

1. Membership

The membership of our Local Group has risen slightly from 691 in 2024 to 706 currently. This equates to 1,261 members. We recruited Ian Maynard as a new member of the committee and his input over the past 12 months has been much appreciated. We desperately need more help with wild flower conservation, managing our reserve at Cambus Pools, protecting wildlife during the planning processes and running our winter talks programme.

2. Field Surveys in Conjunction with Butterfly Conservation

Stuart Bence, wearing both his SWT and BC hats, organised two field surveys. The first was on 13th July to Fallin Bing. In the 1990s this coal tip was re-landscaped for public use and sprayed with a slurry of wild flower seeds to encourage the growth of butterfly and moth food plants. The survey showed this had been a spectacular success, not only were there lots of flowers but the common blue butterfly had been attracted by bird's foot trefoil its food plant.



Common blue butterfly



Wildflowers on Fallin Bing

The rare purple hairstreak butterfly is thought to be under recorded. The adults are small and fly in the tops of oak trees, usually requiring the use of binoculars to spot them. Last summer we received a number of reports of them being present in the oak canopies on University of Stirling Campus. The adults mate and lay their eggs at the base of oak buds. By examining the terminal buds of fallen twigs the eggs can often be spotted and new populations discovered. To see if we could find the eggs on branches blown down in the New Year gales Stuart organised a search party of twenty volunteers at the University in March. Eight eggs were spotted and were taken away to see if they could be raised into adults.



Purple hairstreak found
dead at the University campus



Fallen oak branch



Purple hairstreak
egg

3. Why Not Scotland

On Saturday 15th March our SWT Group joined forces with the University of Stirling Student Union's Green & Blue Space and the Macrobert Arts Centre to host a screening of SCOTLAND: The Big Picture's feature-length documentary, Why Not Scotland?

The screening was attended by over 30 people and was followed by a Q&A session with representatives from our group, the Student's Union and SCOTLAND: The Big Picture.

The film is now free to view on [YouTube](#)

4. Winter talks

To run the winter talks programme for 2024-2025 the committee was forced to abandon the popular 'hybrid zoom/live format' used in 2023-24 as we could not secure the level of support needed. As result of appeals at the April 2024 AGM we agreed to run two live talks during the 2024-25 season at the beginning and end of the programme so that members could keep in touch with one another. Our thanks go to Ian Maynard who did a great job identifying St Margaret's Church Hall in Drip Road as an excellent venue for live talks and for his help at the events. The two live talks were attended by an audience of just over 30 including a number of new participants

- Oct 1st *The Work of Forth Rivers Trust* by Grace Wilding
- Mar 4th *The Bats of Central Scotland* by Central Scotland Bat Group



Spraying giant hogweed on the banks of the Allan Water behind Marks & Spencer in Dunblane - one of the Forth Rivers Trust's projects.

The other four talks were run using the Zoom. Our November and January talks were run as and promoted as local events and attracted up to 50 attendees. The December and February talks formed part of the SWT series of national webinars and were promoted by SWT Headquarters. These talks attracted hundreds of attendees with the talk by Duncan Orr Ewing 'Conserving our Raptors' describing the work of the Scottish Raptor Study Group attracted an enormous audience of nearly 400 from across the UK and abroad. Committee members Stuart Bence and Guy Harewood were responsible for all the hard work organising the programme:

- 5th Nov *Coastal Realignment at RSPB Skinflats*, Toby Wilson
- 3rd Dec [The World of Scottish Beetles](#), Ashleigh Mifflin
- 7th Jan *The Lichens of Scottish Rainforests*, Dr Oliver Moore (PlantLife)
- 4th Feb [Conserving Our Raptors](#), Duncan Orr Ewing

5. 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/> and our page on the national SWT website <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/stirling/> have kept members and non-members informed of our online talks and AGM as well as current campaigns and volunteer opportunities.

We have had a number of popular posts on our [Facebook](#) page they included 'Future Forest's Wildflower Meadow at Blairlogie' (2359 hits), 'Rediscovery of Herb Paris near Muckhart Mill' (2006 hits), 'New Zealand Flatworm' (1698 hits), 'Giant Hogweed Infestation at Bridge of Frew' (1056 hits). Find us by searching for Stirling SWT Local Group Facebook.

