



Wildlife News



Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

DAWN - Newsletter of the North Angus and Angus & Dundee Members' Centres

Number 102 - November 2009

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Introduction

As you will see, this newsletter is rather different from all previous ones. Because of the requirement that only one insert can be included in with the magazine mailing, we have had to combine the Newsletter and the programme for 2010 on one sheet and print this combination on thin card. We ask you cut the programme out and fold it for use as normal.

When this note was written, at the end of August, we record one of the wettest late summers on record. Even then we had a number of excellent outings and excursions to special local sites. In fact, the Barry-Buddon meeting was one of the best ever, as you will see from the report. We can hope only that the autumnal weather improved and that spring is both early and warm. The member's centre committee hope that you will find the many events during 2010 of great interest and will be keen to come and join us. Why not have an active natural history year?

way line. The farm is very low-lying and subject to biting winds that sweep across the Basin and the flat fields from across the North Sea.

Heading towards the Shelduck Hide, the track winds through fields holding many skylarks and meadow pipits. A small detour into the Mill Burn reedbed showed some of the maintenance work that has been carried out to ensure that the reedbed does not revert to scrubland and eventually woodland. It was slightly worrying when Richard showed the high tide strand-line was where we were standing, but as it was low tide we could appreciate the cosy micro-habitat of 6-foot high reeds without getting wet feet. Two marsh harriers quartered over another part of the reedbed to show that conditions were seemingly to the liking of that welcome denizen of the Reserve.

Reed buntings were also in evidence as the group wandered further down the track and past the mute swans lazing around in the sea-crook field where they are fed on waste grain during the winter. All the usual birds could be seen from the Shelduck hide including eider ducks at very close quarters!

As the walk circled the sea-crook field many eider nests in various states of occupation and abandonment were found and there seemed to be a very healthy population in the process of producing the next generation.

Everyone arrived back at the car park in good spirits and without having to recourse to waterproofs as the weather forecasters were proved wrong again.

Montrose Basin Walk

7th June

A mild spring day with rain threatening found a party of 16 setting off under the guidance of Richard Averiss, Angus Countryside Ranger, from the Old Mill car park down the track that goes across Mains of Dun farm and onto Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve. The farm and Local Nature Reserve are one and the same after walking across the disused rail-

Glen Esk

5th July

A keen group of more than 20 members met in the car park at the end of the public road up Glen Esk. Our chairman, James Ivory, introduced the guide for the day, Andy Malcolm, a keeper on the estate. We walked along the track beside Loch Lee, keeping an eye open for birds and butterflies on the slopes and plants beside the track. A buzzard soared out over

the high ground on the other side of the Loch, one or two painted ladies and a few green-veined whites and meadow-brown butterflies appeared on the slopes above us. A reasonable range of plants, including sundew, marsh lousewort, lesser spearwort and a single fragrant orchid, were seen growing close to the track. Andy proved to be a fascinating leader for his knowledge of deer biology and other wildlife and his descriptions of the requirements for stalking.

Two groups formed, the main one to follow Andy up past the Falls of Unich and Dampf and over the top to return down the Shank of Inchgrundle; the other to climb up past the Falls of Unich to study the plants of the cliffs and then return back along the same route. The first group kept up a steady pace and soon disappeared up the past the Falls. They stopped only briefly to admire a few of the characteristic plants of the slopes, including holly fern, yellow mountain saxifrage and one or two dwarf cornel. At the top, they made a detour to clear a sensitive area for the deer and then made their way up and through the peat hags over slopes nearing the summit area. A good range of upland birds were seen, including numerous wheatears, pipits, curlews and the occasional raptor. Meanwhile the clouds had lowered and thickened and heavy rain sped them on their way.

The botany group were fortunate to find a good range of species such as moss campion, green spleenwort and a variety of other ferns, globe flower, roseroot and stone bramble. Although the warm early summer meant that the main flowering season was already over, most species still harboured one or two flowers scattered among the seed heads. They were able to shelter from the rain for a short time under overhangs but made their way down the steep path under fairly difficult conditions. Although they hadn't seen any ring ouzels along the cliffs they caught a good sighting of a foraging family just before crossing the footbridge on the path below the Falls.

Both groups spent a short time finding and admiring several handsome adders among rocks beside the path and met up back at the car park. Andy Malcolm, our leader, certainly deserved the generous vote of thanks. Despite the weather it had been a most informative, interesting and successful day.

