

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

ANNUAL BULLETIN No 36

2011

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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, Christine Reid, Margaret Palin and Arfile. Two colour photographs have been included this year.

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 Jim Cook, Mary Reid and Colin Reid for proof reading and helpful comments (Mary via e-mail again this year).

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

We now have a website at www.dundeenats.org.uk

Anne Reid

SOCIETY REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

My first year in office seems to have passed very quickly and with no major worries or hitches, thanks to the excellent support from all office-bearers and Council Members.

The lecture programme has been well attended in general, with the particular highlight of Niall Benvie's talk on photography, arranged by Dorothy Fyffe jointly with the other local wildlife organisations. Our own lectures ranged from astronomy to the pollination mechanisms of orchids via D'Arcy Thompson and Japanese birds and they always teach us new things about our world and its study.

Summer outings began with an early April walk at Montrose Basin, followed by lunch, on the best day of the spring so far - most welcome after such a long, cold, snowy winter. On the whole we were lucky with the weather with rain before and after outings, though the midsummer evening walk at Morton Lochs was disappointingly wet. A very successful weekend to the Isle of Bute was weather-affected, but we just changed the programme slightly to suit the conditions - walking along a beach in horizontal rain was deemed to be too much even for the Nats! The return from the weekend also provided excitement with a full-blown gale, ferry cancellations, closure of the Benmore Garden (on safety grounds) and a homeward journey where our admirable bus driver spent much time avoiding chunks of tree on the road.

A new departure this year has been the organisation of a photographic competition in memory of Kim Eberst, a member of the Council, who tragically died in a diving accident in 2010. Entries were invited on the subject 'Scottish Wildlife' taken in 2011. The results will be announced at the 2012 Members' Night. Davie Stein very kindly made a beautiful wooden quaich as the trophy for the competition.

Other activities have included participating in the Bioblitz at Shiell Street LNR, providing a display at the Seashore Festival in June based on local sea shells, and a general display at the SOC national conference at Carnoustie in October. Thanks to those who helped to set up and look after the displays.

In addition to our website www.dundeenats.org.uk we now also have a Facebook page where members can post photographs and keep in touch between meetings. Thanks to Lorna who set this up and can be consulted about its use - your President does not 'do' Facebook!

You will be aware that we received a very generous legacy from Frances Towns in 2010 and that we asked for suggestions from members for appropriate projects to fund with the money. We received a number of suggestions which are being looked into in detail and will be reported to members as soon as finalised.

My thanks to all Council Members for their help and support this past year and especially to Lorna Ward and Dorothy Fyffe, Secretary and Treasurer respectively and to Davie Stein for keeping the summer outings on track.

If it appears that I am writing an increasingly large proportion of Bulletin articles, I apologise. It does sometimes feel as if I write the whole thing, and, as President and Bulletin Editor I tend to be the back-up if someone is unable to write up their allocation. I shall try to delegate more but also appeal to you all to submit articles or information of interest - volunteers to write up events and outings would be most welcome. So far combining the two posts seems to be working out well enough - I have, after all, been editor for a long time now and know what is involved.

Anne Reid

Stop press: The 2011 photographic competition was won by Jon Cook with his shot of 'Woodcock in Glen Esk', reproduced on page 22. A full report will appear in the 2012 Bulletin.

CARSEGOWNIEMUIR QUARRY REPORT

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the first planting of trees by Nats' Society members and it is good to report that small patches of woodland are beginning to become evident, just as planned by Margaret Duncan and the others all those years ago. Also, of great significance for the quarry, it is important to report the effects of the exceptional weather this past year.

The period of freezing weather and heavy snow at the turn of the year placed all the trees in conditions of considerable stress, not only from the winds and low temperatures themselves but also the attacks of desperate **rabbits**. However, there was much less bark damage compared to last year because we had re-protected many of the more vulnerable specimens. The early onset of the cold also upset plans for planting more trees.

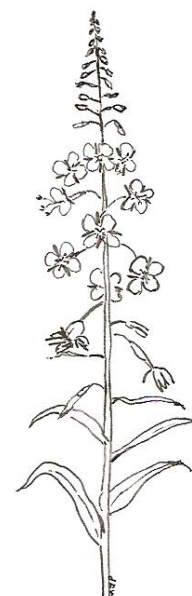
In the spring half a dozen young trees were scattered in various locations, to supplement the few planted in the autumn. The relatively large transplanted **ash** seemed to have come through unscathed and started to put on a good growth of new leaves. Unfortunately, the very dry period in April hit these newly-planted specimens hard and several drooped markedly while the single small **Scots pine** turned brown. It looked plain dead, a no-hoper. The fierce gale of late May smashed down several elderly **rowans** and **elders** at the east end of the quarry. Their falling, fortunately, did little damage, only breaking a few branches on one of our sturdiest planted **oaks** in one case and resting up against another or, in the third case, simply missing anything of value altogether. I hardly need to remind you of the wet summer, with a few dry days interspersed between spells of rain. In fact, this year it took several interrupted days to clear the paths of **rosebay willowherb**.

At least the damp weather revived the newly-planted trees and even the little **Scots pine** rose from the dead and put out a batch of shiny new green needles. The sloping path past the large ash near pond 4 was finished at last, although it remained very wet and muddy. We hope that it will develop a new and protective skin of grass next year. The few dry days were taken advantage of to pull **ragwort** to prevent seeding and the quarry settled down for the autumn, along with a good crop of interesting fungi. A few excellent **wood blewits** enlivened the frying pan of an evening or two! The autumn gales flattened the ancient **geans** a little more and opened up wider gaps in the tree cover. We should have some opportunities to intersperse a few young trees among them in a year or three.

The really great news of the last year was hearing about the large and very generous legacy to the Nats from the late Frances Towns. We look forward to acting on Dorothy Fyffe's proposal of using some of it to build a hut or hide at a suitable location in the quarry, once the Council has approved the idea. A delegation of naturalists including our president, Anne Reid, and Dorothy, the treasurer, plus birders Bob McCurley and Jon Cook, visited the quarry in late November and, accompanied by Ronnie Young, spent some time looking carefully around. They examined several sites and discussed the positioning of the proposed hide. Eventually all agreed on a location in amongst a bed of willowherb some 40 metres above pond 3, at an angle to the path, but with clear views down along the low damp ground by pond 2 and, in the other direction, onto the flat plateau of grass. We'll cut a few low branches to improve the view and hang several bird feeders on suitable branches nearby.

Next year should be of even greater interest. Why not come to have a look around and possibly take in the view from the hide?

Jim Cook



TECHNICAL CONVENOR'S REPORT

This year was an attempt to see the Nats involved in a number of recording and public events. The first of the year was a Bioblitz at Broughty Ferry Local Nature reserve on 28th May. A number of Nats including Stevie and Jim Smith and Anne Reid took part in the evening moths and bats recording where nine species of moth were found as well as **pipistrelle bats**. The next day was fine until lunchtime when an anticipated strong wind blew up. Additional Nats, including Bruce Lynch, who did some early morning bird netting and ringing, and Gordon Corbet, contributed towards the collecting and hunting. In the early evening a small group looked at the seashore. With such a great effort, over 300 species of plants, birds and other animal species were recorded.

We attended the Scotia Seeds open days on 17th and 18th June where, once again, we ran a moth trap and promoted the society. Only 11 species of moth were recorded this year. On 4th and 5th August we attended a wildlife weekend event at Abernety for the Community Council where David led a bat walk on Abernety Glebe and ran a moth trap overnight - 132 individuals of 27 species were caught.

The annual walk at Barry Buddon was well attended and once again we ran a moth trap at Cowbyres with 30 moth species (241 individuals) being recorded. The Barry Buddon walk was slightly down on butterflies this year; however there is confirmation of a colony of **purple hairstreak**.

In September the technical convenor led a bat walk in Baxter Park; over 70 local residents attended. The evening was the last of the warm weather with many **pipistrelles** detected.

David Lampard

SPRING TUESDAY EVENING STUDY OUTINGS

Kingoodie Foreshore - 24th May. It was blowing half a gale down the Tay estuary when we arrived at the waterside in Kingoodie and it remained windy and cold. However, when well wrapped up, the conditions were tolerable and there was plenty to see: birds including **shelduck** and a few **redshanks**, the usual **gulls** and **crows** and one or two **mallards**. We were pleased that David Lampard of the museum joined us and the party walked up-river, peering at **snails** and tiny plants in the walls and at the few brave insects. We checked the roadside for **greater mullein** and **weld**, *Reseda luteola*, as this area had formerly been a stronghold of **weld** but, with changes to the roadsides, there were no traces to be seen. We stopped to study the differences between **common dog-rose** and **downy rose** when neither is in flower and then crossed over to look at the plants along the strandline and in among the reeds. Turning back, the party explored the small **salt marsh** areas, finding such species as **sea club-rush**, **sea plantain**, **sea milkwort**, **sea arrowgrass** and **sea sandwort**. Eventually we decided to take refuge from the increasingly cold wind by retreating for a short exploratory tour through Kingoodie quarries.



Eastern Cemetery - 31st May. The group was pleased to welcome our honorary president, Gordon Corbet, who told us that one reason why he'd come was that he used to know the cemetery well. He used to play there as a schoolboy. In contrast to the previous week, it was a mild sunny evening and we were able to spend a leisurely time exploring the cemetery. We kept an eye open for **hoary plantain**, *Plantago media*, which we'd seen in the western cemetery but there was no sign of it. There were numbers of the expected small mowed grassland species, nothing of particular note but among them were **lesser hop-trefoil**, **bird's-foot trefoil**, **smooth hawk's-beard** and **mouse-eared hawkweed**. The party continued up to the upper part of the cemetery looking for the large **walnut** trees and found that one had come down since the last visit. The green fruit lying around in the grass attracted some attention but we soon moved on. Surprisingly few **butterflies** flitted past, perhaps because temperatures were starting to

fall or, more likely, due to the lack of nectar-rich flowers. Bird life was a little sparse as well, **blackbirds**, **robins** and a few **tits**, although someone reported a pair of **bullfinches** and others reported a **kestrel** overhead for a few moments.

Den O'Mains - 7th June. Only a small group came out on a rather wild evening, although the conditions were starting to improve and we had a pleasant walk exploring the area. The party took advantage of the effects of the recent gale to explore the life in a large tree from top to bottom without having to climb it. Several large **sycamores** were down on the northern edge of Caird Park and we spent a short time looking at the abundant **mosses** and **lichens** and their attendant tiny creatures festooning the upper branches. In areas out of reach of the mower, the lower vegetation was notably lush, not surprising with the regular watering in recent weeks. A variety of **buttercups**, **thistles**, **speedwells**, **clovers**, various **vetches** and the usual small weedy species all abounded. Birds were rather sparse, perhaps due to the effects of the recent gale, but we recorded **blackbirds**, **robins**, **blue**, **great** and **coal tits**, **chaffinches** and **willow warblers**.

Tayport Foreshore - 14th June. This walk, on a lovely sunny evening, set out to fill in the gap between previous walks, along the sea front of Tayport itself. We admired the **swans** with a family of very small **cygnets** in the harbour before setting off to the east. **Swallows** and **house martins** were overhead and **pied wagtails** were noted in several places. On the exposed sand flats near the park several ventured out to look at the **eelgrass**, a marine flowering plant which is very important as food for wildfowl in winter. The evening was rounded off with a sighting of an **osprey** out over the river.

Jim Cook

OBITUARIES

PATRICIA McLEOD

Pat McLeod, who died on 16th January 2011 aged 82, was born in Hong Kong but grew up in Edinburgh and Dundee.

Although she had hoped to work with animals, and originally wanted to become a zoo keeper, this ambition remained unrealised. After completing teacher training in Dundee and at Dunfermline College of Physical Education, she taught PE at several schools in Dundee including Balgay Approved School and Logie Secondary, and coached the Dudhope Boys Gymnastics Club.

In 1959 she married a journalist with The Courier, Robert McLeod, and the couple went on to raise many thousands of pounds through sales of plants and crafts for the Gilfillan Memorial Church and Williamson Memorial Unitarian Christian Church. They supported other charities including the RSPB, WWF, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam and the PDSA.

Both Pat and Bob (Obituary in Bulletin 34, 2009) were stalwarts of the Nats in addition to all their other activities and will be sadly missed.

Colin McLeod

MARION SEYMOUR

After attending Bell Baxter School and St Andrews University (BSc) and Training College Marion spent most of her teaching career in Breadalbane Academy, Aberfeldy. Her subject was biology in its various forms. While there, in digs, (she returned to Ceres at weekends) she became involved in the community and made many friends, some of whom remained friends for life.

She completed her last few years of teaching in Bell Baxter School. There again she made friends who enjoyed her quiet, kindly personality and her own brand of humour.

For many years she was a loyal member of the Nats. Her extensive knowledge of wild plant life, including that of fungi and orchids, was much appreciated. She was also a keen member of the St Andrews Rock Garden Club.

Marion spent many holidays in Europe on wild flower expeditions and delighted in showing her friends slides of the special finds and their habitats. Seeds of some of these plants sometimes found their way into her garden where there were some rare plants and shrubs.

Sadly, after an accident she had to give up her home. She spent several years in Balnacarron Home in St Andrews, followed by a brief stay in St Andrews Community Hospice where she died, aged 97, on 11th March 2011.

Janie Gray

For the last few years Marion lived in a home in St Andrews. She no longer could take part in DNS activities, but it is nice to remember her as one of our faithful Fife members.

A retired teacher, she lived in Ceres where she was a keen gardener and plantswoman. Marion led us on several walks in Fife where, in addition to the natural history, she knew all the local history, so doubling the interest.

She was a quiet, independent lady and I know that she enjoyed her outings and meetings with the Naturalists.

Marjory Tennant

MARGARET McCURLEY

Though not a regular attender of meetings, Margaret McCurley, who died on 4th April 2011, was best known as wife and supporter of Bob. We always hoped that she would come to the Christmas meeting and bring some of her legendary mince pies, or other baking, for everyone to enjoy. She will be much missed by all and our best wishes go to Bob and family.

Anne Reid

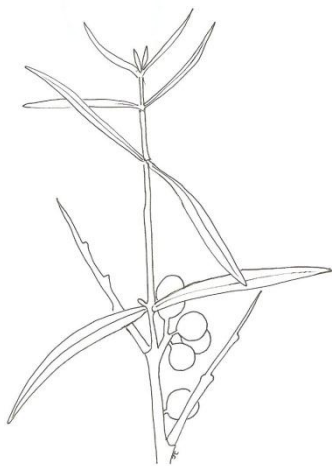
We also record the passing of: Evelyn Kelly who died in January 2011 aged 89; and Dr Chris Green, a former treasurer of the Society, who died on 18th November 2011.

WINTER MEETINGS

CARNOUSTIE BARBECUE

2nd January

Even down at the sea front near the Golf Hotel there was very little wind, so waiting while everyone gathered for our New Year walk was not unpleasant. It became a positive pleasure when Brian and Jenny appeared with mulled wine and cake for us all to enjoy. After all the usual greetings had been exchanged, and Bob had taken a group photo, we set off for a walk on the east end of Barry Buddon, for a change.



As we skirted the edge of the golf course all eyes were drawn out to sea. A few birds were visible on the water and careful scanning revealed **common scoter**, **eider** and **long-tailed duck** in addition to **black-headed gulls** and a single **greater black-backed gull**. The tide was high so we saw only a single **redshank** and a couple of **oystercatchers** flying away along the rock armour. At the sandy edge of the path some of the **sea buckthorn** still had numerous orange berries attached. Jim speculated on how edible these were and was informed by Brian Williamson that SCRI had investigated growing them commercially but abandoned the study as the berries clung too tightly to the branches and were thus not suitable for mechanical harvesting. He added that they made good eating and that buckthorn ice cream was very tasty!

Once on to the army camp we had hoped for more birds but they were rather scarce with **mistle thrush**, **magpie** and **kestrel** being the most notable. Perhaps there was too much disturbance from the large number of dog-walkers (and Nats!) in the area. Anne then beat an early retreat to get the barbecue lit and ready for everyone.

Dorothy's garden was more sheltered than the shore which made for a very pleasant setting for our festivities. Everyone made full use of the seats and tables spread around the lawn and large quantities of food were cooked and consumed. More cake and biscuits appeared (and disappeared) and the day was declared a success by all present. As we cleared up, the garden birds started to reappear with the **robin** and **greenfinches** most prominent. Gordon found a dead **brambling** which Dorothy thought might have flown into a window - very sad, but good to get a close look at a relatively shy bird. Our thanks to Dorothy for, once again, letting us use her garden.

Anne Reid

CHARLES LYELL - PIONEERING GEOLOGIST

Professor Rob Duck - 11th January

Rob Duck delivered an interesting lecture on Charles Lyell; a local resident who was born about 15 miles north of Dundee at Kinnordy, near Kirriemuir in what was then known as Forfarshire. He was the eldest of ten children. Lyell's father, also named Charles, was a lawyer and botanist of minor repute; it was he who first exposed his son to the study of nature.

Charles was fortunate to live in an area giving access to interesting geological features. His birthplace is located in the north-east of the Central Lowlands in the valley of the Highland Boundary Fault. Round the house, in the valley, is farmland, but within a short distance to the north-west, on the other side of the fault, are the Grampian Mountains in the Highlands. Charles would have seen this striking view from his house as a child. He was also fortunate that his family's second home was in a completely different geological and ecological area. He spent much of his childhood in the New Forest in southern England. Both these places undoubtedly kindled his interest in the natural world.

After graduation Lyell took up law as a profession. In 1823 he was elected joint secretary of the Geological Society. As his eyesight began to deteriorate, he turned to geology as a full-time profession. By 1827, he had abandoned law and embarked on a geological career that would result in fame and the general acceptance of the principle of uniformitarianism, a working out of the idea proposed by James Hutton a few decades earlier.

From 1830 to 1833 his multi-volume *Principles of Geology* was published. The work's subtitle was "An attempt to explain the former changes of the Earth's surface by reference to causes now in operation", and this explains Lyell's impact on science. He drew his explanations from field studies conducted directly before he went to work on the founding geology text. He was, along with the earlier John Playfair, the major advocate of James Hutton's idea of uniformitarianism: that the earth was shaped entirely by slow-moving forces still in operation today, acting over a very long period of time. This was in contrast to catastrophism, a geologic idea of abrupt changes, which had been adopted in England to support belief in Noah's flood. The two terms, uniformitarianism and catastrophism, were both coined by William Whewell but older terms persisted. In various revised editions, twelve in all through to 1872, *Principles of Geology* was the most influential geological work in the middle of the 19th century, and did much to put geology on a modern footing. For his efforts he was knighted in 1848, and then made a baronet in 1864.

