

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

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

Number 132 - November 2019

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Introduction

Despite the frequent spells of windy and very wet weather during the summer, there were enough warm and sunny spells and we seemed to be fortunate enough to enjoy an excellent series of excursions. As you will see from the reports we've had a busy time this past summer, as well as the wildlife outings, with working to maintain our reserves and raise funds to help us do that.

Offshore Trip to the Isle of May

Tuesday 4th June

Weren't we lucky! The weather on the day before was so windy and rough that the daily trip out to the Isle of May was cancelled. On Tuesday morning, however, the wind had died, the dense clouds of the previous evening had rolled back and the sea was relatively calm – so out we went. More than a dozen members were on board 'The May Princess', well prepared for all conditions, and eager and alert for any interesting sightings. Before long gannets started to power past, a few Manx shearwaters skimmed the waters across the bow and small numbers of guillemots, a few razorbills and one or two puffins dotted the sea surface.

Once ashore, we were warned to stay on the path because of numerous puffin burrows and to look out for aggressive nesting arctic terns. And the terns were literally waiting for us; screaming abuse and then literally bouncing into the air and continuing the warning from above. Occasionally visitors were rewarded with a decorative white patch or even a sharp peck on the scalp!

One or two distinct pink clumps of thrift or sea-pink dotted the rocky areas but most of the ground was crowded with dense clumps of sea campion interspersed with tufts of sorrel, bunches of nettles, sheets of scentless may-weed and a few lesser burdock. Perhaps the most interesting plant found, however, was henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*).

In places the ground was dotted with burrows and the air full of puffins zipping past, trying to dodge the ever-watchful gulls. Many of the puffins came close enough for us to



see the sand-eels lined up ready for the hungry young pufflings. The adults with food notably dived in through the waiting robbers, landed right in front of their burrows and disappeared in a flash. Those without food stood around without being harassed by the gulls. Occasionally you could watch a herring or lesser black-backed gull suddenly swoop and ambush a food-carrying puffin and even tweak its tail until it dropped the fish and then the greedy robber dived down to pick its prizes off the ground.

We spent the rest of the day exploring the ground around the old lighthouse and then on to the other end of the island, while keeping an eye out for interesting plants and birds. We all gathered in good time to board the ferry back to Anstruther and marvel in the day we'd enjoyed so much.

An Angus Osprey Saga

On 11 July 2004 a male osprey chick was fitted with a green Darvic ring (GREEN BF) at Haddo in Aberdeenshire. Five years later he was first seen mating at Balgavies Loch but, having built a nest, the breeding pair's attempts were thwarted by resident re-introduced greylag geese in 2010 and 2011.

In 2012 he and a new partner (WHITE UF from Clunie Loch) repulsed the nesting geese and raised the first of their 11 chicks. That year one chick was fitted with ring BLUE YD and a satellite tracker by Keith Brockie and Roy Dennis. After 5 successful breeding years WHITE UF did not return in 2017. A

new unringed female raised 3 chicks with him in 2017 and 2 more in 2018.

Once again in 2019 greylag geese set up home on the island osprey nest, and were eventually dislodged by Mr and Mrs GREEN BF. However, the resident breeding pair were attacked and injured by an intruding pair of ospreys and the untended eggs taken by crows, ever on the lookout for such an opportunity. Unfortunately GREEN BF, now 15 years old, has not been seen since. His Mrs recovered and has been seen mating with a new male. (Ospreys typically live for 10 to 15 years, rarely to 20 to 25 years. Up to 50% of young ospreys don't survive to breed).

The first of GREEN BF's chicks, BLUE YD, returned to the UK in 2014 when his tracker stopped transmitting. He has been seen many times since at various Tayside locations including Balgavies Loch, with his distinctive tracking aerial projecting over his back.

Alban Houghton

Bankhead Moss, Fife

Sunday 23rd August

This was a joint outing with members of Tayside and Fife Fungal Group. Ian and Alban picked out the almost inevitable buzzard mewing and circling overhead. Several butterflies flitted past and a range of wild flowers dotted the roadside and hedgerow. On the way across to the Moss the group came across a clump of nettles infested with caterpillars of peacock butterflies. Several adults of meadow brown and a small heath butterfly were seen in the same area and a pleated inkcap fungus was identified.