6. Wild Flower Conservation

In 1983 our SWT group realised that plans to plant a conifer forest over the meadows on Balgair Muir between Kippen and Fintry would destroy the last local colony of Frog Orchids. The owners agreed not to plant an old cornstone quarry area and over the last 20 years we have maintained and monitored the site. The grasses have been strimmed back every March and the frog orchids counted every August. In 2024 there were 29 flowering plants.

During the summer we surveyed rare wild flower hotspots at Denny Muir, Carsebreck Fen, Balgair Muir, Plean Country Park, Brae Leny Meadows, Bomains Meadow, Kippen Rait Glen, Lecroft Embankment, Yellow Craigs Blairlogie, the River Knaik flood plain, Wharryburn on Sheriffmuir and Cock's burn reservoir. We reported two catastrophic declines to NatureScot one of which has been remedied. Sadly, the colony of the beautiful early marsh orchid in Glen Tye on Sheriffmuir which we have been visiting for 16 years had finally succumbed to lack of grazing, however the site on the River Knaik near Braco still had 23 flowering plants.

In the previous newsletter we reported that with the help of University of Stirling students we had attempted to reestablish the beautiful and very rare Sticky Catchfly on the Future Forest Company's south facing slopes of the Ochils between Blairlogie and Logie Kirk. Quite a lot of plants survived the winter and flowered though deer nipped off some flower buds before they came out.



Frog orchid at
Balgair Muir



Edinburgh University are now owners of the north Drumbrae side of Dumyat and their Community Ranger Julie Wilson arranged for their Conservation Society to plant out more of our Sticky Catchfly plants on south facing crags.

Lindsay Mackinlay of Future Forest Company has been establishing a wild flower meadow immediately west of Blairlogie village. We helped by collecting and spreading yellow rattle seed, a parasitic plant which helps reduce the growth of rank grasses. We also grew up and planted out devil's bit scabious to provide an autumn nectar source for butterflies.

Reintroduced Sticky Catchfly on
Witches' Craig

7. Our Local SWT Nature Reserves

In the Stirling and Clackmannan SWT group's area we have several nature reserves along the River Forth between Cambus and Alloa. We are delighted to report that the Cambus Pools' management agreement between SWT and Diageo has at last been renewed. There is a big backlog of field work which has to be done and we are looking out for volunteers (contact roygravedigger@aol.com) There has already been one work party organised by SWT staff member Chris Kilmartin to trim the track-side hedges, which was necessary to allow the reed cutting machine into the western pool.



Our Cambus Pools Reserve

About a mile downstream of Cambus Pools is Tullibody Inch SSSI, another SWT nature reserve. In the last few years this tidal reed bed has been the site of much ornithological interest. In the summer of 2023 two female marsh harriers made nests and sharing a single male they raised and fledged a total of six young.

Since 2006 we have made an annual count of the flowering greater butterfly orchids on SWT's Bomain's Meadow reserve at Bo'ness. This is done to assess the effectiveness of the winter grazing by SWT's Flying Flock. It is a tribute to the commitment of the staff that the numbers have only twice dropped below 450 flower spikes.

8. Protecting Wildlife in the Planning Process.

Our Planning Group has become much depleted with the loss of several of its key members. However, Marilyn Scott has struggled on and managed to look through the Local Authority planning applications to make sure wildlife is protected. We owe her, and the local wildlife experts who she consults, a great debt of thanks. The requirement for public consultation and environmental impact assessments as part of the planning process has meant that we are often asked to comment on proposals. For instance, we held a site meeting with Steven Garbit to discuss Scottish Water's plans for woodland creation round the Cocksburn Reservoir on Sheriffmuir. We mapped the sites where rare species like grasshopper warblers, green hairstreaks, chickweed wintergreen, orchids and petty whin are found so they could be avoided in their planting plans. We also asked them to remove non-native Sitka spruce that have spread from an adjacent plantation.

9. 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 & Events Organiser
Deputy Chair and Treasurer
Minutes Secretary and Planning Group
IT & Web Advisor
Conservation and Facebook Organiser
Committee member
Committee member

Stuart Bence
Guy Harewood
Marilyn Scott
Gabi Rice-Grunert
Roy Sexton
Michael Christie
Ian Maynard