



## LORN & MID ARGYLL MEMBERS' CENTRE

# NEWSLETTER

# OCTOBER 2009

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Welcome to the latest edition of the SWT Newsletter. There are some varied articles, butterflies galore and the exciting news about our very own beaver families, who seem to be settling in very nicely! There are the usual Convenor's reports telling us about what has been happening on the reserves during the summer. The programme of talks is an interesting mix – as always. There is also a full programme of guided walks organised by David Croucher – thank you David. If you can, please go along, as it's always nice to meet up with like-minded people - the wildlife should be good as well!

A volunteer form has been included for our annual Coffee Morning on 31<sup>st</sup> October; if you are able to help or contribute in any way please return the form to Elaine or Diane. Their contact details are at the bottom of the form.

If anyone is interested in contributing to the next newsletter on any wildlife related subject, whether it's a written article (no more than 200 words please), a question that you would like answered or just a suggestion of an item you would like to see in future newsletters, please contact Maurice or Diane before the 20<sup>th</sup> March, their contact details are at the top of this page.



### **Chairman's Report**

2009 will go down in history as a momentous year for Scottish wildlife with the release of eleven European beavers into lochs in north Knapdale, the first mammal reintroduction in this country. There's an article by Simon Jones in 'Scottish Wildlife' so I'll not say too much save to encourage members to have an evening out around Barnsluagan and go beaver spotting. I won't forget my first sighting – a few ripples noticed initially around a small headland and then a beaver coming into sight, swimming so steadily with so little obvious sign of any underwater activity that someone could have been pulling him across the loch on a string, apart from the straight line of his wake, backlit in the fading light. Wonderful!

Do follow Field Officer Jenny Holden's blog at [www.scottishbeavers.org.uk](http://www.scottishbeavers.org.uk) and keep up to date with developments. Four of us had a walk around Loch Coille Bharr on 15<sup>th</sup> August, not expecting to see any beavers in the middle of the day but looking for signs of activity. Gnawed trees and chewed ferns were seen and the flooded footpath through which we had to wade seems to be down to the beavers building their first dam; it was most interesting to see the sort of habitat which the animals enjoy.

There have been walks around Shian Wood and Ballachuan Hazelwood and these and other activities are discussed in the convenor's reports. David Croucher, convenor of Ballachuan, is also organising a series of walks for the coming twelve months both on our reserves and elsewhere, so please do join in some of these and give David plenty of warning of your proposed attendance so that transport can be shared. We hope with your help and enthusiasm to gradually build up our activities and would enjoy feedback from you, the members, with articles or thoughts for the newsletters, notes on interesting sightings or anything at all that would be of interest to other members.

Many of you will be aware of the activities of the Seil Natural History Group, and indeed several of you will also be members of that organisation. I have spoken to chairman Richard Wesley and also attended a committee meeting with a view to discussing any possible ways of collaboration. For the moment we have agreed to make our respective members aware of each group's activities and join in with each other's activities. Details of the group's lectures and outings can be found at <http://seilnature.spaces.live.com/> - scroll down the left-hand-side to find a link to their lectures and outings. A beautiful website and well worth exploring.

One of the points discussed at that meeting was the need to be able to communicate easily with members and with this in mind I would like to suggest that if those of our members with email would like to send their name and address to me at [maurice@arduaine.plus.com](mailto:maurice@arduaine.plus.com) putting the word *contact* in the subject line then we will be able to get in touch with you more easily with news and details of events, etc. Your email address will be used only for this purpose and will not be passed to anyone else. You will be able to have your address removed from the list at any time, of course.

Our series of winter lectures begins again on October 29<sup>th</sup> with a talk by SWT Reserves Manager Sven Rasmussen on the work of the SWT. This will be a good opportunity to find out, or to be reminded, of the wide range of conservation work carried out by the SWT. All lectures are at the Dunstaffnage Marine laboratory at Dunbeg, beginning at 7.30pm, and this year we hope to serve refreshments and home baking after the lectures, so do come along and enjoy the company of like-minded people. If you're happy to offer lifts then I'm happy to try to pass that information to those who might appreciate sharing transport.

The Coffee Morning at St John's Cathedral Hall follows on a couple of days later and a volunteer form is enclosed with this newsletter to enable you to offer your services. We're looking into the possibility of finding another more central venue for future years, but for now we'll carry on with the familiar location.