Lorna Ward

MEMBERS' NIGHT

25th January

Once again all images had been submitted to Brian Allan in advance and he had produced a continuous powerpoint presentation with fancy titles for each section. There were no fewer than eleven contributors with slides on a wide variety of subjects, so we had to keep the evening moving to get through it all. Brian kept everyone in order and the time flew by. Those who showed photos were:

Stevie Smith 'Scotland and Dorset' A wide range of subjects from a **crane fly** with orange **mites** on its back and mating **emerald damselflies** to a **parent shield bug** protecting its young and a **comma butterfly**. Southern specialities included the largest UK **longhorn beetle**, a **tanner beetle**, and a scary, head-on view of a **hornet**.

Brian Allan 'New plants seen in 2010' If you thought Brian had seen every European plant then think again - he is still finding things he has not seen before, or old plants in new places. His superb slides included *Aristolochia sempervirens* on a bird reserve and the **orchids** *Serapias cordigera* ssp. *cretica* and *Orchis provincialis*, all in Crete; several **primulas** in Italy and the endemic *Crocus nudiflorus* in the Pyrenees.

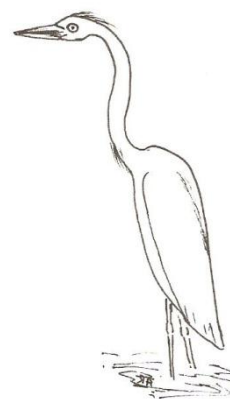
Bob McCurley 'All things white and beautiful' Birds included **ptarmigan** in its winter coat, **ivory gull**, **little egret** and a **spoonbill**. Some plants were naturally white including **chickweed** **wintergreen**, **ramsons** and **bramble** while others were oddities such as the white **harebell**.

Brian Ballinger 'Odds and ends' A **heron** caught in the act of eating a **frog** from the garden pond and another **comma** on the recce for Moncrieffe Hill. The nationally scarce moth, **Rannoch brindled beauty**, in Easter Ross and a **fox moth** which had laid eggs in the moth trap. **Common broomrape** in the station yard at Fern, a new find in Easter Ross, and 200 miles north of any other site.

Margaret McLaren 'Come to Carsegowndiemuir' Some slides to tempt us to the quarry including tree planting, a frosty scene, **frogspawn** in one of the ponds and Jim with the resident **dogs**, Millie and Purdey.

Davie Stein 'Local Wildlife' A close-up of a **kittiwake** with its beak open at Arbroath and **small blue butterfly** on the cliffs nearby. Wet Nats at Dronley and dry Nats at Barry Buddon and the story of the discovery of the **short-winged conehead** at Earlshall Muir, a long way further north than any other record. (For full story see Bulletin 2010, page 37)

Clare Reaney 'Native Plants from the Garden' Describing work to upgrade the Native Plants area at Dundee Botanic Garden, Clare's work also includes propagation of rare or scarce plants for possible re-introduction into the wild. The **sea pea**, *Lathyrus japonicus* ssp. *acutifolius* has already been replanted at Carnoustie. Work is also ongoing with *Mertensia maritima* which is easy to propagate but 'picky' in habitat requirements, and on *Lychnis alpina* from Meikle Kilrannoch where seed is collected as an insurance policy. Plants of **moosy saxifrage** grown *ex situ* bear no resemblance to those found in the wild.



Gordon Maxwell 'Local Views and Wildlife' Including Auchterhouse Hill which is good for a variety of wildlife and Lundie Crags which has **common rockrose**, the foodplant of the **northern brown argus butterfly**. A landslide of the cliff at St Cyrus had changed its look completely at the north end and **bullocks** wading in Morton Lochs did not seem to have caused any problems. The final slide 'beast of the Sidlaws' was actually a tree stump with tangled **brambles** for hair!

Alban Houghton 'Letham and Beyond' **Otter** tracks in the snow at Balgavies Loch where 15 sightings had been noted in the hide log book in 2010 and a **great spotted woodpecker** on the feeder in front of the hide. Yet another **comma butterfly** on **devil's bit scabious** with **red admirals** and **peacocks** nearby, and a large **spider**, *Araneus quadratus*, on the Barry Buddon outing.

Jim Cook 'Come on the Bute Weekend' A set of photos to whet our appetites for the forthcoming Nats' Bute Weekend starting with the Calmac ferry to the island and various views. St Blane's Chapel and some very rough ground (which we shall not be covering) were then shown before the rather startling, but magnificently restored, Edwardian urinal in Rothesay which has now become a tourist attraction!

Anne Reid 'A Miscellany' Including **greater butterfly orchids** from Newtonmore and **northern marsh orchids** near Gourdon, both taken to show them in full glory after and before, respectively, the relevant Nats outing. The 2011 barbecue at Carnoustie in Dorothy's garden on a fine winter day. **Vole** tunnels made under snow but badly damaging the grass surface and serious **rabbit** damage to the bark of large and small trees in the severe winter weather.

After perhaps the most diverse set of photographs yet, Brian was warmly thanked for all his efforts both in preparation and in compering the evening.

Anne Reid



BIRDS OF ETHIOPIA

Anne Tee - 8th February

Anne Tee gave us a lecture about her 12 day bird-watching trip in the Highlands of Ethiopia in 2009. She travelled with an organised bird watching holiday company and travelled to Debre Valley, Wondo Guenet and the Bale Mountains amongst other places, but her main comment was that the pace of the tour was too fast for effective birdwatching. For her presentation, Anne had drawn her own route map to show us where she had been. She stated that she had 377 slides and that she would take six seconds per slide.

As well as showing us the many birds, Anne also showed us some examples of Ethiopian life such as haymaking and cattle tending. Other wildlife seen on the trip included **antelope**, **serval cat**, **baboons**, **wolves** and **hippopotami**.

The birds ranged from the large **lammergeier** to the small brown **Ethiopian cisticola** and included **ibis**, **egrets** and **kingfishers** of various kinds. There are over 800 bird species found in Ethiopia and over 30 endemics and Anne showed us many including **wattled ibis** and **thick-billed raven**. All in all Anne's talk was a thorough introduction to Ethiopia, its wildlife and, especially, its birds.

Anne finished off her talk with a short film clip of a large bird of prey being mobbed set to an Ethiopian music soundtrack.

David Lampard

SOCIAL EVENING

25th February

A change of venue was chosen for this year's Social when 35 members met for supper at the Station Hotel, Carnoustie. An excellent meal was served by the hotel staff and afterwards Jim Cook gave a short photographic quiz which was won by Anne Reid. Anne's 'Animal, Vegetable or Mineral'

quiz was won by Brian Ballinger. Everyone agreed that it had been a happy and enjoyable get-together and that we may well return next year.

Dorothy Fyffe

THE NIGHT SKY

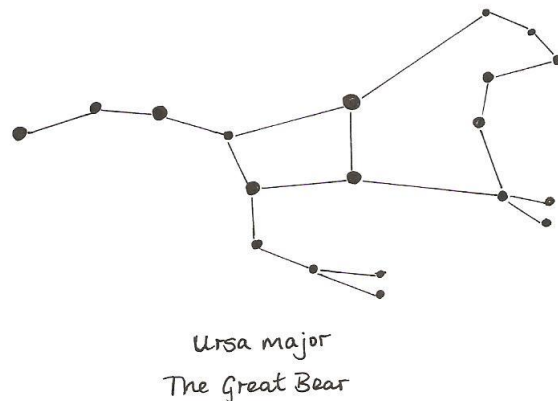
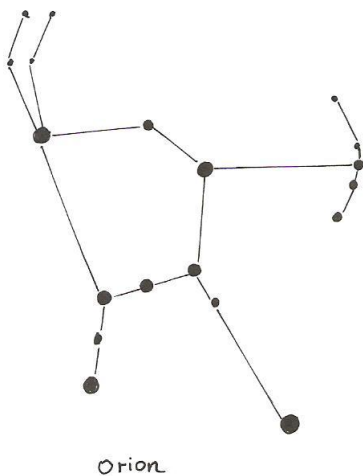
Russell Eberst - 22nd February

An astronomer at the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, Russell Eberst had been suggested as a lecturer for our winter programme by his daughter-in-law, Kim. After Kim's tragic death in August 2010 this lecture was dedicated to her memory.

We were treated to a wide-ranging overview of the subject of astronomy which was detailed enough to inform those who knew something of the subject, yet straightforward to understand for the beginners amongst us. The starting point was our own planet **Earth**, in 'just the right place' to have liquid water and, thus, life as we know it. Our **moon** with its craters and 'seas' was then discussed and the interactions between the orbits of **earth**, **sun** and **moon** explained the occurrence of **solar** and **lunar eclipses**.

The **sun** itself has a very interesting 11 year activity cycle which is associated with **sunspots** and such phenomena as **auroras**. 2006 was a solar minimum and activity had recently been increasing with **solar flares** in the preceding week (February 2011) resulting in **auroras** which we might have seen if there had not been continuous cloud cover for the whole week! It still seems amazing that the sun 93 million miles away (150 million km) can have such noticeable effects on our earth.

Some of the better known constellations were then discussed. The **plough**, known as the **big dipper** in the USA and the **cooking pot** in France, is part of the **great bear**, **Ursa Major**, and is always visible in the northern hemisphere. Its pointers indicate the position of the **north star**, **Polaris**



which appears fixed in the sky due to its high elevation. **Orion**, the hunter, is a winter and spring constellation and one of its stars, **Betelgeuse**, is a **red giant** which is a star near the end of its life. In astronomical terms that could still be a very long time in the future, so we shouldn't worry about it!

Russell then moved on to **meteors** and **meteor showers** which are effectively dust-sized particles burning up on entry into the earth's atmosphere. Occasionally a larger particle gives rise to a more spectacular fireball and particles may actually fall to earth. These **meteorites** are very difficult to find unless precise observations of the path of the particle are noted.

A round-up of facts on some of our nearest planets followed and we were encouraged to use our bird-watching telescopes and binoculars to look at such easily-seen objects as **Saturn's rings** and the four **Gallilean moons** of **Jupiter**.

Russell finished with one of his main interests - the observation and tracking of **satellites**. Many of these are easily visible in the night sky and follow predictable courses which can be found online. There is a particular need to make observations on US military satellites as no information is provided, but their orbits can be calculated from careful, timed observations.

This was an excellent overview of the subject and will, I hope, encourage some of us to look at the night sky in more detail and with greater understanding than before. Get out your binoculars before the nights get too light!

Anne Reid

SUMMER OUTINGS

MONTROSE BASIN

2nd April

This Saturday morning walk was originally on the winter syllabus but timed a little later than our usual March walk. This was intentional, in order to reduce the gap between the winter and summer programmes, also with the hope of spring weather.

The day dawned damp, with actual rain as we drove to Montrose. The SWT kindly opened the Visitor Centre half an hour early so that we could use the facilities, and we gathered in their car park. While waiting for everyone to assemble Gordon Maxwell handed round the lunch menu so that the order could be phoned ahead. A total of 30 Nats turned up which was most welcome on such a damp morning. We then crammed everyone into as few cars as possible and headed for the Lurgies, otherwise known as Old Montrose.

By the time everyone was unloaded and organised the sun was threatening to break through and it felt quite spring-like. The bird list started near the car park with singing **yellowhammer** and



sightings of **mallard** and **shelduck** out on the Basin. A **cormorant** with a white head was seen and provoked a lot of discussion as 'not quite right'. We later found out that some juveniles have paler feathers on the head and thus this one must have been one of last year's birds. As we walked towards the River South Esk **mute swan**, **goosander**, **merganser** and **teal** were seen. The **goldeneye**, **redshank** and **curlew** were probably all still to migrate to their breeding areas, but two **dabchicks** were displaying to each other with more immediate nesting in mind.

Between us we found a number of plants actually in flower, though this was one of the first really warm days we had experienced. The ephemeral **whitlow grass** (*Erophila verna*) was everywhere, but easily missed as it is so small, and **coltsfoot**, **celandine**, **daisy** and **red-dead-nettle** were also seen. The **gorse** was in full flower but some of it had very recently been burned which was rather unsightly and doubtfully necessary.

Upstream, towards the old Bridge of Dun (built by Alexander Steven, 1785-87) most of us saw two **hares** in a fresh, green grass/cereal field beside the path. They were quite easy to spot initially, but much harder once they flattened themselves to the ground. If the grass had been much longer we would not have seen them. Richard Brinklow saw two different **solitary bees** - one probably an *Andrena* sp. and the other one much smaller. Several **buff-tailed bumblebees** were on the wing and a **seven-spot ladybird** was also recorded.

By this time it was a beautiful sunny day and it was with some regret that we headed back towards the cars and lunch. Gordon had organised two courses for a set price at the George Hotel in Montrose which filled the bill nicely. Afterwards about half went on to the recently refurbished Montrose Museum to look at the **agate** collection, and others back to the SWT Visitor Centre. Though no summer migrants had been seen in the morning there were three **sand martins** investigating the holes of the artificial nesting wall after lunch - a fitting end to a spring walk.

Anne Reid

STONEHAVEN AND ABERDEEN

7th May

The first objective of our day was to visit the eastern end of the Highland Boundary Fault where it is visible on the cliffs at Stonehaven. David Lampard handed out several explanatory sheets of paper, with coloured diagrams, and then gave us all a short lecture on the origins of the fault to help us understand what we would see. It certainly clarified the processes involved, but also added more complexity not imagined by most of those present. David also threatened a test on the subject which, thankfully, failed to materialise!

The cliff edge path was 'between seasons' for flowers. The **primroses** and **celandines** were mostly over and the **rockrose**, **thrift** and **bloody cranesbill** only just starting to show colour. Some vowed to come back once things were properly out. The tiny vetch-like flowers of **hairy tare** were unfamiliar to some, and quite hard to spot, unlike the **Spanish bluebell** near the clifftop graveyard. We safely negotiated the cliff edge and managed not to upset any golfers where the path skirted the course. The viewpoint beside the second tee gave an admirable view of the fault itself and the change in the rocks was clearly seen by all.

Somewhat unexpectedly there was a **crow** nesting in an as-yet bare tree near the shore and **yellowhammers** were singing in the hedgerows above the cliff. Seabirds were not much in evidence, apart from the resident **eidors**, but there was a very vocal **whitethroat** in a sheltered gully and we also saw **linnets** and a **rock pipit** on the shore.

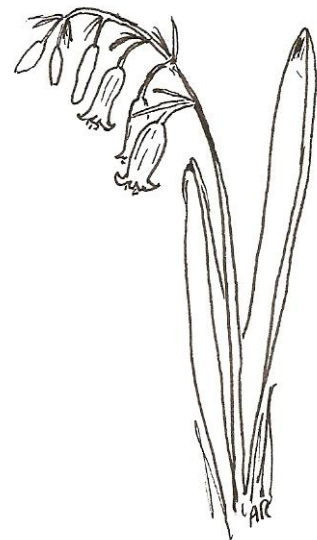
A pause for lunch at the sea front in Stonehaven was followed by the short journey into Aberdeen. The main object of the day was to visit the Cruickshank Botanic Garden in Old Aberdeen, where most of the party spent a happy couple of hours both admiring the garden itself and the incidental natural history. There was a **maggie** making its presence felt and a **blackcap** sang lustily from the top of a tree. Patsy Bain found two **newts** in one of the ponds and some **caddis larvae** were also seen. The trees in the arboretum had grown considerably since our previous visit!

A small party opted to take a longer walk through Seaton Park, along the banks of the River Don, and down towards its estuary. All the small birds were singing enthusiastically but were still visible in places as not all the tree leaves were fully expanded yet. Several **orange tip butterflies** flitted past in the warm sunshine and a **small tortoiseshell** put in an appearance.

The steeper wooded slopes had a fine show of **bluebells**, **stitchwort**, **wood anemone** and **wood sorrel** with **dog's mercury** and **woodrush** indicating old woodland. We commented on the healthy appearance of most of the **elm** trees in the area - perhaps the climate is too extreme for the beetle which transmits **Dutch elm disease**. Sadly, there was not enough time to explore the salt marsh and sand dune vegetation at the mouth of the river - another time perhaps?

We did have enough time for a quick cup of tea before heading for home. Five minutes into our journey it started to rain, and by the time we reached Dundee it was torrential so a short detour to the University was made to drop off the few people who wanted to hear Rob Duck's lecture that evening.

Anne Reid



AUCHMITHIE

17th May

This outing was diverted from the Arbroath Cliffs at short notice as the path there had been closed following a rock fall. After some debate we decided to visit Auchmithie and split up into a shore group and a cliff top party.

The very windy walk along the new cliff top path afforded splendid views of the cliffs and out to sea. The spring flowers were at their best, with fine displays of **red campion** (*Silene dioica*), **sea campion** (*Silene uniflora*) and **greater stitchwort** (*Stellaria holostea*) among many others. There was some suggestion that wild flower seed had been used on this path, adjacent to the new fence,

and there were several plants of **viper's bugloss** (*Echium vulgare*) which is uncommon in Angus, although the indigenous flora seemed to be predominant. It was nice to see **meadow saxifrage** (*Saxifraga granulata*) in fine flower.

Anne pointed out the just visible remains of the **whale** that beached here a couple of years ago. The sea was full of **guillemots**, **shags** perched on the rocks and **fulmars** and **herring gulls** swirled overhead.

Surprisingly, a few insects appeared in spite of the windy conditions and Stevie photographed a **cinnabar moth** and a **garden tiger** caterpillar while a couple of roosting **green-veined white butterflies** were spotted. **St Mark's flies** were much in evidence any time the wind dropped. Anne noted a single **carder bee** (*Bombus pascuorum*) queen and saw a different one over the cliff edge too far away for safe identification.

An enjoyable walk but we were pleased to have been well wrapped up.

Brian Ballinger

ISLE OF BUTE WEEKEND

20th - 23rd May

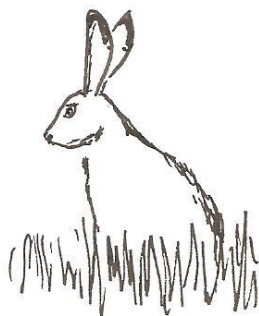
We departed from Discovery Point at 9am on our way to Lochwinnoch. The countryside was looking beautiful and **roe deer** were spotted just before Stirling. The party was welcomed to Lochwinnoch by RSPB staff and received a very good talk about the reserve. Unfortunately there was a very heavy shower of rain just prior to going our walk but off we went anyway as we were sheltered under the canopy of trees. The **hawthorn** was giving off a lovely perfume in the very damp conditions. The birds and bees had more sense than we did, taking shelter from the rain! However, the walk was very enjoyable, for all that, as it was warm.

After our picnic lunch the group continued on its way to Wemyss Bay to catch the ferry to Rothesay. We had time to admire the beautifully restored railway station at the terminal - many cameras were clicking. Soon the ferry came in and, after a pleasant cup of coffee and enjoyable sail, arrived at Rothesay at 3.35pm. Within a few minutes we were at the Glenburn Hotel collecting our keys.

