

Dundee Naturalists' Society

Instituted 1874



Bulletin No 45 2020

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

ANNUAL BULLETIN No 45

2020

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The Bulletin cover illustration is by Shelagh Gardiner and shows the Society's emblem, the dwarf cornel. Other illustrations are by Anne Reid, Jim Cook, Mary Reid, and Arfile. Two pages of colour photographs have been included this year. All other, unacknowledged, photographs are by Anne Reid.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thanks to all members who have submitted articles and reports. This year's Bulletin is shorter than usual as we had fewer activities due to the Covid pandemic. Thanks to Colin Reid, Jim Cook, and Mary Reid for proof reading and helpful comments. Thanks also to those who have willingly, and promptly, supplied photos at my request.

Contributions for the next Bulletin, articles, line drawings and photos, are always welcome and may be submitted at any time during the year. The deadline for submissions is usually the end of the calendar year.

Our new website is www.dundeenaturalists.org.uk . Facebook page: Dundee Naturalists' Society

Anne Reid

SOCIETY REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I wonder what the President in the 1919 flu epidemic had put in the annual report for that year. I tried to find out just who was the President that year and failed. So I look forward to reading the history of the Society, currently in preparation, when it is printed, to find out. In spite of the problems that Covid-19 has generated, we have still had a productive year, but not the one that was planned. Until the AGM in March it was a normal year, with talks ranging from the Antarctic to bees and pollination. Even the weather for the New Year meeting at Templeton was reasonable (for January), and very much better than it had been the previous year!

Not even a Pandemic can stop the Nats. It may change the way things happen, but things keep happening. Having initially cancelled the whole summer programme, we managed to have two field meetings, at Baxter Park and the Law, all socially distanced. Sadly, the Oban weekend had to be cancelled, as did all the bus trips.

Thanks to a vast amount of work by Anne and Lorna, over the summer we produced a weekly Newsletter. As autumn approached the frequency was reduced to fortnightly but still allowed members to keep in touch and exchange news. We are all very grateful to both of them for all the effort. You cannot have a newsletter without content, and the Nats supplied lots of material, and even if as a group we could not go out, individuals did. Many members fitted in photographing and recording, at the same time as exercising, so that we all could enjoy what was being seen.

Autumn lecture meetings were held online, by Zoom, which has proved adequate, if not as good as meeting in person. We all got better at handling the technology, thanks to Lorna's tuition, and heard about New Zealand, an orchid meadow and plant identification by app. This way of meeting will continue for as long as necessary, but we shall have to see what 2021 holds, and keep hoping for the best.

Barry Caudwell

CARSEGOWNIEMUIR QUARRY REPORT

The very wet and windy conditions in the middle of January caused considerable, although superficial, damage. Lots of small branches were broken off together with some larger ones but these were easily cleared where they lay on the paths - and the levels of the ponds had, not surprisingly, risen again. A number of the old trees already weakened and partly fallen, **elders** and **geans** particularly, have been pushed down a little more.

Ronnie Ogg and Jim visited the quarry at the very end of the month, to clear some of the larger fallen twigs and branches from the paths and to check the nest boxes in good time before the start of the nesting season. Although we heard the 'tee-cher' territorial calls of one **great tit** in area C, most birds were still very quiet with few signs of the hectic spring activity to come. One bird box was found to be in need of repair and was removed to dry out before total rebuilding. Others were adjusted and rehung and three were noted for modifications to make them easier to attach and check. Three had been occupied last year and were cleaned out while three others (all new last year) couldn't be opened at all to check if they'd been used, although we suspected that they had been.

The two storms, Ciara and Dennis, on successive weekends in February caused considerable but superficial damage, littering the ground with broken twigs and a few larger old branches but felling no large trees, perhaps rather surprisingly, and raising the water levels in the ponds to re-flood some of the lowest ground. As expected, several of the ancient **geans**, **rowans** and other partly-fallen trees were beaten down again just that little bit more. As well as these effects, perching pole A, the one nearest the hide, which had been showing some signs of rot - and had grown some interesting fungi last year - did blow down. It wasn't too much of a surprise as the wood was **rowan** (from the old tree that blew down in 2012) and when checked it was found in places inside to be as soft as a sponge. Later in the year another gale put paid to the other one, perching pole B. We'll have to find a harder and more resistant wood to erect another two.

A few maintenance jobs were carried out in mid-February, including sawing off some low branches that could affect walkers along one of the paths and re-adjusting a couple of the main steps. We also dug out a few more stones along the paths and checked to look for stretches that still needed to be improved. Two young **pin**es that were being bent over by the wind were reinforced by being attached low down to posts set at an angle. The four short posts put into the plateau last spring, to

mark the square where the grass has been cut short over the last few years, were replaced with longer, larger and easier-to-see posts of much stronger birch wood. What we really could do with, though, is some close grazing of the long coarse grass over the plateau for a couple of days during the autumn or early winter. Anybody have a spare **goat** or a small shaggy **pony** handy?

Work to improve the paths has continued and hole digging for the spring tree-planting was started in early March. We planted two trees, one a small **pine** moved to a more suitable location and the other a small **oak** that Ronnie Young had germinated from acorns collected in the quarry two years ago. At that point, however, the Covid-19 corona virus shut-down came along and all visits to and work in the quarry came to a halt.

During the lockdown Ronnie Young reported that he'd seen two orchids (which were known to be **northern marsh orchids**) beside the main path near pond 2, the usual one that grows there and another a little further along. He was even more interested to report later on in June that the **mallard duck** which had nested again on the raft floating on pond 3 was successful this time. It hatched four ducklings which were swimming around and feeding. Later they were reported to move on to pond 4 and even later to pond 5. It's great to know that the raft which the Society had constructed and launched only in 2018 had been successful. Both a **mallard** and a **tufted duck** (right) had tried to nest on it in 2019 but had been unsuccessful, almost certainly because of predation by either magpies or jays. Last autumn (2019) the raft had been partly covered with an arch of wire mesh, to allow the ducks to climb aboard but prevent predators landing on from above. That and the increased grass growth meant that the duck was able to nest undisturbed – and we hope the raft will continue to shelter more wildlife in the years to come.



It was the end of July after the end of the Covid-19 lockdown before we started visiting the quarry again. Not surprisingly the grasses were growing thick and tall along all the paths and that was the immediate task in hand. It took visits over several weeks to clear the paths with the strimmer. Ronnie Ogg and Jim finished off the path grading at the far end, above pond 5, that had been started before the lockdown in March. Although it was very dry and the replaced turfs looked rather sorry for a short time, the change in weather and heavy rain soon livened them up. The **blanket weed** which had completely covered pond 5 in the last few summers was partly pulled in with a grapnel and rope and lifted out with the aid of rake over a few weeks. Even Ken and Ewan McGregor, who'd visited the quarry for a walk around, had a go at demonstrating their grapnel-throwing expertise! As before, a number of small and a few adult **palmate newts** were recovered and restored back into the water, demonstrating once again that a viable population of newts exists in pond 5. This time much of the dried-out algae was thrown up well above normal flood levels of the pond. The job was nearly finished in mid-September when 'heavy rain interrupted play' and partly flooded the quarry. The rising water covered the drying-out weed left at the water's edge but at least most of it had been thrown far enough up the bank to prevent the nutrients from reaching the water easily. The water also flooded the low ground around the other ponds, particularly around the barbecue site in between ponds 2 and 3. The raft, of course, floated safely up and down with the changing levels. The waters receded only partially by the middle of October and the main path beside the barbecue site remained covered, but could be negotiated in wellies, taking care not to step off into the hollows on either side.

Ronnie and Jim then began digging holes for trees for the autumn planting. We had help for a few weeks from young Calum, who soon proved to be a dab hand with a pick and shovel and helped us dig more holes and plant a number of trees in October. By the end of the month we'd planted six of the largest **oaks** grown by Ronnie Young from acorns that he'd collected in the quarry in 2018 and also seven of the largest **birches** dug out of his garden as seedlings and re-potted. We also transplanted five **hazels** and two **hawthorns**, moving trees self-sown in the quarry, a total of 20 this autumn (and donated a small **blackthorn** to Margaret Bainbridge). We also cleared some low-hanging branches along back-path 1 and planted more of the **willow** whips in various places among the **willowherb**, particularly close to the wicker fence by the hide and on the bank on the north side of the main path almost opposite the hide. At that point, with Covid-19 cases increasing again, we decided to stop visiting the quarry until the pandemic situation improved.

Ronnie Young reported that the heavy rain in November re-flooded the low-lying areas and it was only possible to reach the hide along back-path 2. The birds, mostly **great tits** and **coal tits**, numbers of **tree sparrows** but only a few **blue tits** with a scatter of **chaffinches** and **robins**, were hungrily thronging to the bird table. **Great spotted woodpeckers** were frequent visitors to the peanuts. Even several **mallards** were helping clear grain spilled from the feeders above.

The flood partly receded in mid-December but then rose again later. Water was reported as still flooding the lower parts of the quarry in the first few days of the new year. The heavy frosts of December and early January produced a thick covering of ice over all the ponds and the ground was covered with snow.

Jim Cook

RECORDING CONVENOR'S REPORT

In the early part of 2020 the recording year was well in hand, we had a **hoverfly** identification workshop organised at Murton, as well as all our field meetings to put to use our new skills. In early March Cathy and I attended a meeting of the Biological Records Centre (BRC) in the National Museum of Scotland. The meeting had specialists from recording schemes, government agencies and research organisations, from many parts of the UK, so it was a good place to be in order to network with like minds. This was the first time that BRC had had this annual meeting in Scotland, so it was important that it was well attended, to encourage BRC to bring it back to Scotland in the future. I was not disappointed, we were part of a large and enthusiastic audience, which produced some interesting questions after each talk. It was a good opportunity to talk to people we know and meet new people and network. One of the speakers was Tom Prescott from Butterfly Conservation and he made a "throw away" comment in his talk about "by catch" when running a moth trap. He was talking about Trichoptera, the **caddisflies**. Sitting behind me a lady commented, but why not just identify them and submit a record. Next break I was talking to her and rapidly found that she was part of the Trichoptera Recording Scheme, before long I had arranged an identification workshop for us in 2021. As I was talking to her Cathy came over and commented on her surname which is Flint. Cathy's parents had some good friends with the same surname, and guess what, Sharon's husband Peter is the son of these friends, Cathy and Peter of course remembered each other from field trips in Yorkshire many years ago. It really is a very small world!

I did not know at the time that all my plans for identification workshops were about to go up in smoke. This BRC meeting was the last indoor meeting that we took part in for the rest of 2020. Rather naively I had hoped to be able to move the workshops forward a year to 2021, but at the time of writing, even that is looking optimistic. Keep watching. Eventually we will have a hoverfly and a caddisfly workshop and normal life will, I hope, return.

Despite all the problems of lockdown, biological recording is still happening and even more records are being submitted than in 2019. Martin Harvey, David Roy and Helen Roy, who all work for BRC recently published an article in "British Wildlife" commenting that submissions to iRecord for April 2020 produced over 100,000 records: this compares with 75,000 records for April 2019. It is interesting to look in more detail at these records. Unfortunately, not all the records in iRecord include the habitat, but for those that did, a clear shift was seen, with the proportion of records from gardens more or less doubling, and with a big fall in those from the wider countryside. You might be able to stop recorders going out and about, but it is harder to stop them recording.

It is not only nationally that people have been recording - just look at what has been going on locally. David has been running a moth trap in his garden, Brian Ballinger has been out exercising, walking around his local area and collecting a mass of plant records for the BSS Urban Flora. Lots of other Nats have been out and recording; just look at the Newsletter and on Facebook, a wonderful effort. How many of us have seen **lamprey** locally? You just never know what you are going to see when you go out.



