

## Galloway SWT Members Centre Newsletter – Aug 2010



Chairman:  
Brian Smith,  
Rockiemount, Colvend,  
Dalbeattie. DG5 4QW  
Tel: 01556 620617  
Email: brirockster@gmail.com

Secretary:  
Graham Smith,  
Kalmar, Balmaclellan,  
Castle Douglas. DG7 3QF  
Tel: 01644 420881  
Email: grahamsmith3@tiscali.co.uk

### Welcome to the August edition of the Galloway SWT Newsletter.

After our hard winter, it's good to report on a splendid summer season this year. So far we have put-on six guided-walks showcasing our reserves at Carstramon & Knowetop Lochs, and exploring a broad variety of local wildlife including: birds, flowers, dragonflies, butterflies, moths, beetles and bugs.

But there are still a few more outdoor events to enjoy: On Saturday morning, 7<sup>th</sup> August, Ella McLellan is running a moth-trapping event at Cally Gardens which is a delightful walled-garden in the Cally Estate at Gatehouse-of-Fleet. The following day, Judy Baxter (NTS, Threave) will show us round her butterfly survey transect at Rockcliffe in search of Purple Hairstreak Butterflies. Finally I'm delighted to say that Jim McCleary has agreed to re-run his excellent event at Newton Stewart in search of all four species of Grasshopper and the one species of Groundhopper that occur in Dumfries & Galloway, on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> August.

### Local Development Plan (LDP)

You may be aware that the process to create a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for Dumfries & Galloway is getting underway. This is a vitally important document which will direct the shape and direction of domestic, industrial and agricultural development in Dumfries & Galloway over the next 10 to 15 years. The SWT Galloway Members Centre has therefore elected to take part in the review process of this document. This is quite a daunting task. Dumfries & Galloway is a huge area and it's going to be difficult to cover all areas satisfactorily. So... we are looking to our membership to help identify local issues and areas of concern about proposed developments that could impact wildlife habitats in your area.

The planning process is a lengthy one. It began last year with the design of the consultation process and completes in March 2013 with the adoption of the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the associated Environmental Assessment (EA). The next stage of the process is the publication of the Main Issues Report (MIR) which provides the first major opportunity for consultation and comment. The MIR sets out the Council's general proposals for development in our area and will propose where development could occur and should not occur. It is essentially a consultative document paving the way for the publication of the proposed LDP in the following year. The MIR is published in September 2010, and consultation takes us through to the end of November. This is a key stage in the planning process and we will need your help to ensure that we get reasonable coverage across our region so that potential issues which could impact local wildlife habitats are not missed.

So, please, if you think you can help, let me know.

If you want to know more on the LDP then logon to "dumgal.gov" and search for "Local Development Plan"

Graham Smith (Secretary) [grahamsmith3@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:grahamsmith3@tiscali.co.uk)

### E-mails

E-mail is becoming a more-and-more essential mode of communication these days, and we would like to be able to contact all our members (and, indeed, for you to contact us) by e-mail if possible. We do know some members' e-mail addresses and we do send the occasional e-mail to keep our members informed about local news and events, but we are missing most of you. E-mail is a powerful communications tool, and we would like to use it to keep you informed about new events, changes to existing events, wildlife sightings in Dumfries & Galloway, and the latest developments with the new D&G Local Development Plan.

Currently we have 330 member households in our region and, of these, only 55 have supplied an e-mail id. So we are well short of a complete list. So do, please, send me an e-mail and I'll add you to our list.

You have my assurance that your e-mail address will not be divulged to other members or other parties.

I look forward to hearing from you...

Graham Smith (Secretary) [grahamsmith3@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:grahamsmith3@tiscali.co.uk)

## Knowetop Diary

One of the major maintenance headaches at Knowetop is the stand of Lodgepole Pines along the northern boundary next to the road. These do provide excellent shelter for the reserve but they do have a habit of falling down. The windfalls result in a lot of dead and decaying wood which is good for Long-Horned Beetles who lay their eggs in the soft wood which, in turn, is good for the woodpeckers who peck into the wood in search of their larvae. It's amazing how quickly the bole of a fallen tree can be transformed into a moonscape of pits and holes resulting from the woodpecker's explorations. Last year we had one pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers nesting in the reserve, this year we had two: One pair enlarged the hole of a Tit-box, and the other pair made a beautifully-crafted, perfectly-round hole in the branch of a dead tree. This year I encountered something which I have not seen before - a Woodpecker's anvil: The woodpecker enlarged the pits and holes on a dead tree trunk just enough to fit a pinecone. The woodpecker then jammed pinecones into the holes, nice and tight, so that it could peck out the seeds from inside the cones. The evidence is still there today.

