



Ayrshire Newsletter Winter 2009 - 10

WINTER PROGRAMME

This started in September with an entertaining talk from James Cassels, with lovely pictures of Arran and its birds. We were greatly impressed by the size and scope of the Isle of Arran Wildlife Festival, which will take place again from 12 -19 May 2010. It was very good to see so many people at this talk, and we hope this will continue.

We meet on Tuesday evenings, in the Green Room, the Refectory, SAC Auchincruive, KA6 5HW. Follow the signs from the B743 to the main College entrance, turn left onto the main drive, and then right to the ample parking beside the Refectory. Tea and coffee are available in the interval. Non-members are also very welcome. We are very grateful to Roger Hissett for again arranging such an interesting and varied programme.

17 November: “The Ayrshire Coastal Path” Jimmy Begg

Jimmy’s origin in an old Ayrshire family and his love of the history and wildlife of the county made him the ideal person to be the Project Coordinator for the Coastal Path. Who better to tell us about its wildlife and scenery?

And to follow after Christmas :-

2010

19 January: “Birding Down Under” Angus Hogg

Angus has been the Bird Recorder or Assistant Recorder for Ayrshire for about 30 years. He is also an excellent photographer. Brighten up a winter evening with his tour of Australian birds and wildlife.

16 February: “Ayrshire Rivers Trust; fish and a whole lot more!” Stuart Brabbs

Stuart is the Catchment Officer at the Ayrshire Rivers Trust. As the title suggests, his talk will show the breadth of interests of the Trust’s biologists, including water voles, pearl mussels and invasive species.

16 March: “The Return of the Beaver” Simon Jones

Beavers lived wild in Scotland until they were exterminated by excessive hunting in the 16th century. Now they could be the first mammal to be reintroduced to the country. Simon Jones is the lucky man who got the job of Project Manager for the Scottish Beaver Trial.

20 April: AGM followed by “Ayrshire Reserves Roundup” Gill Smart

The last two or three years have seen big changes at some of our local reserves. As the Trust’s Reserves Manager for the South West, Gill will bring us up to date with all the developments.

We were sorry that we were not able to circulate the card syllabus this season. Copies are still available at our meetings, or send a stamped self-addressed envelope (min. size 160 x 110mm) to Wendy Annan, 12 Blackburn Road, Ayr KA7 2XQ.

SUMMER OUTINGS and the FUNGAL FORAY

Congratulations to all who had the time and good sense to attend these events, held throughout the summer in a number of attractive places. As always, the final flourish was provided by the Fungal Foray, expertly led as usual by Graeme Walker of Scottish Natural Heritage, through mature woodlands and along the banks of the Doon in the grounds of Hollybush House.

RESERVE NEWS

The Reserve Manager, Gill Smart, is working on a funding application to develop a low-key archaeological trail at **Auchalton Meadow**. The reserve has many well preserved but hidden features relating to the early to mid nineteenth century lime-working industry. These could be revealed and explained to visitors without compromising the natural heritage interest. We need to demonstrate community support for the idea, so Gill would like to hear from anyone interested in it, particularly if you live in Crosshill, Kirkmichael or Straiton.

You will remember that, last winter, we felled some large blocks of conifers at **Shewalton Wood**. The ground was left covered in a thick layer of twiggy branches. The contractors are in again, removing that material, and many of the stumps, leaving clear soil for new broad-leaved trees to regenerate or be planted. The machine grabs a huge pile of sticks that it feeds into its structure before spitting out a tidy, enormous bale ready to be transported to the neighbouring paper mill where it will be used as fuel. It's worth going for a look but please keep well away from the work and obey any safety signs.

Why is the Doon under threat?

Scottish Power, a subsidiary of Iberdrola, a Spanish utility company, has the intention of reducing the compensation flow of the River Doon from 45 million gallons per day to 28 million gallons per day and diverting yet more water through their hydro facility on the Kirkcudbrightshire Dee.

The current compensation flow for the Doon was agreed as a result of water loss from the catchment when Loch Doon Dam was constructed in 1935 by an act of parliament. The River Doon already suffers from a 30% water loss from its catchment - greater than any other river in Scotland - primarily due to hydro activity. It would appear that Scottish Power has used the introduction of new EU legislation, the Water Framework Directive, as a means of justifying its intention. The hugely increased volume of water being transferred into the Dee will enable the company to generate more electricity and consequently, more profit.

The effect on the Doon Valley Wetlands Wildlife Site, including our reserve at Dalmellington Moss, would be devastating.

PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION ON THE WEBSITE
<http://www.savethedoon.com/>

Or support the campaign by writing to : -

Ayrshire Rivers Trust, Cronin Building, Auchincruive Estate, AYR KA6 5HW

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