In our part of Perthshire we and other members of Butterfly Conservation have been out recording, with some spectacular results. Lots of new sites (or possibly old sites revisited) for **purple hairstreak butterflies** (*Favonius quercus*) have been found. As more sites were found, that spurred more people to go out looking for them. We found a colony down on the banks of the Tay, just below Errol. Not only have Tayside species been found in new places, but species new to the area have been seen. The **speckled wood butterfly** (*Pararge aegeria*) (left) has been working its way north through Fife for a year or two now and this year it was found on the north side of the Tay.

This is a much easier butterfly to see than the **purple hairstreak**. **Speckled wood** have a display flight out in the open, while the **purple hairstreaks** do their best to hide high in the canopy of **oak** trees.

Not only have new Tayside species of butterfly appeared, but along the Carse the **nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*) has taken up residence. As an adult, the nuthatch is generally a sedentary bird, it is the juvenile birds that go roaming looking for a new territory to occupy. We will see if we still have them next year. (**Nuthatches** have reached Balgay Park in Dundee where two have been seen regularly over the winter of 20-21. Ed.) Over on the west coast in recent years they have moved up through the **oak** woods of Argyll to the Great Glen. Not bad for a bird that until relatively recently could only be seen regularly at St Abbs in Scotland.

Lots of Nats have been out recording, just look at the vast number of accounts of walks on our Facebook page. Other recorders have been working in gardens with moth trapping, just look in the newsletter. Walking around the local area, the botanists have been able to add large numbers of records to the BSS Urban Flora project. A number of people also submitted records for a national survey of **spittle bugs**, the larvae of **froghopper** species. If we can cope with the pandemic year of 2020, surely the coming year will be something to look forward to and just as successful for recorders. Please don't forget that all these records that we have been collecting are excellent, but their value is increased greatly by submitting them to a recording scheme like iRecord.

Barry Caudwell

CONGRATULATIONS

We are very pleased to note that Mrs Margaret Philip celebrated her 100th birthday this past year. She was the wife of the late Bob Philip who was a highly significant President of the 1970s in helping to revive the Society after its near collapse in 1972. Together they worked hard to encourage new members to come along and new talent to join the Council. She served on the Council in her own right, led outings and organised a weekend and was the organising force behind a New Year's Day activity in 1975, the earliest fore-runner of our current New Year barbecues. The group met on Broughty Ferry esplanade and were given the competition task of finding as many different shells as possible. We were invited back to their house for warming coffee and snacks and the points totals for the shells added up. Dorothy Fyffe won hands down by finding a small cowrie shell (an extremely rare shell on that beach). Margaret admitted that she had planted 3 shells on the wide expanses of the beach and each was marked by a spot of red nail varnish. Sure enough Dorothy's shell carried a red spot! Only Dorothy had eyes sharp enough to pick one out.

Jim Cook

OBITUARIES

GERTRUDE (GERT) ROBERTSON

We were saddened to hear of the death of long-standing member Gert Robertson in September 2019 aged 99. She had been a keen, active and very personable member of the Society for many years and will be remembered with affection by numbers of Nats' veterans. Although never a Council member, she played an important role as the long-term auditor of our accounts. Gert had moved to London as a young woman to work in a bank, where she endured the rigours of the blitz, and only returned much later to Dundee when her mother took ill. In her earlier days she had been a keen bird-watcher and enthusiastic hill walker. She regularly joined the Society on its bus outings, revelling in strenuous walks such as the memorable one in June 1975 from the northern end of Glen Shee over the summit of Glas Maol on the Monega track down into Glen Isla to meet the bus. Gert was a great traveller, particularly enjoying trips to northern islands, to Orkney and Shetland, to Iceland, the Faroes, the Lofotens and islands in the Baltic. Unfortunately, problems with her legs curtailed her activities although she still loved to accompany us on the outings, go out for a short low-level walk to enjoy the wildlife and scenery, then meet us back on the bus. She had been unable to come to our winter meetings for nearly 20 years but will be much missed.

Jim Cook

SHEILA BRINKLEY 1931-2020

The Society was saddened to hear the news in February that Sheila Brinkley, a keen member for a number of years who also had served a period on the Council, had died suddenly. Sheila joined the Society soon after she moved up from the south of England to live near Newtyle in 1993. Her particular interests involved all types of plants, ranging from garden plants, wild flowers, ferns, fungi and even lichens, and she was always willing to impart her knowledge of the subject.

It wasn't long after Sheila joined that she began to be much more involved in Society activities, being welcomed on to the Council. She conducted several memorable Nats' outings over the years and also organised and led the unusual 'mid-week' weekend at Elgin during the holiday period, in July, which included a walk along part of the Speyside Way down to Spey Bay, and a specially-arranged evening visit to Elgin Museum with a conducted tour around the display of fossil reptile casts.

She was, as many people have remarked, a 'born teacher' and among other activities that a number of us recall were her two well-attended instruction days, in successive years, in the community hall at Birnam on conifer and then fern identification. Each was followed up by an afternoon field trip in the area.

Sheila hadn't come along to our winter meetings in recent years, after she gave up driving at night, and around a dozen years ago dropped out of attending our summer excursions. She still remained active in Newtyle, however, until very recently.

Jim Cook

JEAN PETRIE

Jean Petrie died on 15 April 2020, aged 96. She joined the Naturalists in the late 1970s and was a regular attender at meetings and on outings. Even after she was no longer able to walk far, she remained a stalwart on the bus trips, and with her friend Ruby Gold always managed to find a tea room to spend the day. She moved to West Lothian some years ago to be closer to her son Hamish and his family.

Colin McLeod

ALEX ROLLO

Alex died on 25th April. He was a qualified quantity surveyor, a Dundonian, and before retiring to live in Carnoustie had worked abroad. On retiring he and wife Melanie ran the local Pet Shop for a number of years. He was a very keen hill walker and photographer and enjoyed frequent visits to the local hills and glens. He was a very keen birdwatcher and an active member of the Tayside Raptor Group.

Alex was Secretary of the Nats for two years from 2007, Melanie having initially been appointed to the post, but was not a long-standing member or a regular attender of meetings. His business commitments led to him giving up as Secretary.

Dorothy Fyffe

CLEMENTINA (ENA) LAMONT

We note with regret the sad passing of Ena Lamont just before Christmas, aged 93. She was known for her embroidery as well as teaching at primary schools for a number of years. At one time she and her late husband James were keen members of the Society. They often came out on Nats' summer bus trips to enjoy the delights of the countryside and its wildlife and regularly attended winter meetings. However, she badly sprained an ankle on a visit to Kinnaber Links and after that more or less gave up coming on outings. However, they did continue with winter meetings for a while before gradually dropping out. It has been a while since she was in contact with the Society. She leaves two daughters and several grandchildren.

Jim Cook

WINTER MEETINGS TEMPLETON WOODS BARBECUE

2nd January

We have had better weather for a barbecue, but at least there is shelter at the Ranger Base at Templeton. Turn-out was modest, but Brian and Jenny provided mulled wine in the car park and everyone went for a walk while Anne lit the barbecue with Barry's help.

The woods were relatively quiet with a limited bird list being recorded which consisted of the resident **coal tits**, **crows**, **chaffinches**, **great tits**, **siskins**, **robins** and a **jay**. Someone found a dead **roe deer** and Jim noted several fungi including **the deceiver**, **candle snuff fungus**, **turkey tails**, **jelly brain fungus** and **violet fire-pit fungus**. Some walked as far as Clatto Reservoir where they saw **tufted duck**, **coot**, **mallard**, **mute swan** and **maggie**.

Once everyone returned the usual mysterious foil parcels were warmed or cooked on the barbecue and we helped to 'tidy up' surplus Christmas chocolate which had been brought along. By the time we left it was raining but our enjoyment had not been reduced and the year got off to a good start.

Anne Reid

54 DEGREES SOUTH

Stewart Dodd - 14th January

Stewart gave a splendidly illustrated account of his visits to South Georgia in the South Atlantic in 2008 and 2009. This isolated island is about 110 miles long and is mountainous with **glaciers**. It is probably best known to most people from its involvement in the 1982 South Atlantic war, and, in Dundee at least, as a former whaling station.

The journey from Britain was long and complicated and, after multiple flights, involved a three-day trip in a small boat. The seas were rough and all but three of his small party were seasick. In this sea **icebergs**, especially the small ones, are a hazard to shipping.

The old whaling facilities on the island are rusting and collapsing, but are picturesque in their own way and provided many photo opportunities. They were abandoned in 1965. Now there is a resident scientific community and there are regular visits from cruise ships. There is still a functioning church and even a rusting old railway locomotive. A museum has been opened and several old ships are preserved. Around the disused buildings there are numerous whale bones alongside old ships' propellers.

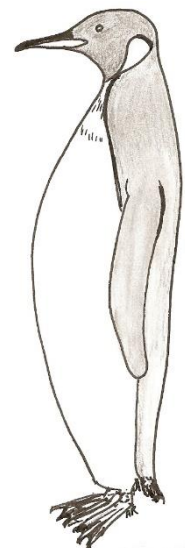
At the time of the visit a large herd of **reindeer** grazed the hillside, but these have since been removed, as they are not native. The vegetation is now recovering. There has also been a programme to remove non-native **rodents**, which were damaging the ground-nesting bird populations. After all this effort there is now very strict biosecurity for anyone landing on the island.

Stewart made good use of opportunities to photograph the extensive bird populations. There are about 22-30 million breeding birds on South Georgia. His pictures included **South Georgia pipit**, **Antarctic prion**, **Cape petrel**, **Antarctic tern** and **snowy sheathbill**. Many of these are scavengers, and we saw pictures of birds feeding on the umbilical cord of a newly born **seal**. The **northern giant petrel** has a massive wingspan of up to seven feet, only slightly smaller than that of the **albatrosses** of which Stewart saw **wandering**, **black-browed** and **grey-headed**. **Penguins** were featured including **chinstrap** and **emperor**. The ground nesting **emperor penguins** moult in spring (October) and during that time are unable to put to sea.

There are large **seal** populations including **fur**, **Weddell**, **elephant** and **leopard**. Some can be fierce and he once had to run from a threatening seal while carrying his heavy photographic equipment. From the boat rare **hour-glass dolphins** and an **Arnoux's beaked whale** were observed. The whale is a very deep diver, and is rarely seen at the surface so the photographs were sent to experts in the USA for verification.

This was a well-illustrated talk about an island that most of us are unlikely to visit, and was delivered with much enthusiasm, holding the attention of all present.

Brian Ballinger



MEMBERS' NIGHT

28th January

Anne had put everyone's contributions together as a single presentation, to simplify the showing. Individual contributors then just had to speak to their own photos.

Alban Houghton - Some Scottish Butterflies Including **painted lady**, which were frequent in 2019, **comma**, **wall brown** which is moving north, **chequered skipper**, **northern brown argus** and its eggs on **rockrose**, and a mating pair of **small blues**.

Willie Angus - Plants from Ireland, Tentsmuir and Shetland **Rock samphire** (*Crithmum maritimum*) in Co. Wicklow, (his photo, right), and **oyster plant** (*Mertensia maritima*) and **Scots lovage** (*Ligusticum scoticum*) in Shetland. The Tentsmuir saltmarsh and the **glasswort** (*Salicornia perennis*) found there. **Common wintergreen** (*Pyrola minor*) in the forest at Tentsmuir and a report of **twinflower** (*Linnaea borealis*) there too. In addition, a well-camouflaged **grayling butterfly** and the beautiful larva of a **pale tussock moth** from Ireland.



Patrick Marks - Cyprus Orchids Beautiful photos of orchids including *Orchis anatolica*, *O. punctulata*, *O. umbilicata* and *O. italica*. Also a group of **cyclamens** in woodland and a field full of endemic Cypriot tulips.