Most dragonflies and damselflies stay out over the heathland to feed on flies and moths during the morning and move to the water later in the day to find a mate. The males have various strategies for finding a female: Some search for a mate over the heathland and drag her back to his favourite pond; and some claim a territory by the pond and snatch a female as she flies by. The Four-Spotted Chaser adopts the second strategy. And so it was, one sunny day in the middle of June that the air-space over the inner lochan was filled with swooping Chasers! The lochan was crowded with male Chasers each trying to defend its own piece of water from adjacent males. Four-Spotted Chasers can be quite aggressive and two males, in particular, were going at it hammer and tongs. Then a female flew nearby, and one male broke off to pursue it. He caught it neatly in mid-air, with the pincers at the end of his abdomen firmly around the pronotum or "neck" of the female. The other male did not give up and gave chase. Eventually the first male released the female and the second male moved in. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you which male was the eventual winner - it was all too fast and furious - and a great spectacle to watch!

Graham Smith (Convenor, Knowetop Lochs)

## Dragonfly explosion at Parton

One day in late May, I was contacted by a local wildlife watcher who had been witnessing an extra-ordinary event in his garden pond at Parton. Fuelled by curiosity, I went round to his house that evening.

The owner had reported an emergence of dragonflies that day from his garden pond. Not that unusual, you may think, but the surprise was the timing and amazing scale of the event. As I arrived and was shown around to the pond, which is no more than a few meters in diameter, the 'wow' factor soon became clear. All around the pond, on almost every single tuft of grass and patch of vegetation, were the ghostly cast skins of dragonflies, left behind as they transformed from aquatic hunter to aerial predator. Huge numbers of Four-spotted Chasers – I would guess probably 200 to 300 – had chosen this day to emerge from the pond. You had to watch where you put your feet very carefully! The event had begun early morning, and most had already left and flown by evening, but there were many others still 'inflating' their wings or waiting for them to harden before making their maiden flights, and a few nymphs were still clinging to the grass stems.

The species is one of our commoner dragonflies. The adults are so-called because of the four spots on the middle of their wings. That such a small pond can hold such a huge number them is remarkable. They are prolific hunters, so there must be a wealth of suitable food available for them in the pond. I suspect that the frogs and newts may well have been breeding less successfully! It goes to show just how valuable even the smallest of wildlife areas in our gardens can be.

There is a good reason for such an extraordinary event. This mass synchronized emergence, which may be triggered by day length and temperature, is thought to be a strategy for minimising predation and increasing their chance of survival. It also means that there are plenty of adults ready to mate at the same time, but it does make them more vulnerable to long spells of bad weather. It is a well-documented occurrence amongst certain families of dragonfly, and probably happens all across our countryside every year. Seldom, however, will it be so clearly demonstrated as around a garden pond like this. As ever, nature always gives us something to marvel at...

Mark Pollitt (Manager, DGERC)

## **Carstramon Wood**

After one of the coldest winters that the wood had ever known, Spring was late. For my carefully planned "Birds & Bluebells" walk on the second Tuesday in May, the bluebells were still only bud, but the migrant birds had arrived, if slightly late. Reserves Manager, Stephen Blow, joined us on the walk and, together with a small (select) group of ladies we enjoyed singing male Pied flycatcher, Redstart, Nuthatch, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, plus many other resident birds. Of special joy were the Wrens which had successfully survived the winter, probably because the wood had little depth of snow. Stephen was able to photograph both Redstart and Pied flycatcher nests in boxes at an early stage of egg laying, and everyone else enjoyed a "peek"

The bluebells were obviously saving their charms for the last Monday in May when Stephen and myself were delighted to host 70 members of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society on their 135<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour. The wood did not let us down. The party, to a man, woman & dog, agreed that apart from being probably Scotland's premier bluebell wood, Carstramon Wood was a delightful place to spend three hours. The visit provoked much talk regarding future management of such a site. Stephen proposes that there will be important investigations to ensure that "old-age" does not rob our grandchildren of its beauties.

The nestbox season was the fastest on record. Obviously the Pied flycatcher females had migrated more successfully than in 2009. Egg clutches were back to "normal" with many "sevens", there were few infertile eggs, few deaths of babies and successful fledging of well over 200 birds. The only "blip" was the solitary Wood Warbler male singing in an area below the house. At the same time, the Wood of Cree was being talked of as "heaving" with singing males. Can this be because W of C is coppiced while Carstramon is managed for mature standards with a high canopy?

