

Dundee and Angus Wildlife News

DAWN-NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGUS AND DUNDEE GROUPS. Jan 2025

Welcome to the all new newsletter of the Scottish Wildlife Trust Angus and Dundee local group.

We aim to publish and distribute a newsletter once a quarter to update you on events with the local group and on our 4 local reserves.

We also run a Facebook page and group which we would love to hear from you on.

Committee news



If you are interested in our plans watch out for announcements on our Facebook Page – we will certainly be looking for new faces to enhance the team in 2025.

We can also reveal that the Angus and Dundee Group have been chosen to host this years SWT AGM. More on this later.

The Committee meets every two months in Forfar or on Zoom and there is always plenty to talk about! This year has been one of transition and we are still in the process of moving forward. The new year started with a rather bleak outlook and there was some talk of closing down as it had proved very difficult to attract new members and the group had no Chairman or Secretary. That would have been very sad as the Angus and Dundee Local Group has a long and interesting history and we care for four magnificent reserves as well as organising activities for members. Fortunately, two of the elder statesmen Richard Brinklow and Trefor Woodford stepped up to the mark to maintain the group for another year. We are all entirely in their debt for preserving our local SWT Community

We have welcomed new committee members with a wide range of interests and experience, while keeping the invaluable expertise of the "older generation". It's a perfect combination and we are looking forward to redefining the group and its structures as we progress and make the most of the opportunities offered by the wonderful wildlife we have here in Angus and Dundee

JUNIOR DAWN

When I drew back the curtains this morning, I was greeted by the golden sun just rising over the hills. The colours in the sky were beautiful and the grass was still white with frost, a perfect winter morning. I took a moment to look at the bird feeding station in my garden and was delighted by the sparrows all jostling for the best place. There were blue tits flitting in and out of the hedge, greedily enjoying the nuts and seeds on offer, and blackbirds noisily chasing each other across the lawn. I was just wondering why they can't share – there's plenty to go round when I noticed a newcomer in the tree.



I had to get my binoculars out to be sure but – Yes! The first **Fieldfare** had arrived. Just the one today but I know there will be more because all those scrumptious red berries on the bushes are irresistible.

I wondered what stories my beautiful new friend would tell me if she could speak my language. Where was she born? Perhaps her home nest was in Norway or Sweden or maybe Lapland. What sights she must have seen in her short life. I bet she has watched the Aurora Borealis lots of times as she has settled for the night in some majestic Norway Spruce. Maybe she has visited Father Christmas and shared Rudolf's breakfast – who knows! She must have flown down magnificent Fjords and across enormous forests, seen icy blue lakes and vast expanses of snow.

I asked myself what did she think when the days started to get shorter and one morning in late Autumn all her friends and relations gathered to begin their epic journey to find a warmer place for the Winter? Did anyone tell her they were going to Scotland? That beautiful little bird, just a tiny bit bigger than a blackbird has flown over one thousand miles to find my garden. How lucky am I to see her!

Watch out for her friends and relations, they might be in your garden and when you see them be amazed at how beautiful they are. Look closely, if you can, at the colours and patterns in their plumage. And if you haven't got any berry bushes in your garden or they've eaten them all already, don't despair. They love to eat fallen fruit so if you have some old, left over apples put them out and maybe you'll be as lucky as I was today. P.S. If you do see Fieldfare in your garden, look carefully, you may have Redwing too!
Dianne Greenwood

It was a slow start this year. We progressed from a wet and miserable Spring through to a damp and grey Summer. Autumn and Winter, thank goodness, bucked the trend and are "doing what it says on the tin!" for once. We have all enjoyed some spectacular bright sunny days on our wonderful Angus Reserves and there are beautiful pictures and posts on our Facebook Group.

Balgavies Loch always excites a lot of interest and this year was no exception. The female Osprey returned from Senegal in late March and her mate KR3 joined her in early April. After some "nestoration," eggs were laid and the chicks hatched in late May. There were two chicks this year, successfully raised and fledged, and ready to leave in mid September. A short season but one which gives so much pleasure to those of us who are lucky enough to live here. For wonderful pictures head over to Osprey Facebook page. A rare sighting featured on their page is an Eagle (Golden or White tailed?) being mobbed by our

This year Balgavies has seen extensive repairs and maintenance work on the footpath and attention has been paid to the management of Fonah Bog, which has been quite dry. A survey of Ash Dieback led to some tree felling and the willow in front of the hide has been coppiced.



The Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels Group have been monitoring the Balgavies Population. Angus is a critical site as the boundary between the Red Squirrels of Aberdeenshire which are Squirrel Pox free and the Greys in the Central Belt which are not!



Next year we plan to renew the Balgavies Guide with an on-line feature accessed through QR codes on renovated posts throughout the reserve – a similar facility for Seaton Cliffs is being discussed.

The Miley Dundee. The Miley Group meet regularly to keep our Dundee green corridor litter free and accessible. This year both Japanese Knotweed and Russian Vine have been treated. There are, however, some clouds on The Miley's horizon concerning a planning application and the Group is quite worried about the implications of changes made to the plans after the period of consultation had closed. We'll keep you posted on our Facebook Page if there are any developments.



