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Introduction

We hardly need to say that the summer has been changeable, to say the least. We've had both long warm dry spells and a few wet periods. However, although they were somewhat delayed by the cold rather late spring, most plants, insects, birds and mammals in the Trust's reserves seem to have recovered and had a good year, particularly the ospreys at our Balcavies Loch Reserve (see the report on page 3).

Unfortunately, however, due to the covid pandemic restrictions, our activities this summer have been limited. The visit to the bluebell wood, reported in the last newsletter, went well but due to the uncertainties and difficulties with bookings, we haven't been able to run any other summer outings. Several of our other activities, including the weekly clear-ups along the Miley, and a few of the Dundee Conservation Volunteers events have continued. Whatever happens, all the meetings of the winter session are likely to be on zoom, at least until further notice. After all, who knows what might happen, with the potential for further outbreaks of any new varieties of SARS-type viruses, more lock-downs and further restrictions? We just have to keep our fingers crossed!

Outings

Due to difficulties with requirements for safety with the covid viruses and in booking for activities, we have reluctantly felt unable to continue with any other summer outings this year, although a few self-guided walks are available. To find out about these, please contact our Secretary or check the website.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL MEMBERS

Once again, if you haven't received any information on the cancellation of our activities this year, please make sure that you are able to receive notifications using the system run by HQ in Edinburgh. A considerable proportion of our members still haven't joined, which means that they won't be receiving any notice of upcoming activities or changes to the programme, so please make sure that you do so.

It's easy to join; just go onto the main SWT 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 type in your name and email address and then click on the box for local group information. The choice is yours whether or not you want to receive other types of information.

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

Dundee Conservation Volunteers

The DCV group were able to assemble a small and cheerful band in early August to clear a considerable area of the highly invasive alien, Himalayan Balsam, on the Law. The plants must be large enough and in flower to spot easily among the trees and bushes but fortunately they are easy to uproot. By clearing these annuals out early they are prevented from seeding and choking out our normal smaller flowering plants next year.



Before



After



The 'Wild South Esk' Trail

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership's innovative project - the 'Wild South Esk' is now live. The project links ten very different Angus habitats, highlighting opportunities to enjoy nature, walking and cycling. The 50-mile-long trail from the River South Esk's 'Source to Sea' will take you on an adventure from the majestic Cairngorm Mountains to Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve and the North Sea. Interpretation has been installed at eight sites along the river over the last month and the website www.wildsouthesk.org is now ready for you to enjoy.

This unique project is part an Angus LEADER Transnational Cooperation Project with partners in Merikarvia, Finland. The project has shared good practice on climate resilient communities, invasive non-native species, and rural economic diversification. The project was funded by Angus LEADER, Aberlemno Community Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Angus Council, and the River South Esk Catchment Partnership.

The 'Wild South Esk' trail shares an insight into the life history of 40 native species at ten sites as well as 15 local walks suitable for a range of abilities. Eight new on-site interpretation panels incorporating beautiful bespoke illustrations, are in urban parks, native woodland, upland heath and importantly by the riverside. Sites can be cycled to from various locations in Angus and the next stop on the trail is shown at each site.

Supporting the projects main aim of facilitating access to the river and outdoor spaces, visitor infrastructure has been enhanced at two sites improving accessibility for locals and visitors to the area. The project provides a fantastic opportunity to encourage exercise and boost mental health and wellbeing by promoting nature rich sites. Importantly it helps install a sense of pride in place in communities who've helped shape the project, 10 Angus landowners are involved, two Community Councils and Shaping Angus was used in an initial consultation in 2018 Wildlife Watching on the River South Esk

The project website highlights all 10 sites, has a catchment wide map and provides further information on projects that are supporting nature, restoration and wellbeing in the catchment. There are also links to links to Visit Angus pages on local accommodation, eating out, visitor attractions etc.

