



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

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Introduction

After the long hard winter and an especially long and cold spring, it's good to welcome the start of what we all hope will be a great summer. As this newsletter records, your members' groups have had a great winter season with a good turn-out at the talk in March and at the AGM in April. John Whyman's Dundee Conservation Volunteers group continues its great work in helping to maintain habitats and reserves and you'll be able to read a summary of its activities in this newsletter. They're always very welcoming to anyone who'd like to join in on their activities. In the same way the Angus and Dundee and North Angus groups would also welcome you at their events and activities during the rest of the year.

Dundee Conservation Volunteers Report for 2017-18

The DCV Group has had another busy year. In April they helped the Dundee Group volunteers with the biennial major clean-up along the Miley and then went off to the Law for an afternoon of work on rock habitats. The May meeting consisted, as usual, of control of the growth of small giant hogweed plants along a stretch of the Dighty. The June conservation work consisted of drystone dyking at Scotston Farm, with another session in August which was postponed to early September and then a further session at Backmuir Woods in October. In July the DCV group helped with control of Himalayan Balsam on Moncrieff Hill near Perth for the Woodland Trust, and like the hogweed control, the difference made in the last few years is obvious. The September conservation work involved sowing yellow rattle

plants on the Law to help establish a wildlife meadow for Dundee City Council and clearing out an old Second World War pillbox so that a gate could be put across the entrance for its conversion to a bat hibernaculum. The November session consisted of improving access to Baldragon Woods at Clatto. Three sessions of the continuing task of clearing invasive Rhododendron from the Bamff Estate near Alyth, in December, January and February, finishing with a day of dune management at Broughty Ferry LNR to complete the year. The numbers of volunteers at each meeting was recorded, to give a grand total of 107 volunteer days throughout the year, with an average of 8.9 per task – almost the same as the previous year.

A Facebook page also helps attract new volunteers and more information can be gained from the Angus and Dundee Group website.

Another major feature of the organisation is raising funds to allow DCV work to continue. The Sustain Dundee grant of £375 for a second year was very welcome and three tasks were hosted by Dundee Countryside Rangers and so did not need the minibus. Other tasks are funded by charging the clients £40 a day, an incredible bargain! This, plus the cushion provided by the remainder of the funds from winding up the Dighty Environmental Group, helps keep the DCV group afloat. Income this last year was £805 while costs totalled £947, leading to a deficit of £142, somewhat less than that budgeted.

John Whyman

Morton Lochs

Saturday 3rd February

As Barry remarked, "If you're feeling cold and wet, that means you're not properly clothed or shod!" But more than 20 of us had come out on a dreich morning and we were all well prepared for the drizzling rain and chill. The group started at the first hide; no squirrels here, but a couple of mallards, a few teal which soon disappeared into the reeds and a stalking heron. Liz soon caught sight of an obliging goldcrest, Ian pointed out a buzzard in the field next door and others picked out a large flock of fieldfares, which seem to have been in rather short supply this winter.

Science Quiz

Discovery Centre 14th March

Walking along to the other loch, most of the group stopped off at the small hide looking at the bird feeders. Several rather dark-coloured red squirrels visited the nuts and bounded around, providing good views for several enthralled members. More prosaically, robins and blackbirds flocked in to pay close attention to the feeders, particularly the fat balls in this lean season. Most interesting, though, was a small flock of long-tailed tits which crowded round a fat ball on the ground, a most unusual sight.

The birds on the loch visible from the lower hide were rather sparse but we were entertained by two swans, probably a male and an offspring from last year, chasing each other around. There were also a few ducks, including the ubiquitous mallards, some teal, one or two and a pochard but no shovellers could be seen. Several little grebes, also known as dabchicks, caught the attention and interest of members.

Several members made it along to the furthest hide without seeing very much more while others spread out to explore the area but all were careful to make it back to the car park in time to travel along for lunch in the Guardbridge Inn. The weather had certainly helped to sharpen our appetites!