I was intending to put out a plea for some volunteers to fill four much needed positions within the group, but that plea has been reduced by half by the filling of two of the posts already. David Croucher has agreed to take up the post of Vice-chairman, which will be a good support for me, and my wife Sheila has also agreed to take on the job of Sales Organiser, made vacant by the standing down of Jane Shepherd who has worked hard for many years to raise money for the SWT through her sales tables at meetings and other events. A big thank you to Jane for all her efforts! I have to say that both David and Sheila needed considerable arm-twisting so my sincere thanks to them both too. The Members Centre would also benefit from a Press Officer to keep local media informed of our activities, so please have a think about this. Finally, the very

important post of Treasurer remains to be filled next year. Jim MacLeod will definitely stand down at the 2010 AGM and having a Treasurer is absolutely vital. Please do think about this and let me know if you'd like to fill the post, or even if you would be prepared to fill it! We need you!

All that remains to be said is that I hope that the group will have a successful and interesting year ahead. Please do get in touch with me if you have views or comments on anything. I look forward to seeing many of you at our winter meetings.

**Maurice Wilkins**



### **Butterflies in Argyll**

I've had a wonderful time watching butterflies this spring and summer and learning more about their lifecycles.

The good weather in April brought out many Orange Tips, Speckled Wood and Green Hairstreak. I haven't seen so many Orange Tips and Green Hairstreaks for many years so this is a good sign. Speckled Wood always seems plentiful and this spring emergence is a first brood, the second appearing in July and August.

One butterfly lacking this year is the Small Copper. Never plentiful but I can usually see several over the course of the season. So far I've only seen two.

May wasn't good weather wise but on the 10th I saw my first Marsh Fritillary of the season at a stronghold on the Isle of Seil. The caterpillars over-winter in a web low down on the leaves of Devil's bit Scabious, which is their sole food plant. By about early April they pupate and emerge as adults mid to late May. A parasitic wasp can have a dramatic effect on numbers of adults for they feed on the caterpillars but there are many caterpillars in each web and nature has a wonderful way of balancing things out in the end! If there are a small number of webs one year then the wasps can't find them and more adults emerge so more eggs will be laid. This year numbers of adults weren't great but in August I found several webs where I'd seen most adults, which is what I'd expect. The strange thing is these adults were seen in an area where there were very few webs last year and they don't fly large distances. There were very few adults flying where there were plenty of webs. Maybe the wasps found the caterpillars in this area? A web find and count is scheduled for early September so more news in the next newsletter.

In June I went to the National Nature Reserve on the banks of Loch Creran called Glasdrum to see a small, colourful and rare butterfly. After a short time walking to clearings in woodland the Chequered Skippers were spotted. They were very obliging stopping to have their photo taken. The clearing of scrub from under power lines has a good positive effect for these tiny creatures as it creates just the right habitat for them. Single eggs are laid on Purple moor-grass, which grows well in these areas and the adults nectar from Bluebells, Bugle, Tormentil and other flowers available to them. Another rarity seen that day was the Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. It flies very quickly and erratically in the same clearings but good sightings were had, unfortunately no photographs.

By mid June the only Blue we are likely to see in Argyll was on the wing. Living up to its name luckily, the Common Blue is still seen on sunny days in many habitats but where Birds Foot Trefoil or other low growing Legumes thrive, as this is the caterpillar's food source.

Grayling, Ringlelet, Meadow Brown and Scotch Argus all appeared in August. Good bright conditions are helpful when out watching for Butterflies but the Scotch Argus will be out even on the dullest of days. Graylings are very common on the rocks by the sea and I've never seen them inland.

August is the month that the Buddlejias flower and the Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady all make use of them. Everything was a little early this year so many Buddlejias had finished flowering by the second week of August but the shrubs pruned very hard were later and these butterflies benefited. The second flush of Painted Ladies were to be seen but not in the numbers we saw pass through May. Most must have ended up in Iceland I think! Numbers of Small Tortoiseshell are not as they used to be but I have seen a few.

Keep an eye out for these spectacular insects and think about planting a few perennial plants in your garden, which they can come and feed from. The species coming to gardens are generally the more common ones but they all need a helping hand and one day a rarity may pass through.

