

SWT Central Borders Group Outings 2017

(1) Selkirk Flood Defence area 17 May

Central Borders Group had their first summer season event on Wednesday 17 May with Douglas Methven leading a group of 23 along the new Selkirk Flood Defences and along the riverside. It was a lovely evening for such a stroll and numerous birds, flowers, lichens and mosses were spotted along the way with the help of the experts present.

A pretty extensive list of birds both seen and heard was compiled ...Sparrow... Swallow...Blackcap...Jackdaw...Blackbird...Goosander...Goldfinch... Song Thrush...Willow Warbler...Mallard...Sedge Warbler...Robin...Common Sandpiper...Pied Wagtail...Heron...Great Tit...Oyster Catcher...Chaffinch... Wren...Sand Martin...Grey Wagtail...Redpoll...Blue Tit...Starling...Garden Warbler...House Martin...Yellowhammer...Carrion Crow...Whitethroat... Pheasant...Wood Pigeon...Feral Pigeon...Rook...and Dipper...and Juvenile Dipper as pictured.

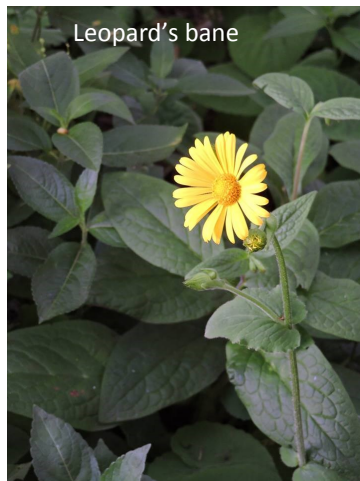
Thanks go to Douglas and Jim for organising the event.



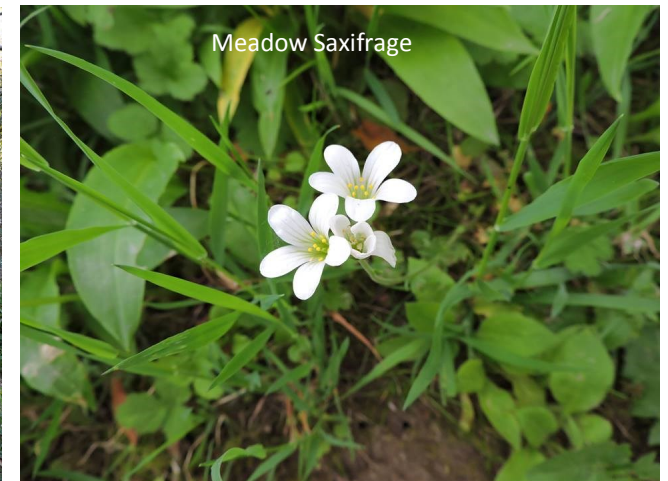
Juvenile Dipper



Dandelion "clocks"



Leopard's bane



Meadow Saxifrage

(2) St Abbs Head 17 June

SWT Central Borders Group held its second summer event on Saturday 17th June at St. Abbs on a VERY hot day. The group, ably led by Jim Russell, was 14 strong... well 15 if you include Louise who had driven down from Crieff and eventually caught up with us at the café at the end of the walk! We set off on a slow ramble along the cliffs, up to the lighthouse and then back down past Mire Loch. There was plenty to see...wild flowers... butterflies...moths...lichen...and birds both on the cliffs and on the sea. The lunch stop at the lighthouse coincided with a lovely display by Bottle-nosed Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises below us on the sea. One of the targets for the day was to find a Northern Brown Argus butterfly on the areas of Rock Rose. One was eventually spotted...by the back markers in the group! A micro-moth was also spotted which has been identified as a *Pyrausta cingulata*, a very local and uncommon moth whose food plant is believed to be Thyme. Common Blue butterflies were also seen by the sharp eyed amongst the group!



Northern Brown Argus



Pyrausta cingulata



Early Marsh Orchid?



