



Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

DAWN - Newsletter of the North Angus and Angus & Dundee Groups

Number 127 - March 2018

Contents

Moths by Moonlight	1
Morrisons Bag-Pack	1
News from the Reserves	2
Dundee Group	3
Dates for your Diary	4

Introduction

As you will see from reading this newsletter we've had a busy autumn and early winter, with our October talk and the major fund-raising activity of the year together with efforts to maintain and improve our reserves, and knowledge about them. At the time of writing, in early January, we look forward with hope towards the year to come and that it will be as successful as 2017.

At our autumn talk the members' group was rewarded with a fascinating talk on moths and in turn we look forward to the two indoor events to come this spring. The winter morning walk will have occurred by the time you read this but we anticipate some wonderful outings during the summer. Come and join us; we'd be very pleased to see you.

Moths by Moonlight

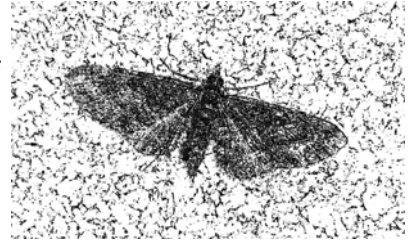
Thursday 16th October

Paul Brooks, from Montrose, the Angus moth recorder, gave an excellent and informative talk on his favourite subject, our local moth populations. He'd been recommended to us as being a very good speaker on the subject and some thirty members and visitors were not disappointed. His enthusiasm and knowledge and came across to all.

Paul began by outlining the differences between moths and butterflies and described the class to which both belonged. He continued on to cover the basic life cycles of these insects, from eggs to larvae, the iconic caterpillars, their food plants and on to pupae and adults. He also talked about some of the ways that these insects deal with the severe pressures of numerous predators. In fact there are a number of different types of animals that prize them

as menu items, not only birds and mammals, but also bats and a wide variety of other insects. These include many predatory wasps and similar species, not least numbers of parasites and hyper-parasites which invade the bodies of moth (and butterfly) larvae and feed on them internally, to emerge as the adult parasites.

Our speaker illustrated his talk with a selection of beautiful photographs of striking day-flying species, such as the 6-spot burnet and cinnabar, and numbers of wonderfully patterned night-flying moths, often superbly camouflaged so as to be able 'hide in plain sight' on substrates such as tree bark. The audience was treated to a variety of photos of larvae, or caterpillars, and we marvelled at illustrations of such beautiful moths as yellow underwing, ermine and garden tiger. Paul also described species such as emperor and northern eggjar, often seen by naturalists and walkers up in the hills, and several examples of large hovering moths including the wonderfully named elephant hawk-moth.



After a spirited range of questions, evidence of the interest in the talk, the vote of thanks was given by Dr Trefor Woodford and ended with a burst of hearty applause.

Morrisons Bag-Pack

Wednesday 20th December

Over a dozen SWT members did a fantastic job of volunteering to help busy shoppers pack their Christmas shopping at the Morrisons Super-Store in Arbroath and collect donations into their collections buckets. Barbara Thompson organised the whole event – highly efficiently, as usual – and we're very grateful that the store management allowed us access to the site to take part in the annual rush. Each volunteer was wearing a Scottish Wildlife Trust sash and Mary and Tom Harwood brought our SWT banners which were soon set up at either end of the check-out line to catch the attention of shoppers.

At first there were relatively few people in the store and not all the checkout lines were in use. Those of us not helping at a checkout were able to stand with a collecting bucket near either the entrance or the exit. For about an hour or so collection rates were slow but gradually more and more shoppers came in and the lines became really busy. Volunteers including Joyce Cooper, Lesley Thomson, Allison Bannerman, Dave McKenzie and Jim McCombe all did an excellent job helping speed up the bag-packing. Veterans Tom and Mary, James, Richard, Liz and Alban and others set to and made positive contributions to the packing and collecting efforts.

Virtually all shoppers donated their change, even those who didn't want help, but a number were remarkably generous, often commenting on their love of wildlife and wished us well. This year we had enough volunteers to keep the checkouts going and allow others the time off to have a coffee break and rest their legs and feet and, later, go for lunch. Not all our volunteers could spare the time for the whole session but everyone made a great contribution.

The numbers of shoppers coming through were greatest for a couple of hours in late morning and early afternoon and then slowed down for a while. However, activity picked up again in mid-afternoon and helped speed the rest of our day past. In fact, by the time the end of the collecting stint came up at four o'clock, the lines were still busy and money was continuing to come in. Eventually those who stayed to the end were able to pull away and gather all the buckets, banners, sashes, leaflets and other items together. It took several of us to carry everything back to the car, particularly the heavy buckets!