After a freshen up we set off to walk to the Bute Museum which is run by volunteers from the Butheshire Natural History Society. They gave us a wonderful wine reception and conducted tours of the Museum. We were all very impressed by their friendliness and everyone enjoyed the displays, especially the well-labelled fresh wildflowers in their open-fronted cabinet. It really turned out to be an excellent start to the weekend and many commented how nice it was to see an old-fashioned museum with an eclectic mix of local displays as our introduction to the island. On the way back we passed Rothesay Castle where there was a family of **swans** in the moat, with four small, fluffy **cygnets**.

A select few went for a walk after dinner. The woods along the hillside above the hotel were very pleasant and we had occasional glimpses of the view out over Rothesay Bay. A single **brimstone moth** was seen flying at the edge of the path but a number of **bats** were working amongst the trees above the path. David had brought a bat detector and identified them as **common pipistrelles** though we thought that there might have been a different species amongst them briefly.

After a good night and an excellent breakfast we set off in the bus for St Ninian's Point. As we walked down the narrow track towards the shore those at the front saw two **hares** retreating across the fields. Unfortunately the wind was very strong, with drizzly rain, and some members turned back and botanised in the shelter of the wall. The rest of the group went on and studied the remains of the chapel dedicated to St Ninian. Archaeological excavations have revealed that it was built in the 6th Century on top of a pagan burial ground and was believed to have been abandoned in the 9th Century when Norse raiders first arrived.



The vegetation on the chapel promontory was very mixed with areas of **salt marsh** grading into fresh water marsh with **flag iris**, **marsh pennywort** and **spearwort** and also areas of heath with **ling**, **bell heather** and **tormentil**, all forming a mosaic with grassland. The best part, for a lucky few, was seeing a mother **otter** and her two **cubs** playing on the shore. Davie was particularly pleased as this

was his first ever otter sighting. On the walk back to the bus we were amused to see two **donkeys** giving us the once over.

The bus then drove us on to Ettrick Bay where we hoped to walk along the bay after our lunch. Unfortunately the wind and rain became so bad that we had to abandon the walk (even Anne decided it was too bad) so after lunch in the cafe we went on to Ascog Fernery earlier than planned.

The sunken Victorian fern house had been built in about 1870 but over time had fallen into disrepair and was a crumbling ruin when the present owners bought Ascog Hall in 1986. It is now fully restored and is a unique and beautiful feature housing some 80 sub-tropical fern species including **tree ferns** from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Mauritius and Mexico. The restoration was helped by an article about Ascog in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* magazine from 1879 which had a complete planting list of the ferns. The 'star' plant is a large specimen of *Todea barbara*, estimated to be 1000 years old, which had survived under the remains of the old fernery and grew new fronds as soon as the roof was on the restored building. Anne and David managed a single moth record in the fernery by fishing a freshly-dead **white ermine moth** out of the pond. The surrounding garden was also full of delights, with many choice plants and a good show of colour, but our appreciation was somewhat tempered by the persistent heavy rain.

As our programme had been cut short by the atrocious weather we stopped in Rothesay on the way back to the Hotel and 'invaded' the magnificently restored Victorian Toilets en masse, to the slight consternation of the attendant. No real natural history here - the nearest was the story that **goldfish** had reputedly been kept in the glass-fronted cisterns until the Council put a stop to the practice - but definitely worth a visit. Some also braved the weather and looked at the sign near the seafront marking the position of the Highland Boundary Fault at its western end. This was the follow-up to our visit to Stonehaven (see above) when we had visited the eastern end of the fault.

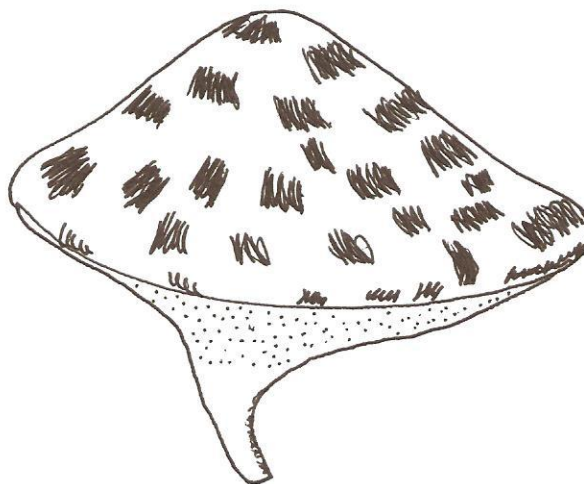
Sunday dawned fair and bright and we set off to visit Mount Stewart House and grounds. The original house was destroyed by fire in 1877 and the replacement is a magnificent Victorian Gothic Mansion, the inspiration of the architect Robert Rowland Anderson and the third Marquess of Bute. The house can only be described as extravagant, with a white marble chapel, a domed zodiac ceiling towering high over the marble hall and a polished marble staircase. There are 300 acres of landscaped gardens and woodlands and we could all have spent a lot more time here than we actually had. Despite this a **spotted flycatcher** and **mistle thrush** were seen in the woodlands, **willow warblers** and **blackcaps** were in full voice and a tree-hole nest was audibly full of young **starlings**. Everyone returned very promptly to the bus, speeded by a very heavy shower which, thankfully, did not last long.

After lunch we went to St Blane's Chapel near the south end of the island. It is situated in a sheltered dip approached up a hill, from where we got splendid views across to Arran with its fluffy-cloud topping. The **sheep** and **lambs** on the way up were not interested in us but were noticeably losing parts of their fleece and there was plenty of wool lying around - good nest lining material! We saw a wonderful show of **dryad's saddle fungus** on a dead tree stump, which Anne Reid identified for us.

The chapel itself was most interesting and we read the informative display boards and learned that only the monks and men were buried in the adjacent graveyard. Women were buried in a separate enclosure on a lower level!

The sun surprised us by shining brightly all afternoon highlighting the greenness of the countryside. On the way back down the hill we stopped to admire the plants in a small ditch, including **watercress**, **water mint**, **brooklime** and **lady's smock** and a couple of **green-veined white butterflies** were seen nearby.

While the main group were at the chapel, a few people took the opportunity to visit the geological curiosity of **columnar, jointed sandstone** nearby. The columns probably developed due to the metamorphic effect of molten magma passing through a fissure in the existing Devonian sandstone and forming a **dyke**. The intense heat and effects of steam and volatile constituents caused localised deformation of the sandstone and, as it cooled quickly, the jointed columns formed.



Jointed columns like this are normally only found as basalt in lava flows such as those at Fingal's Cave on Staffa and the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. The party was also rewarded by finding **heath spotted orchids**.

Our route back to Rothesay followed the line of the Highland Boundary Fault over the centre of the island. Someone also spotted a **roe deer** close to the road.

Monday dawned with a howling gale and rain. We were informed that the Rothesay ferry was cancelled and that, thus, our ferry at the north of the island would be extra busy so we had to get a move on. The ferry operators had seen us coming along the shore road and when we arrived the bus was signalled forward, in front of a stream of cars, as they had kept a place for us. Rhubodach to Colintraive is a very short crossing and we barely stopped before continuing on our journey.

Arriving at Benmore Botanic Gardens we had just paid when the authorities decided to close the gardens due to the dangerously strong winds. Branches were seen to be falling off the trees and plant shelves were blown over in the sales area outside. The entry fees were refunded and we just had to have a bowl of soup or a fancy cake in the cafe. Meanwhile we had been receiving updates on the ferry situation from Anne's husband, Colin, via text message (when there was signal!). He informed us that the Dunoon to Gourock ferry, which we had planned to take, was off due to the gales with no prospect of an early resumption. Jim, our driver, advised that it would be best to return over the Rest and be Thankful to Loch Lomond and then across to Stirling and homewards. At least we had a following wind over the hills - some of the waterfalls were being blown back uphill as we passed.

We stopped for a break at the Loch Lomond centre at Balloch, which was new to many. The few who ventured outside were nearly blown off their feet. Needless to say, Anne went for a walk and recorded a few birds, mostly cowering out of the wind. The rest of the journey home was spent dodging fallen branches and trees on the roadway. We were fortunate to avoid any blocked roads and quite relieved to return home safely.

Full credit must go to Jim who coped admirably with the dreadful driving conditions on our homeward journey. He later reported that, having dropped off his last passenger in Carnoustie he turned up towards the main road at Easthaven to find a tree completely blocking the road. Thankfully the Council workmen were already working on it so his return home was not much further delayed.

The weekend had proved to be a success despite the changes in programme due to the weather and Dorothy and Margaret were warmly thanked for their organisation.

Margaret McLaren

ANSTRUTHER TO ELIE

4th June

Thirty one of us boarded the bus on a rather chilly, breezy but dry day to travel to Anstruther. The plan was to walk the coastal path to St Monans, a distance of 2½ miles, and then either to be taken by bus to Elie or walk the whole way, about a further 3 miles.

The mood of the day was established quite quickly when a number indulged the child within by enjoying playing on the swings. Indeed one of the swingers had to be dissuaded from jumping off the swing at the height of the swing. Some things are perhaps best left as a distant memory!!! One member also paddled the full length of the last beach before Elie - Nats are definitely not afraid to do their own thing!



Extensive lists were compiled of plant life, birds and mammals. I saw **fulmars**, **herring gulls**, **greater black-backed** and **lesser black-backed gulls**, **whitethroats**, **wrens**, **linnets**, a **sedge warbler**, **razorbills**, **guillemots** and **oystercatchers**, to name but a few. The bird of the day for me was the **linnet**, but **gannets** will forever remain in my mind as the Concorde of the bird world. Anne Reid told me a **grey seal** had been spotted and Dorothy Fyffe and I saw a **stoat** running ahead of us for quite a way along the centre of the path.

On reaching St Monans, only six of us decided to take the bus to Elie instead of walking. The bacon butties

served in the community café were great. On reaching Elie the other Marjorie and I walked in along the coastal path to meet and chat with those walking toward us.

An opinion had been asked on the extensive withering apparent along the way. The consensus was that an exceptionally dry April, together with the unseasonal gale of May 23rd and included salt spray were the culprits. Only the new soft growth was affected, and mostly on the windward side.

Marjorie Gillan

Those of us who walked the whole distance were treated to the sight of newly hatched **ducklings** of both **eider** and **shelduck** and a pair of **grey partridges**, all near the Elie end of the walk. Jim and Stevie observed a **kestrel** taking food to its partner on a nest on the Newark Castle ruins and, down near Elie Ness lighthouse, Liz and Adam Olejnik spotted a single **puffin** just offshore. Anne re-found the small plant of *Crithmum maritimum* (**rock samphire**) discovered in 2008. It just seemed to be holding its own, but had been partly buried by moving sand. It will be interesting to see how long this southern species persists this far north.



Also observed on the walk were layers of sedimentary carboniferous rocks, with some folding and faulting adding interest, especially where visible on the shore. There was a good view, across the Firth of Forth, of the Bass Rock and Berwick Law.

Our Hon President, Gordon Corbet, joined us later in the day by walking to meet us from the Elie end. He was searching, in particular, for a tiny, very rare snail which is known from the Fife coast nearby. With Jim's help a few individuals of the rare *Monacha cantiana* were found. The geology of the walk deserves more attention than we gave it - a good excuse to return soon. The Mackie's ice cream at the kiosk at Elie Harbour is also worth sampling again!

Anne Reid

GASK RIDGE AND RIVER EARN

18th June

The rain beat on the windscreen of the coach as we left Dundee, a rather depressing start to the excursion although the forecast indicated that it would improve later. Our first stop was scheduled to be just a quick 'comfort' visit to the large garden centre in the outskirts of Perth on the Crieff road but the rain was still falling steadily. After a quick discussion with co-leader Marjorie Gillan and the other folk at the front, it was decided to stay for half an hour longer to allow enough time for a cup of warming coffee. By the time we'd finished, the rain had eased off, hallelujah, the clouds were breaking and Anne had seen **long-tailed tits** in the car park. At last, the day was beginning to look promising.

It was time to tackle the Gask Ridge, only a few miles west of Perth. Rather than turning right at the cross-roads, as many expected, we turned left and then pulled up at the roadside near a lone tree in the middle of a field. Binoculars came out and everyone crowded over to the left side of the bus. What formed the focus of interest? Two large bundles of twigs could be seen on the branches of that lonesome **pine**. They were **osprey** nests, in the upper one of which a pair had raised young the previous summer, but this time there was no sign of movement. We remained in hope for about 20 minutes but not a feather stirred. One bird was seen flying high overhead but obviously was not coming down to the tree. Continuing on a little further, we were able to view a long and narrow low ridge, not an esker, as it was too straight and unlikely on the top of the Gask Ridge, but probably the site of a dyke formed of intrusive basaltic rock.

Turning the coach round, we made our way along towards a sharp corner where again it parked. By this time, fortunately, the clouds had partly cleared, the sun was peering out and the ground had started to dry. Around about was a rich crop of spring flowers, **lesser celandines**, **bugle**,

greater stitchwort, buttercups, speedwells and a scattering of **primroses**. **Chaffinches, robins, blue** and **great tits, willow warblers** and other small birds lustily proclaimed their ownership of breeding territories. Straight ahead lay a stretch of rough track, with a shallow ditch on either side. It followed the line of, amazingly, a Roman road - but why there? In fact, for a few years after the first Roman incursion into Caledonia in the first century AD, this road marked the furthest northern frontier of the most powerful empire of the time. Several hundred metres along was a narrow path to the left and a small bridge which led to a wire-fenced mowed enclosure, the site of a Roman signal station. We explored this ancient relic, noting the central raised area and the entrance track and doorway, all ringed by a series of protective ditches and banks. A clear information board provided a diagram of the signal station and a description of its activities. Meanwhile, several members noted the botanical interest of the site including **heathers** and **heaths**, small clumps of **sundew** and a few **butterworts** to indicate the acidity of the peaty soil. Pat Gaff, who'd been exploring around, keeping an eye open for interesting specimens, set off with Brian Williamson further along the track but the rest turned back for the bus.

By this time, members were beginning to feel the first pangs of hunger for lunch and the bus continued along the Gask Ridge in the direction of Crieff. As we passed the entrance to the old library at Innerpefferay, the leader lamented the narrow road which prevented us from taking the vehicle down to visit this historic library but briefly described its significance as the country's first lending library opened, in the late 17th century, to ordinary folk. Once in Crieff, we made for the garden centre as a suitable place to park for lunch, with available facilities and the chance of visiting the display on droving and learning of Crieff's crucial importance in the economy of the Highlands as the site of a major annual cattle fair (and its "kind gallows") in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Leaving the bus in the car park, most members played follow my leader and crossed the road to join the path along the south bank of the river Earn from Crieff towards Muthil. At first the bank was high and dotted with **pignut, red campion, lesser celandine** and a speckle of **ferns**. Soon, though, the party was able to move much lower and closer to the river, passing through dense wooded areas and then into more open ground. There was plenty of natural history interest, **herons** at intervals, a few peeps from flitting **sandpipers**, a variety of **willows** and **ferns, alders**, stands of the inevitable **Himalayan balsam, valerian, cuckoo flower** and **bitter-cress, winter-cress**, several **sedges, rushes** and **reeds**, plus **willow warblers** and **reed buntings**. A few members were lucky to glimpse, but only briefly, a zooming **sparrowhawk**. Overhead a couple of mewling **buzzards** wheeled under the sun-dappled clouds.



After a mile or so, one group crossed through a gate and on to a small track which led directly towards the waiting bus. The rest, though, continued exploring the Earn-side wildlife before leaving the course of the river and doubling back along a minor road towards the Drummond Pond nature walk. Standing clear in the sunshine was Torlum Hill, once the highest completely wooded summit in

Scotland. On the way back, we passed a sheer rock face, much beloved by the local climbing fraternity. Possibly it was a fault but much more likely to be a striking example of an exposed dyke. But there ahead was the bus; time enough for a restoring cup of tea and then the trip back to Dundee.

Jim Cook

Note: As promised I offer the names of rusts seen during the Gask Ridge outing. On **nettle** (*Urtica dioica*) there was a splendid example of the rust *Puccinia urticata* (aecial stage) that caused massive swelling of the stem. (Davie Stein has some good photographs.) We also found a rust *Melampsora* sp. on **goat willow**.

Brian Williamson

MORTON LOCHS

21st June

This should have been an idyllic mid-summer evening at one of our local NNRs. However, it rained steadily all day and barely let up as the meeting time approached. Many of those who had intended to come obviously thought the better of it and it was a select band of only eleven Nats who

gathered at the reserve car park. All were clad in full waterproofs and many umbrellas were carried (and used).

We started by walking towards the two main hides under the partial shelter of the trees. When there was a gust of wind this was a mixed blessing as the drips were large and plentiful. An agitated **willow warbler** with a beak-full of food waited for us to pass before delivering the insect morsels to its chicks. Once installed in the hides we combined bird watching with a good blether but did see a **cuckoo** fly past. On the water the **swans** had eight **cygnets** and there were well-grown **mallard** chicks. The antics of the **dabchicks** were fascinating to watch and a **sedge warbler** was eventually identified skulking in the undergrowth in front of the hide.

There had been a persistent high-pitched squeaking nearby when we arrived, but it was not until we emerged from the hides that we finally tracked it down to a **treecreeper** family, well-concealed behind various tree trunks. The parent birds were seen with food but none of the fledglings put in an appearance. On our return we saw a family of **wrens** squeaking through the dripping undergrowth and Gordon reported that he had seen a **hare** on the adjacent grassy track.

A marginal improvement in overhead conditions resulted in us going along the very wet, grassy path to the south hide. Here we saw **northern marsh orchids** and a number of **twayblades** in the longer grass and the **meadow vetchling** and **tufted vetch** were just coming into flower. As we got back to the cars a **roe deer** was seen by some in the distance. Though enjoyable enough in the rain, we must come back on a better evening to appreciate fully Morton's diversity of wildlife.