Brian Smith (Convenor, Carstramon Wood)

## **Carsegowan Moss**

Early this year I took over as the local Convenor of the reserve from Jim M<sup>c</sup>Cleary who, as many of you will know, is very knowledgeable of all aspects of Carsegowan Moss. I therefore have a hard act to follow, but I'm working on it. There is ongoing work, as on all reserves, and at Carsegowan Moss this includes damming of drains, maintaining and improving fencing and the removal of unwanted vegetation.

The more I see of this reserve the more intriguing it becomes as there is a vast multitude of wildlife to be seen. It is not the most accessible of places to visit, but even around the fringes of the bog there holds lots of interest. In recent times such things seen have included a pair of Cuckoos, Reed Bunting, Willow Warbler, Jay, Siskin, Crossbill, Butterflies, numerous Moths, Cranefly, Grasshoppers and Sphagnum Mosses.

I visit the reserve fairly frequently so should anyone wish to join me on one of my visits, please feel free to contact me via email: [a-emacd@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:a-emacd@tiscali.co.uk) or telephone: 01671 830 882

Euan Macdonald (Convenor, Carsegowan Moss)

## **Badger Recording and Monitoring.**

Scottish Badgers is the only charity in Scotland solely dedicated to the study and protection of Badgers. We are currently seeking volunteers to help with badger road accident recording and sett monitoring in Dumfries and Galloway.

We need you to let us know when you see a dead badger on the road. Thousands of badgers are killed in road accidents each year but if the locations are recorded, their deaths need not have been entirely in vain. Once we know where badgers have been killed we can track them back and locate their setts and also plot the range of their territories. If casualties are occurring at one spot on a regular basis we can work to have some form of signage or mitigation put in place to try to reduce them.

We cannot protect badger setts unless we know where they are. If you know of a sett then please TELL US. Do not assume that we already know about it. Although we have an extensive database of setts there are many more that we do not know about. A grid reference is ideal but not essential. If you can spare a few hours you could join our new Sett Monitoring Scheme and visit a sett two or three times during the year to keep an eye on it and let us know that all is well.

If you see a road casualty, know of a sett, would like to join the Sett Monitoring Scheme or just want more information then please contact Andy Riches, on 07792-142446 or email [sloch69@aol.com](mailto:sloch69@aol.com).

Andy Riches, Scottish Badgers

## Galloway SWT Members Centre:

### Winter Indoor Programme, 2010/2011



All meetings take place in the Gordon Memorial Hall, St Ninians Church, Castle Douglas, at 7:30 pm. St Ninians is in Whitepark Road at the bottom end of Castle Douglas (on the B736 to Gelston & Auchencairn). Post Code: DG7 1EX.

All are welcome (members & non-members).

Wed 06 Oct 2010	"Carrifran Wildwood" by Dr. Philip Ashmole	The story of the restoration of the Carrifran Valley in the Southern Uplands above Moffat and the planting of over 450,000 native trees. A description of what has been achieved so far, and their plans for the future. Philip is Project Coordinator of the Carrifran Wildwood Group
Wed 03 Nov 2010	AGM followed by... "A year of Butterflies and Dragonflies" by Graham Smith	A look at the Butterflies and Dragonflies in Galloway as observed, over the year, at Knowetop Lochs Wildlife Reserve near Corssock. The Natural History of these charismatic insects and other wildlife that occurs at this wetland site. Graham is Convenor at Knowetop Lochs Wildlife Reserve.
Wed 01 Dec 2010	"Buglife: The Small Things that Run the World". by Craig Macadam	A presentation on the work of the "Buglife" organisation and the wealth of invertebrates that are found in Scotland. In the second half, Craig will present a summary of the Invertebrate Survey of the North Solway Coast this year. Craig is Conservation Officer for Buglife (Scotland).
Wed 05 Jan 2011	"Hide and Seek" by Mick Durham	An illustrated presentation of Scottish Wildlife photographs from local photographer, Mick Durham. Mick will show how he obtained some of his best photographs and, in the second half, he will present a view of his favourite animal – the Otter. Mick works as a professional wildlife photographer in Scotland
Wed 02 Feb 2011	"Conserving Fish in SW Scotland" by Nick Chisholm	A view of the fish that inhabit the lochs and burns of SW Scotland. A look at their Natural History, the problems that face them and some of the conservation methods that are being used to preserve them. Nick is Environmental Manager of the Annan Fisheries Board
Wed 02 March 2011	"Grasslands – the World at your Feet" by Pam Pumphrey	A illustrated study of our grasslands and the wealth of life that they contain: A look at some of the wildlife found in our grasslands, from flowers & orchids to grasshoppers & beetles. Pam is an active member of the SWT and Chairman of the RSPB Committee for Scotland