



Dundee and Angus Wildlife News

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

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

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Introduction

Our membership has had a busy autumn and early winter. There's always plenty going on. As you will see from this newsletter, we were treated to an excellent talk on Mountain Hares in the autumn, the Dundee Group have kept themselves 'on the go' and there's been plenty of wildlife to see, even in the depths of winter, on the SWT reserves in Dundee and Angus. We're gearing up for the summer ahead, planning for another active year and hope to see you all at some of our talks and outings.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL MEMBERS

If you haven't already registered with the SWT to receive email information about our programme, you'll find it useful to do so. We still meet members who miss out on news of what's going on. It's easy; just go on to the SWT main website, move down to the bottom of the first page and click on the button in the blue-band to register. You'll be asked to give your name and email address and then click on the box for local group information. You can choose as well whether or not you want to receive other types of information.

Mountain Hares

Thursday 14th November

A meeting that was very well attended (in fact, we had to bring in extra seating) was fascinated by a talk on mountain hares and their life on the hills by Scott Newey from the James Hutton Institute. He began by introducing us to the only truly native British lagomorph (hares and rabbits), the mountain or blue hare, *Lepus timidus*, one of the few British mammals

that changes colour from its summer grey-brown ('blue') coat to a pure white one in winter.

These hares are found only on higher land in Scotland, generally in excess of 2,000 ft or more, although they may move lower in hard winters. We heard about the habitats and types of foodstuffs they eat and whether they spread diseases that other animals and birds are able contract; in fact a wealth of information that was well received by the audience.

Tentsmuir Forest Fungus Foray

Sunday 29th September

A keen group of 20 members and friends, both young and old, gathered in the car park at Kinshaldy. In a grassy patch right beside us were several false chanterelles and one or two deceivers. Over on the grass of the barbecue field we found a number of interesting specimens scattered around, one or two brown rollrims and a couple of charcoal burners, a few small clumps of bright yellow golden spindles, a single ugly milkcap, a deer shield and several mosaic puffballs.

There was so much to catch our interest that it seemed ages before the party moved onto the track north through the Forest. Within a few yards we came across masses of sulphur tufts, some young and almost bright yellow, some pale brownish yellow and yet others distinctly brown with almost black gills. In the grass beside the track were a good selection of species. Caley brought in a good specimen of brown birch bolete, a velvet bolete, and the pale pink cap of a birch brittlegill, Liz found several fine caps of that lovely species, plums and custard, and Cali was interested to locate a rather elderly cap of a blusher while another member brought in the small cap of a brown mottlegill. Several of us picked up caps of grey knight in various stages of life and development and a fine specimen of slippery jack.

Out on the dunes and, especially, along the dune slack we came across a number of waxcaps. Perhaps the most interesting was parrot waxcap, found by Cali and Alison also found several specimens of another fascinating species, copper spike, an excellent record, in a small grassy patch beside the conifer woodland.

If anyone would like a copy of the list of fungi found, please email the editor of this newsletter (address at the back).

Constant Effort at Balgavies

You may have caught sight of long dark nets spread out in a line in a quiet spot while visiting the Balgavies Loch nature reserve. These are the work of a small team of volunteers led by Ken Slater, who've been visiting regularly over the year to use the nets to sample the local bird life. The idea is to obtain information on numbers and ages of both local breeding and visiting birds which will be very useful in managing the reserve in the future.

The early results are interesting. A total of 126 birds, of 17 different species, were captured. The most notable ones being 3 lesser redpolls and 3 bullfinch, with 1 recapture of each. The most common species proved to be willow warblers (25), great tits (16), blue tits (15) and blackcaps (14), with the most recaptured species, at 4, being the blackcap, perhaps demonstrating that the blackcaps are remaining in the vicinity.

The project continues and will yield a very useful source of data for further management.

Presentation at Balgavies Loch

In October a small group of SWT members met in the look-out car park overlooking Balgavies Loch to receive a large-format cheque for £500 from the ASDA store in Forfar. We were very pleased indeed to receive this from their 'Bags of Hope' fund for use on the Balgavies reserve, the SWT reserve closest to the town. We'd very much like to thank all the people concerned at ASDA and in Forfar, and especially Barbara Thompson, for this generous donation.