Cliffs and Stacks with breeding awks



(3) Lauder Moor 15 July



Despite a dismal forecast, and morning of wind and rain, 14 intrepid adventurers gathered high up on Lauder Moor 370m (1200 feet in old money) on the afternoon of Saturday 15 July for the SWT Central Borders July walk led by Kate Bissett. Some had travelled far, from the distant realms of Kelso and even Edinburgh!

Fortunately the weather magically improved in the afternoon giving us a window of warm and less inclement weather. We explored a small area of this expanse of wet and dry heath and patches of acid grassland which is managed for sheep grazing by annual muirburn. During interludes of better visibility, we caught glimpses of the Eildons, the Black Hill of Earlston and with the eye of faith - the Cheviot!

We were very lucky in having a geologist in the group who was able to tell us of the origin of the boulders in the dry stone dykes. Unfortunately, moths and butterflies were keeping their heads low after the morning rain and wind. However we saw meadow pipits and heard brave skylarks and the calls and drumming of snipe. The moor was dotted with Tormentil, Heath Bedstraw, Lousewort, Wild Thyme, Mountain Pansy, Clover, Bird's foot trefoil, Harebells, Bell Heather and Cross-leaved Heath to name but a few. The Ling was just tempting us with a hint of purple but it will dominate the moor in swathes of colour in a week or so's time.

The moor has lots of different interest as the seasons change and hopefully the walk will have served as a introduction for those who attended.



Fourteen eager walkers, led by Malcolm Lindsay, set out on the path to Hill North summit on a fine summer morning. Shortly after reaching open ground we paused to catch breath and found ourselves standing beside a fine specimen of Broad-leaved Helleborine, a very uncommon orchid in the Borders. That was a great start before the steep pull up Hill North through an area of wet grassland dotted with Sneezewort and Meadow Vetchling. We found a few insects including Twin-spot Carpet, Shaded Broad-bar and Large Yellow Underwing moths and Green-veined White butterflies. Ever expanding views unfolded behind us as we reached the blooming heather (Ling and Bell heather) and Bilberry through which we climbed all the way to the flat grassy top. Reddish trachyte rocks formed the cairn – igneous rocks formed from volcanic activity 300 million years ago. A hill-topping Small Tortoiseshell butterfly joined us on the exhilarating breezy and sunny summit with its wonderful 360° vista of the Borders countryside at its summer best. We mused about the function of the prehistoric “hill fort” site on which we were standing and the mind sets of its Bronze Age inhabitants. Was it used as a refuge in times of danger or revered as a spiritual centre? No-one knows.

Then it was downhill to the Saddle and a traverse round the south side of Mid Hill. Lunch was taken close to a boggy area where discoveries included Lesser Spearwort, Marsh Lousewort, Common Butterwort, Cross-leaved Heath and Heath-spotted Orchid. Well refreshed, we walked on to the charmingly grassy Little Hill, the sometimes overlooked 4th Eildon, with its different geological origin leading to a slightly calcareous soil with fine grasses, Wild Thyme, Lady's Bedstraw, Harebell and good colonies of Common Rock-rose. Here excited shouts from our lepidopterist contingent announced the arrival a fine Scotch Argus butterfly in pristine condition and probably blown upwards from the wet meadows below. Birds were rather inconspicuous at this mid-summer date but Meadow Pipit, Buzzard, Kestrel, Linnet, Swallow and House Martin all put in an appearance.

We then traversed the northern side of Mid Hill where we found several large specimens of Stag's Horn Clubmoss colonising an area of hill which had suffered fire damage about 10 years ago. By now we could see a heavy shower enveloping Galashiels a few miles to the west so we hurried on to reach the St Cuthbert's Way path and a somewhat weary-legged steep descent into Melrose, just avoiding a bad soaking. Once cars had been collected coffee and cakes were the order of the day in re-emerging warm sunshine. A great day of hill walking, wildlife and good company.