Anne Reid

KELTNEYBURN SWT RESERVE

2nd July

A dozen or so Nats, joined by a few SWT members, met to explore the SWT reserve at Keltneyburn near to Aberfeldy. We started our plant spotting by finding the rare **small cow-wheat**, *Melampyrum sylvaticum*. Then it was eyes down to look for as many as possible of the eight **orchid** species that occur on the reserve. We just about made a full house but surprisingly we failed to find **northern marsh orchid**, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, one of Scotland's most common species. The seven we did see here were:

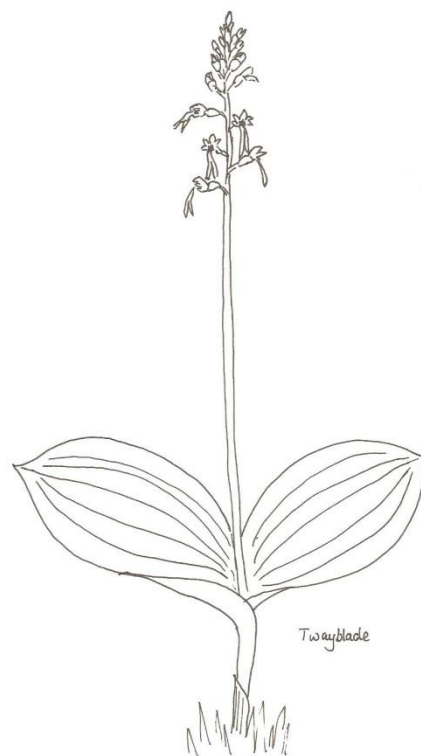
Common twayblade	<i>Neottia ovata</i>
Bird's-nest orchid	<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>
Small white orchid	<i>Pseudorchis albida</i>
Greater butterfly orchid	<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>
Heath fragrant orchid	<i>Gymnadenia borealis</i>
Common spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>
Heath spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza ericetorum</i>

Although nobody saw *D. purpurella* we did find a hybrid between it and *D. fuchsii* just as we were about to leave for our second port of call, the lime kiln just up the road from Keltneyburn. Here we did find *D. purpurella* as well a single tiny spike of **lesser twayblade**, *Neottia cordata*, hiding, as it does, under thick **heather**. Here too, and at our last site, the limestone pavement on the lower slopes of Schiehallion, we located a number of alpine plants including **yellow mountain saxifrage** and **heath speedwell**.

Botanising finished, we then rounded off the day with a cream tea at the hotel in Weem. A great end to a very successful day.

Brian Allan

Note: Orchid scientific names have been updated recently. Ed.



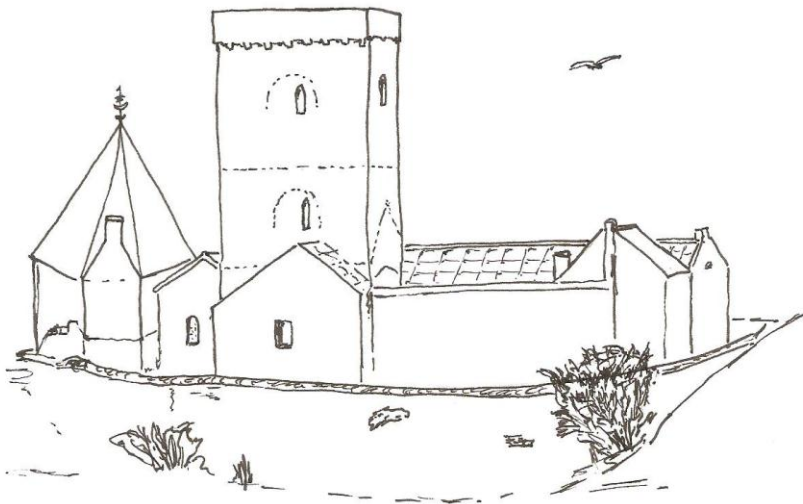
INCHCOLM ISLAND

16th July

Thirty six people were on the coach which left Dundee in torrential rain. The cloud on the Fife shore was nearly down to river level. Not a promising start. However, before reaching Perth, Dorothy Fyffe had spotted a patch of blue sky and just north of T in the Park (Balado) someone identified a **jay**. By the time we reached West Craigie organic farm the sun was shining. Anne Reid headed straight for the woodland walk where she saw a significant number of **tree sparrows**, and singing **willow warblers** and **blackcaps**. Others explored the farm whilst some enjoyed the outstanding view from the terrace with a cup of coffee, first. The nature trail round the farm has good information boards and plaques (a **bat** inscribed as a radar navigator, **harvest mouse** etc.) for children to discover and take rubbings using paper and wax crayon. The abundance of wild flowers and insects is encouraging. The farm assured us that there had been no cheating with packets of wildflower seed. There were fewer sightings of butterflies and moths than would have been expected given the favourable conditions, though the rain had not long since stopped.

Next on to South Queensferry, where Colin McLeod joined us, for the 12.15pm "Maid of the Forth" sailing. The Forth Bridge, magnificent from any angle, is probably seen at its most impressive from below. A small group of **red-breasted mergansers** passed underneath with us. There were **gulls** galore but also **terns**, **puffins**, **guillemots** and **seals** to be seen during the half hour crossing. An on-going commentary explained the oil terminal and pointed out features of interest.

On landing, members of the party scattered according to their wants - shop and Information Centre, good picnic spot for lunch, or off in pursuit of wildlife. As it turned out it was the wildlife which was in pursuit of the Nats! The **lesser black-backed gulls** were determinedly defending their chicks and more than one member received a severe thump from an anxious parent. Anorak hoods were hastily deployed and umbrellas found to be effective protection. The few resolute souls who reached the west end of the island found **fulmars**. Perhaps future visits should be timed about a month later.



St Colm's Priory is amazingly well preserved with access to several levels and a tower to climb providing you are prepared to worm your way up one very narrow section of spiral staircase. It is well worth the effort for the 360° view from the middle of the Firth. Fortunately the expected rain failed to reach the island although we could see heavy showers round about. Shortly before re-embarkation a thunderstorm with forked lightning passed to the east. Incredibly we arrived back, home and dry.

Margaret Bainbridge

CAIRNWELL, GLENSHEE

30th July

When did you last see the Dundee Naturalists' emblem plant, **dwarf cornel**? Some members did see it on the slopes of the Cairnwell on a magnificent and fairly calm sunny day. Unfortunately, no flowers were seen as it blooms earlier in the year; **purple saxifrage** and **mountain azalea** flower even earlier and most members saw good patches of these plants too.

But what a magnificent show of other flowers - **melancholy thistles** marched up the glen road and, as we approached the ski area, swathes of **yellow saxifrage**. Four Nats led by Pat Gaff and Davie Stein stayed in the glen - finding several butterflies, including **dark green fritillaries** and

moths, including a **netted mountain moth**. The other 30 Nats either walked or took the chairlift to the plateau.

We had great views to the Cairngorms as we followed the ridge marking the Perthshire/Aberdeenshire boundary. **Heaths** and **clubmosses** were identified, **ravens** were heard and seen cronking away; **pipits**, **wheatears** and **ring ouzels** were seen too. **Mountain hares** hared off, as they do. The Allans saw an **eagle**. **Red deer** were also spotted.

All those on the plateau walked at least a kilometer north of the Cairnwell before going down. The rich assemblages of plants on **sugar-limestone** patches were admired, most folk obeying the advice to keep to the path. The wee **moonwort**, **Scottish asphodel** and **field gentian** peeked out of the **Dryas** heath - a real treat.

David Lampard's group ventured to Loch Vrotachan, while eight Nats went on to one of only four *Astragalus alpinus* sites in the UK (all in Tayside). The patch showed three very neat flowers.

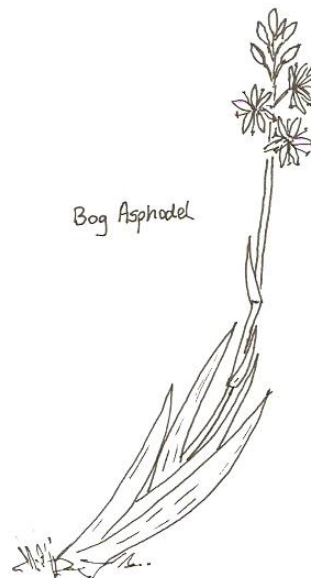
Descending heathery ski slopes there was lots of interest in wet flushes - **saxifrages** and **sedges**, **bog asphodel**, **marsh lousewort** and **frog orchids**. Also real **frogs**, **lizards**, **roe deer** and **red grouse**. David had seen **ptarmigan** on his recce, but only droppings were spotted on the outing itself.

We were blessed with a lovely mountain day with no mishaps. Despite the mixed abilities of our groups. I was very relieved that no Nats featured in the Courier's story the following Monday which reported three Saturday call-outs to the Perthshire Mountain Rescue Service.

Alban Houghton

Note: I checked the name of the rust we found sporulating on **least willow** (*Salix herbacea*) and it is *Melampsora arctica* at the uredinial stage. It is interesting to note that this rust has its two earlier stages on montane *Saxifraga* species.

Brian Williamson



BALKELLO WOODLAND

9th August

On our way to Balkello we were hoping that the pleasant evening of sunshine would continue as there had been rain for the previous three days. The surrounding countryside was verdant and really lovely. A **buzzard** was seen flying around looking for his supper as we arrived at the car park. We were pleased to see a number of cars already there and members were in groups having a chat.

We broke into two groups. I had ten members and Lorna 12, but Jean and Doug arrived a little later and caught up with our group as were naming the trees at the start of the walk. The other group were out of sight. **Gean** trees, with lovely coloured **cherries** were a great temptation and Davie and I enjoyed a few. **Hawthorn** and **alder**, and the **bracken**, were looking at their best. The major point of note was that this now looked like woodland - all the trees had been knee-high at our last visit.

We walked up the hill admiring the view. We then spotted a **small tortoiseshell butterfly** resting on **nettles**, perhaps ready to lay eggs. **Raspberries** were also seen and any red ones soon disappeared! A **roe deer** was seen in the distance. At a point halfway up we went to the left and continued to enjoy the very pleasant evening and the wonderful view across to the Fife hills. We went as far as the wall and decided we would turn back as to climb over was a bit risky for some members. Jim Cook continued and met the other group further up the hill. Joy, Brian, Tracy and son Mark had seen **gentian**, but they were now over and brown. **Palmate newts** were seen in the pond near the old quarry and a **caterpillar** of the **fox moth** was also found.

On the way down **chestnut** and **rowan** trees were looking their best. A very pleasant evening was enjoyed by all.

Margaret McLaren and Lorna Ward

BARRY BUDDON OPEN DAY

14th August

A great turnout of 70 members from the five local conservation and bird watching groups assembled to enjoy their annual visit to Barry Buddon. Members of Dundee Naturalists' Society, SWT, RSPB, SOC and the Angus and Dundee Bird Club were initially welcomed by Bob McCurley. A briefing, given by Capt. Dave McGurk, covered the importance of the need for vigilance regarding the Risk Assessment and health and safety for the group's visit. Jim Cook then addressed the gathering and this was followed by a group photo.

Two parties then set off to explore and enjoy the natural history treasures of Barry Buddon, and, with the weather playing its part, they were not to be disappointed. The birdwatchers recorded another excellent total of 67 species with passage migrants such as **whinchat**, **cuckoo**, and **whitethroat**. Raptors, including **kestrel**, **sparrowhawk**, **buzzard** and a reported **hobby** added to the day's excitement for the birders.

The butterfly enthusiasts were pleased to record 11 species which included **grayling**, **painted lady**, and **peacock**. Unfortunately the **purple hairstreak** did not oblige on this visit. The overnight moth trap at Cowbyres produced an excellent catch of 30 species expertly named and labelled by Anne Reid. Members were able to view the moths at leisure at lunch time and marvelled at names such as **swallow prominent**, **ruby tiger** and **gold spangle**.

The botanists too had another good day with an enthusiastic Jim Cook wading through water (in wellies!) to record an **adders tongue** fern in Happy Valley! They also enjoyed the mass display of **autumn gentians** between the High and Low Lighthouses, and finished their day off with sightings of **yellow bartsia**.

Another crowd-pleaser, just after lunch, was the display of a very large pod of **bottle-nosed dolphins** which entertained the onlookers with a gymnastic display of high aerial jumping techniques - great to see. With a great combination of good weather, good company and a fine display of Barry Buddon natural history treasures, we all went home very well pleased with our day's exertions and felt we all had been adequately rewarded on our annual visit. On behalf of the five groups I would like to thank Capt. Tom Graham (Camp Commandant) and his staff for their help and cooperation in ensuring the outing went off so smoothly. Roll on next year!

Bob McCurley



Examining the catch from the moth trap

Photo by Bob McCurley

BALERNO TO FLOTTERSTONE PENTLAND HILLS

20th August

Thirty four keen members of our Society met to walk through the Pentland Hills Regional Park from the Harlaw House Visitor Centre, near Balerno, to the Flotterstone Visitor Centre just north of Penicuik. This is an area Jenny and I know well since we lived in Penicuik for the first few years of our marriage.

After leaving the coach we all headed for the Visitor Centre where there is a nice wild flower walk and a very attractive nectar garden. This latter was in full bloom and lots of butterflies and other insects were recorded. Near the end of the wild flower walk was a pond and Jim got really excited to see **water soldier**, *Stratiotes aloides*, a plant found mainly in east England but naturalised here in Balerno.

After a snack we headed south up a fairly gentle slope to the highest point of the walk between Bell's Hill and Harbour Hill. The track is also used for off road cyclists and we had to be on the lookout for these silent speedsters. The terrain was mainly heath with much **ling**, *Calluna vulgaris* with **bell heather**, *Erica cinerea* and **cross-leaved heath**, *Erica tetralix* in patches. One other species we delighted in seeing was **common sundew**, *Drosera rotundifolia*.

We took lunch at the top then headed downhill past Glencorse Reservoir to Flotterstone to relax in the sunny Beer Garden of the Flotterstone Inn. Some partaking in a cold beer while others enjoyed a refreshing ice cream. Don't say the Nats is not good for you!

Brian Allan

METHVEN WOODS

17th September

Just over 30 turned up for this Perthshire outing. The previous day had been very poor weather-wise, and the days succeeding proved similar, so we were very lucky. The conditions were just about right for a fungal foray and for the other varied interests of the party.

Methven Wood is, unexpectedly, actually accessed from Almondbank and not Methven. We stopped for a cuppa and a bun at Dobbies at Perth, which was appreciated by all, before we reached Almondbank,.

The start of the walk passed an attractive cottage with a garden and a nearby loch but, soon after, we were into wilder country of mixed woodland. A number of commoner fungi began to show, such as *Amanita rubescens*, *Russula ochroleuca* and others of more dubious nomenclature. However, an interesting item was observed a little further up the path. This fungus (I hesitate to call it a mushroom) is called the **horn of plenty** (*Craterellus cornucopioides*) and is like a small black trumpet. (The French call it '**trumpet of death**'. Ed.) Despite its odd appearance it is actually edible. It is by no means common and I have yet to find it anywhere near Dundee.



It was in this area, on the recce, that Davie Stein and I spotted a **red squirrel**, but it was obviously loth to show itself with 30-odd pairs of (booted) feet on the ground.

We had now reached about halfway on our clockwise tour of the area and were here entered an interesting stand of older woodland including some magnificent examples of **oak** and

Scots pine. This was a tricky area to negotiate and some folk began to sag a little - but the end was in sight. However, there was a problem. There was a field to cross. This had presented no hold-up on the recce, but on the day of our outing the exit gate was closed and, to compound the problem, a herd of boisterous young **cattle** were intent on inspecting the Nats at close quarters. I can only speak for my own group who eventually managed to negotiate the fence, Peter Kinnear being of great help here. One lady, who shall be nameless, was ceremoniously (or was it unceremoniously?) lifted over the fence - I think it made her day!

Gordon Maxwell

PHOTOGRAPHS



'Woodcock in Glen Esk' by Jon Cook

The winning entry in the 2011 Photographic Competition for the Kim Eberst Memorial Trophy



Kim Eberst Memorial Trophy

Made by Davie Stein for the Photographic Competition

AUTUMN MEETINGS

BIRDING IN JAPAN

Martin Robinson - 11th October

This was our first talk of the winter season 2011 and was well attended. Martin shared with us not only his stunning bird photographs, but also the background to how his friendship developed with a Japanese visitor to Scotland, through his work at Killiecrankie, which eventually led to him being invited to Japan as their guest and enjoying a quite unique experience. Martin's visit to Japan was in January, with temperatures falling as low as minus 20 degrees, with snow falling mostly on the west. He described the vastness of Tokyo, the culture, particularly the Japanese obsession with **cherry blossom**, the increasing popularity of birdwatching by the Japanese themselves - even holding birding meetings in their temple grounds, and their fondness for technology and all the latest gear. An overview of the geography of the islands was given, the country being quite mountainous and wooded, with the valleys heavily populated. It remains highly volcanic - due to the Pacific Ring of Fire.

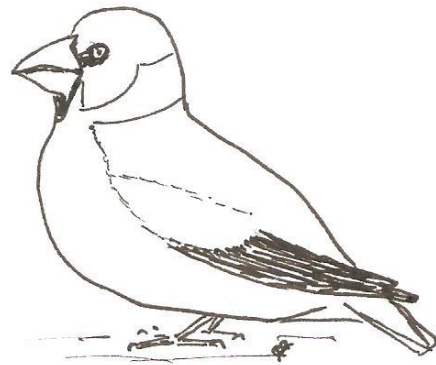
Martin first visited the island of Honshu, mainly in the Tokyo area, followed by a visit to the island of Hokkaido, which he felt was very like our own Perthshire. This type of trip would normally have been impossible due to language barriers, as very little English is spoken.

The Japanese are very innovative and Martin showed us several examples of home-made bird feeders, which also tended to attract mammals. Martin described his photographs of various habitats, including broadleaved woods, the undergrowth of which is made up of dwarf **bamboo** and also the many small harbours with examples of pancake ice and frozen foam.

The stars of the show however, were naturally the birds themselves, with Martin having excellent close up photographs. Some of our own reclusive birds, such as **hawfinches**, are quite common in Japan, but at the other extreme Martin was able to capture a photograph of a rare **grey bunting**. His other highlights included a **Baikal teal**, **red-crowned cranes**, **Steller's sea eagles**, a **pygmy woodpecker**, and a **Japanese grosbeak**, among many others.

Martin's talk generated many questions and much discussion and was thoroughly enjoyed by the company.

Stevie Smith



BEYOND THE FRAME

Wildlife Photography
Niall Benvie - 19th October

This was a joint meeting with other local groups including the SWT, RSPB, SOC and Angus and Dundee Bird Club. The fact that the audience numbered around one hundred reassures us that the extra organisation involved is definitely worth the effort - thank you, Dorothy.

Niall is a professional photographer and naturalist and is well known both locally and internationally for his images. This lecture challenged us all to think of our photography from a new angle. Now that digital cameras are so good it has become almost too easy to capture a view or close-up with minimal technical knowledge. This is probably a 'good thing' from the audience point of view, but has created difficulties for professional photographers which has led Niall to develop new concepts and ideas in his work.

Some of the more thought-provoking images resulted from juxtaposition of images with news headlines from the same date. Niall had also made invented warning signs and 'planted' them in the wild, again to provoke thoughts and reactions from us. Messages relating to 'Nostalgia for Snow' help to bring home the potential impact of global warming.

On the representational side Niall has developed a field studio which allows close-ups of plants and animals with minimal handling and quick release back to the wild. The resulting photographs are very detailed and able to be used in a number of different ways. He also uses montages of a number of images either as a single theme, such as 'Betula' or as details from a deconstructed landscape.