Brian Ballinger - Woods, Nats and Finds An eclectic mix including the news that six new sites have been found for **twinflower** in Easter Ross, and **oyster plant** found at a new site too. Reports that half a wood and the pond have been sold, and a summary of the BSS Urban Flora results so far. A week in Portugal when *Scilla peruviana* was seen. More local records included the second Angus record for *Crassula tillaea* on a Nats outing to Glen Clova, and an *Epipactis* sp found on Moncrieffe Island on another outing.

Jim Smith - UK wildlife A **marsh harrier** in Somerset, a **cuckoo** on Mull and a male **goosander** at Montrose. Beautiful bird reflections of **lapwing**, **little grebe** and **coot**, and a hovering **kingfisher**. An **otter** on Mull, **red squirrel** at Tentsmuir and a **seal** eating a **flounder** were topped by a photo of a **shrew** investigating Stevie's boot!

Stevie Smith - More from the UK A **narrow-bordered bee hawkmoth** from Mull in 2019, which was a bumper year for them, a **scarlet tiger moth** in Somerset, and a **green silver-lines moth** in Dorset. A series of photos of **crab spiders**, some of which can change colour to match the flower they live on. A basking **grass snake** in a Dorset chalk pit and a **little owl** in Yorkshire eating a worm, spaghetti-like. To finish with, a selection of fungi including **blue tooth** near Boat of Garten and a **dune cup** at Balmedie.

Brian Allan - Sardinia Delights 2019 The opening comment was to the effect that Sardinia was quiet, with nowhere to eat out! Then we were shown a number of the usual excellent orchid photos, including *Anacamptis morio*, *Anacamptis papilionacea* and some hybrids and subspecies, *Serapias cordigera* and *S. lingua* and *Ophrys tethredinifera*. Brian finished with *Crocus minimus* and *Allium trifoliatum*.



Jim Cook - Carsegowniemuir Quarry An aerial photo from 1980s compared with a drone photo from 2018 showing the development of woodland on the site. Tree No 1, an **oak**, and the same tree 30 years later and a lot bigger. Some pond life from the day of the cancelled 2019 barbecue, including the **flatworm** *Polycaelis* and six specimens of *Hydra*. Floods at the quarry showing the picnic tables nearly submerged and then re-emerging - this is why they get moved uphill for the winter, but this was a summer flood! Jim finished with fungi including **scarlet caterpillar club** which parasitises lepidopteran pupae.

Anne Reid - Quarry and Birds Nats enjoying a dry barbecue and then more photos of floods. **Waxwings** in Arbroath, left, and two **goldcrests** drinking from a puddle at Forfar Loch.

All contributors were thanked for their input to the evening, which seemed to cover everyone's interests and was much enjoyed.

Anne Reid

POLLINATION, BEES AND THEIR TRIBULATIONS

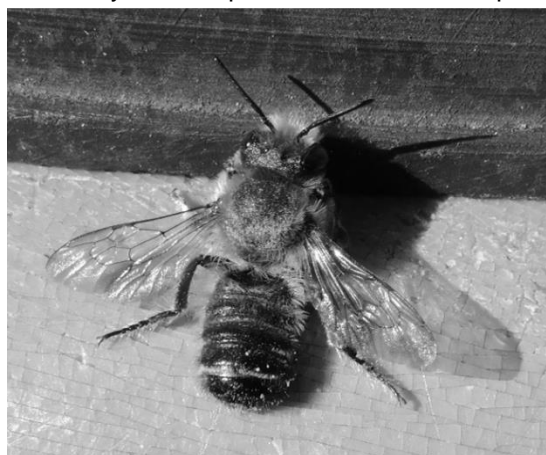
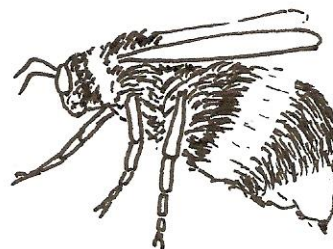
Athayde Tonhasca - 11th February

Athayde, who is an entomologist with SNH (now NatureScot), began by pointing out an interesting coincidence, that the following day was the birthday of Charles Darwin - who spent much of his life investigating bees and pollination - before moving on to defining just what pollination is. So, pollination is the transfer of pollen from the anthers of a flower to the stigma surface, ensuring that seed is produced. This could be in a single flower, or between flowers on separate plants, and can be performed by the wind or a range of animals including bees, and also by moths, beetles, hoverflies and other insects, birds and mammals. Many plants provide a reward to the insects that perform this essential service in the form of nectar which is a sugar solution and can contain up to 80% sugar. If a flower has recently been visited by a bee a second bee will not revisit it until the nectar supply has been replenished.

Bees have two life styles, some live socially in a colony which in some species could be as large as several thousand individuals. However, the majority of species, about 80%, are solitary, building a nest, laying a few eggs, and provisioning the developing young. Several nesting strategies can be found to be used by solitary bees.

In **mining bees** such as *Andrena fulva* the mines can be found by looking for little “volcanoes” of soil at the entrance of the burrow. **Leafcutter bees** such as *Megachile centuncularis* cut sections of leaf and use it to build dividing walls in the nest tube. **Mason bees**, of which an example is *Osmia bicornis*, as their name suggests frequently build a nest in masonry.

In the **honey bees** and **bumblebees** - the “corbiculate bees” - the females use the scopa (a broom like structure of hairs on the back legs) to collect pollen into pollen baskets on the hind legs. Unlike the other groups the honey bees moisten the pollen as it is collected and this allows them to pack the pollen load tightly. Bees also collect nectar, as a sugar source. Bees are strongly associated with Papilionaceous flowers (butterfly like) such as many legumes and orchids. The anthers of some flower species will only release pollen when vibrated and the bumblebees are very good at doing this “buzz pollination” as are many of the solitary bees, but not honey bees. This buzz pollination is very efficient at releasing pollen and it results in a good pollination for the flower, this is why in many commercial glasshouses colonies of bumblebees are installed to ensure that the crop is well pollinated. Another crop that produces a larger yield following pollination is **raspberries**, and many bee-keepers move hives to raspberry fields to provide this pollination service.



Solitary bee

Most wild species of bees are declining. In order to survive, bees need a source of food, both pollen and nectar, throughout the season. They also need a site in which to nest which could be a burrow in fine soil, a hedgerow, a tussock in grassland or a cavity which is often in wood. In most species it is only the mated queen that survives the winter, so she will need a hibernation site, frequently underground. Unfortunately, with 71% of land now under intensive agriculture these resources are much less commonly found than in the past. Other issues that bees now face are the increasing use of insecticides in agriculture. It is not just the direct insecticidal properties that are a problem, but compounds such as the Neonicotinoids, which are systemic insecticides, have a disorientation effect on bees. Bees also suffer from ectoparasites such as the mite *Varroa destructor*, which is a honey

bee parasite and which can also be a vector transmitting bee disease, such as the deformed wing virus.

What about the future? What needs to be done? We need to protect areas of flower-rich grassland. The management of road verges offers a potential flower resource, but only if they are not mown before flowering can take place. Reducing the area of lawns and encouraging the planting of wild flowers in gardens could help. Many seed mixes are not ideal as a substitute for a wild flower meadow as many of them only produce plants that have a short flowering period and also sometimes produce plants that do not have pollen or nectar. Don't persecute **dandelions**, as they provide a good food source for insects! **Ragwort** is also a great food plant for insects; it is only a problem in hay as

the animals that it is toxic to normally avoid it when it is fresh. Many trees provide pollen, early and late in the season, and a nectar source for bees; just stand under a Lime tree in spring and listen to the bees! What can we do in our gardens? Leave any holes in garden walls for the mason bees, piles of rubble can also provide good hibernation sites. Remember that chaos is good for providing flowers and hibernation sites, so you can relax and be a lazy gardener!

This talk was memorable for a variety of reasons. In addition to its content and presentation were the wonderful slides that Athayde had constructed for it. Each slide was absolutely clear and very simple to understand, no clutter, just what was needed.

Barry Caudwell

SOCIAL EVENING

14th February

This was, once again, held in the Queen's Hotel and followed the usual pattern. Mike Sedakat had set a number of quizzes of varying degrees of difficulty (though not as hard as the previous year!) which we all enjoyed trying to answer. We then made short work of the varied buffet meal before drawing the raffle for a wide range of prizes generously brought along by members.

Anne Reid

A NATS WEEKEND TO SPEYSIDE 2010

Anne Reid - 25th February

Fantastic Freshwater Invertebrates by Craig McAdam. Well that is what was in the Winter Programme and also what was advertised. Unfortunately, sometimes things do not go according to plan, and this was one of those occasions! Craig was unwell and we received a message that he would not be able to give the talk. Buglife, for whom Craig works, offered us some alternative titles but for a variety of reasons it was decided that we would try and fill the gap with home-grown talent. Anne Reid, offered to step in and provide a talk. Anne's idea was to do a talk on one of the Nats summer weekend visits, but with a difference. The trip that she decided upon was the 2010 trip to Speyside, but it was going to be a very different talk to the short talk she gave just after the trip.

The difference was that this talk was the summation of three trips to Speyside, based at the Balavil Hotel in Newtonmore (below), all made in the same year. The first one was the recce trip she made to plan for the Nats visit in May. The third visit came about when Anne had a summer holiday in Speyside a few weeks after the Nats weekend. So she had three trips, all well photographed, but the question was how to make a talk out of three trips to the same area? The wonderful idea that Anne had was to use the three trips to look at a number of sites, but to do this as if it was a time lapse sequence, and it worked (see photos on page 15). We saw trees just coming into leaf, through to full leaf. At other sites we saw the beginning of flowering in plants developing into full flower. As an idea it worked really well, and it was a view of an area that we seldom see, thank you Anne.



Barry Caudwell

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION AND AGM

10th March

The AGM was to be the last physical meeting of the Nats for a while due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown shortly afterwards.

After the formal business of the meeting the results of the 2019 photographic competition for the Kim Eberst Trophy were announced. In a change to recent years the judging was done by last year's winner, Jon Cook, along with Lorna Ward and Colin McLeod from the Nats Council. This is a pattern which seemed to work successfully and will be repeated in the future. The subject was "Interesting Natural History". The eleven entries, in order of receipt, were:

Whitethroat in the Sidlaws - Joy Cammack
Blue Butterfly Ball - Alban Houghton
Carnoustie Palm - Colin Reid (Gorse re-sprouting from a cut trunk)
Winter Sun - Liz Olejnik
Fishing - Jim Smith (Sea eagle)
Nettle Seeds for Lunch - Anne Reid (Bullfinch)
Nectaring - Stevie Smith (Hummingbird hawkmoth)
Me and My Shadow - Darell Berthon (Darter dragonfly)
Great Yellow Bumblebee - Wendy Irons
Boletus calopus at Loch Faskally - Jim Cook
A Lady's Smock with a Butterfly showing Orange Tips - Barbara Bell

The winner was Stevie Smith with her beautiful close-up of a hovering hummingbird hawkmoth with its tongue extended into a bramble flower. She was presented with the trophy and a certificate. Second was Alban Houghton's photograph of a group of blue butterflies feeding on stony ground and third was Jim Smith's fishing sea eagle with its talons extended. Both received certificates.

Anne Reid

The winning photo is in the colour section on page 15

SUMMER ACTIVITIES

When the first lockdown was announced, starting on 23rd March, the Nats, along with a large number of other organisations had to cancel all their planned summer activities. We were restricted to staying at home and not travelling, except for essential purposes. We all became very familiar with the walks available from our front doors.

A couple of weeks in we realised that it would be good to keep everyone in touch, so it was decided that it would be good to have a Newsletter to send out to all members reporting on wildlife sightings and as a means of communication. Some people were already on the Nats Facebook group and used that to keep in touch. The first Newsletter, sent on 2nd April, was very short and was sent by email to as many members as we had details for. It was sent to everyone else by post, with a request to supply an email address if one was available. We now only post 4 copies (plus one hand-delivered), with the rest electronic.