[About half of the money has already been spent to purchase a load of stone chippings for the urgent task of repairing and improving the path around the loch.]



December Bag Packing

The bag-packing session at the Morrisons' Supermarket in Arbroath in early December proved highly successful. Firstly, the store staff were good enough to allow us in to help shoppers load up their purchases into suitable carrying bags. Secondly, enough members were able to come along to lend a hand. Even although some weren't able to stay for all that long, enough volunteers attended so that all the tills were covered for most of the time and allowed the helpers some time off for a cup of coffee or a snack. And finally we are grateful for the generosity of the shoppers who donated handsomely towards a grand total for the day of £755.55p, a most creditable amount that will be used to maintain and improve our reserves and help local wildlife. We are most grateful to all concerned in Morrisons, to local SWT

organisers, to all the helpers who gave up time to come along, but in particular to all the good people of Arbroath and the surrounding area, who helped to fill our collecting buckets.

Finance News

We're planning three fund-raising bag-packs in supermarkets in Angus over the coming year – near Easter, during the summer and near Christmas. As you will have seen from recent newsletters, such activities have proved to be one of our most efficient and effective fund-raising activities nowadays. We always need as many people as possible for these events, so please volunteer to come along and help.

Our income from the talk in Forfar in November came to the sum of £194, from donations at the door and for the tea or coffee but also from the raffle.

A further source of funds has been the quiz set by Mary Harwood. This has now been totalled up and comes to the very tidy sum of £254.10. You'll be pleased to know that she's already at work on the quiz for this year.

Autumn and Winter Local Wildlife

The full range of winter migrant bird life has arrived, with flocks of redwings and fieldfares and other smaller birds from Iceland and Scandinavia, plus the skeins of geese coming down from northern lands. Balgavies Loch has seen small numbers of pinkfeet to supplement the resident greylag population but the real spectacles were at Montrose Basin at dusk and, especially, dawn with the mass gabbling and the roar of the wings of thousands of geese flighting in or leaving for feeding grounds. There have been reasonable numbers of waxwings seen, plus some specialities such as a great grey shrike in one of our glens and a black scoter off Lunan Bay.

Barbara Thompson

News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch The floods in late summer and a failure in the drains in one of the farms to the south of the loch ended up blocking the road to Weilstaves Cottage until an excavator could be brought in (at a cost of £1,800). At least the robustly re-built bridge wasn't washed away this time. The bushes in front of the hide have been cleared to improve the view and more felling and treatment of sycamore re-growth is planned for this coming year.

Lintrathen Loch The wintering geese arrived on schedule and proved to be a considerable spectacle with attendant flocks of ducks including goldeneye and pochards. The peak numbers of pinkfoot geese this year was 17,125 birds in late October; amazing! There are plans to improve the path for disabled access and also to allow a view over the loch and we've received approval from HQ for the new leaflet

that was very well prepared by Allison and her highly skilful daughter.

Montrose Basin

The last of our 66,575 pinkfooted geese will be gone by the time you read this. It has been a notable winter with over 8,000 wigeon, 150 pintail and good numbers of teal, mallard and knot as well as regular views of tree sparrows, snipe and kingfisher

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath The cliffs are quiet at this time of year, with few birds around and only a few very hardy flowers still showing. Regular visits along the cliff top path has shown, all too clearly, that it is continuing to deteriorate slowly and in places slide down the slope towards the sea. Also, the short stretch of path immediately above the cliff fall, even although closed off, still seems to attract unthinking visitors who don't notice the undercut cliff below them. We hope that the local Community Council will be able to encourage work to be carried out to improve all the paths along the coast.

The musical sculpture, which was erected without permission, has been removed and, after consulting the owner, was re-erected in a suitable alternative site on a headland near Carlingheugh Bay.

The Miley, Dundee The weekly litter-picking sessions are continuing as usual and as the vegetation starts to die down we start to see more rubbish that has been previously hidden in the undergrowth.