South Esk Primary School in Montrose are on board as the rivers 'Species Champions' and the Partnership are promoting the project via the Brechin

Community Led Tourism SENS Scot Scottish Government Pilot. Our leaflet provides direction to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code – when you're enjoying Angus's countryside this year please tag us on Instagram @wildsouthesk. More information can be found at www.wildsouthesk.org or email info@theriversouthesk.org

Kelly Ann Dempsey
River South Esk Project Officer

Adventures in Moth Trapping

I have been interested in moths for over ten years but have not had any moth trapping equipment. Commercial set-ups can cost many hundreds of pounds and are mains powered or battery powered (using an inverter to generate mains voltages).

A few years ago I tried to make my own trap based on the Skinner trap design and experimented with LED strip lights powered by normal AA batteries. This did not produce much in the way of catches. Then last year a friend ran his battery powered trap in my garden and got a good catch and that spurred me on to experiment further.

I examined his trap and used the web to gather all the information I could about trap construction and light characteristics. I made some modifications to my homemade trap and got better results. I also got a UV LED strip and used that in conjunction with a visible LED strip and that improved matters.

This year I was loaned a bucket trap with battery powered lamp by the East of Scotland group of Butterfly Conservation. This improved my overnight catches and I was able to carry out some comparisons between my LEDs and two different mains voltage "blacklights" (as used on commercially available traps).

The conclusions were that trap design is important. I was able to run the "blacklights" over my homemade trap and compare catches with the bucket trap. This allowed further refinements to my own trap that made sure the trapped moths didn't just wander out of the trap when they felt like it. Good sealing of the sloping plastic sheets against the sides of the box is important as moths can squeeze through the smallest gaps. Also having a vertical funnel leading into the trap also makes a difference.

Now it should be noted that my garden is bordered by a road and has two street lamps shining into it all night, so any moth trap has some competition, but I still have a list of over 80 species of macro-moth and over 30 micro-moths between June and September this year.

My LED lights are not as good as the mains voltage lamps and clearly light intensity is a factor in attracting moths to the trap, but as a very cheap way of doing some moth trapping it is to be recommended to beginners or those wanting to only dabble occasionally.

Andy Wakelin



News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch



This certainly has been the year of the osprey at the loch, with the best production of fledglings for some time. Their father was the powerful male KR3, who displaced the previous resident male, Blue YD, three years ago but has only bred successfully this year with the

female Mrs Green BF. As has been widely reported, the grand total of three young ospreys (compared to the usual two) have fledged and flown successfully. Warden Jim Hughes says that he thinks they are the best young birds he's ever seen at the Loch. At the time of writing they were still at and around the loch, feeding up well, but getting ready to depart south. By the time you read this, we hope they will all have successfully reached West Africa and are enjoying the fish and warmth there. We're looking forward to seeing them all back in Scotland, to add to the expanding population of these magnificent birds.

Another development that you may be interested to catch is that the Loch was the background to a visit by a TV company recording an encounter between a wildlife cameraman, Hamza Yassin, and actor Ben Miller. Apparently this is to feature in a nature series for More4 which will be released later in 2021.

The long-running fence saga continues and as a result there was no grazing in the overgrown south meadow, which has continued to deteriorate. The overflow pond at the farm immediately to the south of the loch is to be enlarged and improved to prevent the damaging flooding and deposits that has occurred several times during intense rainfall in recent years. Some further path improvement is scheduled for next year, to restore good conditions for walkers and nature lovers of all ages.

Alban Houghton

Lintrathen Loch

Lintrathen has been fairly quiet this summer but the birds have had a good year, with young birds seen on the water, in the fringing rushes and reeds and in the woodlands around the loch. Most of the mallard ducklings have survived and thrived around the edges of the loch, along with a few great crested grebes. The hides have been used frequently, (perhaps due to the effects of the restrictions of foreign travel and consequent increased numbers of British visitors) but are showing signs of wear and ageing. We hope to have some maintenance done before winter sets in.

The group look forward to welcoming the first of the winter migrants, with numbers of Canada geese (which breed in northern Scotland) and flights of pinkfoot geese coming in along with a variety of winter ducks.