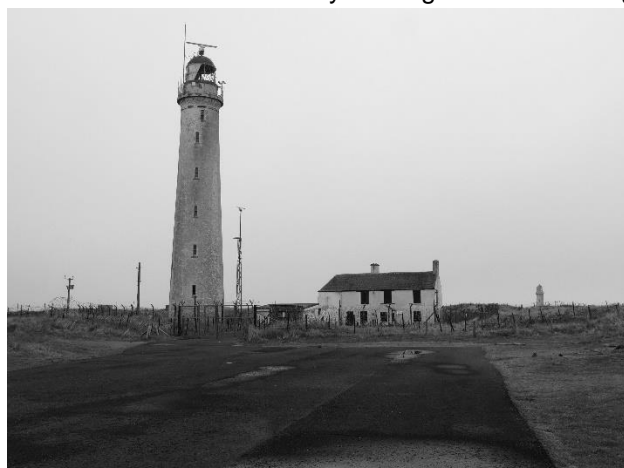
By the time we got to the second Newsletter on 12th April, Lorna was producing a digest of the Facebook page for inclusion, as not everyone uses Facebook. This, along with a pleasing number of other contributions from members, resulted in a publication of around eight pages which has been the pattern ever since. To begin with Newsletters were weekly, but in August we decided to move to every two weeks, as life appeared to be becoming less restricted.

BARRY BUDDON

13th - 14th June

Sunday should have been the Barry Buddon joint outing day, so I decided to go anyway as it is, conveniently, within five miles of home (the advised travel distance limit at the time). In view of the forecast, I decided that the Saturday gave a slightly better chance of dry weather, so I went in from the Barry level crossing (no cars, I'm afraid) and walked towards the lighthouse in the gently drizzling haar. It dried up a bit as I reached the Spion Kop Road junction, so I actually went down to the lighthouse, sadly not in use this year for our moth traps. The photo (next page) shows it with gates closed and none of our cars. There were lots of **skylarks** singing in that area and I also saw two juvenile **stonechats**.

A patch of **crosswort** (*Cruciata laevipes*) in full flower shone out in the gloom. The only birds on the shore were two rather lonely-looking **black-headed gulls**.



Back up the Spion Kop Road I heard the **cuckoo** several times (Alban had heard it from the nearby cycle track a couple of times). It was moving around but I didn't get a sighting of it, unfortunately. Otherwise the birds were as expected with the most obvious being all the singing **willow warblers** and **linnets** on top of the flowering **gorse** bushes. At the grassy bivouac site there were three **mistle thrushes** and two **great spotted woodpeckers**. When I got to the pond at Cowbyres it started to rain heavily so I headed for the car which was only ten minutes away.

Despite less than ideal weather conditions the bird total for Saturday was 38 species, though there were no butterflies or any other invertebrates apart from **spittle bugs** (see page 24) which were recorded for the survey.

Having been rained off, I went back to Cowbyres on Sunday morning, mainly to look for invertebrates. More luck this time with **azure** and **blue-tailed damselflies**, a **common heath moth**, a **silver ground carpet moth** and, slightly surprisingly, a roosting male **common blue butterfly**. It was good to see that the **swans** had a family of three cygnets and there were also at least three juvenile **coots** on the pond. I managed to add six species to my bird list, bringing the tally for the two days to 44 species - not bad for the less than ideal conditions.

Anne Reid

TRIP TO BARRY BUDDON - BARRY AND CATHY

14th June

Having been locked down in the Sidlaws since 23rd March, we decided to take a socially isolated walk to Barry Buddon. The camp was open but cars could not drive in as is usual on a joint visit. In addition, the weather forecast was not very hopeful, it was rather damp. We arrived about 11 o'clock and entered near Monifieth golf course. We walked up the path which runs outside the camp by mistake, seeing a male **linnet**, **rabbit** and **moles**, as betrayed by fresh molehills. For Lepidoptera we had to settle for an adult **cinnabar moth**, *Tyria jacobaeae*, sitting on vegetation and several **silver-ground carpet**, *Xanthorhoe montanata*, on the wing.

Re-entering the camp at the Barry rail crossing we walked back to the car via Cowbyres Ponds, pausing to investigate various small tracks off the "main road" which looked hopeful for Lepidoptera, however little was evident. There were a spectacular number of **swifts** and **swallows**, also **house martins**, flying overhead near the woodland. A pair of **roe deer**, a doe and a buck, peered at us across a rushy semi-wooded area. They must be used to people as they did not scarper but instead observed us from a distance.

We spent some time at Cowbyres where a **common blue butterfly**, *Polyommatus icarus*, was hunkered down on the vegetation. A search for **green hairstreak** was not successful but there were two species of **damselfly** perched on vegetation - the **azure** and the **blue-tailed**. We were excited to get a goodish view of a **wood tiger**, *Parasemia plantaginis*, which was hovering low in the herbage. At the time we guessed that it might be egg-laying or producing a pheromone trail. However, examining the photo later, we could see pectinate antennae and hind-wing colour more characteristic of a male. The males are said to fly around looking for the more sedentary females which hide in the vegetation. The **common heath**, *Ematurga atomaria*, and the **timothy tortrix**, *Aphelia paleana*, also turned up. Another photo, of mysterious, neatly rolled, suspended parcels formed from birch leaves later proved to be of interest. These are likely to be the work of a **birch leaf roller**, a beetle belonging the genus *Deporaus* possibly *Deporaus betulae*.

Close to the military base, on a pile of road-making material, we saw a yellow-flowered member of the Boraginaceae, *Amsinckia micrantha*, **common fiddleneck**, a plant introduced from N America. Thanks to Brian Ballinger for identifying it for us.

Barry and Cathy Caudwell

BAXTER PARK

11th August

Covid restrictions were eased and permitted gatherings of up to 15 people from five households. On this basis we decided that some kind of Nats outing might be possible. If more than the permitted number of people turned up, then we would make as many separate groups as necessary to comply with the guidance. On the evening a bold eleven members arrived (see photo) and were duly split into two formal groups, which splintered even further, as is usual with Nats outings. Much of our effort was in recording plants for the BSS Urban Flora scheme which, in the absence of Brian Ballinger, fell to Anne to record.

Parts of the park had been left with the grass unmown, to reduce the amount of upkeep needed, and we found some of these areas to be quite productive in our quest. There had also been formal flower beds near the Pavilion which had not been tended recently and yielded a good selection of weeds to add to the list. The most noteworthy plants seen were **salad burnet** (*Sanguisorba minor*), **yellow rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*), **corn marigold** (*Glebionis segetum*), **carrot** (*Daucus carota*) and **opium poppy** (*Papaver somniferum*), which were all found together in a small area near the north edge of the park and raised suspicions that a wildflower seed mix had been sown there. We recorded 78 species in all as having 'arrived naturally' and thus suitable for inclusion in the Urban Flora.

Meanwhile, attempts at a bird list were not so successful. **Blue tit**, **robin**, **magpie** and **woodpigeon** were seen in the park and **herring gulls** and **house martins** flew over. The fact that it was early evening meant that bird activity was low anyway and the looming clouds, which threatened thunder, may not have helped. In fact, it started to rain just as we were drawing things to a close before 8pm and there was, indeed, thunder.

Anne Reid



DUNDEE LAW

8th September

This was our second, and last, trial outing of the summer, before restrictions against the virus were tightened again. We met at the car park below the summit and, once again, concentrated on recording plants. We had not left the parking area when Lyn Jones noticed a grass, *Ceratochloa carinata*, which had not been recorded in Angus before.

The account below appeared in Newsletter 22.

Though there had been hot sun all morning and into the afternoon, by our meeting time of 4.30 it had clouded over and we could see the rain approaching down the river. Somewhere around 20 people gathered before we split up to explore and record plants, and birds. What had once been a planted wildflower meadow with **poppies** had regressed to a reasonably species-rich rough grassland with such things as **meadow cranesbill**, **yellow** (below), **field scabious**, **ox-eye daisy** and some **yellow rattle**. A single **poppy** flower suggested that some disturbance of the ground might bring the species back with little effort.

Once into the woods there were a lot of **nettles** around but also such 'escapes' as a *Crocasmia*, **buddleia** and **dame's violet**. The **brambles** were ripe, but I didn't have anything to put them in, unfortunately!

Once we had done a full circuit below the top some people climbed the steps to the war memorial while others retrieved their cars and came up the easy way. The rain became a little heavier which encouraged a swift retreat, down the lee side, to cars.

Barry commented that in addition to very few birds seen, there were also no nests visible where at least the untidy twig masses of **woodpigeons** might have been expected. On the insect front a single queen **bumblebee** (probably **buff-tailed**) flew past and Cathy found a small moth on a **ragwort** flower which she thought was a **nettle tap moth**.

A small group of fungal hunters found several interesting species, including **golden scalycap** (*Pholiota aurivella*).



Anne Reid

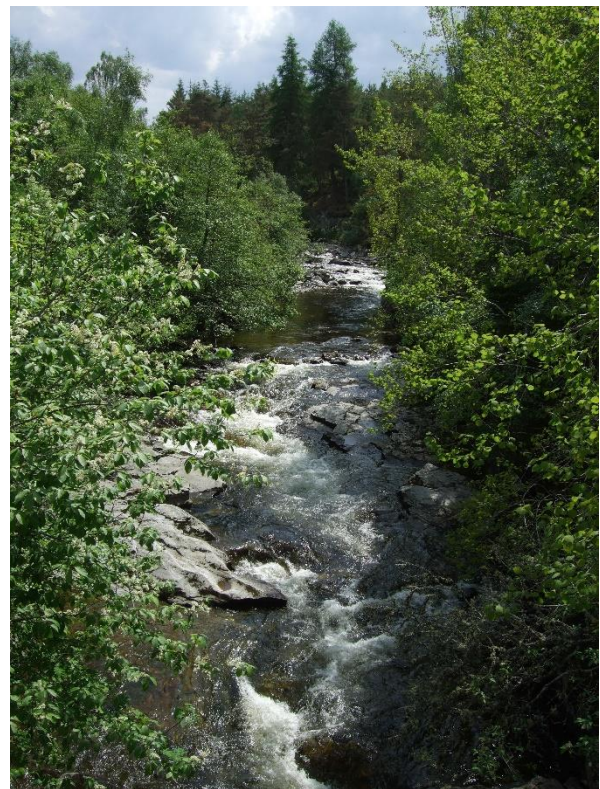
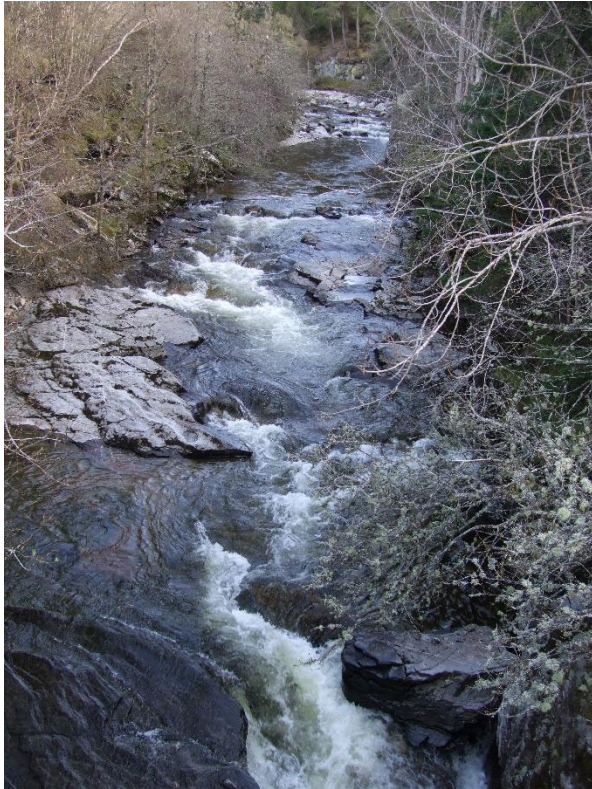
PHOTOGRAPHS



Northern marsh orchids at Newmills, Cluny, in Dave Trudgill's orchid meadow. See page 16.
Photo Dave Trudgill.



