

1. Membership

The local membership has fallen slightly with 682 households in 2021 to 652 households in 2022. This equates to 1,184 members spread over 682 memberships.

2. Our Cambus Pools Nature Reserve

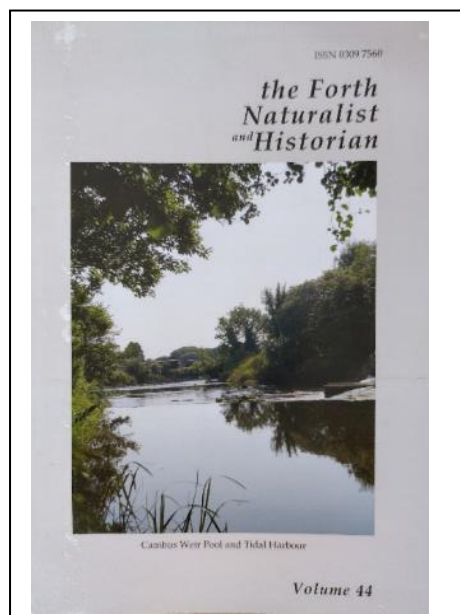
The Scottish Wildlife Trust have been negotiating a new Cambus Pools Management Agreement with Diageo's representatives since before the existing agreement ended in late 2019. Diageo have left it in the hands of their solicitors to be the point of contact for the Trust in the negotiations. After more than two years of effort the situation is still between the lawyers.

While the Trust had a management agreement with Diageo's predecessor's United Malt and Grain Distillers for 25 years, the company were now offering a 'Lease Agreement'.



The Trust's lawyers, having looked at the terms on offer, identified several clauses which caused concern and advised that it would not be in the interests of the Trust to sign the agreement. Diageo's lawyers have been asked to replace the lease agreement with a management agreement, as we had in the past, and for their client Diageo to pay the Trust a management fee to cover the costs of looking after the company's property.

The committee of the Stirling & Clacks Local Group have been in regular contact with staff from the Trust to keep updated with progress and to press for a solution. Local members and Trust staff have invested their time and resources into Cambus Pools and are keen that the improvements made are not lost due to the amount of time taken during these negotiations. Unfortunately, no practical conservation work can take place at Cambus Pools while the negotiations are still ongoing and there is no sign that an agreement will be reached in the immediate future.



On a more positive note, the history of the Cambus Pools Nature Reserve is detailed in two articles written by Roy Sexton and published in Volume 44 of the Journal of [The Forth Naturalist and Historian](#).

Complete runs of the journal are kept by Central Scotland Public Libraries as well as the main National and University libraries.

The current journal volume price is £12. It is available to buy from: Smith Art Gallery and Museum, Dumbarton Rd., Stirling.

3. Winter talks

Covid continued to affect the way we held our winter talks programme for 2021-2022. This meant that our talks were once again held online using Zoom. Attendance at our talks was fairly consistent with 40 to 50 participants (separate computer logins) at each. As many of our participants were made up of more than one viewer, this equates to over 50 people at each talk.

Bookings for our talks were handled through the SWT Eventbrite page. This provided the opportunity for attendees to give a donation, which many of you did. These donations were much appreciated as Covid restrictions have meant that we have not been able to carry out any other fundraising. Our thanks go to all of you who donated.

We will soon begin to think about our winter talks programme for 2022-2023. While we hope we will have the option of holding meetings at a suitable venue we cannot be certain that this will be possible. We will be looking into a range of options including continuing to use Zoom and the possibility of using a hybrid format, where an in-person talk is live-streamed, so you can choose to attend or join us online. We would love to get your feedback on our Zoom talks and thoughts and preferences for our next talks programme.

Our first talk of the 2022-23 programme, held in October, was by Neil Kitching, a geographer, author and energy specialist who spoke about the links between climate change and nature. Neil questioned our love affair with the typical highland scenery and asked 'Is rewilding the answer?'

In November Jack Wooton gave a presentation on [The Forgotten Fish Project](#). A project that Jack founded to raise awareness of the European Eel, a species which gets little attention and even less conservation focus.

To round off 2021 our vice-chair Chris Cathrine, Director of Caledonian Conservation Ltd, gave a talk on The Role of an Ecological Consultant and the Planning System. Chris has engaged with planning from a range of angles, which has given him a broader understanding of the systems in Scotland, and how best to engage with them to benefit biodiversity. This talk is available to view on the [SWT YouTube](#) channel.

Our first talk of 2022 was held in February. Bringing Wildlife to your Garden by Stuart Bence, one of our committee members, showed you how he successfully created a garden for wildlife and how others can follow in his footsteps.

In March our programme was brought to a close with a talk on Hibernating Heralds: Underground adventure in search of Moths by Dr Katty Baird. The [Hibernating Herald project](#) was started at the end of 2016 in an effort to find out more about the distribution of Herald and Tissue moths in Scotland and is a citizen science project offering a fun diversion for moth recorders during the traditionally quieter winter months.