Seaton Cliffs. There has been reinforcement work on the footpath at Seaton Cliffs and the essential work of strimming the vegetation around footpaths on all our reserves to keep areas accessible goes on all summer.



Lintrathen Reservoir. The loch has attracted good numbers of over-wintering geese and ducks this past autumn and will continue to provide a haven for wildlife into the spring and summer. The hides at Lintrathen are regularly inspected and there has been a professional structural survey of the double hide. Footpaths to the newer east hide have also been recently repaired.



"What better place to visit on a sunny frosty winter's morning? The walk in through the young trees then over the bridge through lovely mature conifers and beeches through to the old hide is, in my opinion, the best approach to any of SWT hides in Angus. We have seen many different birds on our regular walk-in's including crossbills. Yesterday (Jan 4th), no crossbills but long tailed tits, all the other tits, goldcrests and a very noisy greater spotted woodpecker. It wasn't very close for us to see but something was spooking it judging by its alarm call. No red squirrels there yesterday but we saw one the other month and the evidence of their feasting is all around. This is definitely a spot for sitting quietly for a wee while.

Last summer, the view from the hide was of mud flats, the reservoir was so dry, but now it was covered in water and full of teal, widgeon, mallard, whooper swans, pink foot geese and

Meet our members

Name: Dianne Greenwood

Date Joined: September 2024

Areas of Particular Interest: I like all aspects of wildlife but if I had to pick one it would be Birds. I can sit all day in a hide



What was it that first sparked your interest in Wildlife? Walks with my Dad in the Yorkshire countryside. My dad had polio when he was young and had to rest often on our walks and so from a very young age I learned to stop and look with an expert guide. Awe and wonder were an integral part of my life as I learned to love all of nature from the tiniest bug to the tallest tree .

Who was the biggest influence on this aspect of your life? Rachel Carson and her "Silent Spring", I still have the book. (Showing my age!) and Nikolaas Tinbergen who is the reason I love to sit all day and observe behaviour.

What's your favourite Wildlife TV Programme / Book? It has to be Countryfile.

Your most magical wildlife moment was.... Belayed on a climb in Glencoe when a Golden Eagle glided past the cliff a few feet below my perch and flew down the valley. Amazing.

And where is your go-to wildlife spot in Angus? Anywhere where there are birds and red squirrels and that's everywhere.

Name: Aleksejs Loginovs

Date joined: August 2024

Areas of particular interest: I like learning about the practical conservation work happening around Scotland. I enjoy a day out doing wildlife photography, or volunteering on the reserves. I occasionally dabble in video editing and I enjoy



What sparked your interest in Wildlife? I moved to Scotland and went on some hikes with friends. Coming from a very flat country I was amazed at the natural beauty of the mountains that Scotland has. Then I learned that the more closely you look at what's around you - the more things you see.

Who was the biggest influence on this aspect of your life?

Two equally big influences on me were David Attenborough and my partner. Shows featuring David Attenborough opened my eyes to how diverse the nature on our planet is and what amazing things we could see if we just stepped out of our houses. And my partner's love for birds and all things wild encouraged me to step out and start exploring.

What's your favourite Wildlife TV Programme/Book?

I really enjoyed watching Chimp Empire on Netflix. It's the most captivating high-quality story-driven wildlife TV show I've ever seen. The makers managed to capture an amazing story about social interactions within a group of chimps.

Your most magical wildlife moment was...

When I was camping at Loch Muick and decided to go and explore the path leading towards Glen Doll. I came across a red patch of sphagnum moss and really paid attention to it for the first time. Looking close at it I realised there are lots of little sundew plants dotted across the red of the moss. Little traps - glistening invitingly with little droplets of "dew" dotted around and their bright colours. The dew, of course, is to trap and slowly digest any insect that gets drawn to it.

At that moment I felt like I was watching an alien universe - something akin to planet Pandora in Avatar.

Is Fonah Bog a bog?

During the winter I've been cutting willows with Zac at Fonah Bog, near Balgavies Loch when we came across this interesting question.

Is Fonah Bog a bog?

A bog is one of the two main types of peatlands (meaning there is a lot of peat there). A fen is another type. A peatland is a type of wetland, which there are many more of.

Bogs are just bodies of standing water that are only fed by rainwater. Bog soil, or peat, contains high levels of nutrients that can't be accessed by plants due to the low oxygen environment caused by the very slow flowing water and bog mosses so anything that is to survive there needs to specialise. This leads to a lot of biodiversity. Knowing that, we can safely say that Fonah Bog is not actually a bog, because it has a lot of water streaming into it

Could it be a fen?

Fens are fed by precipitation, surface and groundwater. They are also full of sphagnum mosses (and peat), which cause the surface to flow very slowly, creating a low-oxygen environment that prevents a lot of plants from being able to access the nutrients locked in the peat.