Nectaring by Stevie Smith
The winning entry in the Photographic Competition 2019, for the Kim Eberst Trophy



River Tromie at Tromie Bridge, 12th May, left, and 5th June, right. Comparative photos showing the change of season from the recce to the actual Nats Speyside weekend, 2010. See page 10. Photographs Anne Reid

AUTUMN LECTURES

We decided to go down the Zoom route for our Autumn Lectures. Despite being online, around 30 members signed on for each lecture, broadly similar to the number who would normally have attended in person in 'normal' circumstances.

ADVENTURE DOWN UNDER

Darell Berthon - 27th October

Darell and Wendy were fortunate that their trip to Australia and New Zealand started early enough in the year that they returned in March, not long before the Covid lockdown. They had some inkling that the pandemic was gathering momentum, but, fortunately, it didn't affect their plans.

Their travels started in Sydney where a short stay took in many of the sights and the Botanic Gardens where their birdwatching started. The **masked plover** (right, photo Darell Berthon) was reasonably common and noteworthy as the same bird was later seen in New Zealand but under the name **spur-winged plover**. While in Sydney they even managed to go to a meeting of the local Ornithological Society. They got themselves there by public transport, but the members very kindly drove them the hour back to their hotel.



A cruise was the leisurely method of getting to New Zealand, with opportunities for spotting some seabirds on the way, with **dolphins** and **fur seals** thrown in as a bonus. Stops at some South Island ports gave opportunities for birding where, in addition to native birds, there were plenty of introduced (and well-established) European species.

After disembarking at Auckland, Wendy and Darell covered a large part of the North Island, staying variously in rented flats, hotels and with Wendy's cousin in Hamilton, and having a hire car throughout. A particular highlight was the island of Tiritiri Matangi, which they visited twice. This restored reserve is home to a number of otherwise rare or threatened native species including **takahe**, **bellbirds**, **stitchbirds**, **tui**, **silvereyes** and **kokakos**, some of which were reintroduced to the island.

A very wide range of reserves were visited and a long list of birds generated. The very aggressive **variable oystercatchers**, which turned out to be defending young, were memorable. At the end of the trip they fitted in a trip to the Zealandia reserve, near Wellington. This is a project to restore an area to the ecosystems which prevailed before humans arrived on the islands. It is fully fenced against introduced mammals and the native birds and reptiles are now thriving.

The trip home was uneventful but the birding did not stop. At Dubai airport, while being taken out to their plane, a **hoopoe** flew across the tarmac. Return home was rather colder than they had been used to in New Zealand, and lockdown was imminent.

Anne Reid

ORCHIDS IN OUR MEADOW AND GARDEN

Dave Trudgill - 10th November

A small advantage of the fact that we are currently having to do everything online is that, even though I am not near Dundee, I have been able to join some of the Nats lectures this winter. I was pleased to be able to hear Dave Trudgill's interesting description of the development of an orchid meadow on the land that he and his wife Jean own at Cluny near Blairgowrie. The Nats had hoped to visit the site in summer 2020 so we were able to see what had been missed, and what hopefully can be visited in 2021.

The site started life as an arable field and therefore initially had high nutrient levels from the addition of fertilisers but, over time, these have diminished and are now significantly lower than the adjacent field which is still used for crops. The Trudgills have sought to develop a range of habitats within the site to suit as many different species of native orchid as possible, including a pond in the lower lying area.

Over the years they have sown seed of almost all of the native orchid species and now have a good display of many of these. Earlier in the season the **northern marsh orchids** (page 14 for photo) dominate and into the summer there are lots of **common spotted orchids** but also the less familiar **butterfly orchids**. The latest to flower are the helleborines – there are both **marsh helleborine** and **broad-leaved helleborine** in different habitats within the meadow. Orchids aren't the only plants within the meadow as a number of other grassland plants including **cowslips**, **yellow rattle** and **ox eye daisy** also thrive there.

The site also borders the Lunan Water which adds another habitat. In spring there is an impressive display of **daffodils** along the bank and in summer hundreds of **roach** from the nearby Loch Marlee come into the burn to spawn. There are also **beavers** in the area and, while these are mainly nocturnal, Dave has managed to get some photos of them out in the daylight, including a kit (right).

We also heard about their efforts to increase the range of soil conditions and the hard work involved in removing the turf and top layer of soil before spreading lime in a bid to create a more alkali soil. It seemed that the jury was still out as to whether it was worth all of the effort!

Dave gave a most interesting talk and, to me at least, it was a revelation of how many native species of orchids there are, and how varied they are.



Mary Reid

WHAT PLANT IS THAT? HOW USEFUL ARE SMARTPHONE APPS?

Hamlyn (Lyn) Jones - 24th November

In recent years many apps have been developed for smartphones and some have been produced for plant identification. In this Zoom talk Lyn described his studies of these apps and, in particular, those that automatically identify uploaded images. Potentially these could be a helpful addition to our plant identification resources, perhaps mainly for beginners, but also for those difficult plants that are not identified to family at first sight.

Lyn selected 38 native and naturalised British plant species, as well as some plant images from his collection. These showed typical features of the species. He tested 10 of the free automatic apps and gave each 5 attempts to identify each image. The answers received were variable at times, even when the same picture was presented to the same app. Some species were successfully identified by all apps, whereas others gave more difficulty and some were not identified by any app.

The apps assessed included Flora Incognita, Google Lens, Plant id, Plantnet and Seek. The average correct score of these 5 apps was 44% to species, 56% to genus and 65% to family. The only one that does not require internet access is Seek. These apps are being modified as time goes on and some may have improved since the study was undertaken.

Lyn emphasised that a clear image without confusing background is important. That can be difficult to achieve at times.

The conclusion was that, although these apps may be useful sometimes, they are no substitute for floras, books, keys and botanical knowledge at the present time. Those apps which upload images need to be used with some caution, as they can mislead, although they may improve with time.

We need to hang onto our plant books, at least in the immediate future.

Brian Ballinger

Note: The link to the listing of apps for plant identification is at https://visual-flora.org.uk/Useful_Links.pdf

THREE WOODS AND A POND

Brian Ballinger - 8th December

This, our last talk of the autumn, should really have been entitled 'Two and a Half Woods and no Pond' since Brian had sold part of a wood and the pond since the last time he talked on the subject. He gave a summary of each site and showed some of the natural history found there.

The wood many of us are familiar with is Brownie Wood, near Gauldry in Fife, which Brian can see across the river from his house in Dundee. He reminded us of its varied wildlife and how the disused quarry in the wood had been cleared and now contains *Callitriche* and has regular **frogspawn**. There is a tangle of **honeysuckle** in places in addition to **cherry laurel**, **holly**, **birch**, **rowan** and planted **conifers**. **Badgers** and **red squirrels** thrive and there is remarkably little vandalism considering how close to housing the wood is situated.

Brian's pond was situated on the south edge of the Sidlaws, beside the road, and is known as Dam Pond (below, photo Brian Ballinger). It had a varied selection of resident birds with **coots**, **moorhens** and **mute swans** nesting and a range of small birds in the surrounding **willows** and bushes.



The margins had a varied flora, including **knapweed**, **scabious** and **red campion**, but the **ash** trees show signs of dieback disease. The pond, bought in 1998, was sold recently, to a nearby farmer who owns **alpacas**.

Tarroul Wood is in Caithness and has two parts, one on each side of the railway line which made access to the southern part difficult. The southern half of the wood was sold in 2019. The rest has **lodgepole pine** which is dying but also regenerating, and, along the damp ground beside the Burn of Winless, a range of typical marsh plants including **bog myrtle**, **bog asphodel**, **cotton grass**, **marsh ragwort** and a

number of **sedges**. It also has the northernmost record of the **ivy-leaved duckweed** (*Lemna trisulca*). Such enviable species as **water vole** and **large heath butterfly** are also present.

Garrick Wood in Easter Ross is near Brian's 'second home' in Fearn near Tain. Here there is heathland with self-seeded **pine**, **birch** and **bracken**. Boggy areas have **sundew** and more **bog asphodel**, and **green tiger beetles** and **wood ants** are found in the drier areas. **Lesser twayblade**, **creeping lady's tresses** and the **clubmoss** *Lycopodium clavatum* are also seen here.

Brian's summary of the characteristics and natural history of all these sites showed his enthusiasm for recording as many different groups as possible and the contrast between the sites was very obvious from what we were shown.

Anne Reid

MEMBERS' ARTICLES

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

This section was progressing steadily with the usual contributions coming in until mid-April, shortly after the start of the Covid lockdown. After this, most observations were included in the Newsletters. To add variety, some entries from the Newsletters have been incorporated into this listing to reflect people's observations. It must be remembered that we were all confined to very local walks for the first couple of months before being allowed further afield in July.

Margaret Bainbridge	MB	Monifieth
Brian Ballinger	BB	Dundee, West End
Jim Cook	JC	Broughty Ferry
Alban Houghton	AH	Broughty Ferry
Liz Olejnik	LO	Wormit
Anne Reid	AR	Monifieth
Colin Reid	CR	Monifieth
Stevie Smith	SS	St Vigeans, Arbroath
Brian Williamson	BW	Dundee, Law area

5th January About 25 **waxwings** in the garden. BB.

7th January Saw a **fox** run across the road in Broughty Ferry, not far from the former Eastern primary, at 5.30am. AR.

17th January A **magpie** was rattling loudly in the garden in the morning just as it was just getting light, a sound not heard in the vicinity for a long time. I couldn't see, though, what was causing the alarm, perhaps a prowling cat. JC.

21st January A **peacock butterfly** basking in neighbour's garden on a sunny, warm day. SS.

27th January A **woodpecker** drumming in Brownie Wood, Gauldry. BB.

1st February Early on a quiet morning I woke to hear a distant **song thrush** starting to tune up. Although it only sang for a short time, was this bird the first herald of the dawn chorus? JC.

4th February Two **robins** behaving in an almost friendly manner to each other for the last couple of days. None of the usual aggression around the bird feeders - they must be thinking of pairing up. AR.

5th February A very large **bumblebee**, probably a queen **buff-tailed**, flew past the upstairs window on a sunny morning. It has not been particularly warm, but not cold either. Not many flowers are out yet, unfortunately. AR.

5th February A lonely **red fox** was barking its distinctive calls at about 4 am somewhere in the area. JC.

5th February At 8.30pm a large **fox** crossed the road at the junction of Strathern and Claypotts Roads, unhurriedly scrambled up a low wall, and disappeared into a garden. AR.

21st February **Frogs** have arrived in the garden pond. No spawn yet. BB.

27th February Heard the rapid tapping sounds of a **great spotted woodpecker** on an old resonant tree a number of times in the oakwood close to Carsegowniemuir Quarry in Angus. JC.

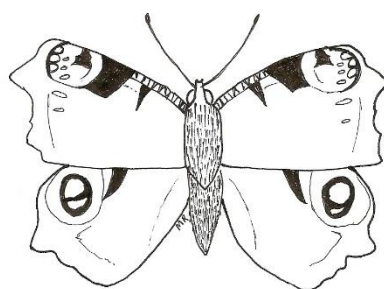
3rd March Woke early on a rather blustery morning to hear a **song thrush** singing strongly from next door in the pre-dawn darkness. It was still going half an hour later when a **blackbird** joined in as the light strengthened. A while later the distinctive calls of a **great tit** could be heard. Was it the dawn chorus at last? JC.

6th March Heard my first singing **skylark** of the year, high over the field just to the north of Carsegowniemuir Quarry. The **great spotted woodpecker** was still drumming energetically in the oakwood to the south. JC.