When the takings were counted up, they came to the amazing total of £1065.20, our best-ever result! Our grateful thanks go to all those who took part, especially Barbara who'd organised the session, to the Morrisons store managers and staff, who were most helpful, and – most of all – to those many generous shoppers whose very welcome contributions helped swell the collections. The monies donated will be used to benefit our SWT wildlife reserves in Dundee (The Miley) and Angus (Montrose Basin, Balgavies Loch, Lintrathen Loch and Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath).

News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch The most important recent event is that the SWT acquired an extra piece of land, due to a generous gift by Alison Bell, daughter of the late John Compton, who'd been so important in setting up the reserve in the first place. The necessary legal arrangements will incur fees that your local group committee has agreed to pay. Another set of fees will be for the identification of the many invertebrates captured by last summer's 'bug-vacuuming' survey and the report describing the

finds. Further funds had to be spent on repairing the roadside fence which was damaged by speeding vehicles.

We look forward to the ospreys returning this spring, after the successful fledging of 3 youngsters last year. However, although most dog walkers are responsible and keep their dogs on leads on the circular path, some do not and continue to disturb wildlife at all times of the year.

Lintrathen Loch During the autumn the annual exchange of migrants took place as usual and large numbers of geese and ducks came in to liven the winter scene. Most of the pinkfooted geese roost overnight, leaving early and only returning in the last light of the day, along with increasing numbers of Canada geese, but numbers of ducks sometimes could be seen from the two hides during the day. In fact, at times, visitors had to be careful and quiet when entering the hides, particularly the newer one, to avoid disturbing the wildfowl nearby. Mallards were most common, as might be expected, along with smaller numbers of teal, tufted duck, pochard, widgeon and a few golden eye.

The Miley The annual leaf clearance session in November helped prevent the track from being mired over with ground-in wet litter and re-open the path-side ditches. However, the bare slopes in some of the steepest banks remain a problem, with too much material being washed down. Perhaps the introduction of some ferns and similar shade-tolerant plants will help stabilise those steep bare places and slow down erosion. Some small trees and bushes were cleared away from the top of the bank in one section, without consultation, by a house holder next to the Miley but we hope that during this coming spring and summer the vegetation will recover and stabilise the slope below.

Montrose Basin The kingfishers (mostly a juvenile female) has been faithful to the ponds in front of the Visitor Centre since August, to the great enjoyment of the staff and visitors. Up to four Little Egrets have been around the ponds and salt pans for a few months.

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath The autumn and winter sees the cliffs at their quietest, with few birds around, except the usual rock doves, crows and similar year-round residents. Along the water's edge, though, and on the Flairs of Carlingsheugh Bay, numbers of small waders, redshank and oystercatchers, rock pipits, turnstones and others could be seen. By early January a few fulmars were prospecting along the cliffs, an encouraging sign of the spring to come. The freezing weather at the end of the year has had little effect on the reserve. Although a few small slips occurred along the cliffs, so far there has been no major damage. In some places, however, the paths are continuing to deteriorate slowly and will eventually need to be re-built.

Dundee Group

Mary's Quiz

The 2017 Wildlife Quiz produced by Mary Harwood finished late last year and we're pleased to say that it was a great success, with sales of the quiz sheets and donations bringing in a very welcome total of £190.54 to our local reserves fund.

There were 7 completed and correct sheets sent in; from these the 3 winners were chosen at random. The prizes were 1st - £15, 2nd - £10 and 3rd - £5, all with 1 year's free family membership. We're very grateful indeed and would thank everyone who took part and contributed.

The 3 winners were:

- 1st – Karen Sleith
- 2nd – Lily-Anne and May-Belle Barclay
- 3rd – Jean Cook (no relation!)

If you'd like to see the complete list of answers, please speak to Mary Harwood directly, look at the website or email the address given at the end of this newsletter. We hope you're looking forward to seeing the next quiz; it's already in production. Mary started working in the New Year on a promising idea.

Litter-picking at the Miley

The litter-clearing sessions by one or two local members each week is continuing, as usual. Although the 5p charge on plastic bags has made a difference in the numbers blowing around (and those caught in the branches of trees, known as 'Witches Knickers' by the Irish) there are still all-too-many sweetie papers, crisps bags and wrappers from around chocolate bars and the like, plus plastic bottles and bags, a variety of larger items and general rubbish. Unfortunately, also, some dog owners are not responsible – but the great majority are! – and either don't clear up after their charges or, almost as bad, collect it into a 'doggy bag' and then sling the bag into the bushes. In such packaging the dog wastes can last a long time until perhaps an unlucky child or some other unfortunate finds it. Yeugh!

Leaf Clearing from along the Miley

Sunday 19th November

It was a great morning, relatively mild and sunny, when a small group gathered just off the Loons Road and distributed out a series of rakes, brushes and shovels before setting off. What a contrast with some of the leaf clearance days of a few years past!

