

Dundee and Angus Wildlife News



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

Number 137 - November 2022

Welcome

It is only this year that we have been able to begin organising local SWT outings again after all our actions were so heavily curtailed by the pandemic. At last we're beginning to return to something more like normal activities, with the first socially-distanced indoor meetings in spacious well-ventilated rooms and several excursions into Angus, as described in this newsletter.

The wild swings in the weather this past year have greatly affected our wildlife. It will take many years, if not decades, for the effects of the violent storms of last winter to be overcome but at least wood-decomposing insects and fungi and the animals that feed on them will benefit long into the future. The very dry spring and summer affected numbers of some breeding birds and a variety of insects such as butterflies. And then the heavy rains this autumn has prompted the best display of fungi for years.

Many of these changes have been noted by local Trust members on their rambles around our local countryside. Who knows what will happen this winter but we can only hope that we will be able to see some normality next year in our activities. We very much look forwards to seeing you all again.



IMPORTANT FOR ALL MEMBERS

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 (*Subscribe Now*) 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/>

Plant Sale

The Dundee Support Group held their plant sale on 1st of May and made £596.70 from the sale of generous donations of plants from local SWT members to raise funds for the Angus & Dundee Group.



Helpers and customers at the plant sale.



Sidlaw Hill Walk

27th July 2022

The forecast didn't seem promising but at least the weather was dry when we gathered at Scotston Farm and were able to drive part of the way up the hill. The almost 20-strong party headed off up the rest of the hill, led by Euan Baird, and found a good range of the usual hill plants. A search among the taller heather eventually yielded tiny plants of an interesting species, the small twin leaves of the lesser twayblade orchid. Keeping our ears and eyes open, we noted a range of the species expected in such a habitat, a variety of tit species, thrushes and blackbirds, a curlew and a lark, plus a few very distant grouse. However, just as we reached the crest of the ridge, the threatening clouds began to spit and soon it was raining steadily, almost bang on the forecast time of 3 pm. Fortunately everyone was well clad although a few had rather light footwear and were likely to have wet feet.

It was time to head down. However, there was a fair distance to go, particularly as we skirted round several boggy areas and went off-track and had to walk laboriously through long tough rushes and grasses and sink into deep mossy clumps. Although we continued to note various good examples of typical bog and marsh plants, the conditions made it more difficult. By the time we reached a definite track leading down the hill, the rain was sheeting down. However, back at the farm the clouds started to lift and we all said that it had been an interesting day out, although the conditions could have been better! Our thanks go to the Baird family of Scotston Farm for hosting and leading the event.

Barry-Buddon Joint Outing

Sunday 21st August 2022

For the first time since 2019, the various natural history groups in Dundee were able to get together and run a joint outing to the large army training area and ranges of Barry-Buddon on the north bank of the Tay estuary. Members of the local RSPB and SOC groups, together with those of Dundee Naturalists' Society and the our local group of the SWT gathered at 10am in the car park just outside the main entrance to the accommodation and administration blocks, divided up into the usual birding, botanising and insect groups and were given gate keys by organiser David Lampard.

After arranging the lunch site and time, we headed off in different directions to explore the area and note the changes. We found that the 'Happy Valley' area had become considerably overgrown in the last three years and was exceptionally dry. We were unable to find the usual interesting plants there, particularly any fronds of the adders' tongue fern and the greater twayblade orchids. Elsewhere the expected plants and fungi were either missing or rather sparse. The other groups had noticed the same effect of the dry summer. Butterfly numbers were well down, both in species and individually.

Birds were less affected, although perhaps not as numerous as usual.

Meeting for lunch in the normal car park at the tall lighthouse, we were able to inspect the overnight moth trap catch that had been sorted out and recorded by David Lampard and Anne Reid and then chat among ourselves while eating our lunches. Later we spread out to search in different habitats for wildlife of interest. It was a great day.



Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing moth



Montreathment Forest Fungal Foray

Sunday 18th September

Some 22 members and friends gathered at the meeting point beside the road through the conifer plantations and began to find a good variety of fungi almost immediately. Best of all were a few nice chanterelles close to the parking place. But would we find other edibles?