12th March A small flock of **fieldfares** flew over Carsegowniemuir Quarry, an unusual sight this winter. Has anyone else noticed the low numbers of these and **redwings** this year, or does this only apply in central Angus? JC.

15th March A queen **tree bumblebee** quartering the garden looking for a nest site. AR.

17th March **Frogspawn** in the garden pond in the last couple of days. BB.



19th March A dead **badger** could be seen lying beside the A90 road between Dundee and Forfar, not far from the Inverarity turn-off. Presumably it had been hit by a vehicle; we can only hope that the poor unfortunate creature died instantly. JC.

19th March A **chiffchaff** seen on Carnoustie golf course. Only a hint of a song. AR.

24th March At Broughty Ferry LNR (Shiell Street), a singing **chiffchaff**, a bit later than last year, and a charm of **goldfinches**. AH.

25th March A pair of **bullfinches** could be seen in the garden in a flowering exotic *Prunus* tree, snipping the fresh buds off. They're the first I've seen in the area for a long time. Ah well, it doesn't matter if the tree lost a few buds but it was good to watch these handsome birds for a few minutes. I moved off quietly and left them to it. Perhaps the quietness of the Covid-19 lockdown had encouraged them. JC.

30th March A **seven-spot ladybird** found in the garden. MB.

7th April A **buzzard** circled fairly low over the large houses a little further down the road, the first I've seen in the area for ages. JC.

8th April In the shadow of the Seven Arches viaduct I was standing listening to a singing **blackcap** - my first of the year - when I spotted a **bat** flitting about at treetop height. I stood and watched it for over 5 minutes and tried to take a photo, with little success. AR.

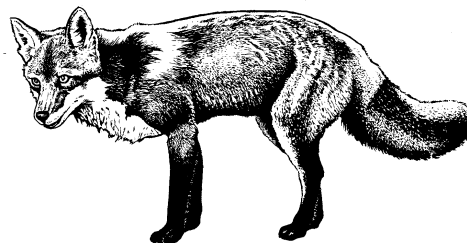
15th April An **orange tip butterfly** in the garden, mid-morning. MB.

11th April In the Law Woods a **chiffchaff** was calling (my first summer visitor in this area), and also **wren, magpie, blackbird, great tit, dunnock, house sparrow** and **crow**. On the way back from the Law into Adelaide Place, I spotted the following in flower: **lesser celandine, coltsfoot, daisy, groundsel, thale cress** and **blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*). BW.

19th April Butterfly numbers are building up. I have had **small tortoiseshell, green-veined white** and a male **orange tip** in the garden this week and found a **comma** near the Dighty. AR.

19th April Delighted to see a pair of **jays** in the Law Woods. I have never seen a pair in these woods so I hope they are setting up home in competition with the **magpies**. **Jays** are seen regularly on Balgay Hill and I have always assumed those appearing on the Law were visitors from Balgay. Seeing **peacock butterflies** daily. BW.

26th April Saw a fine **red fox** in beautiful condition, briefly, at around 8 pm along the Arbroath Road at the back entrance to Craigie High School. JC.



27th April At last I heard my first **willow warbler** in the Law Woods. There is a fine display of **red campion** in flower on the south side of the summit. BW.

1st May Heard my first **blackcap** of the season calling strongly in the garden during a lovely sunny morning. JC.

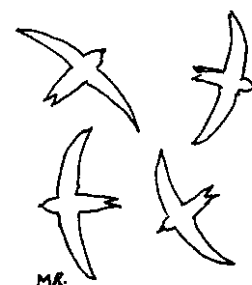
5th May Saw a **buzzard** circling high over the road and houses, all the while being harassed by a **carriage crow**, at about 2 pm. JC.

5th May Several **orange tip butterflies** round the Dighty this afternoon and I had a very quick glimpse of a **kingfisher** as it flashed past. AR.

7th May This morning really felt like summer - sunny and warmer. I heard a **cuckoo** from the Barry Buddon cycle path. Also several **swallows** and five species of warbler. AH.

11th May I finally saw a **swift** over the house. AR.

11th May We watched an **otter** eat a fish on the water's edge of the Tay about a mile west of Wormit Bay. The tide was out a little way and it wasn't until it had finished eating and walked along the shore that I could be sure what it actually was as it had been head on. LO.



17th May Woke early to hear a **song thrush** singing strongly somewhere close by the bedroom window. It's great to know the population round here seems to be thriving - as is also shown by the numbers of broken, fat (and all too well-fed!) **garden snail** shells littering the paths. It's good that we're doing each other a good turn, fewer snails in the garden and more dinners for them. JC.

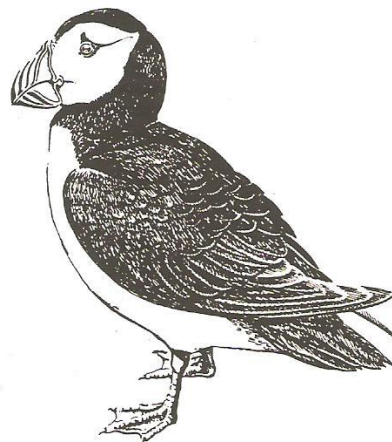
17th May Rode up to Clatto Reservoir and Templeton Woods on my bike. On the water I was surprised to see over 100 **lesser black-backed gulls** (where do they breed?), **herring gulls**, a single **tufted duck**, six male **mallards** and a **moorhen**. The star of the day was a nesting pair of **great crested grebes** on one of the islands. BW.

- 19th May** On a warm sunny morning several **butterflies** were warming themselves on the house wall. One at least was a **peacock** and another was, I think, a **red admiral**. JC.
- 20th May** In the morning the rather boring calls of a **greenfinch** could be heard from the garden next door. It's great to know that there are at least a few of them still around. JC.
- 25th May** I saw three very healthy-looking **foxes** together near Reres Park on my early morning walk (7am). Then another two days later on Navarre Street. You just need to be out and about early or late to see them at this end of the town. CR.
- 2nd June** A **chiffchaff** was calling repeatedly in the late afternoon in the patch of woodland close to the entrance to Dundee and Angus College at the bottom of Strathern Road, where I'd heard them before. It's good that they're back, presumably breeding, in the same place. JC.
- 3rd June** A ride along the Dighty through Trottick Ponds from Claverhouse to Trottick gave a nice view of a **grey wagtail** and flowering **water crowfoot** in the water. Still plenty of **red campion**. BW.
- 10th June** What I thought was a pair of **bullfinches** coming to my feeders now appears to be at least two pairs. Five (3 male, 2 female) were all at the feeders together today. Also, rather unexpectedly, a male **siskin** appeared briefly - not the usual time of year. The **great tit** pair have noisy young in a nestbox - Colin is watching closely for fledging as all the coming and going is visible from where he is working at home. AR.
- 11th June** Walking from Balmerino west along the Fife Coastal Path through woodland I found **red campion**, **water avens**, **wood avens**, **bugle**, and two species that were new for me – **sweet woodruff** (*Galium odoratum*) and **sanicle** (*Sanicula europaea*). I discovered that the latter has an interesting history as a medicinal plant in many countries, especially for treating burns. This woodland walk is one of the best I can recommend, with views to the Tay for a picnic, beautiful mixed vegetation and the paths and bridges much improved in recent times. BW.
- 16th June** When the fog lifted Jan and I walked to the top of Craigowl Hill. The big surprise was a **short-eared owl** near the summit, two **buzzards** on thermals and great close views of several **meadow pipits** and **skylarks**. By the roadside I found **speedwell** (*Veronica officinalis*), **germander speedwell**, **bird's-foot trefoil**, **lady's smock**, **heath bedstraw** (*Galium saxatile*), **lady's mantle**, **wild thyme** and **white clover**. The **blaeberrys** were not yet in flower. A **small heath butterfly** was noted. BW.
- 30th June** We had a female **tawny mining bee**, *Andrena fulva*, in our garden in Monifieth this afternoon. It was working the **white clover** in the lawn (grass). MB.
- 2nd July** A solitary **brimstone moth** was trying to disguise itself on a garden wall along Strathern Road near the College. JC.
- 4th July** I spotted the **dolphins** from our upstairs window, after my attention was drawn to two boats, well out in the river, which were hardly moving. Close inspection with binoculars revealed several **dolphins** around the boats, jumping clear of the water a couple of times, the first time I have actually seen them in the river. CR.
- 6th July** A small adult **frog** was hiding in a mossy place in the garden, the first I've ever seen there. As far as I know there are no ponds anywhere around about, so how did it get to that spot and how far had it come? I put it back in a safer damp place and left it in peace. JC.
- 10th July** After seeing that Anne had been off to Auchmithie **puffin** hunting, I decided to go as well to see if I could spot any for Clementine our grand-daughter to see today. We were very lucky and saw a few flying about, some bobbing on the water, then one flew in front of us to land on the cliff. This was all I could have hoped for. The rain came on and as we sheltered under the cliff Clementine spotted a beautiful **garden tiger moth** on a sandstone rock. So we were very pleased as we also saw **fulmars** and various other birds including **guillemot**. LO.
- 12th July** A warm sunny morning and open flowers brought a number of butterflies into the garden. A total of 11 were sunning themselves on the house wall, 9 of them were **small tortoiseshells**. The other two near the top of the wall were, I think, **red admirals**. JC.
- 15th July** A trip to St Cyrus coincided with the best display I have ever seen of the **clustered bellflower**, which was flowering profusely all over the dunes. The yellow **crosswort** was an



excellent contrast. **Swallows** were still around the deserted buildings, **house martins** had nests on the visitor centre and the **peregrine** was spotted high up on the cliff. AR.

25th July On this sunny but windy day I walked south along the Angus Coastal Path from Auchmithie to Castlesea Bay and to the headland at the south end to watch seabirds. On the outward walk I enjoyed watching the **house martins'** aeronautical skills on the cliff sides and skimming the barley crops, and a **whitethroat** sang close by in the hedge. A couple of **small tortoiseshell** and **red admiral butterflies** settled on the sheltered path. I took the steep path down towards the headland and spent a happy time watching the antics of the cliff dwellers. More than 30 **shags** sat on the lowest rocks; the **herring gulls** and a **greater black-backed gull** with juveniles dominated the next higher platform, and the **kittiwakes** sat secure on their well-constructed nests on the highest ledges. Some **guillemots** and a few **eidlers** were bobbing on the water near the cliffs and **gannets** passed by further from shore. Back in the village I walked north along the street to a view point and found that there were ten **puffins** on the water near the natural arch. BW.



7th August A visit to Clatto Reservoir today gave clear views of a family of **great crested grebes** – definitely two adults with three juveniles. Earlier this summer it looked as though rising water levels had spoiled their chances of breeding at Clatto, but they must have rebuilt the nest and started again. There was also a **little grebe**, **coots**, **moorhens**, **mallard** and **gulls** (**black-headed**, **lesser black back** and **herring gulls**). At home I was delighted to spot a **willow warbler** feeding in the **hawthorn** tree beside our window. BW.

19th August Four beautiful, freshly-emerged **peacock butterflies** were sunning themselves on the front of the house in the early afternoon. JC.

13th September On a walk from Clatto Reservoir and back through Templeton Woods it was good to see that the **great crested grebe** family are thriving with all three juveniles out on the water. A couple of **moorhens** were pecking around on the shorelines and the usual **gulls** on the water. In the ditch I found **marsh woundwort** (*Stachys palustris*), a plant new to me. BW.

17th September At about 9.30am Colin called me with a sense of urgency to say that he had just seen a **ferret** or **polecat** under the hedge in our garden. We followed it in behind the **Buddleia** and I grabbed my phone in the hope that it would show itself amongst the **ivy** in the corner and allow a photo. It eventually peered out at us more in curiosity than fear, suggesting an escaped **ferret**. Barry informs me that the pink nose makes it a **ferret** - a **polecat** would have a black nose. AR.