Crossing the boardwalk into the reserve, we could see numbers of sedges and rushes plus a couple of interesting fungi. Most of us decided to detour out onto the slightly raised surface of the centre of the Moss. The group continued on round the path and visited the hide for a short time but there was little of interest to see, only a few mallards and a couple of swans. Caley found a fine Orange Grisette and others spotted a yellow slime-mould. We continued on into the mature conifer wood, adding a few more birds to the list and several brittlegill fungi before heading back.

Barry-Buddon

Sunday 8th September

A large group of over 50 members and friends of the various wildlife groups gathered in the hope of a good day. Graham Smith introduced the occasion and reminded us of the special hazards to be found on the site. We also spent a few minutes gratefully remembering the legacy of the late and much-missed Bob McCurley who'd been largely responsible for encouraging and continuing, after the loss of Steve Fulford, the Barry-Buddon wildlife open days while liaising successfully with the army.

The bird groups split off and moved on to their first viewing site at the western end of the training area while the plants group moved down to the mouth of the Buddon Burn with Jim Cook. There was a range of birds around, an early buzzard circling over the area and adjacent golf course and a fleeting sparrowhawk was reported while the usual meadow pipits, pied wagtails, a few wheatears and a single curlew could be seen on the heathland. Down on the damp ground we could see a few fine specimens of Grass of Parnassus flowers still out, along with ragged robin but, alas, could find no greater water-dock nor gypsywort. We decided to move straight on to the lighthouse car park for lunch and the opportunity to admire the catch from the moth trapping of the night before. They'd all been identified and labelled by Anne and David. Some folk walked up to the sentry post at the top of the tall dune to look out over the dune but, since there were no dolphins to be seen, most didn't bother. Instead we walked round to the large dune slack where we were rewarded by sheets of small shy blue gentians and several monstrous parasol mushrooms, the largest measuring 26 cm (almost a foot) across.

We drove round to park near Happy Valley and found only a few of the plants that could be seen earlier in the year, one or two adder's-tongues, pennywort but no twayblade orchids. Butterflies and birds still flitted around and there were several interesting fungi such as alder tongue and spotted toughshank. On the way back we stopped for a brief visit near the scrape and spotted a few late damselflies and common darters. As always, it had been a great day and we're grateful for the cooperation with the army who control the land.

News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch

Work continues to explore the possibilities of securely fencing the main field beside the road near the hide on the south side of the loch. Many birds have had a successful breeding season. At the time of writing we're waiting for the first of the winter migrants to fly in.

Lintrathen Loch

The old hide has undergone a major refurbishment, being thoroughly cleaned out and the some of the fittings renewed. New bamboo screening has been installed round the hide. A new mink raft has not shown any signs of mink. Wildlife noted over the summer include great crested grebes with young, ospreys, masses of mute swans, and Canada geese. A green woodpecker has been heard but not seen. We are talking to Scottish Water to try to open up more of the area to visitors of various abilities.

Montrose Basin

A poor summer saw no sand martin, common tern or eider offspring. However, osprey were seen feeding daily and kingfisher sightings are also regular.

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath The cliffs quietened down as the breeding season drew to a close but the

usual range of interesting plants, from orchids to bellflowers and campions could still be seen until later in the season. The path continues to deteriorate, however, and all too many walkers are ignoring the dangers of the undercut cliffs.

The Miley, Dundee The vegetation growth along the sides seems to have been greater than usual this year. Litter picking continues weekly, and we remain very grateful for the efforts put in by the volunteers. Would anyone else like to join in to help for an hour or two every month or so?

Small groups of infants, particularly from the Law Nursery, have been escorted along the Miley by Mary and Alison to introduce them to the wonders of the great outdoors. They seem to greatly enjoy the experience.

We have been pleased this year to receive a 'Thriving' certificate from the "It's Your Neighbourhood" Award Scheme.

Dundee Food & Flower Festival

4th - 6th September

The Friday session was very busy and as noisy as usual, with literally hundreds of happy primary school children escorted round the show (and enjoying the day out of school). Tom and Mary ably 'manned' the stand with much help from Allison and Barbara. Jim spent time covering both our stand and the one for the Dundee Naturalists' Society next door.

Saturday was very slow in our tent to begin with but in the afternoon the wildlife and children's tents

were both busy and we were able to interest a number of people in the activities of the local SWT group. The fine weather continued on Sunday and again there were good numbers of visitors.