We were left somewhat bemused by the wealth of ideas presented, but most went away with new ideas on the meaning of photography. Some of us will stick to capturing images of what we see, but I am sure that Niall has inspired others to adopt a more experimental approach.

Anne Reid

NON-NATIVE SPECIES - AUDITS, IMPACTS AND CHANGES TO THE LAW

Robin Payne - 25th October

Our speaker is the specialist in non-native species at SNH and started by pointing out how a number of different terms are used for these plants and animals, including non-indigenous and alien, sometimes prefixed by invasive.

Any alien may have impacts on such factors as biodiversity, human health, local economy, landscape or access to the countryside. An audit, by SNH, of aliens in Scotland came up with the astonishing total of 988 terrestrial and fresh water species. Of these 824 are plants, of which only about 10 create problems including the well-known **giant hogweed**, **rhododendron** and **Japanese knotweed**.



Of the 13 non-native mammals in Scotland ten are widespread and six have a significant impact; **sika deer**, **domestic cat**, **mink**, **grey squirrel**, **rabbit** and **brown rat**. Of the eight birds which have self-sustaining populations the **Canada goose** probably has the most impact. Invertebrates are less well-known but include the **American signal crayfish** and the **New Zealand flatworm** and overall probably number 'hundreds' of species.

We were then told about some of the law relating to non-native species. The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act contained lists of proscribed plants and animals. The 2011 Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act has changed the approach to make it an offence to introduce, or cause to grow in the wild, any organism 'not ordinarily resident', which removes the need for lists, which rapidly become out of date. The message from this is - if in doubt DON'T DO IT.

The coordination of any action against invasive species is by SNH with other bodies such as SEPA, Marine Scotland and Forestry Commission Scotland having a major input. There was a lot to take in but we are all now much better informed on the subject.

Anne Reid

DARWIN AND OUR NATIVE ORCHIDS

Roy Sexton - 8th November

When I looked at our Winter Programme my eyes opened up when I saw the magic word **orchid**. Then I saw it was to be a lecture on Charles Darwin's studies of **orchid pollination** which I thought could be a bit intense or dry, to say the least. However, our speaker, Roy Sexton, soon had the full attention of the audience by approaching the subject in a clear and fascinating way.

Dr Sexton began by stating that Darwin was convinced that orchids had evolved in our distant past from **lilies**. The earliest orchids would have resembled our **lady's slipper orchid** as these had a similar method of fertilisation to the lily. Our speaker then progressed through a number of different orchid species which Darwin noted had progressively more sophisticated means of fertilising and setting viable seed.

Moving to the *Epipactis* genus it was explained these had a modified labellum or lip which had a cup capable of holding nectar to attract insect pollinators. The *Neottia* and *Listera*, our **bird's-nest**

orchid and the two **twayblades**, were considered. Each has a long downward pointing lip with a central groove down which a trickle of nectar would run. This I found particularly fascinating as Darwin had linked these three species together. Now, thanks to DNA, all three have been consolidated in the genus *Neottia*. Who needs DNA when a Victorian botanist can group them together merely by studying them in the field!

The same was found with *Coeloglossum viride*, the **frog orchid**, which Darwin linked with the *Dactylorhiza* genus. Only now, by DNA, has this species been moved into that group, which, to the eye, it resembles.

The next stage in Darwin's evolutionary climb through our British orchids was to look at the two **butterfly orchids** which have a long spur with nectar at the bottom and are pollinated by night flying **moths** with an equally long proboscis. Our speaker then related the famous story of the time Darwin was shown a particularly large tropical orchid from Madagascar with a 12 inch nectary spur. He then predicted that an insect with a 12 inch proboscis would have to exist to enable pollination to take place. Unfortunately he was not proved correct until 40 years after his death when a moth new to science was discovered on the island which indeed has a 12 inch proboscis. Appropriately it was named **Darwin's predicta moth**.

Finally, with the audience still enthralled, the *Ophrys* genus was discussed. Here pollination is carried out, not by nectar to attract the insect pollinators, but by the labellum mimicking the insects themselves. The males repeatedly visit the orchid flowers to attempt to copulate with what they see as an extremely alluring female of their species. Pollen sacs then become attached to the eyes of the unfortunate insect and in a matter of seconds bend forward so that when the hapless insect visits another flower it is in an ideal position to complete fertilisation.

Only one thing seemed to have been wrong in Darwin's findings; he persisted in denying that orchid flowers self-pollinate, a fact that has now been proved beyond doubt.

So the end of a truly fascinating insight in the thought of Charles Darwin concluded with a hearty and well deserved round of applause for a scintillating talk delivered with aplomb by Dr Sexton.

Brian Allan

RIVERSIDE COUNTRY PARK

12th November

After a damp, misty week the morning was bright and sunny and not noticeably cold. This resulted in a turn-out of 27 for our Saturday walk to explore the newly re-opened Riverside Park. Jim gave us a brief history of the site from mud flats (in his youth) to Council tip and the first version of the Park, over 10 years ago. Public access was then withdrawn when dioxins were found in the tipped material resulting in a decontamination of the site and thick capping of topsoil before all was landscaped and sown with various wildflower seed mixes and reopened to the public in summer 2011.

Our walk around the Park gave us a flavour of what might be found and we all admired the excellent views up the Tay from the elevated circular viewpoint. The tide was fully out so we could see the full extent of the mud flats of Invergowie Bay with the Gowrie Burn meandering down to the main river channel. There were groups of **gulls** in the distance and some **redshanks** and **curlews** on the mud. **Mallard**, **teal** and **wigeon** were seen, mostly beside the course of the burn, and **crows** and **feral pigeons** used the redundant sewage pipe as a perch.

Though the vegetation is mostly new, there were still a number of plants in flower including **greater knapweed**, **red** and **white clover**, **corn marigold**, **sow thistles**, **gorse** and **nipplewort**. The striking seed heads of **penny cress** (*Thlaspi arvense*) were remarked upon by several people and searching uncovered a few spikes with the inconspicuous flowers still present. The recent mild weather (only two very slight frosts, so far) meant that we even saw a **red admiral butterfly** on the wing and both **seven-spot** and **eleven-spot ladybirds**.

On the pond (really a long-term flood) beside Riverside Drive the pair of **mute swans**, with two well-grown **cygnets**, were resting quietly. The **hawthorn** hedge to the south of the field still retained most of its leaves and though small birds were present they were quite hard to spot. We did record **chaffinch**, **goldfinch**, **blackbird**, **dunnock** and **long-tailed tits** among others and Gordon



Thlaspi arvense

Maxwell saw a **sparrowhawk**. A group of **shaggy ink cap** fungi was seen close to the path.

Most of the party then moved the short distance to the Riverside Inn for lunch, organised by Margaret McLaren, which rounded off a most enjoyable morning.

Anne Reid

THE RED SQUIRREL - A VANISHING ICON?

Ken Neil - 22nd November

Ken Neil of the Scottish Wildlife Trust began by describing the plight of **red squirrels**. There are an estimated 140,000 reds left in Britain, Scotland being one of the few remaining havens having approximately 75% of the population. Areas in the north are still grey-free but the **greys** are, nonetheless, on the move. One anomaly, however, was the discovery of a grey squirrel in the Fort William area and, after much discussion, the consensus was that this one had to have fallen off the back of, what could possibly have been, a Forestry Commission lorry.



The Scottish Wildlife Trust is working with partners in projects across Scotland to develop long-term conservation strategies such as helping to maintain a line of containment and so help prevent the spread of squirrel pox. It will also reduce the competitive pressure on red squirrels. In Tayside, this line runs from Montrose to Comrie and

further west, through the National Park to Argyll. Main predators are birds of prey and pine martins but, humans are a threat too, with road traffic taking its toll.

Included in all the information given on habitat and breeding, we were told of the very varied diet including fungi which, and, as an aside, I know about from a time when, doing a squirrel survey, I was "stotted" on the head by a mushroom, no doubt dropped by an irate squirrel, angry at having the territory invaded. We also learned of another endearing feature in that squirrels are either left or right handed, ascertained by study of the direction of "thread" on an eaten pine cone.

Italy now has to cope with a decline in its red squirrel population and, it is hoped, that the knowledge and experience from work undertaken in Scotland will be of help to them in their endeavours.

At the end of an excellent lecture, Ken responded to a number of questions posed by the audience, obviously with an interest in a duty of care for our native squirrel.

Marjorie Gillan

D'ARCY THOMPSON - NATURALIST AND PRESIDENT

Matthew Jarron - 6th December

The subject of this talk was a remarkable man whose wide-ranging activities spanned two centuries. Born in Edinburgh, his adopted city was undoubtedly Dundee where he was Professor of Biology and Natural History for over 30 years. He eventually left to take up the chair of Natural History at St Andrews University in 1917. He was also President of our own Society from 1890 - 94. One of his legacies remaining in Dundee is his extensive collection of specimens now held in the D'Arcy Thompson Museum in the University, his original museum having been demolished.

Matthew Jarron gave us a fine talk on the life and times of this ground-breaking and forward-looking pioneer in the field of mathematical biology and the growth of organisms. Matthew's details of his expeditions with the Dundee whalers were especially appreciated. Tales of his eccentricities in his latter years (as is often the case with famous men and women) were well received.

Gordon Maxwell

Note: The D'Arcy Thompson Museum is open to the public on Friday afternoons during the summer vacation and on other special occasions during the year. No doubt our Society will arrange another group visit in the near future.

PRAYER FLAGS, POPPIES AND PRIMULAS

Richard Brinklow - 7th December

This was a splendidly illustrated Wednesday Afternoon talk about a recent visit to the Sichuan region of western China. This area and its wonderful wildlife, flora and scenery was first described in the early 1900s and it is now possible to visit once more. The emphasis of Richard's talk was on the diverse, extensive and often endemic flora but we also saw a selection of other wildlife and something of the people and places.

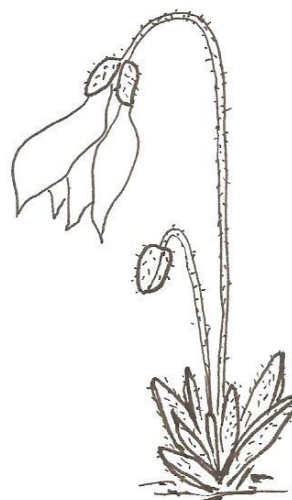
The starting place, Chengdu, was large, polluted and congested but featured the **giant panda** breeding centre, the place of origin of the Edinburgh pair. There were also attractive **red pandas** here.

The little party then set off for the mountains in three 4-wheel drive vehicles along roads of very variable quality, some only recently repaired after the 2008 earthquake.

There are 370 species of **lousewort** (*Pedicularis* sp) in China, 170 of them endemic, and Richard showed us pictures of several very varied examples. A range of *Primula* species were illustrated, including some familiar to us from gardens such as *Primula sikkimensis*. **Orchids** were a feature, including two striking **lady's slipper orchids**, *Cypripedium tibeticum* and *Cypripedium flavum*. There were many **poppies** including the attractive **red poppywort**, *Mecanopsis punicea*. There were varied examples of *Iris*, *Cynoglossum*, *Clematis*, *Thalictrum*, *Androsace*, *Corydalis*, *Paeonia* and many others. Many genera were familiar to Europeans but there were only a few species from home such as **marsh marigold** (*Caltha palustris*). Richard also gave us briefer glimpses of the varied bird, insect and lichen species.

The 2000km round trip to the west took in several high passes of 4000m or more and, as usual in these situations, the weather was variable, sometimes being cool and wet - several photographs showed plants being examined under the shelter of umbrellas. In between the mountains were areas of agriculture with **barley**, **oilseed rape** and other crops. Small tractors were seen frequently but **yaks** were also in evidence. Some people wore traditional dress and the children watched the plant photography with great interest.

The Buddhist and Tibetan influences were strong in the west with monasteries, prayer flags and prayer wheels. The architecture of the small towns was a mixture of old and new. This was a fascinating account of a still relatively unknown land.



Brian Ballinger

NEW ZEALAND

Dorothy Fyffe - 20th December

We were whisked away to the far side of the world with Dorothy's slides of New Zealand. She had covered a lot of ground and showed us some of the birds and scenery seen on her travels. Of particular interest was the island of Tiri Tiri Matangi which had been reclaimed for wildlife after the elimination of **rats**. Boat trips enabled good views of **Australasian gannets**, **blue penguins**, **black petrels**, **fur seals** and several species of **dolphins**, amongst others. At the end of the trip, in Dunedin, she had found a statue of Robert Burns which is a replica of the one in Dundee.

The second part of the evening was devoted to seasonal refreshments and a good chat. All enjoyed the varied baking brought by members washed down with tea and coffee served by Lorna and helpers.

Anne Reid

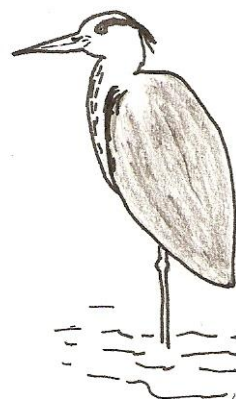
MEMBERS' ARTICLES

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS 2011

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 is noted on the list below.

The year started with the snow carrying on from the previous November - we were all very pleased, from a practical point of view, when it finally melted. Moths and butterflies were about three weeks early in the first few months of the year, despite the prolonged, cold, snowy winter but got back nearer to their usual flight periods later in the year. Numbers of butterflies seem to have been down on last year. Montrose Basin continues to turn up interesting birds, including **spoonbill** and **great white egret**, and is always worth a visit, if only for a walk along the Lurgies where **otters** are sometimes seen.

Brian Allan	BA	Monifieth
Brian Ballinger	BB	Dundee, West End
Joy Cammack	JoyC	Birkhill
Jean Colquhoun	JeanC	Dundee, West End
Jim Cook	JC	Broughty Ferry
Monica Edwards	ME	Invergowrie
Alban Houghton	AH	Letham, Angus
Gordon Maxwell	GM	Lochee
Daphne Macfarlane Smith	DMS	Broughty Ferry
Colin McLeod	CM	Dundee
Anne Reid	AR	Monifieth
Stevie Smith	SS	Arbroath, St Vigeans
Mo Thompson	MT	Broughty Ferry
Brian Williamson	BW	Dundee, Law area



2nd January A **heron** seen standing on the verge of the A92 dual carriageway at Balmossie, near the Dighty. CM.

6th January After fresh snow in our garden on The Law, feeders attracted a female **brambling**, a **wren**, male **blackcap**, **goldfinch**, **chaffinch**, **greenfinch**, **robin**, **dunnock**, female **siskin**, and **blue**, **great** and **coal tits**. BW.

9th January A mature **buzzard** sat on a low branch by Kinghorne Road watching garden birds. His yellow legs with black, sharp claws and yellow beak with black tip were clearly visible. BW.

14th January More or less all the snow, which fell in November, has gone at last. DMS.

20th January Walking above the North Esk at Edzell I spotted two **herring gulls**, mid-river on adjacent stones. As I watched, one passed a small **fish** to the other - much gentler behaviour than often seen in these aggressive birds. AR.

20th January A **pied wagtail** in Castle Street, in Dundee city centre. BW.

22nd January A rising tide at the Eden Estuary hide gave 37 species of birds including the waders **knot**, **dunlin**, **curlew**, **lapwing**, **redshank**, **black-tailed godwit**, **grey plover**; ducks such as **shelduck**, **goldeneye**, **eider**, **red-breasted merganser**; five **whooper swans** and **brent**, **greylag** and **pink-footed geese**. A **peregrine** flew overhead scaring the waders. BW.

23rd January A female **blackcap** was cautiously foraging under the garden bird table in mid-afternoon. Still there the following morning. AR.

29th January Loch of Kinnordy, Kirriemuir was mostly frozen over but a flock of about 20 **bramblings** was feeding in the woodland. An impressive fly-past by 27 **whooper swans** made my day! BW.

29th January Two **bramblings** in our garden - always a delight to see. (One or two continued to come until 14th February.) DMS.

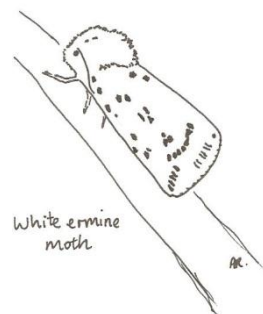
5th February A **kestrel** seen hovering over The Law, then it was challenged and chased by another one. BW.

14th February A pair of **siskin**, one of my favourite birds, was at the nyger seed. DMS.

25th February The **frogs** have arrived in force in the garden pond, so the **heron** did not eat them all last year. BB.

26th February I was sitting in the sun at the front door, at lunch time, when a **small tortoiseshell butterfly** fell (literally) down onto the step beside me. I suspect it had been hibernating behind the wooden cladding, above. It arranged itself more neatly in the sun and after a few minutes flew off to bask on some bare soil nearby. AR.

26th February Found a **white ermine moth** in the house. Its normal flight period is May to July so I suspect it may have been pupa on an **azalea** plant in the house and emerged in the warmth. Placed it outside, on an eggbox, deep in a bush, where it laid some eggs! JoyC.



27th February **Frog spawn** in the garden pond. BB.

28th February On a walk at Crombie Country Park I found a **newt** on the path and moved it to safety. The adjacent pond still had ice on it but more newts were visible, and active, under the ice. SS.

1st March Heard loud squawking in my neighbour's garden, Holly Road, and found it was the same, or similar, large **green parrot** that I saw on 17th March last year in a tree nearby - odd! DMS.

2nd March Two pairs of **bullfinches** came to our wild cherry trees to feed on buds. BW.

2nd March A visit to Loch of Kinnordy gave the surprise appearance of a **bittern** (for a few minutes only) that has stayed for many months, but is unseen by most. About 30 **whooper swans**, **shoveler ducks**, **wigeon**, **mallard** and **teal** were also noted. BW.

5th March Saw a **whooper swan** in Broughty Ferry harbour. Must be ready to migrate north. JC.

16th March A female **sparrowhawk** took a **chaffinch** on our peanut feeder. That day we also saw **brambling**, **bullfinch**, **long-tailed tits** and the usual visitors. BW.

19th March Saw my first butterfly of the year, a **peacock**, at Drumoig. DMS.

19th March A walk from Errol to the reed beds was rewarding. An **oilseed rape** crop provided feed for 64 **whooper swans** and 36 **mute swans**. BW.

21st March I found a good colony of **rusty-back fern** on a stone wall in Barnhill. Not a common plant in this area. BA.