29th September A highlight of a visit to Murton NR, Forfar was to find three **green sandpipers** (two have been regular winter visitors last season and now another has turned up). There were also a few **wigeon**, **mallard** and **teal**, a **mute swan** family and ten overflying **lapwing**. Two **roe deer** were browsing at the far end of the lochan next to the first hide. BW.

8th October The early afternoon was sunny and warm enough to bring out three **red admiral butterflies** at Usan, near Montrose. The birding highlight was a **treecreeper**. Later in the afternoon, at the Montrose SWT visitor centre, I learned that the last count of **pinkfoot geese**, on Friday 2nd, was 77,200 with much coming and going over the Basin. AR.

29th October Heard and saw a few **fieldfares** in Carsegowniemuir quarry, the first there this autumn. JC.

30th October On a late walk from Rosemill to the old Dronley Station on the Newtyle Railway Path I counted no less than 13 **buzzards** all 'socially spaced' and presumably looking for **earthworms**, in a field of emerging winter barley. In the same field was a flock of restless **starlings** and also some **fieldfares** which, when viewed in full sunshine, looked splendid with

their ochre breasts and slate grey heads. In the trees and bushes along the path were other delights, especially a flock of **yellowhammers** feeding in an old **apple** tree covered in **lichens**, and group of **tree sparrows**, **goldfinches** and **chaffinches**. A **pied wagtail** flitted about in a horse paddock, and **jays**, **magpies**, **crows** and **woodpigeons** were also seen. On the fast-flowing Dighty near Rosemill I found a **heron** and a lone **goosander**. BW.

10th November A female **blackcap** seen eating the **honeysuckle** berries outside the kitchen window at lunch time. AR.

10th November At Clatto Reservoir the fog was thicker than I expected but I was able to count no fewer than 26 **goosanders**, **coot**, **moorhen**, **mallard**, **mute swan**, and **black-headed gulls** on the water and **yellowhammer**, **robin**, **blackbird** and **duncock** during the soggy walk round Templeton Woods. The islands in the reservoir are now completely under water. BW.

23rd November Woke some time during the night to hear a **tawny owl** calling some distance away. It's the first I've heard in a long while. JC.

25th November I saw the first **blackcap** (male) of the winter in our garden. BW.

2nd December A fine adult **fox** seen in a back garden in Buddon Drive, Monifieth. MB

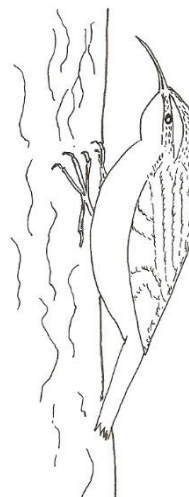
3rd December First snow and frost brought birds to the garden feeders this morning. I was surprised to find two **jays** and two **magpies** visiting us besides **bullfinch**, **robin**, **blackbird**, **chaffinch**, **goldfinch**, **great tit**, **coal tit**, **blue tit** and **house sparrows**. Up on Balgay Hill I watched a **buzzard** looking for a meal amongst deep grass, accompanied by six **magpies** in the tree above. BW.

18th December On a visit to Montrose Basin I visited the Lurgies to see what was about on an incoming tide. The answer was 'not a lot!' The best birds of the visit were a **treecreeper** and a **goldcrest** with a **tit** flock, near the car park, a **little egret** on the Basin and a **kingfisher** over one of the pools amongst the **gorse** bushes. AR.

20th December I observed the **Great Conjunction** (of Jupiter and Saturn) at 5.00 pm through my telescope and had a fine view that even just managed to pick out rings of Saturn and three of Jupiter's moons. BW.

25th December A mid-morning phone call from Ronnie Young made it a very Happy Christmas indeed with the news that he'd taken his usual walk with the dogs up Carsegowniemuir Quarry and had just seen the first confirmed **red squirrel** sighting there. We'd had suspicions that squirrels had visited the site occasionally, leaving split hazel nuts and other signs but weren't absolutely sure. He'd reported what he thought was a squirrel several times in the previous few months but they were difficult to see in the lighting conditions high up in the trees, making it difficult to tell if they were grey or red. But this one was low down in a tree near the hide and the low winter sun shone right onto its beautifully lustrous red-brown coat. No doubt about it! And he's seen it once or twice more since. JC.

29th December A fine walk in the snow and sunshine in a circuit walk from Tullybaccart over Smithton Hill, Ardgarth Hill and Lundie Craigs gave a **wren** in the forest edge, a couple of **buzzards**, a pair of **stonechats** and a small flock of **goldfinches**. BW.



A VERY RARELY SEEN BIRD

1st April

I woke up early, shortly before 6 am, and groggily switched on Radio 4 on to hear the latest (bad) news. What I caught was Kate Humble with the 'tweet of the day', who with a straight face or, rather, voice was describing a very rarely-seen nesting bird, the **vernal jape**. She went on to detail the mottled, beautifully camouflaged male that was so difficult to see that he was virtually invisible and emitted fairly nondescript calls that were very difficult to recognise and trace. It took me a moment or two as I was surfacing to full consciousness to realise the date! It cheered me up and boosted my feelings before the upcoming news on the hour. Did anybody else catch the piece?

Jim Cook

A NETWORK OF PATHS

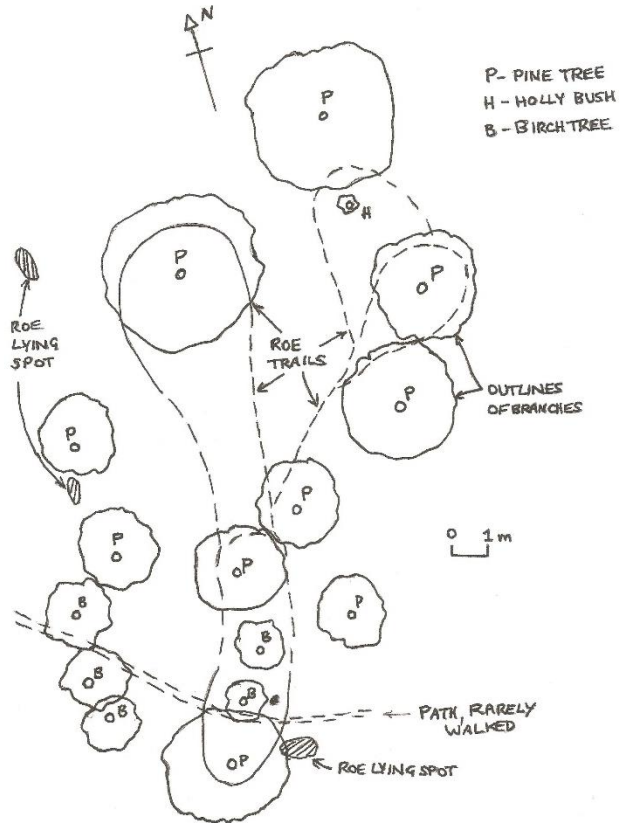
Spring 2020

After starting to visit the quarry again in July we found a complex pattern of narrow paths winding round a group of pine trees at the far end in area G4. Ronnie Young mentioned that he and the dogs very rarely visited the area. The paths passed under fairly low branches and curled round the trees to meet up again and were still fairly fresh although the grass was starting to grow back over them. But what was responsible for the network?

Fortunately, a small pile or two of droppings, several obvious deer sleeping patches nearby and the fact that we'd seen **roe deer** rutting paths in the quarry several times in the past few years indicated the culprits. Perhaps the total lack of disturbance in the early spring had encouraged the courting activities of one ardent roe deer buck (or possibly two?) chasing does in heat round and round and in and out between the trees prior to mating. Ronnie Ogg and Jim, along with some help from Calum, measured them as accurately as possible.

The diagram, drawn to scale, indicates the complexity of the network. Has anyone else seen a roe deer courting path network as complex as this?

Jim Cook



SPITTLE BUG SURVEY

At the March AGM meeting, Barry drew our attention to a survey of **spittle bugs**, the nymphs of **froghoppers**, also known as **cuckoo spit**. These sap-sucking insects had been implicated in the spread of the plant bacterial disease, *Xylella fastidiosa*, for which there is no known remedy. The survey was to better understand the distribution and preferred plant hosts of the froghoppers in the wild.

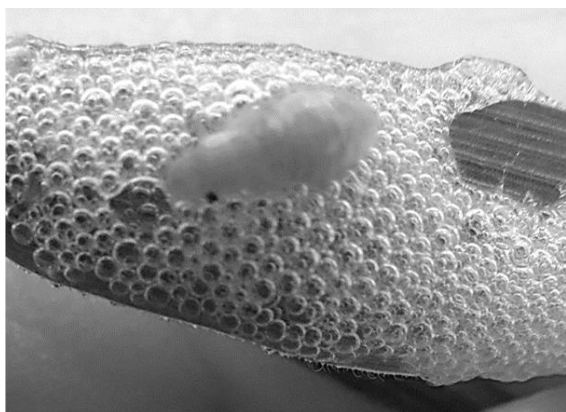
Several Nats, but mostly Anne and Colin, Barry and Cathy, Brian Williamson and Alban (as far as I know) noted the spittle bugs when they were out and about in June and early July, helped by the fact that the lockdowns were easing by then so we could get slightly further afield. All that was required was to gently reveal the 5mm (or smaller) nymph in the 'spittle' and identify it as either *Philaenus spumarius*, the **common froghopper** (opposite, left), with an all green nymph or as one of the *Pseudophilaenus* species (opposite, right), which have black markings. Results were then entered on the survey website, run by the University of Sussex. Inevitably, there are more species to be found in the south of England, but our task was relatively simple.

As might be expected, the first records were from open, sunny sites near the coast and the **common froghopper** was, indeed, the more frequently found, on a very wide selection of herbaceous plants. The *Pseudophilaenus* nymphs were only occasionally seen and then more on grasses than other plants. As the season progressed we were only finding them inland or in shady edges of woodland. The final record of the season, that I know about, was in the hills above Glen Lethnot on 18th July, where Colin was exploring some of the less-frequented parts of the Glen.

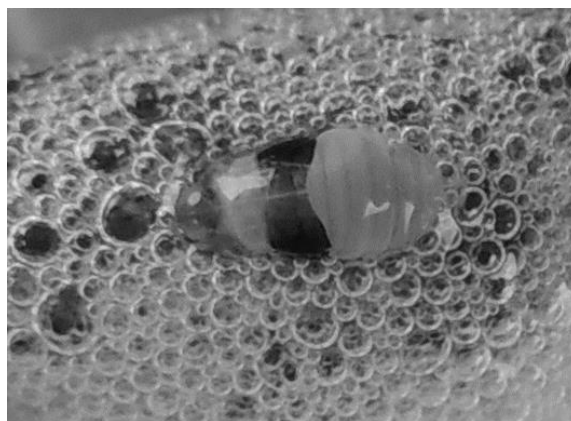
This was one of the simpler surveys I have taken part in and required only a little extra effort when out and about already. There was the opinion that the recording form online could have been better designed, but, though slightly cumbersome, it wasn't dreadful. We felt that our 'Citizen Science'

was making a real contribution to the wider picture, especially with relatively fewer naturalists in Scotland.

Anne Reid



Philaenus spumarius



Pseudophilaenus sp

CARSEGOWNIEMUIR QUARRY BARBECUE

Along with all our other summer activities, the Society barbecue, scheduled for 18th August, was cancelled due to the Covid situation.

However, a close family group, the McGregor clan, took the opportunity of the presence of the facilities at the quarry and organised their own barbecue there on Saturday 5th September. They had, of course, checked with the Youngs first but like any good Nats' members were welcome to visit and enjoy the quarry. In the event they chose a good day and by all accounts had a highly enjoyable – and very well fed – time. They were able to manhandle one of the picnic tables down (and then back up afterwards) but also took along their own large garden barbecue set with a cover (unused for several years) which they were good enough to donate to the Society. It too is sheltered under its own cover between the two picnic tables, above flood level.

