

STIRLING MEMBERS CENTRE

Newsletter and Activities

Programme

November 2009



Here Come the Girls - Influx of Painted Ladies

Elegant painted lady butterflies with their black, white and tawny wing markings are usually seen on sunny late summer days, nectaring on Buddleia or knapweeds with red admirals, small tortoiseshells and peacocks. This year however, after a population explosion in their North African breeding grounds we saw one of the greatest immigration events of the last 50 years. Millions headed north in a butterfly tidal wave which spread across an 850 mile wide front from Ireland to Poland. Moving at a rate of about 100 miles per day thousands per hour were arriving in south coast gardens in late May and a few days later they could be counted by

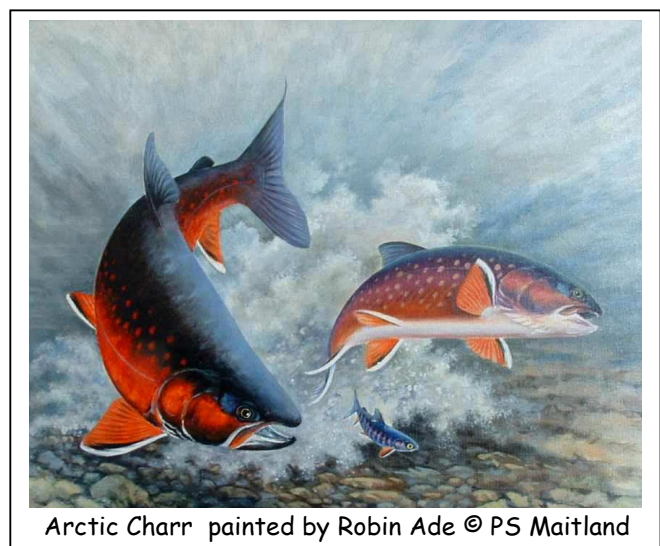


the hundred as far north as Durness. The good weather during this period encouraged these adventurous pioneers and sightings were recorded in St Kilda, the Faroes and even Iceland during the beginning of June. By August the initial migrants, now rather tattered and faded, had bred, giving us a second batch of fresh young adults. If you spotted painted ladies this year please record them at www.butterfly-conservation.org

Out of Sight, Out of Mind? Conserving Rare Fish

Stirling Members Centre area includes several internationally important water bodies and with them goes the responsibility for conserving the wide range of specialist organisms they contain. The following examples of rare fish illustrate that although they are out of sight they are subjected to many of the same pressures - habitat loss, pollution, alien invader species - as land animals.

The **Powan** is a distinctive Scottish variety of the freshwater whitefish which was confined to Loch Lomond and Loch Eck. Growing up to 46cm long it has a dark bluish back, pale silvery underside and striking dark fins. Currently numbers are in serious decline because of predation by ruffe, a small member of the perch family. This invasive alien is thought to have been introduced by pike fishermen as live bait. It eats powan eggs and competes with the adults for food. Thanks to the foresight of a few dedicated conservationists, protected populations of powan have now been established in Carron Valley Reservoir and Loch Sloy. Loch Lomond also contains a unique population of **River Lampreys** members of which, instead of spending part of their life at sea, live entirely in fresh water.

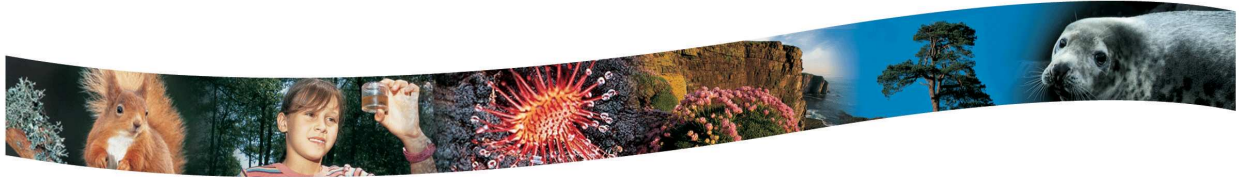


Arctic Charr painted by Robin Ade © PS Maitland

The **Arctic Charr** which is related to both salmon and trout takes its name from the Gaelic for the breeding male's red belly. Our native fish are non-migratory, populations having survived in lochs with cold,

well-oxygenated water since the end of the last Ice Age. Locally Charr are still found in Lochs Doine, Voil and Lubnaig, but sadly the Loch Katrine population is probably extinct. The fish is given little protection in law and there has been a steady loss of populations probably as a result of water engineering works, pollution, afforestation, trout stocking and climate change.

Sparling or smelt is a small silvery fish 10-20cm long which inhabits clean estuaries and comes upstream to spawn in freshwater. Originally there were 16 Scottish estuarine locations though currently the fish is confined to the Forth, Tay and Cree. Sparling seem to occur throughout the Forth estuary but assemble in the upper estuary near Alloa in late February migrating into fresh water to spawn in March. It is not known where the current spawning beds are. As a result of pollution local numbers plummeted in the 60s and 70s but glad to say they are increasing again as the river quality improves.



New Members Centre Website

www.swtstirling.org.uk

Members of the committee have been busy constructing a web site which will contain details of the talks and conservation activities we organize. In addition there will be information about how to enroll children in the WATCH group, who to contact when biodiversity is threatened by development and how to report unusual wildlife sightings. Also included will be recommendations for local wildlife- rich walks and family outings.

Winter Programme of Illustrated Talks.

Our talks are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm in the new Raploch Community Campus in Drip Road Stirling (behind Sainsburys). There is a large car park beside the building which you enter through the glass fronted section facing Drip road. Cost £2 **Non Members Welcome**

Monday Nov 9 th 2009	'Wetland Birds of the Forth Estuary' Neil Calbrade (BTO WEBS coordinator)
Monday Dec 14 th 2009	'Scottish Plant Conservation at the Botanic' Heather McHaffie (RBGE)
Monday Jan 11 th 2010	'The Flying Flock' Tim Brain (SWT's conservation shepherd)
Monday Feb 8 th 2010	'Structures built by animals : How do they do it?' Prof Mike Hansell (Glasgow University)
Monday March 8 th 2010	'Wildlife of the Cairngorms National Park' Allan Bantick (Chairman SWT)
Monday April 12 th 2010	Work of the Woodland Trust in Scotland J. Christie Plus short AGM

Your Chance to Help. Conservation Work Opportunities Nov/Dec 2009

Nov 15th 2009 Clearing and burning the willow and gorse from Blaircressnock butterfly orchid meadow in Flanders Moss NNR. (10.30-16.00h) For further details and booking contact Stephen Longster 01786 450362 or by email FLANDERS@snh.gov.uk

Saturday 28th November 2009 National Tree Week Mixed Hedgerow Planting at Gartmorn Dam (1.00pm - 3.30pm). Contacts Clacks Countryside Rangers 01259 452478 rangers@clacks.gov.uk

Dec 13th 2009 Xmas tree scavenge. Help clear invasive pines from Flanders Moss NNR and cut your own Xmas tree (10.30-16.00h). For further details and booking contact Stephen Longster 01786 450362 or by email FLANDERS@snh.gov.uk

Secretary/Editor: Sue Sexton 01786 833409 sextonsp@aol.com
22, Alexander Drive, Bridge of Allan FK9 4QB