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath

The nesting seabirds have had a great year, with good numbers of gulls, fulmars and rock doves plus small numbers of cormorants and guillemots. The cliffs have been bright with flowers, primroses and one or two early purple orchids, thrift and sea campion earlier in the year and masses of purple milk-vetch, a scatter of carline thistles and orchids and, later, devil's-bit scabious and ling flowering in the small area of maritime heath. The areas of sand leek, *Allium scorodoprasum*, have thrived and the colonies are gradually expanding in one area of the cliffs. In a few places the insects, such as the mining bees, have had a good summer as well.

The concrete blocks across the path to the dangerous section have been marked and signs erected. It seems that most walkers and cyclists along the cliffs now use the slightly longer but much safer diversion around the cliff fall area. It probably won't be more than a few years before the old path collapses down onto the rocks below. Elsewhere sections of the path are slowly moving downhill, although not yet anywhere as hazardous. Down in Carlingheugh Bay, campers have left a few old fire sites and some rubbish but in general the reserve area has been fairly clear. There are no signs of recent damage by trail bikes but as always the cliffs and bay area need to be monitored regularly.

Montrose Basin

The summer has been successful for ospreys that made daily fishing visits and for guillemots and razorbills that have been seen in their hundreds in the Basin and in Montrose Bay. The great white egret and 3 or 4 little egret have been around all year.

The winter migrants are coming in with the first pink-footed geese, wigeon and teal arriving as we go to press.

The Miley, Dundee.

The Miley has, of course, remained open all throughout the pandemic as a public route. As elsewhere, the coarser vegetation has thrived and along with it lots of wild flowers and ferns and the bird populations.

The weekly clean-ups by individual or couples of group members have continued virtually throughout the lock-downs. Without these regular maintenance sessions, the state of the path would soon deteriorate. Unfortunately, although most dog-walkers co-operate well in clearing up after their animals, a small minority still don't do so. One owner even became rather abusive when challenged. Considerable numbers of large piles seem to accumulate at the Loons Road end and a few of these have been accidentally trodden in and spread along the path. Such messes are a hazard, particularly to the numbers of children who traverse the path every day.



Mary Harwood

Dundee Group

The work on the drainage ditch and clearing of the path along the Miley took place at last during the summer, but there has been some disagreement with the exact work done. We await developments, which we hope will be resolved by the time you read this.

The very generous presentation of £2,500 from Karl Stortz Ltd has greatly helped our finances and allowed the ditch-digging work to go ahead.



The Group also was delighted to receive a total of £500 from the Dundee Community Grants group in Dundee. The presentation to Mary and Tom Harwood and Pamie Bennett-McGurk, the artist, in the Wellgate Centre took place in late August. The money will be used to help finance the re-painting work in the tunnel along the Miley.

Mary Harwood



Programme for 2022

The situation with the pandemic is still uncertain but we are hoping to arrange to use the whole of the very much larger Main Reid Hall in Forfar for at least for one of our lectures in the spring. The ample space inside the Main Hall compared to the Upper Reid Hall, our usual venue, would allow plenty of room for any audience to be well separated out. The same situation holds for the AGM; we're waiting to see what happens with the covid-19 pandemic, local infection rates and numbers hospitalised. Please keep an eye open for emails from HQ and on our website to find out what is happening.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre News

Opening times are: Fri-Mon (closed Tue, Wed, Thurs), 10:30am-4pm (closed 1pm-1:30pm for cleaning). The visitor centre no longer has a timeslot system. You can still book tickets online, but this is entirely optional. These are day tickets and will simply allow payment of admission fee in advance. They will be accepting visitors on the door as usual.



Scottish Wildlife Trust Family Membership includes children's Wildlife Watch membership

For the activity programme for the Montrose Watch Group see the website at:

tinyurl.com/SWTMontroseW

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



or www.facebook.com/MontroseBasin/

The World "Wild" Web

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

More information about Montrose Basin can be found at www.montrosebasin.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!

November Newsletter Copy Deadline - 10th January 2022

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at 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).