Jim Cook

ORCHIDS ALONG BROUGHTY FERRY ROAD

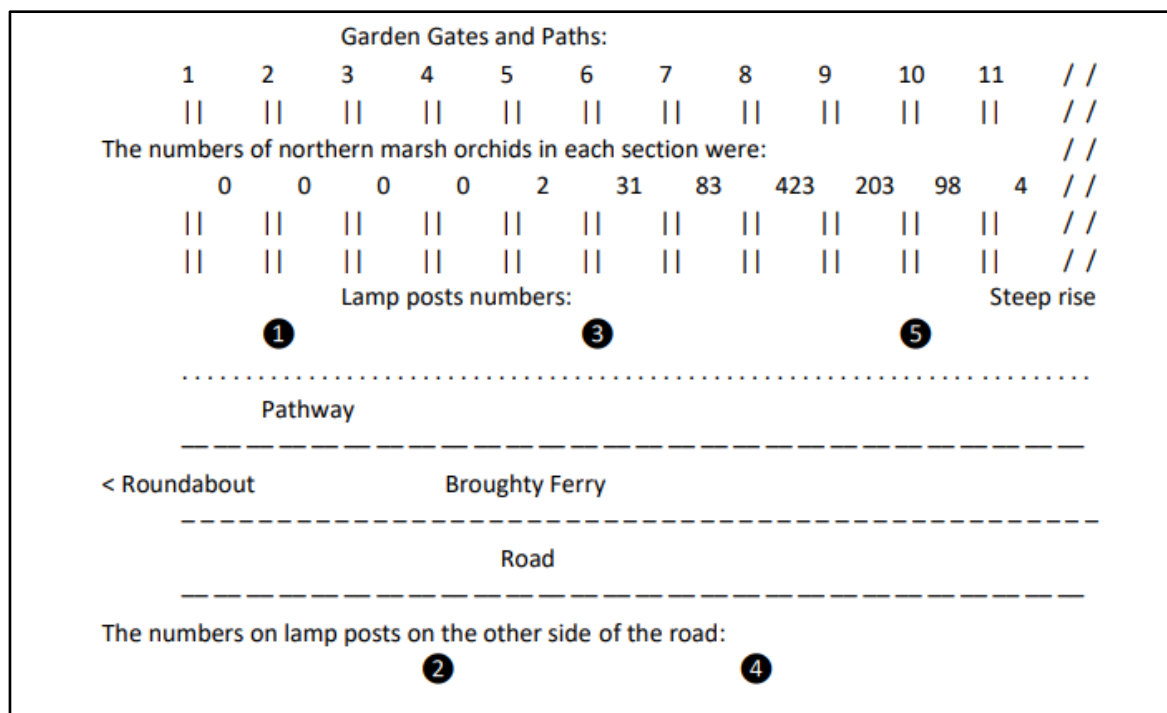
July 2020

The warm dry weather in spring and then the rain in early summer encouraged a great flush of orchids in the usual grass verge along the Broughty Ferry Road near the roundabout down to the Stannergate. In early July Brian Allan reported that he'd seen an estimated 1,000 **northern marsh orchids**.

A week or so later Brian and Jim met (socially distanced, of course!) to have a closer look. Brian counted a total of 7 spikes of **common orchids**, *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, and three spikes of possible hybrids. Jim spent time surveying the **northern marsh orchids**, *D. maculata*. Most but not all of them had finished flowering and could be seen as brown spikes in among the taller vegetation grown up around them. The large numbers and brown colours made them rather difficult to count accurately but it is possible to divide the area into countable portions.

The verge varied between approximately 10 to 15 metres wide from the roadside path to the garden walls and had not been mowed before then. The stretch surveyed runs from the roundabout along to where the verge rises steeply up to a drier plateau. Conveniently it is divided up into roughly equal widths by a series of mown paths down from the garden gates (many of them obviously never used) and the presence of three lamp posts (numbered 1, 3 and 5). A patchwork of drier and damper areas, presumably the remains of an old spring line, marks the grassland. These damp areas are

indicated by small clumps of rushes and spreads of several different sedges. A total of 58 species of higher plants were noted this year. The diagram illustrates the site.



The overall total more-or-less = **844 spikes**. This represents an increase of around 100 flowering spikes since they were counted six years ago. It's a rich site for Dundee, worth keeping a careful watch. There were numbers of small moths hiding in among the grass with hoppers and a few adults of **common brown grasshoppers**, *Chorthippus brunneus*, jumping about and two species of **agarics** in the grass near the pathway, **yellow stainer**, *Agaricus xanthodermus*, and **pavement mushroom**, *Agaricus bitorquis*, a bit further along.

If the orchids were to be counted more accurately next year, a group of volunteers at the right time of year would be a good idea. It shouldn't take long, less than an hour or so. Anybody interested?

Jim Cook

CORRIE FEE

8th October

Adam and I had a walk up Corrie Fee, to the top of the plateau, on a beautiful day. We set off from the car park at Glen Doll, with the sound of roaring **stags**, echoing in our ears from both sides of the glen, as we went. We only actually saw a couple of deer up the hillside after we left the cover of the trees. We saw a few **ravens** and **buzzards** higher up over the tops, but sadly no **golden eagles**.

There were a few last wild flowers in bloom, including blue **milkwort**, **devil's-bit scabious**, **harebell**, **lady's mantle**, **tormentil**, **buttercup**, **yarrow**, **thistle**, **bog cotton** and small sprigs of **ling** and **bell heather**. A few stunted **rowans** grew along the water's edge or in amongst boulders.

One **kestrel** hovered over the hill, possibly looking for **voles** of which there appeared to be plenty about. Our dog frequently pounced into the heather at the side of the path, only for us to see a vole scooting out at the far side and away to safety! I was surprised to see them so high up the hillside. On our way back down, before reaching the trees, we found a smallish furry black caterpillar on the side of the path which was moved to safety, but we were not able to identify it.

Two **herons** flew up from the burn as we approached the trees. On our arrival back at the car park, some four hours after setting off, there was a lot of noise coming from the tree tops near the cars. Ten or twelve **crossbills** were feeding in the tops of the trees, a lovely treat to finish off our lovely, exhilarating walk on a fabulous day.

Liz Olejnik

NATURAL HISTORY ON THE DOORSTEP

I sometimes sit on the sheltered bench at my front door for a coffee break, as long as the sun is shining(!). Beside the door are various pots of flowering plants. On Tuesday 13th October, after a wet start, the day improved and while I was sitting soaking up the sun a queen **buff-tailed bumblebee** (right) started feeding on the *Viola* flowers and a second one flew past. One of the **drone flies**, probably *Eristalis pertinax*, investigated the dwarf *Chrysanthemum* several times and three different species of smaller **hoverflies** were seen too. There was also a slightly dozy **wasp** which didn't stop to be identified.



A butterfly landed, just out of sight, on the *Cosmos* down the path so I went to investigate and found a **painted lady** (left) also enjoying the sun. As soon as I sat down again a **red admiral** flew past. Quite a good list for just sitting still in mid-October!



Update - Saturday 17th A rather dozy-looking **common carder bumblebee** was feeding on the *Chrysanthemum*, again in the sun. These may well be the last bumblebees of the season, though in mild winters there are sometimes worker bees seen at remaining flowers.

Anne Reid

DUNDEE IN BLOOM IN NOVEMBER

Being confined to the limited council area of the City of Dundee in this Covid year, I was considering options for botanical activities in November. I decided to do a tour of as many of the green places such as parks, nature reserves and cemeteries in the City as could easily be fitted into the limited daylight hours when it wasn't raining. The plan was to see how many of the wildflowers that had not been planted were in bloom at this sub-optimal time of the year, when most botanists have shelved their floras for the season. My previous survey in Easter Ross suggested that this was not the bleakest time for blooms, that honour belonging to February, after the frosts have done their worst.

On each visit I walked briskly round the main path of the site, noting all vascular plants in flower. No doubt a prolonged search would have yielded more. In the month of November from the 6th onwards I managed to go to 22 sites, including 6 cemeteries, 5 nature reserves and 11 parks. Some parks remained unvisited and I apologise to them. Anne Reid kindly came along on one occasion.

The cemeteries were: Western (18 species in flower), Barnhill (15), Balgay (10), Birkhill (8), Eastern (8) and The Howff (4).

The nature reserves were: Stannergate Grassy Beach (28 species in flower), Riverside Nature Park (22), Miley (8), Broughty Ferry Shiell Street (8) and Trottick Ponds (2).

The parks were: Dawson (15), Clatto (14), Lochee (13), Law Hill (12), Victoria (11), Magdalen Green (10), Dudhope (10), Camperdown (8), Caird (4), Balgay (3) and Templeton (2).

So Stannergate is the winner, closely followed by Riverside Nature Park and Western Cemetery. At this time of year coastal and more open sites tend to be more favoured. In the spring the woodland sites would have been further up the list.

Management is an important factor in these urban places, as the influences of herbicide application and close mowing were much in evidence. The Council is consulting on this and it is hoped they can be persuaded to reduce grass cutting in some places.

A total of 71 species were in flower with **daisy** (*Bellis perennis*) (photo, next page) in top spot on 12 sites, followed closely by **groundsel** (*Senecio vulgaris*) in 11 places. It was good to see *Fumaria*

capreolata (**white ramping fumitory**) and *Pastinaca sativa* (**wild parsnip**) still in flower at Stannergate. So, it is still worth venturing forth to look for wildflowers in November. Many more species are also there in vegetative form. I hope to repeat the exercise in the New Year to see how many plants are still in flower.

Brian Ballinger



Species List: *Alchemilla mollis*, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *Arrhenatherum elatius*, *Bellis perennis*, *Calystegia sylvatica*, *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, *Cardamine hirsuta*, *Centaurea nigra*, *Centaurea scabiosa*, *Cerastium fontanum*, *Cirsium arvense*, *Cirsium vulgare*, *Colchicum autumnale*, *Cymbalaria muralis*, *Cytisus scoparius*, *Digitalis purpurea*, *Epilobium montanum*, *Erodium cicutarium*, *Fumaria capreolata*, *Galium mollugo* (album), *Geum urbanum*, *Geranium x oxonianum*, *Geranium robertianum*, *Hedera helix* sl., *Heracleum sphondylium*, *Hieracium* agg., *Holcus lanatus*, *Hypericum androsaemum*, *Hypochaeris radicata*, *Knautia arvensis*, *Lamium purpureum*, *Lapsana communis*, *Lathyrus pratensis*, *Leontodon* (*Scorzonera*) *autumnalis*, *Leucanthemum vulgare*, *Lunaria annua*, *Lupinus x regalis*, *Matricaria discoidea*, *Melilotus altissimus*, *Myosotis arvensis*, *Papaver somniferum*, *Parietaria judaica*, *Pastinacea sativa*, *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, *Plantago lanceolata*, *Poa annua*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Ranunculus repens*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Rumex crispus*, *Senecio jacobaea* (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), *Senecio vulgaris*, *Silene dioica*, *Silene vulgaris*, *Sisymbrium officinale*, *Sonchus asper*, *Sonchus oleraceus*, *Stellaria graminea*, *Stellaria media*, *Tanacetum parthenium*, *Tanacetum vulgare*, *Taraxacum* agg, *Trifolium pratense*, *Trifolium repens*, *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, *Tripleurospermum maritimum*, *Veronica hederifolia*, *Veronica persica*, *Vicia sativa*, *Ulex europaeus*.

LAMPREYS

March 2020

In late March Duncan, Karis and Sheamus McGregor found some spawning lampreys in the Newtyle Burn and Moira posted the video footage on the Nats Facebook page. Following on from this, in the first week of April a non-member posted a second lamprey sighting in the Invergowrie Burn, near to where it goes under the A90 dual-carriageway. These primitive fish are nationally rare and rather secretive so records of them are unusual locally. David made sure that the records were sent to the appropriate organisation.

Anne Reid