Tom Harwood soon set off for the far end, close to Clepington Road, while the others began sweeping and raking at the Loons Road end. Ian Baird had brought along his wheel barrow and it wasn't long before it was being used to move loads of leaves to one of several compost heaps left from previous years. The southern half of the Miley was relatively

clear of leaves which were easy to gather and remove because they were light and dry. At the same time the ditches along the path were cleared out and some of the encroaching vegetation, especially the abundant brambles, was cut or dug out.

Most of the time, though, spent working at the middle section below the road bridge where the leaf deposits were deeper and heavier. Again, they were swept clear and moved into heaps to stabilise and rot down to encourage more local wildlife. The ditches also needed dug out to renew the flow down into the drain. Although the weather had been dry the path was damp and a little muddy in one section, which is why ditch maintenance is so important. Eventually, the two groups working in from each end met up and we were able to walk along and admire our efforts. It was time for a well-deserved lunch!

'It's Your Neighbourhood' Certificate

22nd November



After a thorough visit by a small team of inspectors, The Miley reserve, through an urban area of Dundee, was selected for an award (not our first such recognition for the Miley). At a ceremony in the City Hall the Certificate was accepted by Mary and Tom Harwood, on behalf of The Miley project and all its volunteers. The certificate was awarded to the group for the continuing good work carried out by our helpers to keep the SWT reserve along the old railway line in good condition for both wildlife and visitors. It is one of a series of certificates presented each year in a number of categories for a wide variety of community and environmental activities.

Mary Harwood

Nursery Children along The Miley

12th January

Late last year Mary Harwood was asked by a member of staff from Law Nursery in Dundee if it was possible to take a group of four-year olds on a guided walk through part of the Miley. Mary and Alison Keeble, another volunteer, with school staff member Lisa, escorted a group of eight small and budding enthusiasts along the path. Naturally, they were all curious and fascinated by the wildlife that could be seen. They found mosses and lichens, saw leaf buds on trees and new shoots in the ground and looked for birds. In fact one of the 4-year olds even kept a tally of how many different birds had been seen – a Naturalist in the making!

Mary Harwood

How to Join the Dundee Group:

If you live in or around Dundee and would like to join in with the group activities please come along to one of the SWT evening meetings in Forfar, phone Dundee 0774 767 4675 and ask to speak to the Miley Organiser, Mary Harwood or send an email to the editor at the address at the bottom of this page.

Dates for your Diary

- Thursday 8th March** **"The State of Seabirds in the UK"** An overview by Dr. Julie Black, Senior Marine Ecologist, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Aberdeen. 7:30pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St, Forfar. Suggested donation £3.50 adults, accompanying children free.
- Thursday 19th April** **"Scotland's Wild Deer, opportunity or threat"** A talk by Richard Cooke, Chair of the Association of Deer Management Groups, following short AGM. 7:30pm Upper Reid Hall, Castle St. Forfar.
- Saturday 28th April** **Montrose Coffee Morning** 10am-12 Old & St. Andrews Church Hall, High St. Montrose. Suggested donation £2.
- Saturday 19th May** **Dundee Plant Sale** 10:30-3pm at the Demonstration Gardens, Dawson Park, Caenlochan Road, Dundee. All donations welcome.
- Sunday 3rd June** **Visit to Fowlsheugh RSPB Reserve** Meet at 10:30am in the Montrose Basin Centre car park, before travelling on to Fowlsheugh, as parking there limited. Bring binoculars and lunch.
- Sunday 8th July** **Coastal Day Walk** through Seaton Cliffs Reserve for wild flowers and butterflies to Carlingheugh Bay where there are opportunities for rock pooling and exploring the caves. (Bring torch)(low tide 4:46pm.) Meet at 2pm Victoria Park, Arbroath by the cliffs.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

Full details of events can be found on scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk or www.montrosebasin.org.uk on the Visitor Centre page.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will open daily, mid February to 31st October from 10:30am to 5pm. and Friday to Monday from 1st November to mid-February from 10:30am to 4pm.

Dundee Conservation Volunteers

Contact John Whyman on (01382) 431848 (daytime), or 07940 165997 (mobile) for details of the current programme. A Sunday activity occurs once a month. The SWT minibus leaves Seagate Bus Station at 9:30am to the activity destination. Wear old clothes and stout boots. Bring waterproofs and lunch.

It's your chance to help conserve wildlife actively!

Contact Details

The Angus and Dundee Group website is at myweb.tiscali.co.uk/adbswt

and you can email on adbswt@tiscali.co.uk

The SWT's home Web Pages are at www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk



Group	Leader	Meeting Place	Phone
Montrose	Watch leader	Basin Visitor Centre	01674 676336

(SWT Family Membership includes children's **WATCH** membership)

July 2018 Newsletter Copy Deadline - 21st May 2018

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for July to November 2018 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the email address

jim.strath91@gmail.com

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247), having its registered office at Harbourside House, 110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh EH6 6NF.

It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).