A small team of 3 members, Alban Houghton, Peter Bainbridge and Jim Cook, were joined by Sue Allan, who'd just come along with the hope of joining in, to take on 6 other teams from the University and similar groups. The event was organised and run by the local branch of the British Science Association with questions on on such topics as space, the environment and general science.

You will be pleased to know that we held our own and were in 3rd place at the halfway mark! However, rounds on computers and science fiction proved more of a problem and we slipped somewhat, ending up in fifth place. However, all enjoyed the event, the bar proving popular, and look forward to the possibility of another similar event next year. Anyone who'd like to join in would be very welcome!

AGM

Thursday 19th April

The evening's programme began with the Annual General Meeting. The Chairman welcomed the audience and quickly summarised the variety of outings, events and lectures during the past year, while thanking the numerous committee members, particularly the secretary and treasurer, and the many volunteers and helpers who made the year such a success. The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports outlined their work during the year and, in particular, covered the state of our finances. Peter Bainbridge reported that the members' group income had been £7180 (including £3000 from the RJ Largs Trust, shared with the North Angus group) and the expenditure so far was £5380, but with large expenditures to come on the survey of invertebrates in the Balgavies reserve and legal fees for the transfer of land extending the reserve. These would cause the current account to fall to £4460. Peter paid tribute to fund-raising efforts, particularly the bag-packing session at Christmas, organised by Barbara Thompson, that brought in just over £1000.

The two members newly co-opted to the committee were formally adopted and the various conveners of the finance, activities and reserves sub-committees were re-elected. The meeting closed with a report on Dundee Conservation Volunteers, run by John Whyman, which was read out by our Secretary, Liz Houghton.

Then the audience settled down to hear what they'd really come for! They were treated to a fascinating talk on 'Scotlands Wild Deer', not by the advertised speaker who'd been forced to drop out at short notice, but by a former colleague, Deirdre Stewart of the Association of Deer Management Groups. We were fortunate indeed that she was able

State of Scottish Seabirds

Thursday 8th March

An audience of more than 20 members and friends heard a fascinating talk by Dr Julie Dixon, of the JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) group based in Aberdeen, on the 'The State of Scottish Seabirds'.

Julie easily demonstrated her mastery of the subject by describing Scotland's marine birds, pointing out that 68% of the world's northern gannets and as many as 90% of Manx shearwaters are hosted by this country. Populations had decreased in such species as fulmars, puffins and roseate terns due to a variety of pressures including reductions in food supplies, predation by invasive species, pollution and disturbance. Conservation measures included control of ground predators, protection areas on and around the coasts, control of pollution and the monitoring of sand eels, a most important food species.

The interest of the audience in the subject was shown by the lively and long-running question-and-answer session afterwards – continued during the cup of tea when the talk finished.

Also in the audience was Dr Linda Rosborough, the new Chair of the Governing Council of the Trust, who was visiting as part of her mission to meet as many SWT Members' Groups as possible. She said that she'd much enjoyed the meeting and talking to a wide variety of the members.

to step in at such short notice and deliver such an excellent and informative talk. She talked about the life cycle of red deer and the timing of important stages in their lives so that their numbers could be surveyed more accurately to help in their management. She described all the inter-acting pressures, including mortality and recruitment rates, dependent on the conditions and weather, welfare and such varied pressures as legal requirements, landowners own objectives, traffic on the nearest roads, designated sites and public interest. Other influences include sporting rates, potential licensing, afforestation, peatlands and carbon capture and education. In all we were treated to a clear and most informative description of the difficulties of red deer and estate management.

Spring Plant Sale

Saturday 19th May

Many of us had doubts in the days running up to the sale. Would anyone come along or would everyone be watching the Royal Wedding? Or would the football cup finals draw most interest? Would we have enough plants for sale, after the long cold spring weather? Would the weather be kind?