**David Croucher**



### **Shian Wood Reserve Report**

Reporting on the late spring/summer season, it was quite a wet May with one sunny, dry spell. Late May, June into July brought lovely summer weather. A guided walk held on the 30th May, though sparsely attended, was held on a pleasant summer day. As well as more common species, the wood warblers call was heard and the cuckoo. Butterflies were prolific, including small white, orange tip, speckled wood and painted lady.

Placing Reserve leaflets in Oban Tourist Office seems to have been successful, as some 60+ have been taken over the high season. On the day of the guided walk, four visitors appeared that we were aware of.

After the wettest August locally for 11 years, on September 4th Dr Tom Prescott of Butterfly Conservation Scotland led a search for Marsh Fritillary webs with a small group of volunteers. The day turned out fine and mild, but despite a thorough search of the three main areas where Devils bit Scabious was abundant, as well as areas by the concessionary path, no webs could be found. A small group of highland cattle have continued in the summer months to graze in the lower wood.

**Rob Chipchase** Tel: 01631 562921



### **Ballachuan Hazelwood Reserve Report**

The Marsh Fritillary Butterfly continues to get plenty of attention at the Reserve. In March, on a warm sunny day, I found caterpillars by their webs. They will venture from the webs in good weather to feed. At this stage they are still very small, less than a centimetre long and very thin. By late April they have grown considerably and soon pupate. The adults appear in mid May and numbers this year didn't appear great but at the annual count of their webs in September numbers were nearly up to last years so maybe it was down to time of observation. [the lack of it!!] Adults don't travel far so keeping a suitable habitat going in one area is important. To this end a new fence has been put across the lower breeding area with the view to reducing the amount of sedge and thick grasses by the cows over a period of time. This will be monitored carefully.

Hérons were very active, as usual and Ballachuan can boast a large Heronry. Several new nests were added in the Beech trees and some young were still in the nest well into August.

The Barn Owls nested successfully again this year. Young were heard but not seen as the nest is in a big crevice in a cliff, on the 19<sup>th</sup> July.

Small birds on the Reserve remain plentiful. Whitethroat, Willow, Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers, Whinchat, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit and Reed Bunting all had breeding territories. Woodcock, Snipe, Water Rail, Widgeon, Mallard, Mute Swan, Buzzard and Sparrowhawk are all present at the Reserve.

Golden ringed Stalker, Small red Damselfly, Small Blue Damselfly and the Beautiful Demoiselle are also present. Otters are seen regularly from the Kilbrandon end anywhere through to Cuan. With patience good sightings can be had of these fantastic creatures.

If anyone would like to have a walk round the Reserve at any time please give me a ring as I'm there quite frequently.

I would like to put up Bird Boxes of various descriptions over the reserve so if anyone feels they could make some and donate them to the Trust please let me know.

**David Croucher**



### **Barnluasgan and Beavers**

As you all know three Beaver families were released in the Knapdale area during May. They were radio tagged and will be monitored carefully for five years. I have been down several times to watch and been successful three times. The best place to watch is from the pontoon at Loch Coillie Bhar. The main areas of activity are close by and if you are quiet and the water isn't choppy the Beavers are easy to watch.

Parking is at Barnluasgan Visitors Centre. A daytime walk has been arranged to look at the activities of these nocturnal creatures [see walks list] but the best time to observe them is dusk or just before. Give it a try.



### **Can you help?**

Can any one let me know of any Badger setts in the area?

**David Tel: 01852 300563**



We're looking for people with knowledge on particular subjects. E.g. Fungi or Lichens or Mosses. Do you know something about Dragonflies or Moths? Have you a particular Butterfly that visits your garden each year. Let us know, you don't have to be an expert but a little knowledge passed on could be very interesting.

**David Croucher Tel: 01852 300563**



### **Knapdale News**

The beavers arrived in late May and are now at home in the Knapdale lochs. Three families from Norway were released. The family in Loch Coillie-Bharr are real stars, they have taken up home in the north of the loch and can be seen by visitors and locals alike from the jetty as they leave their lodge to swim to their feeding area in the Dubh loch. They have built the first dam in the wild it is amazing what changes in water levels a very small dam can cause. The situation is being monitored to ensure that it doesn't affect other conservation interests. At the moment between 7.30 and 8 pm is a good time to see them just before dusk but it will get earlier. One of the female kits now over 2 years old has dispersed, a usual occurrence and is somewhere around the Fairy Isles area. It has even been seen swimming in the estuary.