Barry Buddon

9th August

It must have been one of the best joint excursions to this iconic sand dune SSSI. Seventy birders, botanists and entomologists, members and friends gathered to listen to Bob McCurley welcome the group and thank the camp commandant for access to the military training areas. The variety of experts had come along to add their specialised knowledge of the

wildlife of the area. Graham Smith, among other birders, ably supported Bob and we welcomed Barbara Hogarth, plant recorder for Angus. She and Pat Gaff were intending to continue their explorations of the area, following on from previous years. Gordon Maxwell and Daphne Macfarlane-Smith were looking forward to finding a good range of butterflies and Bob reminded the throng that David Lampard and Anne Reid had put a moth trap out the previous evening and would be showing us their catch at the lighthouse during our lunch break.

The bird group recorded a total of 67 species, two better than last year – including four bullfinch, a cuckoo, snipe, migrating wheatears, a late-nesting dabchick, green woodpecker, green sandpiper, greenshank, ringed plover and, best of all, a single great skua, commonly known as a 'bonxie', flying past the lighthouse and last seen heading for Fintry.

The great insect find of the day was a purple hairstreak butterfly, a first record for Barry-Buddon. Only a few people, including Daphne MacFarlane-Smith, saw the specimen but were fortunate enough to capture a good photograph of the butterfly. We were all able to admire the image at lunchtime near the lighthouse. In fact, all the groups were lucky. The sun came out in the morning and within a short time the vegetation was full of flitting butterflies, including peacocks with resplendent fresh eyes, meadow browns and handsome dark-green fritillaries, small heaths, brilliant small coppers and graylings. By mid afternoon a total of 15 species had been recorded, one more than last year.

Moths were abundant as well. Many ragwort plants stood just as defoliated stems and the others carried masses of the orange-and-black ringed caterpillars of the cinnabar moth. We all spent time after the lunch stop examining and admiring the moth trap catch identified and arranged by David Lampard and Anne Reid. They recorded a total of 28 species in the moth trap overnight.

The botanists had a great day, finding Parnassus grass, giant water-dock, gypsywort and skullcap in among the reeds at the mouth of the Barry Burn and good stands of wild basil and marjoram on sandy dunes a little further on. Theo Loizou and Russel Nisbet, who had joined the group, proved to be a great asset. Their sharp eyes picked out a number of interesting species. In 'happy valley' during the afternoon, the party turned up large numbers of adder's-tongue ferns (in excess of 30 spikes, far more than last year), a few tway-blade orchids, a variety of willows and a number of autumn gentians. Later they moved to the corner ponds, finding numerous specimens of several species of damselflies and dragonflies and many more butterflies. David Lampard and Anne Reid joined in, providing nets and white trays,

so that members spent a while looking for water boatmen, water beetles and other forms of pond life. The group finished off by finding yellow bartsia but such was the interest, didn't leave until nearly 5 pm.

It had been a terrific day – and, even better, the weather didn't break, bringing the threatened heavy rain, until everyone was well clear of the area.

Dundee Group News

Stannergate Foreshore - 2nd September

A small party from the Dundee Support Group, ably led by Mary and Tom Harwood, took a look at the recently completed works on the path and railings along the Grassy Beach. The new railings and concrete work appears very impressive but we noted that the width of the new path covered some of the interesting rock exposures along the beach.

Although late in the year, a good variety of plant species could be found and there were no obvious places where the pathside vegetation had been completely obliterated. However, several members noted that at the end near the car park someone had either scattered a packet of garden seeds or even deliberately planted specimens of a variety of garden plants. We weren't worried about them greatly; these types of aliens generally don't last too long in competition with our tough-as-nails local wild flora!

The usual mix shore birds picked and pecked among the seaweeds on the shore line. A handsome curlew caught our attention, a pair of red-breasted mergansers dived offshore, a heron flew in to perch on an old sewer pipe and we all remarked on the black-headed gulls not being black-headed any more as harbingers of the winter to come. Tom's sharp eye caught site of movements in the weeds below us and pointed out several beautifully camouflaged turnstones searching for supper along the shore. We were fortunate to return to the cars before the rain started again.



Peter Bainbridge, treasurer of the Angus & Dundee MC (left), received a generous donation to the SWT from the manager and staff of No1 pub after a night of fund raising last June.

For further information on these and other events, see the DAWN newsletter or contact the MC Secretaries. For further information on Montrose Events, telephone the Montrose Basin Visitor Centre on 01674 676336.