Fens are also usually quite species rich. Fonah Bog has quite a lot of willow and bog myrtle

What else could it be?

There is a type of wetland called a Carr. This is a type of wet woodland that often gets referred to as a swamp. Carr's have very nutrient-rich soil with nutrients available and thus are usually dominated by larger trees and most of the time a single species dominates most of the area. Looking at Fonah bog it's quite clear how much it is dominated by the impenetrable wall of

So, what is Fonah Bog?

The classification above gives us some hints; however, we need to remember that one type of wetland can transition into another over time. This is influenced by changes in direct and surrounding land use, and changes in the climate, which in turn affects the transition.

Thinking through the above we concluded

How does a fen become a woodland Carr?

Fonah Bog is surrounded by farmland and historically there have been high levels of agricultural run-off in the form of silt, which enriched the surface water. The issue of agricultural run-off has now been fixed thanks to hard work of farmers in the surrounding area.

These extra nutrients in the water, however, promoted more growth of shrubs and willows. The roots of willows allow oxygen to penetrate deep into the peat, thus allowing a greater diversity of microbes to decompose the peat. As the peat decomposes, the stores of nutrients are released into the surface water, causing a positive feedback loop that accelerates habitat change. In addition, as the Sphagnum mosses and peat are replaced by willow, the flow of surface water increases which prevents water from being able to be stored over the summer months, and floods to occur in the winter.

We are cutting the willows down in carefully chosen areas to create a mosaic of different wetland habitats within one area to support as great a variety of species as we can.



Volunteers
cutting willows at
Fonah Bog

Osprey

We are lucky within the Angus area to have a number of sites that support Osprey breeding.

One of these is our very own Balgavies Loch where for a number of years there have been breeding pairs (KR3 AND unringed female) and a number of chicks fledged.

2024 saw two chicks fledge. If you want to track them their Darvic rings are 1L1 and 1L0

Please remember, Ospreys and protected birds and like all wildlife on the reserves mustn't be disturbed. Ospreys have the highest full legal protection under UK law (Schedule 1). It is an offence to injure or disturb any bird, nest or egg.

The main hide at Balgavies is the best place to view the birds with a direct line of sight to the nest and perches

The Osprey will be expected back in early summer and hopefully will result in another breeding pair and more healthy chicks.



Upcoming events

Sunday 9th February 2025

Tentsmuir Coastal Walk, followed by lunch at Larick Centre. Meet 10:00am at Links Road N carpark, Tayport
Lunch at 12:30pm at Larick Café, Shanwell Road, Tayport DD6 9EA

Thursday 20th March 2025

Eden Project – Talk by Caishlan Sweeney/Julianne Robertson
7:30pm – 9:30pm
Meffan Museum and Art Gallery, 20 West High Street, Forfar DD8 1BB

Thursday 17th April 2025

Local Group AGM – followed by short talk by Dirk Sporleder from Dronley Community Woods, which has been managed according to Continuous Cover Forestry principles since 2019. The talk will be about woodland management such as continuous cover forestry, permanent irregular woodlands and coppice with standards.
7:30pm – 9:30pm
Meffan Museum and Art Gallery, 20 West High Street, Forfar DD8 1BB

Saturday 24th May 2025

Dundee Plant Sale:

Saturday 31st May 2025

Camperdown Park Walk
Meet at 10:00am at Camperdown Country Park Zoo Car Park
Lunch/picnic at 12:30pm at Camperdown Wildlife Centre Cafe

Sunday 15th June 2025

Local Natural History Groups Joint outing to Barry Buddon
Meet at 10:00am in the main visitor's car park close to the guard room entrance into the army camp.
Bring binoculars, lunch and wear appropriate clothing.

Sunday 22nd June 2025

Visit to Dronley Community Woods with Dirk Sporleder.
Dronley Wood has been managed according to Continuous Cover Forestry principles since 2019. It is a multipurpose woodland where biodiversity, amenity and timber production are equal priorities. During the site visit, you will be shown what has been achieved so far and find out plans and challenges for the future. Dronley Community Wood Meeting point and time TBC

Sunday 21st September 2025

Joint Fungal Foray with TAFFG members at Ayton Hill
Meeting point and details TBC

Sat/Sun 8th/9th November 2025

Miley – leaf clearance
10:00am – 4:00pm
Meeting – Loons Road end of Miley

Any suggestions, Able to lead a walk, give a talk, Get in touch email address

How to access the Angus and Dundee webpage and Facebook

Go to scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk. Depending on the device you are using you will find a link called 'Groups' at the very top of the page or one called 'Local Groups' at the bottom. Click on this then scroll down and select 'Angus and Dundee' <https://www.swtdundeeangus.org.uk/>

Facebook page with Group news and Event updates can be found here. [SWTADLG](#)

Please give us a follow

We also have a Facebook Group which you can join where you are able to post pictures and share your wildlife encounters. You have join the Group here. [Group Page](#)

If you have any problems with the sites, please email social@swtdundeeangus.org.uk