A continuing problem is that, although most dog walkers do a great job in picking up what their animals leave behind (but not always depositing their plastic bags in the correct bins), there's a small number who don't. It doesn't take long for regular visits by a single large dog to start to make a real mess. We would appeal to all visitors with dogs to please pick up and encourage any other dog walkers they see. It's bad enough for adults to have to watch where they tread but we also have regular visits by infant and primary school children.

The continuing wet weather has led to muddy patches developing. However the culvert by the main bridge that's regularly cleared out by Tom does a good job in helping to drain the worst of the water and we've had no floods as in the past. The gale in early January brought down a small tree over the path and a tree safety survey has been carried out. Further work will be undertaken to remove potential hazards.

Dundee Group

Presentation in Albert Hall in Stirling

Wednesday 30th October

Two representatives from the Dundee Group received an award from the 'Your Neighbour' group, which is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society. The assessor from Edinburgh visited the Miley in June while the wild flowers were in full bloom, rather than in autumn as in the past. He looks at site maintenance, wildlife potential and the level of involvement of neighbouring communities.

The Dundee Group was pleased to receive a 'Thriving' certificate for the Miley.

Leaf Clearing

Sunday 24th November

We were fortunate that the event was well attended, with about a dozen members and friends coming along to help. Alison Keeble, Ian and Shiona Baird, Mary Harwood and James Ivory were prominent in getting 'stuck in' to the task of clearing the leaves from the Loons Road end of the path. The idea is to remove the abundant fallen leaves from along the path before they become too wet and trodden in and form a muddy morass. The leaves were dumped well off the path, preferably in piles where they would compost over the winter and spring to encourage worms, snails and small insects.

Kate Treharne and her assistant, along with two very keen young helpers, spent their time very usefully clearing the fallen leaves and branches out of the ditches to restore the full flow of water away from the path. Other members dug small channels to drain water from the muddy pools on the path back into the ditches.

Tom Harwood and Jim Cook cleared the leaves from along the northern part of the Miley. Fortunately the leaves were fairly dry and easy to rake up – unlike some previous years. Even better, although rain was expected, it held off until we'd completed the task. The groups met in the middle and were able to retire well satisfied by our hours of labour.

Visits by Nursery School pupils

The infants from the Law Nursery continue their visits to the Miley to enjoy the walk along the nature trail and to meet some of our local wildlife. They come along around four times a year – roughly in January or early February, depending on the weather, in April, some time in June before the school holidays and then in September at the start of the new school session.

A further activity is that small groups are brought along, carefully supervised by Lisa and her aides, to help with the litter-picking. Although maybe it's the novelty and fun of using the litter-pickers to pick up cellophane wrappers, plastic bottles etc. that appeals to them, the visits are valuable in helping to educate the children about litter and its effects on other visitors and on wildlife. Certainly, whatever the time of year, the young visitors always seem keen to visit the Miley!

Alison Keeble

Plant Sale reminder

The Dundee SWT Group Annual Plant Sale in the Duntrune demonstration garden in Dawson Park (at the back of Broughty Ferry) takes place on Saturday 23rd May, 10:30am to 2pm or until we run out of plants! All contributions of plants and volunteers' time will be gratefully received. There will be tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits, along with a Tombola stall – with appropriate donations – all in a sheltered location. Don't hold off; remember that earlier is better than later!

Barry-Buddon

Please note that the annual wildlife group gathering is much earlier than last year, being arranged for Sunday 14th June, meeting at 10am in the car park at Monifieth football grounds. This is along the shore, close beside the railway, through the tunnel under the railway embankment. We'll be splitting into smaller groups to look for birds, plants and insects (and any other forms of wildlife). If you've never been, the Barry-Buddon visit is one of the wildlife highlights of the year, well worth going to!

Diary Dates

Thursday 5th March	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	Montrose Coffee Morning. 10am-12noon, Old & St. Andrews Church Hall, High St. Montrose. Suggested donation £2
Thursday 30th April	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	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	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	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	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

July Newsletter Copy Deadline - 11th May 2020

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for July to November 2020 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at jim.strath91@gmail.com

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre News

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will be open from 11th February to 31st October, every day, from 10:30am to 5pm and from 1st November to mid February, Friday - Monday 10:30am to 4pm.

More details can be found on
www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk
or
www.montrosebasin.org.uk

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



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

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!

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).