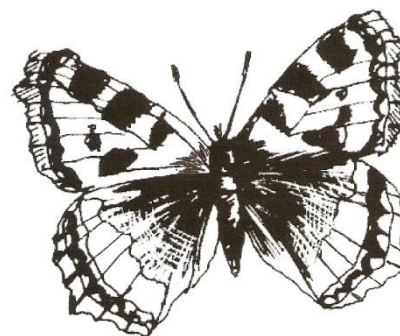
23rd March A queen **buff-tailed bumblebee**, first this year in the garden, flew noisily by. DMS.

24th March On Inverlaw Place I heard a **great spotted woodpecker** drumming and three **buzzards** overflowed Dudhope Park. BW.

27th March At Monikie, saw my first spring migrants - **sand martins**. Also, at Crombie, three **chiffchaffs** were singing. DMS.

31st March A pair of **green woodpeckers** seen at Crombie Country Park. SS.

7th April A walk around Crombie Country park on a warm, sunny afternoon gave records of **small tortoiseshell** and **peacock butterflies** and evidence of spring with a number of singing **chiffchaffs** and nesting **swans**. More unusual was a singing **treecreeper** - I have heard their squeaks and calls before but never the full song - not unlike a **chaffinch** song but with a different ending. AR.



7th April On a rising tide at the Eden Estuary I witnessed about 300 **black-tailed godwits** (the males already showing splendid russet summer plumage) being harassed by two **peregrine falcons**. Two **gannets** were diving in the outer estuary and all the usual ducks were present. BW.

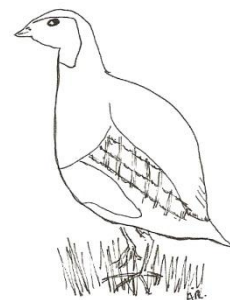
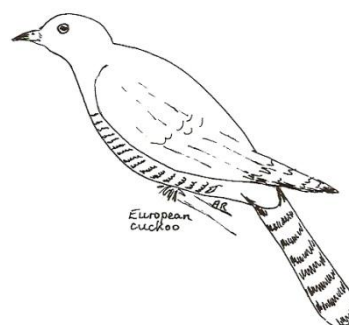
10th April The hottest day of the year so far - 20°C in the garden - produced an unidentified **white butterfly** in the morning and a single male **orange tip** in the afternoon. Much earlier than usual. AR.

11th April One **red-tailed** and one **early bumblebee** were feeding on **azalea** flowers. DMS.

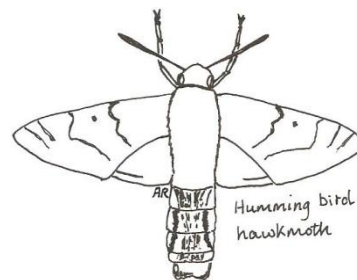
14th April Another warm spring day. On a walk round the lower Dighty I saw several **sand martins** and a single **swallow**, my first of the year, and heard a **chiffchaff** and a **willow warbler**. At last the migrants are starting to arrive. Also saw an **orange tip butterfly**, a **peacock** and several **small tortoiseshells**. The **gean** and **bird cherry** already fully in flower so all looking lovely. AR.

15th April Liz spotted a swimming **water vole** by the Balgavies Loch exit tunnel. Perhaps the **mink-trapping** programme has encouraged the vole's return. AH.

- 16th April** Cuckoo calling at the Cruachan Visitor Centre - certainly my earliest ever. There were a few BTO Birdtrack records creeping north into Scotland the same week. AH.
- 19th April** On a warm still evening in The Law Woods saw a **willow warbler**, **chaffinch**, **great tit**, **blackbird**, **carriion crow**, **herring gull**, **dunnock** and **robin**, but the most surprising was the appearance of a **magpie**. BW.
- 22nd April** An **orange tip butterfly** in the garden. BA.
- 24th April** My first sighting of **swallows** (three) at Tentsmuir Forest. BW.
- 24th April** Near Kinshaldy, saw four **orange tip butterflies** and a **green hairstreak**. The latter are usually only seen for two weeks in May. DMS.
- 25th April** An **orange tip** at Restenneth, near Forfar. AH.
- 25th April** **Chiffchaff** and **willow warblers** singing in The Law Woods. BW.
- 26th April** Two male **orange tips** on **aubretia** flowers in the garden and a **chiffchaff** heard singing nearby. JeanC.
- 29th April** One of the science students at Dundee College doing a survey saw a **red squirrel** (and he was certain that it was RED!) in the central conifer plantation of Caird Park. JC. (I have seen red squirrels there in the past. Ed.)
- 1st May** At Tarfside heard a **cuckoo** calling, saw several **orange tips** and, remarkably, a swimming **slow worm**. This beast was around 50cm long which is said to be its maximum size. AH.
- 4th May** Several **orange tips** at Balgavies. AH.
- 6th May** An early butterfly, a **red admiral**, flitted through the garden in Broughty Ferry. JC.
- 8th May** My first sighting this season of a **swift** on a humid evening after heavy rain. Also another **magpie** in The Law Woods. BW.
- 8th May** **Red admiral** on **azalea** in our garden today - probably more been seen on the coast too. We normally see the August hatchings of spring migrants but not the migrants themselves. AH.
- 13th May** I finally saw my first **swifts** of the year at Arbroath. AR.
- 16th May** Beside the Tay reed beds at Kingoodie I watched a **stoat** on the road at a range of 5 yards. BW.
- 20th May** Waiting for the ferry to Islay from Kennacraig I was delighted to see a **great northern diver** and **black guillemots** at close range. BW.
- 26th May** Confirmed **early bumblebees** (*Bombus pratorum*) are using an airbrick of house to access nest. DMS.
- 2nd June** Saw my first **common blue butterfly** of the year and also found a **cream spot ladybird**, both in St Vigeans Den. SS.
- 4th June** On the Arbroath Cliff Path (SWT Reserve) we saw **rock pipit**, **meadow pipit**, **skylark**, **rock dove**, **guillemot**, **razorbill**, **gannet**, **kittiwake**, **fulmar**, **shag**, **cormorant**, **gulls**, **starling**, a pair of **linnets** and a hunting **kestrel**. BW.
- 6th June** At 10.00 pm a **song thrush** was singing in the Law Woods. This was a very common sound around The Law over a two week period following the severe gales that hit Scotland on 23rd May. These birds may have lost their first broods in the storm. BW.
- 10th June** On the footpath south of St Vigeans I saw a pair of **buzzards**, a large family of newly fledged **long-tailed tits**, a **great spotted woodpecker** and, surprisingly, a male **bordered white moth** flying in daylight. SS.
- 15th June** One of the gardeners reported seeing a **sparrowhawk** near the Kingsway Campus of Dundee College. I have no reason to doubt him: he's correctly reported several sightings of interesting wildlife before. JC.
- 27th June** Two male **bullfinches** in the garden. Bullfinches seen regularly over the last month and suspect that they have nested. No proof, unfortunately. MT.
- 5th July** Two **magpies** at Three Mile Wood, outside Arbroath, flew into trees on opposite side of the road. SS.
- 11th July** Two **grey partridges** running along the road near Brax Farm between Crombie and Arbroath. At least the second time seen in the same place. SS.
- 25th July** A **bat** was circling our garden, to the north of our house, in the evening. DMS.



- 26th July** A visit to lower Glen Esk gave evidence of breeding birds with **siskin** and **spotted flycatchers** both feeding juveniles. Dozens of **mistle thrushes** were feeding in the heather-covered slopes and birch trees. A fast-flying **merlin** made my day! BW.
- 29th July** Bill and I looked for recently-reported **purple hairstreaks** and were delighted to see five flitting about oak trees at Barry Buddon - mostly very high up so it was a neck-breaking task to see them! DMS.
- 1st August** A **maggie** in Dudhope Park - further evidence that they are moving into Dundee. BW.
- 9th August** A visit to Fife Ness was rewarding with dozens of **gannets** and **sandwich terns**, **guillemot** and **razorbills** with juveniles. There were about 30 **common scoter** but also a **great skua (bonxie)**, **arctic terns** and **ringed plover**. BW.
- 12th August** Several **peacock** and **red admiral butterflies** flitted around **buddleia** flowers, after the abundant nectar, in the garden in Broughty Ferry. JC.
- 13th August** On a cold, rather grey afternoon a **hummingbird hawkmoth** was seen on the **buddleia**. Suddenly the sun came out and a **small tortoiseshell**, a **peacock** and a **red admiral** appeared on the *Verbena bonariensis*. ME.
- 14th August** **House martins** were gathering in the sky around our house and three **swifts** were seen, the last I saw this season. BW.
- 31st August** A visit to The Lurgies, Montrose Basin, gave a fine sight of a **spoonbill** feeding in by the River Esk in water-filled channel. The same day at Lunan Bay gave good views of **kittiwakes** with juveniles, **common** and **velvet scoter**, **dunlin**, **sanderling** running at the edge of waves, and 18 **ringed plover**. BW.
- 3rd September** Flying south over our house about 9am were 20 **greylag geese**. DMS.
- 4th September** In the late evening, a singing **robin** in the garden in Broughty Ferry announced that it was back from its 'hols and rest-cure' with its bright new feathers and ready to begin the proclaiming of territories once again. From then on, more and more vocal activity could be heard at night. JC.
- 4th September** A good day at Eden Estuary, Fife, with three **ospreys** in sight, **grey plover**, **lapwing**, **curlew**, **black-tailed godwits** and a **spotted redshank** amongst the **common redshanks**. BW.
- 8th September** Three **red admirals**, one **peacock butterfly**, two **buff-tailed** and one **white-tailed bumblebee** and one **carder bee** were all feeding on my **Bowles mauve**, perennial wallflower. DMS.
- 20th September** I've never seen a **ruby tiger moth** but found six of its hairy **caterpillars** feeding on **ragwort** near Kinshaldy, varying in colour from pale ginger to black. DMS.
- 28th September** The last two **swallows** of the year (for me) were flying over Drumoig about 3pm. (The last seen from home were three on 24th.) DMS.
- 29th September** A female **hen harrier** seen at the Monifieth end of Barry Buddon. BA.
- 29th September** Amazed to find **mallard** with newly hatched, fluffy ducklings at Keptie Pond, Arbroath. SS.
- 7th October** A lovely sunny afternoon, though chilly in the shade. Six **red admirals** on a clump of **sedum** and *Verbena bonariensis* for an hour or so. Such a cheerful sight. ME.
- 10th October** At Kingsbarns, Fife, at high tide enjoyed watching waders crowded on a rocky spit. **Turnstone**, **ringed plover**, **oystercatcher**, **redshank**, **cormorant**, **dunlin**, **knot** and some **black-headed** and **lesser black-backed gulls**. **Gannets** were visible far out at sea and a **guillemot** paddled about inshore. A **rock pipit** hopped about on the shore nearby. BW.
- 23rd October** A juvenile **great crested grebe** appeared at Clatto Reservoir amongst the gulls and ducks. BW.
- 27th October** On a still, sunny morning it was warm enough to sit outside at the front door at coffee time. A queen **buff-tailed bumblebee** visited the **pansy** and **petunia** flowers in pots beside me and a **red admiral butterfly** took advantage of some late flowering (self-seeded) **lobelia** nearby. A **drone fly** alternately basked and visited the flowers. AR.
- 28th October** While standing at the bus stop at 9am I counted 11 **long-tailed tits** as they flitted across Nursery Road, Broughty Ferry, from one tree to another. DMS.
- 1st November** Surprised to see a **red admiral** in the garden - my last butterfly of the year. DMS.
- 11th November** A **fox** seen at around midnight opposite my front door. It was nipping in and out of front gardens and is probably the same one seen twice previously. GM.



12th November A hill walk above Glen Lochay (west of Loch Tay) gave the reward of a male **hen harrier**, and a **raven**. In the lower woods we saw a **jay**. BW.

13th November On the St Vigeans path I saw a small flock of **bullfinches**, a **treecreeper** and a **kingfisher**. SS.

16th November A visit to the Eden Estuary Hide during a low to rising tide gave good views of **heron**, **redshank**, **curlew**, **oystercatcher**, **goosander**, **goldeneye**, **wigeon**, a **great crested grebe** and a fly-past of **pink footed geese**. A **great spotted wood pecker** visited the feeders. BW.



19th November A **small tortoiseshell butterfly** still flying at Glen Esk. Also saw a **ruby tiger caterpillar**. SS.

20th November A check on the butterfly hibernation bunker at Lunan Bay revealed **small tortoiseshells** and **peacocks** but none of the hoped-for **commas**. SS.

24th November A loose flock of over 70 **fieldfares** with a few **redwings** were seen flying and uttering their distinctive calls around Carsegowniemuir quarry, perching for a few minutes on the top-most branches of a tall tree and then restlessly swirling on. JC.

27th November Rather unexpectedly I came across a **great white egret** on the Lurgies at Montrose Basin. I even managed to get photographs which were accepted as proof of this rare visitor when I showed them to staff at the SWT Visitor Centre. AR

3rd December About 15 **waxwings** were feeding on *Sorbus* berries on Tullidelph Road, Dundee. BW.

3rd December The **grey squirrel** is back on the bird feeders - the first visit for three years and not very welcome. BB.

4th December Bill moved the compost bin and found a **frog**. We were astonished as we had never seen one in the garden in all the 28 years we have been here. DMS.

14th December There was a report at an environmental learning meeting in the city that "at least seven pairs of **red squirrels** were breeding in Caird Park this year". That should be a good target to check next year! JC.

15th December More trees blown over by the wind in Brownie Wood, Gauldry, but not as bad as earlier in the year. The worst year for gales since we bought the wood in 1998. BB.

18th December A male and a female **blackcap** visited our garden on a frosty day, along with the **greenfinch**, **chaffinch**, **duncock**, **blue** and **coal tits**. BW.

19th December Saw two **carion crows** tossing **moss** off the garage roof onto the path. We'd wondered who were the culprits! DMS.

20th December A delight to spot 13 **fieldfares** and two **redwings** perched in our **wild cherry** trees for a brief period; the pair of **blackcaps** continue to visit too. BW.

30th December There were 11 **goldfinches** around sunflower hearts (their favourite food) and nyger seed, the highest number this year. DMS.

30th December At Balmerino, near the Abbey, I noticed a **tree sparrow** in the hedge, and about 30 **curlews** were feeding on local fields of the Naughton Estate. BW.



ALCHEMILLAS IN ANGUS

I wrote in the 2009 Bulletin about *Alchemilla glaucescens* (**silky lady's mantle**), a new discovery in Angus. This sharpened our interest to the extent that we paid considerably more attention to all Alchemillas.

I had not seen *Alchemilla glomerulans* (**clustered lady's mantle**) in Angus. This is usually an upland species and is known to grow in Caenlochan. In 2010 I was examining plants along the Isla from Forter heading west and found *A. glomerulans* growing on the riverbank, just one plant. I

informed Barbara Hogarth and, some weeks later, we both set out to look for more along road bankings, since this plant is really associated with montane hay meadows on the Continent. We found none. But we did find a colony of plants which did not fit the description of anything we knew. We took samples and Barbara had the plants confirmed by Margaret Bradshaw, the expert on British *Alchemillas*, as *A. monticola* (**velvet lady's mantle**). This was a rather startling find since it is a plant usually associated with a suite of *Alchemilla* species from North Yorkshire and Durham. We have no idea if it was native here or accidentally introduced. Quite possibly native.

Since that discovery we have found another puzzling *Alchemilla* from near Kirriemuir. This does not fit the description of any of the British flora. Barbara is still working on this one and has now established a link to experts in Scandinavia. Hopefully, there will be more news on this front next year.

Apart from all the above we have hit another problem which seems to be of European proportions. This is *Alchemilla glabra* (**smooth lady's mantle**). The variation among these plants is so wide that we think it is possible that we are looking at several species. These could actually be endemics which would throw up many questions, the answers to which may be a long time coming.

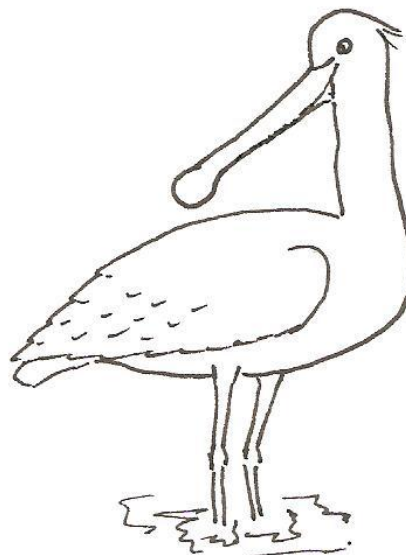
Pat Gaff

BOB'S ANGUS BIRD HIGHLIGHTS 2011

Tayside and Angus birders were spoiled in 2011 with a number of 'firsts', species never before seen and recorded in the county. The principal one was **red kites** breeding successfully in Angus for the first time in 150 years! This milestone historical record was confirmed by national adjudicating bodies RSPB and SNH. The site is, of course, highly confidential and will not be disclosed to ensure no disturbance. The second 'first' was the successful breeding of **marsh harriers** at Loch of Kinnordy this year with two juveniles being produced. These could be viewed from the Gullery Hide with no disturbance to the birds. All fingers crossed that they will return and breed again next year!

A new British record was set with the sighting and counting of 2139 **siskins** seen going south on a visible migration count by Clive McKay. Not to be outdone, the 'Angus Twitchers' were catered for with a 'first ever' record of the very rare **dusky warbler** found at Cliffburn Gully, Arbroath - in fact two individuals of this rarity were present at this site, an amazing occurrence! Another outstanding event occurred when unprecedented numbers of **European** and **Greenland white-fronted geese**, in company with **bean geese**, arrived in great numbers on the east coast with Aberdeen and Fife also enjoying this unexpected treat.

Other highlights recorded in Angus in 2011 were the arrival of Mediterranean birds. **Spoonbills**, **little egret** and **great white egret** all touched down in the Montrose Basin area and lingered for two to four weeks at various times during the year. Is this evidence of global warming taking place? We can only hope for a breeding record in the near future! All in all, 2011 was a great year for Angus and Tayside birdwatchers and we look forward to 2012 with 'great expectations'!



Monthly Bird Sighting Highlights 2011

January	White-tailed sea eagle seen at Loch of Lintrathen
February	The bittern returned to overwinter at Loch of Kinnordy on 5th.
March	The first osprey returned from Africa to Loch of the Lowes on 21st and at Balgavies on 29th
April	A nuthatch , very rare in Angus, was at Finavon on 9th
May	Two common cranes visited Loch of Kinnordy on 19th

June	A great white egret paid Kinnordy a brief visit on 5th.
July	Three spoonbills arrived at Montrose Basin on 1st and stayed until the 30th.
August	Two juvenile marsh harriers were seen at Kinnordy on 14th confirming successful breeding.
September	A black guillemot juvenile was in Lunan Bay on 4th. A very rare visitor to Angus.
October	Two white-tailed sea eagles visited Montrose Basin - will Angus achieve the first breeding record on the East Coast?
November	15 waxwings (scarce this winter) were at Forfar on 5th.
December	11 short-eared owls were recorded at a colonial roost on Condor RM Base, Arbroath.