In the event, the sun shone and good numbers of visitors came along in the morning, before the nuptials and football began. And there was a good array of plants donated for sale – for which we must thank numerous donors: Dorothy Fyffe, Richard and Janet Brinklow, Daphne and Bill McFarlane-Smith, Ian and Shiona Baird, Margaret and Peter Bainbridge and several others. In fact, by the end of the day we'd sold a greater proportion of the stock than in previous years and there wasn't much left. Even although, as Mary and Tom agreed, maybe we hadn't had quite the same number of visitors, they had individually bought more and the takings were greater than last year. We made £536.36 from the plant sales, for which we'd like to thank all the buyers who'd made it such a success. Mary's tombola and coffee and tea stall also brought in a respectable total of £40, which brought the grand total up to £576.90, a very tidy sum indeed. We'd like to gratefully thank all those who'd helped make the event such a success.

News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch The reserve management sub-committee have been examining the options for repairing or replacing the fence around the reserve, especially the stretch along the road on the south side, but whatever is decided, it is likely to be expensive. The fence is important for safety but also to allow the grazing of cattle, particularly in the south meadow where rank vegetation is threatening to take over and needs to be controlled. Meanwhile, a walk around the path and a visit to Fonah bog is rewarding

at this time of the year for the numerous wild flowers and the throngs of singing small birds and other forms of wildlife. The island in the loch is attracting the usual interest, from visitors to the hide, for the activities at the osprey nest.

Lintrathen Loch The two hides have been surveyed recently and found in good condition although they need a coat of protective paint. The geese left at around the same time as usual in the spring to return to their Arctic breeding grounds but there are lots of ducks and other water-birds to maintain interest.

The Miley The weekly litter-picks are continuing as usual and, as the weather improves, becoming more enjoyable in their own right. An enthusiastic group of members and volunteers (including six newcomers) gathered for the Annual Clean-Up clearing bags of litter, cleaning out the ditches near the Harefield Road bridge. None of the ferns and few clumps of ivy that had been planted on the steep exposed banks above the drain back in January were visible but we hope they may appear as the weather warms up. The rest of the vegetation is growing up and helping to hide some of the more untidy spots. There are lots of wild flowers to admire, along with numerous aliens tossed out from gardens, and the birds are singing their hearts out. This must be the best time of year to enjoy a stroll along the reserve path to enjoy the wildlife.

Montrose Basin A time of change as the ducks and waders leave for their breeding grounds and the summer visitors arrive. Sedge warbler and sand martin turned up but in small numbers while up to five ospreys can be seen fishing at low tide. The new Shelduck hide is now open and the old one will be removed before the river claims it.

Seaton Cliffs The cliffs have been showing their usual array of wild flowers, although they only appeared rather later than usual due to the cold spring weather. Fine displays of thrift and sea campion decorate the cliff tops and ledges, along with clumps of primroses and a few orchids in Dickmont's Den and numbers of others along the path sides. The fulmars and gulls are nesting noisily, as usual, with smaller numbers of auks and cormorants appearing offshore. It is good, also, to report that there haven't been recent signs of wild camping or off-road moto-cross bikes in the reserve.

North Angus Group

Our Coffee Morning in Montrose on 28th April made £328.50 which was a bit lower than normal due to a competing coffee morning and the raffle performing poorly. However, the event was well received and increased our funds to support projects at the Basin.

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

- 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.
- Sunday 19th Aug** **Barry Buddon Open Day**
Guided walks for birds, insects & flowers. Meet at 10am, Monifieth Playing Fields. (NO502323) Bring binoculars and lunch.
- Thursday 15th Nov** **"Seaweed and Other Edible Marine Foods"**
Talk by Dr. Gavin Hardy, Marine Phycologist, Newcastle University. 7:30pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St. Forfar. Suggested donation £3.50 adults, accompanying children free.
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Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

There are a range of events for children on Wednesday's in July and August called "Wild About the Basin". Check out the Basin Facebook page for details. (www.facebook.com/MontroseBasin/)

There are also walks to see Puffins and Kittiwakes in July and a Journey to the Centre of the Mud in August.

September and October have Bird Ringing, Fungi and pink-footed goose events as well as an Optical Fair so you can get some new views of wildlife on Montrose Basin.

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)

November 2018 Newsletter Copy Deadline - 17 September 2018

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for November 2018 to March 2019 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

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