### **Saturday 26th May Arbuthnott Estate Leaders: *Peter Middleton & Alban Houghton* Bus**

Arbuthnott Estate lies in the Howe of the Mearns a few miles east of the village of Fordoun. The estate includes mixed arable farmland, a beef herd, woodlands and a working sawmill. Also running through the estate is the Bervie Water. All these features should provide a variety of wildlife to be seen including birds, wild flowers and hopefully a few surprises. Overlooking the Bervie Water is the old parish church of Arbuthnott. Undoubtedly one of the finest and most interesting historic pieces of mediaeval architecture in Kincardineshire, and may be of interest to members. The Grassic Gibbon Centre is situated by the roadside where we could make use of the facilities.

#### **Tuesday 12th June Gagie Marsh (NO 448376), Westhall Terrace**

Leaders: *Jim Cook & Anne Reid* Private Cars

This marsh is one of the most botanically interesting small wetlands in Angus, with a good range of marsh orchids, rushes, sedges and other water-loving plants. There is also the chance of seeing typical wetland birds such as ducks and moorhens and it is an especially good site for snipe. Bring wellies!

**Saturday 16th June Killiecrankie** Leader: *Alban Houghton & Brian Ballinger* Bus

The east-facing, wooded slopes of the pass of Killiecrankie may not be designated as a RSPB reserve now but the birds are still there - particularly notable are the summer migrants - redstart, wood warbler and tree pipit. Habitats include birch woods and plant-rich mires, cliffs and the River Garry gorge where the redcoat leaped to escape the steel of Bonnie Dundee's troops. The National Trust Centre is not far away on the east bank. A short and a longer walk will probably be offered.

**Saturday 30th June Carsegowniemuir Barbecue** Leaders: *Anne Reid & Jim Cook* Private Cars

Last autumn was the 20th anniversary of the first plantings in our own Quarry reserve. Come and help us celebrate its 21st birthday. Everyone is welcome! No effort is required apart from bringing your own food and refreshments; we'll supply the hot coals. If you've never visited the site, it's a great chance to enjoy the quarry at the best time of year, admire the hard work contributed by many society members and have a chance of seeing the most interesting wildlife. From 2pm onwards.

**3rd-5th July Midweek Expedition to Elgin** Leaders: *Sheila Brinkley & M. McLaren* Bus

A few changes to our usual format this year. Firstly the "weekend" begins on Tuesday morning returning home on Thursday. We will depart from Discovery Point, Dundee at 9.30am on Tuesday 3rd July, (with a packed lunch) arriving at the hotel in time for dinner. A programme will be handed out on the bus and we hope you will all enjoy the expedition to Speyside and Moray. There are a few places left for anyone interested - a good way to get to know each other. Speak to Margaret McLaren should you wish to come along.

**Saturday 14th July Ben Lawers** Leaders: *Alban Houghton & Jim Cook* Private Cars

This is a new venture for the Society, using cars to access areas that are impossible to reach by bus. Ben Lawers is justly famed as one of the prime mountain botany localities of Scotland and we hope to be able to record a number of the more interesting habitats and species - weather permitting. This outing is for keen botanists and hill walkers but, please note, the high level walk is only for the fit and well-equipped. Full mountain gear and boots are essential. The low level route allows the less able to sample much of the most interesting flora. Contact either the Excursion Secretary or the Secretary to arrange for a lift and confirm attendance.

**Saturday 28th July The Falls of Clyde and New Lanark**

Leaders: *Brian Allan & Dorothy Fyffe* Bus

The path beside the River Clyde up to the Falls covers a range of woodland habitats that provide a good introduction to the typical plants and animals of western Scotland. We'll walk up to admire the dramatic grandeur of the Falls and explore the network of paths afterwards. The New Lanark Mills Centre is also worth exploring, for those that have the time.

**Sunday 12th August Barry Buddon Excursion** Leaders: *Bob McCurley & Jim Cook* Private Cars

Barry-Buddon is the largest and best area of sand dunes and dune slacks in this part of Eastern Scotland. By arrangement, we are allowed to spend a day freely exploring the wildlife delights of this valuable array of habitats. The party will divide into several groups, concentrating on birds, plants and butterflies and dragonflies / damselflies, although outstanding examples of any of these will be indicated to members of all groups. Why not come and join us for a great day out? Meet 10.00am at Monifieth Football Field car park.

### **Saturday 18th August Arbirlot/Elliot/Easthaven**

Leaders: *Brian Ballinger & Peter Middleton* Cars or Service Bus

This is a return visit to this wonderful area of Angus coastline with an inland extension. We will meet at the Easthaven car park by the shore (passing under the railway line) NO 591 362 at 9.30am. Easthaven may also be reached by the hourly 73A bus service (8.34 Ninewells, 8.50 Littlewoods, 9.07BF, 9.13 Monifieth - arrives 9.32).

Some of the party will then proceed to Arbirlot and walk down the Elliot Water, partly following the old railway line, a pleasant woodland and riverbank setting. After crossing the railway line, we will be in the quite different coastal habitat and the track takes us past a series of special and interesting sites, starting at Elliot links with its interesting flora and other wildlife. Further on we hope to see various orchids and finally arrive at Easthaven. The total distance of the longer walk is about 5 miles, over a mainly reasonably good footpath without steep climbs.

Shorter walks around Easthaven will also be arranged to see the interesting plants, birds, butterflies and seashore and enjoy the views along the coast.

### **Tuesday 28th August The Edderty Den and Kinpurney Hill, Newtyle**

Leaders: *Margaret McLaren & Peter Middleton* Cars

Meet at 7.00pm along South Street, Newtyle at the car park on left hand side of road after the Park on the way to Glamis.

The history of the Road up to Denside farm is very interesting and a note will be given on the start of the walk. Continuing along Glamis Road (having parked at the car park beside the Park) you will see the signpost to the Den and Kinpurney Hill on the right hand side by Edderty Burn. Turn right up the track between the burn and the farm buildings. Don't cross the burn at the bridge, keep it on your left and mount the steps in front of you to enter the Den. There are interesting trees, some felled Elm trees have now formed coppice stumps. Wild cherry (gean) in the lower section and oak, rowan, hawthorn, birch, goat willow and wild rose throughout. There are also introduced species - can you name them? There are marker posts after leaving the den by way of a kissing gate and crossing a rough track. The posts will guide you by a fairly direct route to the top of Kinpurney Hill some 600 feet above where you left the den. Many interesting plants and the gorse should give a strong smell of coconut!

### **Saturday 22nd September Alyth Den and Caddam Wood**

Leaders: *Gordon Maxwell & Dave Stein* Bus

Both of these venues are excellent localities for fungi, as well as being fine nature walks, and have been visited regularly by our society over the years. Alyth Den is especially attractive with its fine stands of beech and sandstone gorge and the burn running through. Caddam Wood, near Kirriemuir has more varied woodland and includes more conifer areas than Alyth Den, and this is all to the good as it provides a more varied habitat and thus a more varied selection of fungi. Given a good fungi year like 2006, a plethora of fungi is virtually guaranteed. Enjoy the hunt.