Website: myweb.tiscali.co.uk/adbswt
Email: adbswt@tiscali.co.uk

Bring your friends

OFFICE BEARERS

Hon. President Dr Hugh A P Ingram

Angus & Dundee Members' Centre

Chairman: James Ivory
Tel: 01575 530258

Secretary: Liz Houghton
Tel: 01307 818302

North Angus Members' Centre

Chairman: Andy Wakelin
Tel: 01674 676783

Secretary: Joyce Cooper
Tel: 01674 676783

Warm and waterproof clothing and stout footwear should be worn on outings.

Members are reminded to undertake only the walks within their capabilities. For wild country, food and drink should be carried and map and compass are desirable.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at Cramond House, 3 Kirk Cramond, Edinburgh EH4 6HZ. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).



**SCOTTISH
WILDLIFE TRUST**
Charity number SC005792

Angus and Dundee & North Angus Members' Centres

Programme 2010

Dates for your Diary

Members' Centres Events

Thurs 26th Nov **Alpine Flowers:** Talk by Mike Almond. 7:30 pm at Meffan Gallery, West High Street, Forfar. Admission £3.50

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

Full events can be found on www.swt.org.uk or www.montrosebasin.org.uk on the MBVC pages.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will open daily from 15th March to 15th November from 10:30am to 5pm. Between 16th November and 14th March it will open **only** on Fri, Sat and Sun from 10:30am to 4pm.

March 2010 - Newsletter Copy Deadline - 4th January 2010

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for March to August 2010 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the address below: Jim Cook, Science Section, Dundee College, Old Glamis Road, Dundee DD3 8LE. My email address is j.cook@dundeecoll.ac.uk



(SWT Family Membership includes children's **WATCH** membership)

Group	Leader	Meeting Place	Phone
Dundee	Ranger	Various Parks	01382 435911
Forfar	Craig Borland	Forfar Loch	01307 461118
Montrose	Watch leader	Wildlife Centre	01674 676336

Dundee Conservation Volunteers

Contact John Whyman on (01382) 431848 (daytime), or 07940 165997 (mobile) for details of the current programme. A Sunday activity occurs once a month. The SWT minibus leaves Seagate Bus Station at 9:30am to the activity destination. Wear old clothes and stout boots. Bring waterproofs and lunch.

It's your chance to help conserve wildlife actively!

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Saturday 30th January 2010

Walk round Forfar Loch:

Led by Park Ranger, & Liz Houghton. Meet at 10am, at Ranger's Centre, Lochside Rd. Forfar. (NO 451 506) Followed by pub lunch.

Thursday 18th March 2010

Whales & Dolphins in the 21st Century,

Talk by Ian Cumming, Photographer & Naturalist. 7.30pm at Meffan Gallery, West High St. Forfar. Admission £3.50

Thursday 22nd April 2010

Creepie Crawlies on the Cliffs:

(Arbroath Insect Survey), talk by Brian Little
Following **Annual General Meeting** 7:30pm at Meffan Gallery, West High St. Forfar

Sunday 25th April 2010

Dawn Chorus at Barry Mill: Led by Peter Ellis, Warden & Ian Baird
Meet at 5am at Barry Mill (NO 534 349)
Approx. 2hrs

Saturday 1st May 2010

Montrose Coffee Morning: 10-12am
Old & St Andrews Church Hall, High St. Montrose. Admission £1

Saturday 22nd May 2010

Dundee Plant Sale: 10:30am -3pm at the Demonstration Gardens, Dawson Park, Arbroath Rd. Dundee

Sunday 13th June 2010

Wildlife Week Walk round

Balgavies Loch:

Led by Hugh Ingram & Alban Houghton for birds and flowers. Meet at hide car park at 2pm. (NO 529 509) Approx 2hrs.

Sunday 4th July 2010

Visit to Dumbarrie Links Reserve:

Led by Gordon Corbet & Brian Ballinger
Dune habitat with rare coastal flowers and butterflies. Meet at 11am car park off Main St. Lower Largo (NO 422 026) Approx 4hrs
Bring lunch, waterproofs.

Sunday 8th August 2010

Barry Buddon Joint Outing: Led by Bob McCurley & Jim Cook
Meet at 10am at Car Park at Monifieth Playing fields (NO 503 324) Bring Lunch. Approx 5-6 hrs.

Thursday 9th September 2010

Return to the Beavers at Bamff: led by Paul Ramsay & James Ivory
See how they have progressed in the last 2 yrs. Meet at 6:30 at Bamff estate near Alyth (NO 221 515) 2hrs.

Thursday 18th November 2010

A Return of Ratty? The Cairngorm & Glens Water Vole Project
Talk by Helen Gray, Project Officer 7:30pm at Meffan Gallery, West High St., Forfar. Admission £3.50