Mary's flower quiz proved very popular and we passed out over a hundred copies, for a donation, during the course of the show. Many thanks to all our volunteers who came along to help with the stand, although a few more ordinary members, not just committee members, would be welcome.

Montrose Basin

First Place In The Local Tesco "Bags Of Help" Vote

The Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve and Visitor Centre took part as a candidate in the local Tesco "Bags of Help" vote earlier this year. Customers at the Montrose and Brechin Tesco stores were able to vote for the local charity of their choice during the months of March and April. The volunteers and staff at Montrose Basin were all delighted to hear that we came in first place! It's great to know that the local community are so supportive of everything we're striving towards, and we are understandably overjoyed to have received £4,000 in funding.

The grant will go towards improving and extending our outdoor education facilities, as well as painting a mural in the car park to make the visitor centre entrance an even more fitting celebration of Scottish wildlife.

Joanna Peaker
Visitor Centre Assistant Manager

For further information on these and other events, see the DAWN newsletter or contact the Group Secretaries.

Website:

swtdundeeangus.org.uk

Email:

info@swtdundeeangus.org.uk

OFFICE BEARERS

Angus & Dundee Group

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Secretary: Liz Houghton
Tel: 01382 775462

North Angus Group

Chairman: Andy Wakelin
Tel: 01674 676783

Secretary: Joyce Cooper
Tel: 01674 676783

Warm and waterproof clothing and stout footwear should be worn on outings.

Members are reminded to undertake only the walks within their capabilities. For wild country, food and drink should be carried and map and compass are desirable.

Bring your friends.

All children must be accompanied by adults.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at
110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH6 6NF
It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).



Charity number SC005792

**Angus & Dundee
and North Angus
Groups**

Programme 2020

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre News

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will be open between 1st November and mid-February on Fri, Sat, Sun and Mon from 10:30am to 4pm.

From mid-February to October the Visitor Centre is open all week 10:30am to 5pm.

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



Scottish Wildlife Trust Family Membership includes children's Wildlife Watch membership
For activity programme see the website at:
tinyurl.com/SWTMontroseW

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March 2020 - Newsletter
Copy Deadline - 6th January 2020

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for March to August 2020 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the address below:

Email address is jim.strath91@gmail.com

The World "Wild" Web

Angus and Dundee Group website is at
swtdundeeangus.org.uk
and you can email on
info@swtdundeeangus.org.uk

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

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!

Saturday 25th January 2020

Winter Walk on Links at Kinnaber followed by lunch at the Links Hotel
Meet at car park, off A92 N of Montrose, opposite road to Charleton Fruit Farm (NO 724 609)

Thursday 5th March 2020

Wildlife Crime. Talk by Blair Wilkie, Tayside Wildlife Crime Officer, 7:30 pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St. Forfar
Entry by donation, children free.

Saturday 25th April 2020

Montrose Coffee Morning. 10am-12 Old & St. Andrews Church Hall, High St. Montrose. Suggested donation £2

Thursday 30th April 2020

Wildlife of the Angus Glens Talk by Hugh Bell, Naturalist and Angus Ranger, following short AGM. 7:30 pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St. Forfar
Entry by donation, children free.

Saturday 23rd May 2020

Dundee Plant Sale. 10:30am - 2pm in the Demonstration Gardens, Dawson Park, Caenlochan Rd. Dundee. All plant donations or swaps very welcome

Sunday 24th May 2020

Bluebell Walk in Oakwood, Inverquiech.
Meet at 2pm at Dryloch (NO 295 500)
Turn N off A926, Kirriemuir-Alyth, just E of Ruthven, Angus

Sunday 14th June 2020

Barry Buddon Open Day
Guided walks for birds, insects & flowers. Meet at 10am, Monifieth Playing Fields. (NO 502323) Bring binoculars and packed lunch.

Sunday 26th July 2020

Guided walk in search of edible seaweeds with Mrs M. Horn. Meet at 2pm in the Auchmithie car park, NO679442 behind village hall. Possibility of high tea afterwards at But n' Ben

Date TBC (See newsletter and website)
Autumn River Walk along the N.Esk from the Gannochy Bridge. Meeting at 2 pm at the carpark on Edzell Muir. (NO598693)

Thursday 19th November 2020

The Bessie Ducker Story
Talk by Ken Slater on his work with Dippers. 7:30 pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St. Forfar
Entry by donation, children free