A second family is happily settled in Loch Linnie and are active around the island. The third family was disturbed in Creagmhor Loch, gunshots were heard. The male and youngster turned up in the canal and the male as far a field as the Kilmartin coast area; he has been caught and returned to the loch. Unfortunately the female has not been seen or heard since.

Volunteer help is needed for the beavers if you are interested contact Jenny at [jholden@swt.org.uk](mailto:jholden@swt.org.uk), and if you want to learn more see <http://blog.scottishbeavers.org.uk>

The osprey again has had a successful year raising at least one young, they were still around the nest site in mid August but are often seen fishing in the Crinan estuary in August/September before departure.

In the hot weather in May and early June good numbers of the Beautiful Demoiselle could be seen on the Fairy Isles burn and the Hairy Dragonfly was active on the lochs. There were the same numbers of plants of Long-leaved helleborine this year as last year but with a few less flowers as more were grazed. Knapdale is well worth a visit later in the year after the midge season but bring your wellies!  
**Pat Batty**



### **PROGRAMME of EVENING MEETINGS for 2009/2010**

**All meetings start at 7.30pm, but the lecture theatre is open from 7pm**

#### **THURSDAY 29th OCTOBER**

‘The work of the SWT’ by S Rasmussen, SWT

#### **SATURDAY 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER**

**SWT COFFEE MORNING, St John’s Cathedral Hall, Oban 10am –12noon**

#### **WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER**

‘The Benefit of Marine Protected Areas’ by David Ainslie

#### **WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

‘The Challenges of Wildlife Videography’ by Bob Groves

#### **THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY**

‘Wildlife Encounters in Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands’ by Frithjof Kuepper

#### **WEDNESDAY 17th FEBRUARY**

‘Thirty Years with Badgers’ by David Croucher

#### **WEDNESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH**

‘A Garden OF British Ferns’ by Alastair Wardlaw

#### **THURSDAY 22nd APRIL**

AGM, followed by ‘The Knapdale Beavers – One Year on’ by Jenny Holden



### **SWT walks 2009-2010**

All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated.

#### **18<sup>th</sup> October Angus Garden Taynuilt**

Meet in main car park at 10.0am Entrance fee: £2.50

#### **15<sup>th</sup> November Barnluasgan Knapdale**

Beavers and other stuff! Meet at Barnluasgan visitors centre 10.0am

Led by Pat Batty

#### **20<sup>th</sup> December Taynish Nature Reserve**

Meet at main car park at 10.0am

**2010**

**17<sup>th</sup> January Arduaine Garden**

Meet in main car park at 10.0am

Led by Maurice Wilkins- Head Gardener

**21<sup>st</sup> February Glen Nant Forest walk Kilcrenan**

Meet in main car park at 10.0am

**7<sup>th</sup> March Luinig**

Meet at ferry terminal for getting the 11.0am ferry

Led by Rosy Barlow who lives on Luinig

**21<sup>st</sup> March Glasdrum and Glen Creran**

Meet at Glasdrum car park at 10.0am

**18<sup>th</sup> April Crinan wood**

Meet at council car park by Crinan Coffee shop 10.0am

**16<sup>th</sup> May Shian Wood South Shian**

Meet main car park 10.0am

**20<sup>th</sup> June Ballachuan Nature Reserve SWT Seil Island**

Look for butterflies including the rare Marsh Fritillary

Meet at lay-by below Kilbrandon Church at 10.0am

**18<sup>th</sup> July Lismore more details later**

**15<sup>th</sup> August Craignish Peninsular**

Meet at Ardfern Village hall car park at 10.0am

**5<sup>th</sup> September Ballachuan Nature Reserve Seil Island.**

Marsh Fritillary Web Count. Please come along and learn about the life cycle of this beautiful Butterfly and see plenty more insects too. We do a count of webs every year.

Meet in lay-by below Kilbrandon Church at 10.0am

**19<sup>th</sup> September Kerrera more details later**

If you are unsure of any of the details please contact David on 01852 300563 well in advance