

## **1. Membership**

The local membership has risen slightly from 683 memberships in 2023 to 691 in 2024. This equates to 1,235 members. However, we only have consent to contact 366 memberships, that's 53%, to let them know about our activities.

## **2. Our thanks to Liz, Melissa and Tom**

At our 2024 AGM Liz Albert, Melissa Shaw and Tom Palmer have decided to retire from our committee.

Liz attended the first AGM of the newly resurrected SWT Stirling Group in 2002 and she's probably attended most of 22 AGMs since then. In those years Liz has been one of our most active committee members. For a long period, she served as treasurer and has also, at times, shared the duties of the Chair and run our Groups' committee meetings.

In 2018 Liz took over the Planning Team. She successfully recruited new members and set in place a team-based training scheme for them. Liz herself became an expert on the increasing number of Forestry Applications and she organised a series of fact-finding visits. She has also taken an active role in the discussions concerning the reform of the planning process.



In the photograph above Liz is recording the butterfly orchids in a meadow in Plean so that they could be translocated if the planning application was successful.

Melissa joined our committee in 2015 having previously volunteered at a number of our conservation surveys and activities. Melissa took on the role of Facebook organiser and played a lead role in developing group's social media presence.

Tom was elected onto the committee in 2018. He has been an active member of the Planning Team, taking a particular an interest in the Forestry-related work. Most notably, he took over responsibility for assessing Felling Permission Applications in our area, writing wildlife-related responses where this was relevant.

Our thanks go to Liz, Melissa and Tom for their input and we wish them well in the future.

## **3. Web Site and social media**

Our online presence continues to be an important means of communicating with our members and the wider public. 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 [mastodon](#) pages along with lots of interesting facts. My thanks go to our dedicated committee members who keep these up to date.

### 3. The Conservation Work of our Group

#### The Status of our Local Orchids

Over the last 20 years our group has monitored the status of 16 of the rarer orchid species in the local area. This has involved visiting 72 colonies once every two years and counting the flowering spikes.

From these figures the current status of these colonies is judged to be: 11% are increasing, 44% are stable, 26% are declining, 14% were critically endangered (less than 10 remaining flowering spikes) and 4% of sites had been lost.

The example in the table below are the colonies of the Lesser Butterfly Orchid, one of 32 species of wildlife chosen by NatureScot to be of principal importance for Scottish Biodiversity Conservation. We notify NatureScot or the landowners in cases of major decline.

Lesser Butterfly Orchid Colony Status	
Ballangrew SSSI	Critically endangered
Callander Golf Course	Critically endangered
Carsebreck Gannochan SSSI	Declining
Carsebreck Loch SSSI	Increasing
Carsebreck Westerton SSSI	Stable
Deny Muir SSSI	Declining
Quoigs Meadow SSSI	Declining
Westerbalgair Meadow	Declining
Westerbalgair SSSI	Stable



Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia*

#### Reintroducing Sticky Catchfly on the Hillfoots



The beautiful and rare Sticky Catchfly plant is only found naturally at about 10 sites in the UK. It loves the south facing slopes like Arthur's Seat but by far the biggest colony is on the slopes of the Ochils between the University of Stirling and Alva.

Our group have been monitoring the numbers over the last 15 years and growing up seedlings to plant out at sites like Alva Glen and Yellow Craigs when numbers decline.

In the last two years The Future Forest Company bought the Dumyat slopes between Logie Kirk and Menstrie which had been denuded of Sticky Catchfly as a result of long-term grazing. In collaboration with Lindsay Mackinlay of The Future Forest Company and with the help of many volunteers we have grown up and planted out 150 two-year-old plants. Many of these flowered last summer but getting them to self-propagate is the next target.

Sticky Catchfly *Viscaria vulgaris*

## 4. Winter talks

Our winter talks programme for 2023-2024 reverted to an online only format as the group could not secure the level of support necessary to enable us to continue running our popular 'hybrid format'. All these talks are available to view on the [SWT YouTube](#) channel.

The majority of our talks were run using the group's Zoom subscription with 25-50 attendees joining online. We also held 2 talks that were hosted and promoted by SWT headquarters and these attracted audiences of over 200 people from across Scotland, the UK and abroad.

We began our 2022-23 programme in October with a talk by John Holland who spoke about 'Wildlife of the Head of Loch Tay and the Tay Marshes SSSI'. John is an upland ecologist at SRUC and lives on the shores of Loch Tay.

In November James Silvey of RSPB Scotland gave his personal insight into 'The Lives of Cuckoos'. A fascinating look into the lives of these cunning birds.

Our final talk of 2023 was run as a SWT national webinar. Ally Lemon, Marine Ornithology Advisor at NatureScot, spoke about the 'Seabirds of Scotland' that can be seen around our coasts and the pressures that they face.



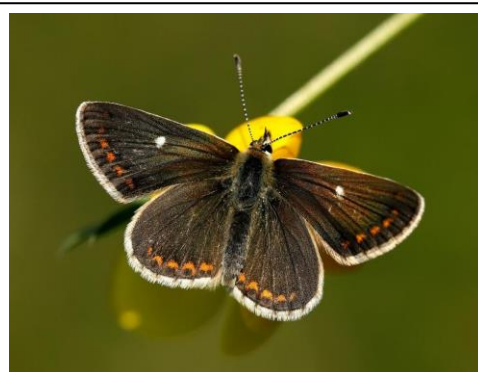
A fascinating cuckoo (Image copyright - Ben Andrews from RSPB-Images)

We started 2024 with our January talk, 'Dragonflies & Damselflies in Stirling & Clackmannanshire' by Daniele Muir of the British Dragonfly Society. Daniele spoke about the species that can be found locally and across Scotland as well as the measures taken to aid their conservation.

In February Alistair Whyte, Head of Plantlife Scotland, gave a talk on 'Scotland's Important Plant Areas - Restoring Wild Plant Diversity - Current Progress'. He covered the work that Plantlife have been undertaking to identify and protect these sites.

Our final talk, held in March, was also hosted as a SWT national webinar. 'Butterflies and moths of Scotland that most need our help' by Anthony McCluskey of Butterfly Conservation covered the species that can be found throughout Scotland, from the common to the very rare.

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



Northern brown argus (Image Copyright Iain Leach)

## 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.

Chair  
Treasurer  
Planning Team Coordinator  
Minutes Secretary  
IT Advisor and Mammal Group Convenor  
Facebook Organiser  
Cambus Pools Reserve Convenor  
Committee member  
Committee member  
Committee member

Chris Cathrine  
Guy Harewood  
Liz Albert  
Marilyn Scott  
Gabi Rice-Grunert  
Melissa Shaw  
Roy Sexton  
Tom Palmer  
Stuart Bence  
Michael Christie