Bob McCurley

ALIENS AMONGST US

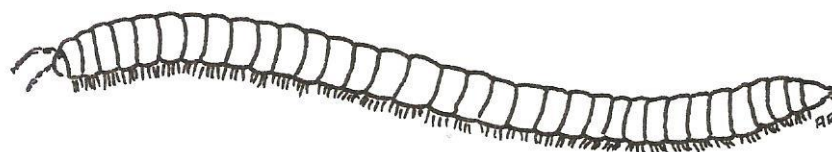
From time to time we get visitors from other parts of the world to Dundee and the surrounding area. Some arrive under their own steam while others hitch a ride to arrive here. In April 2011 a worker from a builders' merchants in Arbroath discovered a large brown **grasshopper** at his workplace. Unfortunately it soon succumbed to the local climate. It was about 5cm long and looked like a **locust**. Checking through an appropriate key established it was not one of the six or so species of Orthoptera currently known to be resident in Scotland. It was far too large

The grasshopper had short antennae with wings that extended beyond the end of the body and a pronounced third pair of legs. Characters visible with a hand lens included vertical eye stripes, a keel along the pronotum (a plate which covers the first segment of the thorax) and the pronotum was further ornamented by three deep creases. By viewing it under a microscope a short peg could be seen between the front legs

It was possible to identify the species from these characteristics as *Anacridium aegyptium*, the **Egyptian grasshopper**, by using an identification guide and the Orthoptera recording scheme website <http://www.orthoptera.org.uk>.

This species occurs naturally around the Mediterranean. There are occasional records of it in the UK as a vagrant. It is often associated with fruit or vegetables or on pot plants, turning up at supermarkets or garden centres. It is believed that this specimen hitched a ride on a load of timber. As far as I can tell there are no other records of this species in Scotland.

David Lampard



KINSHALDY MILLIPEDES

16th May

On a sand dune near Kinshaldy, I saw what I thought at first was a stripy caterpillar on the surface of the sand but, when I bent down to take a photo, I found it was a **millipede**. Having seen one, I realised that there were half a dozen of them all heading in exactly the same direction - to the northwest! They were occasionally being blown over by the wind but that did not deter them from continuing when they'd righted themselves. All rather strange! I later identified them as **striped millipede**, *Ommatoiulus sabulosus* which apparently prefers sandy sites.

Daphne Macfarlane Smith

MARSH HARRIERS OVER KINNORDY

A visit in early July to the Loch of Kinnordy, taking advantage of a dry afternoon for some birdwatching before forecast heavy rain arrived, turned out to be an act of great fortune. A breeding pair of **marsh harriers** was patrolling over the reed beds and willow scrub on the north side of the Loch giving those in Gullery Hide a thrill. The female perched on a tree surveying the marsh for several minutes, showing off her cream-coloured crown and throat; as she cruised over the reeds we could see clearly her black wing tips and whitish leading edge on her upper wings. Later, the male also perched on another dead tree branch in the middle of the marsh showing his impressive talons. On one occasion the pair did a low-level food pass, and we saw the male carry a small **rodent** in his talons to near the nest site.

The Loch was surprisingly lacking in other species during this brief visit. **Swifts**, **swallows** and **house martins** skimmed the reeds (but the **sand martins** that flocked in the reed bed last week had gone), numerous **mallard ducks**, a few **wigeon** and a **coot** were busy feeding amongst the **bog bean** rafts that were also nest sites for three pairs of **lapwing**.

Brian Williamson

RAMBLES WITH STEVIE

Highlights of my Year - 2011

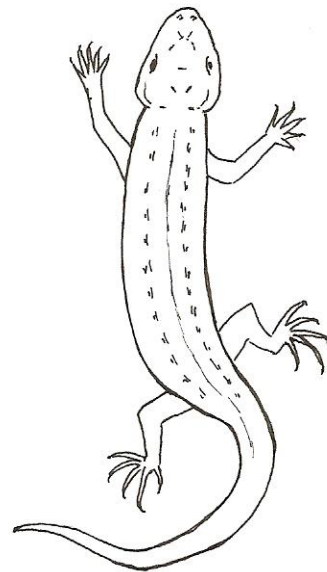
Back in January, harsh icy conditions prevailed. Unfortunately, the female **blackcap** which had remained in the garden since November, left two days before the Big Garden Birdwatch. The four **cormorants** continued to entertain us, having staked a claim on the **weeping willow** on the hill at St Vigeans church. They alighted clumsily and noisily on the tree and proceeded to disagree amongst themselves before settling and preening. They allowed me to approach fairly closely to take some photos, the top of the tree being level with the path round the church. Presumably their usual territory was some freshwater loch which had frozen solid, so they had taken to fishing in the Brothock Burn which was unusual for such shallow water.

February continued to supply winter fungi, such as **scarlet elf cups**, at St Vigeans Nature trail. Another group looked like the tantalisingly rare **ebony cups** and as I type this, I am hoping it will fruit again in the same spot this year so I can get a positive identification. The **heronry** at the back of the cemetery still had eight or so birds congregating daily. Like the **cormorants**, they had taken to fishing in the running water of the burn. In the garden, the **sparrowhawk** persisted in catching the more interesting birds and ignored the **starlings**.

By March, I had nearly enough **starlings** visiting the garden to have my very own murmuration. Very difficult to exclude them from the feeders without spoiling things for the **great spotted woodpeckers**. Two **foxes** visited the garden daily from late afternoon trying to eat seed spill under the tree feeders and fallen **mealworms** from the feeder on our French door. Yes, I did take pity on them and put out some scraps.

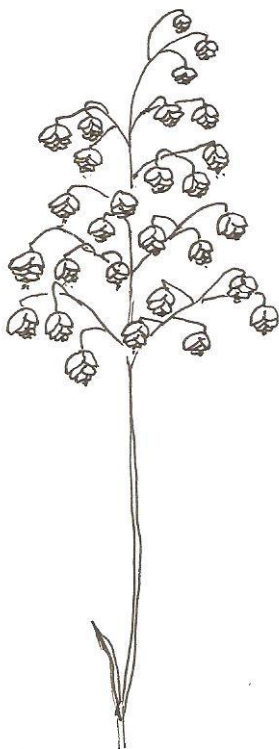
April saw me becoming involved with Friends of Angus Herpetofauna in order to attract and relocate **common lizards** from the site of a new cycle path north of Montrose, prior to the diggers commencing work. This involved laying down refugia matting and checking underneath it on a regular basis. It was also interesting to see how quickly the refugia were colonised by various invertebrates.

In May, the **common cranes** were wonderful to see at Kinnordy - such elegant birds. We arrived in the car park in time to see them fly overhead and catch just one quick photo. Another exciting find for us were several specimens of **red-necked footman**, attractive black moths with red collars, in different locations in Angus and Perthshire. These are not normally found this far north, but a small colony was also discovered by myself in Denlethen Woods, Laurencekirk, much to the delight of Mark Young, moth recorder for Aberdeenshire, who noted it as a new record. Naturally a further highlight this month was the Nats weekend to Bute and what a fabulous weekend it was despite the weather.



Although the moth trap was set up and not enticing any moths, our intrepid trio of Ronnie, David Lampard and myself were able to enjoy and photograph the many **bats** feeding on the **craneflies** which were attracted to the trap instead. In addition, we had rock-pooling available right on the hotel's doorstep and a variety of walks to enjoy in addition to the scheduled outings. The end of May saw a **swallow** fly into my porch. As it was unable to find the way out, it was duly captured, examined and photographed swiftly and released. What a stunning bird close up.

Amazingly, in June, it appeared that St Vigeans Den Millennium Forest had recovered incredibly well from having a large butterfly-friendly area of **grass** and **vetches** set on fire in April of 2010. My first sighting of a **common blue** was on 2nd June - a very pretty and very blue female (normally more brown). **Lady's smock** appeared in abundance and so did the **orange tip butterflies**, who nectared and co-operated for photographs. The moth trap surprised me by including five **cinnabar moths** in its catch. At dusk our garden had regular visits from **ghost swift moth** males, flitting round like wee ghostie fairies, hoping to locate females by scent. An SWT outing to Stormont Loch provided us with **creeping lady's tresses**, **twinflower** and the larval stage of a **great diving beetle** - a massive, lively specimen with huge mandibles, (Jim was in charge of the holding, I was in charge of the camera!) which, strangely, was found on the path, instead of in the water.



July saw the appearance of **orchids** in Ethie Woods, with a **gold spangled moth** sitting on one. A jaunt to Glenesk provided us with **slow worms**, but on this occasion no **adders**. We were delighted to see a large **mistle thrush**, **northern brown argus** and **dark green fritillary butterflies**, the **longhorn beetle** *Rhagium mordax* and a beautiful **jewel wasp** *Chrysis ignita*. The Nats outing to the SWT reserve at Keltneyburn provided us with more spectacular **orchids**, a stunning **micro moth** *Pyrausta purpuralis*, a **golden-ringed dragonfly** and some delightful **doddering dillies** (**quaking grass**). The moth trap continued to excite and was duly carted off to Dorset for 3 weeks wonderful camping at an SSSI.

August was time for the annual Barry Buddon open day and this didn't disappoint, with beautiful weather and splendid sightings. Generally, due to the rather wet summer, **fungi** and **slime moulds** were already appearing in droves in the woods and sand dunes and were a delight to see. A Nats outing to the Pentlands provided me with my first sighting of **round-leaved sundew**. Mill of Benholm held a Moth Night - with catering! As well as the main event, it was nice to get out of the cold periodically and have a warming cuppa.

September saw the temperature already start to fall, though it had never really picked up during the summer. At Crombie Park, the **black darter dragonflies** were also already beginning to feel a chill as they sought out the **dogs** and perched on them for warmth!! The dogs appeared somewhat bemused but co-operated by standing still while I captured the shots. The moth trap turned up a most

glorious **frosted orange** and an equally stunning **merveille du jour**. The Nats fungal foray to Methven Woods provided some cracking and unusual finds. Likewise, Kinshaldy, St Cyrus, Denlethen Woods and Ethie Woods all provided different specimens according to habitat. The end of the month saw me discover a sadly departed pure white **squirrel** lying at the side of the St Vigeans Nature trail path. This was duly reported to Dr Mel Tonkin, Project Manager of Scottish Squirrels, who confirmed it was a white **red**.

October saw us visit the west coast at Applecross, over the highest mountain pass road in the UK - the picturesque Bealach na Ba (pass of the cattle). The resident dog **otter** delighted us by coming up onto the beach in front of our rented cottage and catching **fish** just a few yards offshore. Many lovely local walks are available in this area, including one to Coral Beach, which is actually **calcified seaweed**. **Mergansers** and **great northern divers** were seen daily as were **seals**, **red deer** and a **golden eagle**. On the return journey, we were astounded to see a helicopter fly over the hills, towing a **stag** through the air on a long piece of rope. It's the modern way, we were told, the shooting estate owns the helicopter. (I hope they disembowelled the stag first!)

A reminder in my diary in November prompted me to visit Broughty Ferry LNR to seek out the **collared earthstars** and I was not disappointed. Some were fully opened while other had the promise of things to come. As in previous years, Jim and myself have gone to the Montrose Basin at

this time to see and hear the **pink foot geese** come in for the evening which is a wonderful spectacle. November also gives some of the best sunsets and a calm evening at the Basin is hard to beat.

Primroses have continued flowering throughout December including some seen on our Christmas day walk, when we also had a **ladybird** cross our path. The flock of **curlew** who move to the flooded field behind the cemetery in winter is bigger than ever this year, but **oystercatchers** are fewer. There are sixteen individuals in the flock of **moorhen** who also congregate here at this time of year. Last year they had to move to the running water of the Brothock Burn as their field was frozen solid. Fungi are less obvious this month, but there are still some good specimens to be found if one is prepared to look and often **slime moulds** can be seen under logs - remembering to put everything back where it was for the little creatures. So my new diary is here now for 2012 and how lovely it is to see the entries written in already for the outings in the coming year. Much to look forward to.

Stevie Smith

Note: Many of the outings Stevie mentions are described in more detail elsewhere in the Bulletin. This article records her commitment to all kinds of natural history and shows an enthusiasm we should all try to match. Keep up the good work Stevie! Ed.

MANX SHEARWATERS AND GANNETS AT ARDNAMURCHAN POINT

On a visit to the Ardnamurchan Peninsula in August to look at the 60-million-year-old volcano, with its almost complete 4km wide **ring dykes**, and Ben Hiant we took refuge from a severe gale at the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse. A wild sea was pounding the surrounding cliffs and great breakers were rolling into the bay so when I looked out seawards from inside the museum (created inside the former Head Keeper's House) at the Lighthouse I was delighted to see **gannets** diving beyond the surf. In the same area of water a flock about 200 **manx shearwaters** with their stiff narrow wings were skimming the waves and settling on the water in large groups - perhaps they were gathering for their long migration to Brazil.

Brian Williamson



A WILD CONEHEAD CHASE

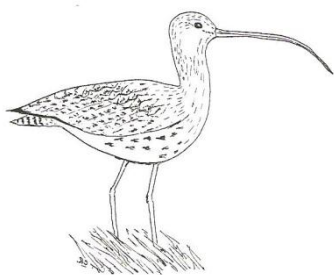
8th September

The four of us met Gordon Corbet at the Kinshaldy car park in Tentsmuir Forest and set off south towards Earls Hall Muir on the great hunt. Would we be successful? All of us hoped that one of the party would be able to call out that they'd found the prize, a live specimen or two of the **short-winged conehead**, a type of tree (or bush) cricket, which Davie Stein and Gordon Maxwell had been sharp-eyed enough to find the previous year. That record had caused a considerable stir since previously the species had been known only from as far north as East Yorkshire. How had it come to be so far north? It would be quite a coup to find it again and confirm the species as a normal resident.

On the way through the forest, we kept our eyes open for dead stems of the **yellow bird's-nest**, *Monotropa hypopitys*, a most unusual yellowish-brown plant that exists as a saprophyte, relying on root fungi for its nutrient supply and dispensing with the need for green leaves. All that's visible above ground is the flower stalk. It's difficult enough to locate at the best of times and this was rather late in the season. In the event, not even a dead brown stalk showed itself. However, we did find plants of **creeping lady's tresses**, *Goodyera repens*, with a bright orange **rust** which Gordon Corbet later identified as *Pucciniastrum goodyeri* which had only six previous British records, three in

Scotland. A few fungi were dotted about and the local midges began to take an interest. It was time to move on.

Once in among the Earlsall dunes, the party split up and began our search. Gordon C proceeded along the dunes, while Anne, Gordon M and Davie concentrated more in the open dune areas and Jim moved inland. We peered in among the long leaves of grasses and sedges for any signs of movement - and there were plenty of those. In fact, the place was nearly, but not quite, 'hoachin' with **grasshoppers**, mostly the **common brown** species, *Chorthippus brunneus*, and a few of the **common green** ones. A scattering of butterflies dashed about in the windy sun, a few **small coppers**, a **dark-green fritillary** or two and several small **tortoiseshells**, along with a number of **common blue** and **red damselflies**. It was a veritable naturalists' paradise, apart from the deafening interruption every few minutes by a Typhoon fighter roaring overhead on final approach before yet another 'circuit and bump'. There goes another fifteen million quid, perhaps comforting to know that we're on the same side but an ear-rattling intrusion for those underneath. At least the insects seemed to be deaf to the racket but there was not a trace of a **conehead**.



The Earlsall Links area was notably wetter than usual. The dune slacks were deeply flooded, much greater than welly boot depth, which made progress difficult. At least the bog plants were doing well, with **mosses**, **cotton-grasses**, some of the **sedges**, **willows**, **alders** and similar species all thriving. **Willow warblers**, several active **snipe** and one or two early **curlews** made the most of the conditions. But still no **coneheads**.

Between the five of us, we must have combed many hectares of ground very thoroughly and eventually met up on a high sunny dune for a bite to eat. After all, when on a major hunting expedition, it is important to keep your strength up! At least the pilots seemed to have given up and gone for lunch as well. Among the topics debated, of course, was the lack of coneheads. Why? Perhaps we were just a shade too late in the season. Or possibly we were looking in the wrong habitat; Davie and Gordon had seen the specimen last year basking on piece of broken fishing float in rather open sandy ground and that's where we'd been searching. However, Gordon C told us that, south of the border, the species normally occurred in heavy vegetation, in bushes and trees. It was, all said and done, a type of *bush-cricket*. Perhaps instead of sweeping through the grasses, we should have brought a beating tray and spent some time searching the taller plants more thoroughly.

After our pieces had disappeared, we split up again and kept on looking. Roaming through the dunes, we came across several large distinctly round pools, perhaps old bomb craters left over from war-time operations. This time we devoted more effort to searching through taller vegetation and, at least, had the chance to sample the rather sharp yellow berries of **sea buckthorn**. Again, there were lots more butterflies and grasshoppers with some interesting green **looper caterpillars** on low **pine** branches but, disappointingly, no signs of coneheads, not a twitch of an extraordinarily long antenna, nor the slightest chirp of a call!

At last we decided to 'call it a day' and a great day out it had been. However, we all felt a slight sense of anti-climax. It had been a bit of a wild goose chase. Never mind, we'll have to try again next year, choose the time more carefully, hope for another good day and bring greater reinforcements as well as more sweep nets and a few beating trays. You know the Nats, we don't give up *that* easily.

Jim Cook

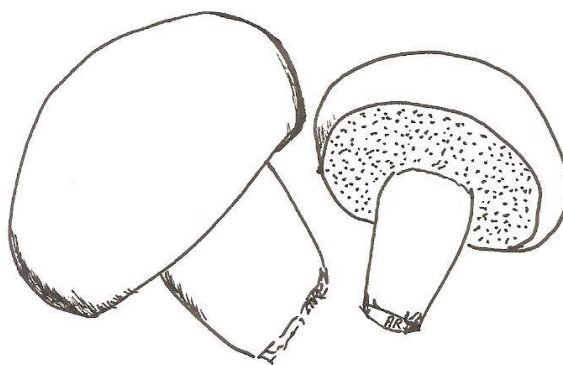
HUNTING FOR FUNGI IN TENTSMUIR

7th October

"I think they're **greylags**" said Gordon, as a large skein of geese swept by high overhead. The birds split into several irregular groups as they passed inland under the dull heavy clouds and some seemed to wheel around to pass overhead again. We were standing on the beach near Tentsmuir Point and keeping an eye for anything of wildlife interest, but particularly fungi. Just offshore, though, was a dark line of giant slugs on a low sand bank, literally hundreds of basking **seals**. At intervals, when the wind eased off for a few minutes, we could hear the crooning songs of some of them. Although the occasional Typhoon (the jet, not the tempest!) powered overhead, there

was much less disturbance than during the visit in September. Perhaps they were away off to the Libyan sun.

We stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot at the edge of the dunes and then were able to enjoy a half hour of basking in the warming sunshine. It wasn't long, though, before Lorna noticed dark clouds gathering and we had to beat a rapid retreat into the shelter of the forest. There was plenty of interest, a large but (disappointingly) rather worm-eaten **brown birch bolete**, *Leccinum scabrum*, dark-grey capped *Tricholoma terreum*, a few specimens of *Helvella*, the **blue-cheese fungus**, *Postia caesia*, on fallen



wood, one or two *Amanita* species, including **blushers** and **fly agarics**, *A. muscaria*, several **web-caps**, *Cortinarius* spp., and a variety of others. In one damp area in among the trees, we came across large patches of the rounded leaves of **common wintergreen** (*Pyrola minor*) with a few dead flower heads.

We'd left the car in the morning in the Kinshaldy car park and headed north along the edge of the forest towards the point. Although the variety was perhaps not as good as in some years previously, there were large troops of fungal caps to be seen. Tentsmuir, once again, had proved to be winner. **Puffballs** and **waxcaps** abounded in open sandy places, crimson, yellow-brown, **parrot caps** and several other species, and in among the trees were **dark-red brittle-gills** and the occasional **charcoal burner**, **sickeners** and other *Russula* species, and an occasional dark **hedgehog**, the wonderful *Sarcodon imbricatum*. Further on we were able to pick a few for our own frying pans, mostly the yellow *Tricholoma* species.

Then Davie spotted a crouching figure amongst the pines some distance ahead. On coming up with him, we found that he was cutting off fungi as if his life depended on it. We had to admire his technique, a deft flick with a small knife, a quick check for quality and then into his trays. They were all the one species, very large numbers of the yellow *Tricholoma*, *T. flavovirens*, a good edible species. When asked why so many, his reply was that they were for his own use. Hah! Pull the other one. If so, he must have the greatest hunger for fungi ever recorded. He had four blue trays tied together with cords held in each hand and each was packed full with the caps. There must have been a good few hundred caps distributed through the eight trays. This was the first time any of us had seen commercial picking in Tentsmuir Forest. In the past, elderly Poles who'd come across during the war had cut many fungi but these were for their own use. At least the species he was collecting was abundant in places and there were still large enough numbers for anyone to pick.

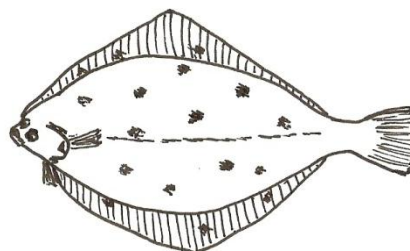
Have Nats members ever seen any commercial collecting going on in local woodlands? It wouldn't take long for commercial pickers to strip a forest even as rich as Tentsmuir. And the handful we picked were delicious, fried with a little onion and a beaten egg!

Jim Cook

INTERESTING BIRD AT GUARDBRIDGE

22nd November

Let me say, right away, that if any twitchers have read the above heading they can put their binos back in the case! I was scanning the Eden Estuary, as usual, for anything of interest when, above and to the left of me, a rather large bird flew across my line of sight. It was carrying a large **flatfish**, head pointing forwards. I immediately thought "an **osprey**" but hang on, I hadn't seen an osprey for over a month; they were all off on holiday to warmer climes. I hurriedly re-focused the 'scope as the bird had just settled on a fence post across the water. A quick shift; it was unmistakeable; a **buzzard**. A disappointment? Well no. How many people have seen a buzzard in flight with a large fish?



I decided to investigate. I asked a number of experienced 'watchers who come to the hide. To date, not one had seen such a thing. This begged the question, had the buzzard copied the ospreys which it must have seen diving for fish. I did not think so. I had already seen one young buzzard drowned after flying into the water and the nearest I had seen an adult to water was when a bird tried to pluck a **teal**, unsuccessfully, from the surface.

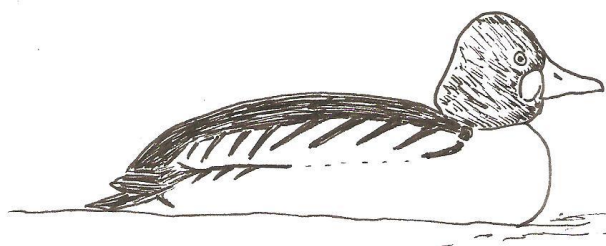
The answer to the question was to come about a week later when probably the same bird was seen again with another fish. But on this occasion a **cormorant** was seen on the mud nearby, accompanied by four **crows**. I was now convinced that the buzzard, attracted by the crows, had relieved the cormorant of its catch - they are known to abandon fish which are too big to swallow.

So there ends my tale. These little episodes always make my day and, into the bargain, it was my birthday! Any offers for this year will be gratefully appreciated.

Gordon Maxwell

OTTERS AT BALGAVIES 2011

Midday on a cold but clear 5th December at Balgavies. Twenty or so **cormorants** decorated the trees on '**osprey** island'. Some **goldeneye** drakes were pursuing females. Then a dozy **heron**



on a lochside fallen tree was suddenly ever so alert. Three **moorhens** fluttered up to join it. Waving reeds showed the progress of something in the water. First one **otter** then another. All too soon they disappeared over the peninsula.

This was the 22nd otter sighting of 2011 recorded in the hide logbook. There were 15 in 2010. My last sighting in February was even briefer than the one described above, but sometimes prolonged fishing speers are witnessed. One July visitor was

amused to see two **otters** repeatedly surface draped in **algae**, whose growth is promoted by agricultural eutrophication. Another watcher was lucky enough to see one crossing the frozen loch in January. Keep watching.....

Alban Houghton

SURVEYS AND REQUESTS

FUNGI IN ANGUS

Known Sites and Areas of Interest

Help Needed: This is a list of sites or areas known to carry a good range of fungal species, or at least suspected to do so. Do you know of any others or have any lists of identified fungi from any of these places? Please let Jim Cook know of any good fungal sites you know locally.

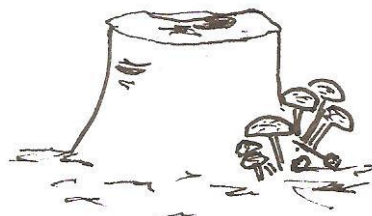
Location codes: NA - North Angus; CA - Central Angus; SA - South Angus; EA - East Angus; WA - West Angus

(*) – sites or areas already known to carry an excellent range of fungi

Sites	Location	4-figure GR	Comments
1 *Backmuir Wood, near Dundee	SA	3433 - 3434	Good range of woodland species
2 *Balgavies Loch	CA	5251 - 5350	Good range wood & grass species
3 Balmadies woods, by Letham	CA	5550 - 5549	A range of woodland species
4 Barry (Buddon) Links	SA	5232 - 5532	Puffballs, <i>Lepiota</i> , <i>Hygrocybe</i> spp

5	Caird Park, Dundee	SA	4032 - 4033	Range of woodland species
6	*Caddam woods, by Kirriemuir	CA	3855 - 3856	Very good woodland fungi
7	*Camperdown Park, Dundee	SA	3632 - 3732	Good range of wood & grass spp.
8	Carsegowniemuir Quarry	CA	5054 - 5154	Woodland & <i>Hygrocybe</i> species
9	Clearie woods, by Crombie	SA	5239 - 5339	Woodland species
10	*Crombie Country Park	SA	5140 - 5240	Good range of woodland species
11	*Dronley Wood, nr Dundee	SA	3436	Good range of woodland species
12	Dunnichen Hill	CA	4949 - 4950	Thought to be good
13	Edzell woods	NA	5969	Reasonable range of species
14	Falls of Drumly Harry, Noran Water	NA	4562	Thought to be good
15	Forest Muir, east of Kirriemuir	CA	4254 - 4255	Range of woodland & grass spp.
16	*Forfar Loch woodland	CA	5043 - 5044	Interesting wood & grass species
17	*Gannochy woods	NA	5972 - 6070	Good range of woodland species
18	*Glamis (Angles Park) Woods	CA	3847 - 3846	Good range of woodland species
19	Glen Clova	NA	3273 - 3569	Woodland and heathland species
20	Glen Esk	NA	5775 - 5873	Woodland species
21	Glen Ogil woods	NA	4463 - 4464	Range of woodland species
22	Hunter's Hill woods, by Glamis	CA	3845 - 3846	Woodland species
23	*Kirriemuir; graveyard by Kirk	CA	3854	Range of <i>Hygrocybe</i> species
24	Kinblethmont woods	CA	6346	Thought to be good
25	Kinnaber Links, Montrose	EA	7260 - 7361	Thought to be good
26	Ledcrieff/Pitcur woods	WA	2636 - 2637	Good range of species
27	Lintrathen woods	NA	2654 - 2755	Thought to be good
28	Monikie Country Park	CA	5037 - 5038	Range of woodland species
29	*Montreathmont Forest	CA	5553 - 6054	Good range of woodland species
30	North Ballo Hill woods	WA	2535	Range of woodland species
31	Reekie Linn woods, River N Esk	CA	2553	Range of woodland & bank species
32	*Templeton Woods, Dundee	SA	3534 - 3533	Excellent range of woodland spp.
33	The Retreat woods, Glen Esk	NA	5078 - 5079	Woodland species
34	Tulloch Hill woods, Glen Prosen	NA	3662 - 3761	Woodland species
35	*West Woods of Ethie, N of Arbroath	EA	6544 - 6545	Good range of woodland species

Jim Cook



SMALL BLUE BUTTERFLY SURVEY

The **small blue** is the smallest butterfly in the UK. Its caterpillars only eat **kidney vetch** (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), so the distribution of the butterfly is dependent on the distribution of the food plant. The small blue is a Priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

The butterfly is widespread in the UK, found in small widely scattered colonies. However, it has suffered a recent rapid decline in numbers and distribution. In central southern England it is estimated that its numbers dropped by 7% every ten years during the 1980s. During the millennium butterfly survey it was not recorded from 30% of the 10km squares where it had been found between 1970-1982, the previous survey period.

In Angus the small blue has been found historically along the coast, in grassland and dunes, and inland on man-made habitats such as quarries, road embankments and disused railway-tracks. However, there is strong evidence the species is declining, particularly in inland sites. Kidney vetch is a pioneer plant that grows on areas of bare soil and sparse vegetation, and it is outgrown by more aggressive plants once the vegetation has established. The small blue has a limited ability to colonise new areas; once it has been lost from a site it often cannot recolonise.

An Angus survey in 1994 revisited known small blue colonies and discovered some worrying facts. Of eight inland sites, along old railways lines, at Forfar, Balgavies, Milldens, Pitmuies, Friockheim and Heughhead, two sites had been built over, one was probably never suitable for small blue in the first place, and two were overgrown. Encouragingly, although no small blues were seen during the survey, kidney vetch was growing at Pitmuies, Friockheim, and Heughhead.

Along the coast, small blues and kidney vetch were found at a number of sites at Seaton Cliffs, Auchmithie and Boddin. There was cause for concern at several more. Easthaven, Elliot Links, Red Head, north Lunan Bay and Kinnaber links, all previous sites, had no kidney vetch growing. At Usan, Ethie Haven and Carlingheugh Bay, although kidney vetch was found the small blue was absent

The absence of the butterfly where its food plant is present is not necessarily bad news; it could be that the adults were not flying when the surveyor visited. It is more serious when kidney vetch is disappearing from sites, or where the sites are becoming isolated from each other.

Small blue adults fly on sunny days from late May to early July. There is some evidence that in good years there may be a second generation brood in August. The eggs are laid on kidney vetch flower heads from late May to early July and caterpillars may be found from late June onwards. The small blue over-winters as a caterpillar.

In 2012 Butterfly Conservation and the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership are launching the Angus Small Blue Project which hopes to stop the decline and possibly re-introduce small blue to previous breeding sites. The project will start with a survey of all previously known small blue colony sites. It will be a combination of looking for the butterfly and kidney vetch. We are particularly keen to visit inland sites where the small blue has not been seen for many years. We also hope to find any colonies overlooked by previous surveys. The survey work will be followed up by practical work at some sites in the following years.

This is an opportunity for the Nats to show their local knowledge. If you wish to become involved with the survey please get in touch with David Lampard.

David Lampard

MAGPIES, BLACKCAPS AND FOXES

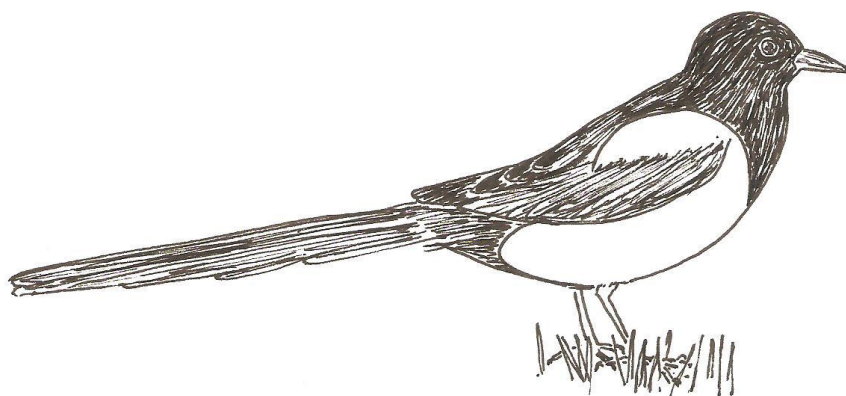
Until recently there were very few records of **magpies** anywhere in Angus but the impression has been gained that they are, possibly, being seen more frequently. Pat Gaff and Bob McCurley would be very interested to hear of any **magpies** you see locally.

Similarly, Bob is still collecting sightings of winter **blackcaps** as they are seen by more people at bird tables and in gardens.

After an apparent increase in sightings of **foxes** within Dundee it would be interesting to see how widespread they are within the city and suburbs, and to note whether they are fully nocturnal. Gordon Maxwell is happy to coordinate the **fox** records.

For all records it is essential to have a date and location, as accurately as possible, and also time of day for **foxes**. Records can be submitted to the relevant member or to Anne Reid (contact details on page 1) who will forward them.

Anne Reid

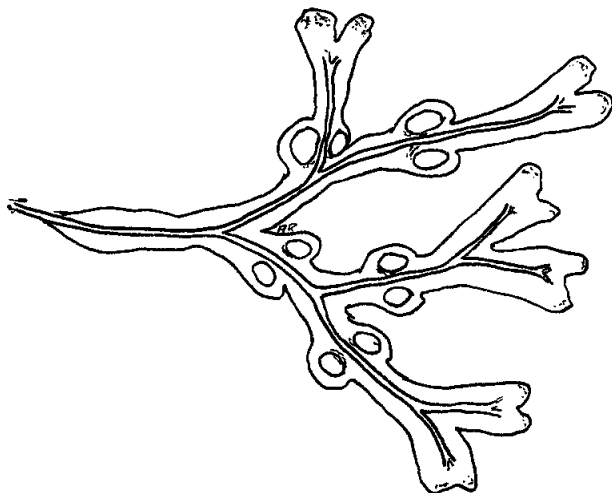


CONTRIBUTION TO A LIST OF SEAWEEDS AROUND THE ANGUS COAST

Common Name	Scientific Name	Comments
Wrack	<i>Alaria esculenta</i>	Brown; occasional
Egg Wrack	<i>Ascophyllum nodosum</i>	Brown; abundant on rocky shores
Red Seaweed	<i>Ceramium rubrum</i>	Red; common
Sea Beads	<i>Chaetomorpha linum</i>	Abundant on muddy rocks
Sea Mat	<i>Cladophora rupestris</i>	Green; common
Carragheen Moss	<i>Chondrus crispus</i>	Red; common
Sea-Lace	<i>Chorda filum</i>	Brown; occasional
Velvet Horn	<i>Codium tomentosum</i>	Green; scarce on rocks Lunan Bay to Scurdyness
Coralweed	<i>Corallina officinalis</i>	Red; common under seaweeds and in pools
??	<i>Cystoseira</i>	
Red seaweed	<i>Delesseria sanguinea</i>	Commonly seen washed up
??	<i>Dumontia incrassata</i>	Sparse
Gutweed	<i>Enteromorpha intestinalis</i>	Green; abundant on upper shores
Horned Wrack	<i>Fucus ceranoides</i>	Common on upper shore in Tay estuary
Serrated Wrack	<i>F. serratus</i>	Abundant on rocky shores
Spiral Wrack	<i>F. spiralis</i>	Abundant on rocky shores
Bladder Wrack	<i>F. vesiculosus</i>	Abundant on rocky shores
Small red?	<i>Gigartina stellata</i>	Frequent
Sea Oak	<i>Halidrys siliquosa</i>	Abundant in large rock pools
Thong-weed	<i>Himanthalia elongata</i>	Frequent
Oar-weed	<i>Laminaria digitata</i>	Common on lower rocky shores
Oar-weed	<i>L. hyperborea</i>	Common on lower rocky shores
Sugar Wrack	<i>L. saccharina</i>	Common on lower rocky shores
Jelly Buttons	<i>Leathesia difformis</i>	Common in rock pools
Red Encrusting Algae	<i>Lithophyllum sp.</i>	Common
Red Encrusting Algae	<i>Lithothamnion sp.</i>	Common
Jointed Wrack	<i>Lomentaria articulata</i>	Frequent
Dulse	<i>Palmeria palmata</i>	Common under seaweeds
Channel Wrack	<i>Pelvetia canaliculata</i>	Abundant on upper rocky shores
Red Epiphyte	<i>Polysiphonia lanosa</i>	Frequent on <i>Ascophyllum nodosum</i>
Purple Laver	<i>Porphyra umbilicalis</i>	Common in sheltered waters
Red seaweed	<i>?Rhodophyllum</i>	Sparse
Sea Lettuce	<i>Ulva lactuca</i>	Common

Help Wanted: Have you any records of seaweeds in Angus? Do you know of any good seashore locations for seaweeds around the Angus coastline? Would you like to help in collecting more records? Please contact any member of DNS council.

Jim Cook



MULLED WINE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

1 bottle red wine *
275ml/10fl oz water
75g/3oz sugar
1 cinnamon stick
4 cloves
Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon and 1 medium orange

Place the water sugar and spices in a saucepan. Bring to the boil then allow to stand for 10 minutes. Add the juice and rind. Add the wine and heat the mull slowly until very hot but not boiling. Serve hot. This amount serves 6.

* I usually mull my own home-made Autumn Wine made with elderberries, brambles, rosehips, apples and grape juice. This wine should be stored for at least a year before use. However, any full-bodied red wine gives a good result with this recipe.

Jenny Allan

This recipe originally appeared in Bulletin 15, 1990/91