Thanks, as always, go to the speakers and my fellow committee members for delivering a very successful programme of talks.



Jack Wooton, Freshwater Ecologist and Eel Specialist at the Forth Rivers Trust



Hibernating Heralds (Image by Katty Baird)

4. The Planning Team's work over 2021-2022

It's been another busy year. Our aims are always to avoid or minimize damage to valuable habitats and wildlife, and to enhance habitats and wildlife wherever possible.

We continue to monitor weekly all Planning Applications in Clackmannanshire Council and Stirling Council, picking out the applications of concern for wildlife reasons, anything from roof-work or demolition that may affects bats /birds, to major new site developments and infrastructure.

We also monitor weekly all proposals in Stirling and Clackmannanshire for new Forestry / Woodland and for a variety of other Forest Management proposals, including Felling / Restocking. These are dealt with through Scottish Forestry's Regulatory System. We respond to almost all of these.



For example, we deal with forest felling through Scottish Forestry's regulatory system.

We then research each site of concern and decide how to respond - what wildlife information to highlight and what recommendations to make.

We run our own training events to meet the needs of Team members, including new recruits. Examples here:

- How to monitor Planning Applications and pick out proposals we need to research.
- The use of a wide range of online resources including Google Earth, Instant Streetview, the Ancient Woodland Inventory, Deep Peat Maps and so on.

Our responses go out on behalf of our Team. Occasionally we Object outright to an application (with approval from SWT HQ). More often, we make recommendations about avoiding or minimising potential adverse impacts of a proposal and recommendations for enhancing biodiversity - these are aimed at getting changes made to applications / proposals.

Sometimes we get pleasing outcomes, for example, a refusal of a Proposal for Gas Turbines to produce electricity in a rural setting; and a much-improved Woodland / Forestry Design on a very large moorland site. Sometimes the outcomes are not at all pleasing, for example the final outcome regarding Park of Keir. Perseverance is required.

This year we have been even more involved in national initiatives. These include Scottish Government Consultations /Forestry-related Consultations, and other lobbying efforts. We've also become members of 2 online forums for Peer-to-Peer Learning and Support, one organized by Scottish Wildlife trust staff for its own Planning Volunteers, one run by Planning Democracy.

Huge thanks to all Team Members for their commitment and work over the year.

We are always interested in new members for our Planning Team. All you need is an interest in conserving wildlife in our area, basic IT skills, and a willingness to learn. Experience using maps is a help. If you are interested in finding out more, or in joining our team, please use 'Contact Us' on our website and we will get back in touch as soon as we can. <https://www.swtstirling.org.uk/contact-us>.

5. Monitoring Wild Flowers

We have an annual programme of monitoring our local Stirling and Clacks wild flower populations using counts of attractive easy to identify wild plants (axiophytes). In 2021 we visited 46 sites which included 32 orchid meadows. When populations are declining or are threatened, we try and do something to help. During 2021 we also participated in a Pan European study of the health of our grasslands led by the University of Tartu in Estonia and organised in the UK by Plantlife.



Cowslips were chosen as a characteristic plant of our once flower rich meadows. With the help of our Local SWT Facebook readers we found 6 local sites (Pirnhall, Dunblane, Causewayhead, Lecropt, Cambus and Fishcross) some with hundreds of plants.

The picture shows Melissa Shaw capturing the cowslip pollinators at one of the two colonies on the remaining fragments of fields in grounds of the University of Stirling. We have harvested seeds from these sites with the intention reintroducing these attractive plants elsewhere.

7. Web Site and social media

Our online presence continues to be an important means of communicating with our members and the wider public as Covid restrictions continue. Our group's website <http://www.swtstirling.org.uk/> has kept members and non-members informed of our online talks and AGM as well as current campaigns and volunteer opportunities.

This information is also posted on our [facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages along with lots interesting facts. Our website, facebook and Twitter pages are the best places to go to find out about our activities. My thanks go to our dedicated committee members who keep these up to date.

8. The Committee

Thanks are due for the enormous amount of work done by the committee as well as the many other SWT members who have helped during the year. Of particular significance is the retirement of Ally Lemon who joined the committee in 2018 and held the role of Group Secretary.

Chair
Vice-chair
Treasurer, Planning Team
Group Secretary
Minutes Secretary
Moth Group Organiser
IT Advisor and Mammal Group Convenor
Facebook Organiser
Cambus Pools Reserve Convenor
Committee member
Committee member
Committee member
Committee member

Guy Harewood
Chris Cathrine
Liz Albert
Jan Harbidge
Michael Christie
Tony Rogers
Gabi Rice-Grunert
Melissa Shaw
Roy Sexton
Ally Lemon
Tom Palmer
Stuart Bence
Norman Still

Guy Harewood, April 2022.