Cep

The group set off along the track into the forest, with members veering off into the trees when they spotted an

interesting fungus. The leader spent some time showing the group the main differences between various groups of fungi. It wasn't long before somebody found an excellent fresh cap of the cep or penny bun, the renowned *Boletus edulis*. It is an edible and good or even delicious almost 'meaty' fungus if well prepared but, as always, it is important that it is correctly identified. Some time was spent looking at its identification features and recording good numbers of such fungi as ochre brittlegills, sickeners, blushers, false chanterelles, horse-hair fungi, birch brackets, horses' hoof brackets, witches' brooms and numerous others. Even better, members found lots of ceps, enough to be able to offer them round so that everyone who wanted one was able to take a cep home to sample. We were all very pleased with the day.



Chanterelle



News from the Reserves

Balgavies Loch

Fonah Bog, to the south of the Loch usually dries up during part of the summer but this year the drought has been exceptional. This may explain the numerous sightings of lizards there by Mary Rogers. Mary and her husband Jim also were involved in the dramatic events out in the loch in July.

On the 20th the pine trunk supporting the huge osprey nest, perhaps weakened by the ferocious storms of the early winter, suddenly split apart. The nest and the chick inside it ended up in the water. Disaster! Rapid action was essential. Bird watchers Mary and Jim Rogers sped to the rescue and their efforts, together with those of Loch Warden Jim Hughes, James Silvey and SWT manager Rab Potter and Raz Rusmusson from Loch of the Lowes, with help from Tayside Raptor Group member Robin Manson, managed to restore the situation. A temporary nest was erected in a larch on a small peninsula into the loch. All this drama attracted attention nationally and was well reported in newspapers and on radio. As the blog on the SWT website put it, "It takes a team to rescue an osprey".

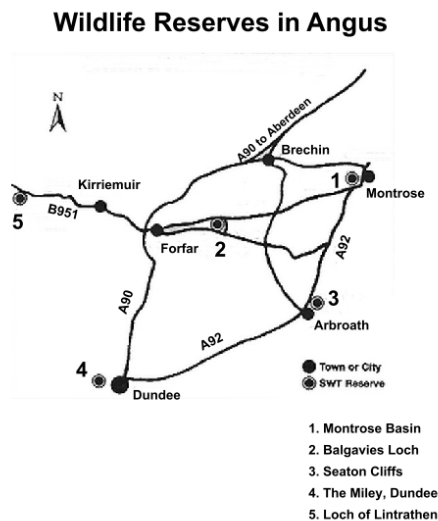
Nourished by plentiful supplies of sea-bass, provided by Jim Hughes, the young osprey (identified as Darvic ring Blue 640) thrived and flew successfully in August. We can only hope that Blue 640 is able to survive its perilous first year and look forwards to seeing the young bird back next summer from its first winter migration to Africa.

Other good news of Balgavies ospreys emerged later in the summer. The male Blue YD, the first of 16 chicks fathered by Green BF between 2012 and 2018, has himself successfully raised two young birds on a nest in north Fife. His travels were tracked by the

small radio transmitter strapped to his back and became well known to many followers. Over the years Blue YD has been seen many times at Balgavies Loch and above the Eden Estuary. He still carries the redundant transmitter but it will fall off eventually.

Back in the Balgavies reserve, local SWT team leader and organiser Duncan Budge and his work team have been busy repairing and renewing sections of the walking circuit around the Loch. You will find it much safer and improved.

Another item which we welcome is the news that the grazing plan for the coming winter includes the much neglected and overgrown south meadow. Hopefully this will suppress the growth of coarse grasses and similar dominating plants and help to increase the bio-diversity of this formerly important grassland area.



Alban Houghton

Lintrathen Loch

Lintrathen Loch water levels have been very low this year due to the drought and are still rather low. Nevertheless there's still lots to see from either of the two hides. A big flock of more than 3,000 Canada geese, mostly on the mud flats at the eastern end, are the main interest during the day. Later, towards dusk equally large numbers of pink-foot geese come flighting in and tend to roost on the open water in the middle. In addition there are the usual numbers of ducks and others, including mallards, of course, tufties, wigeon, great crested and little grebes and mute swans. We all hope that there will be good rains to restore more normal water levels, which will bring the birds closer and make them easier to identify.

James Ivory

Seaton Cliffs, Arbroath It has been a most active summer on the reserve. The early spring flowers were excellent, with drifts of the pink flowers of thrift or sea pink decorating the cliffs. Among them were clumps of white flowers of scurvy grass followed, slightly later, by the larger white flowers of sea campion.



Kittiwakes and chick

Numbers of butterflies and day-flying moths could be seen at times during the summer, along with plenty of mining bees in a few places. The nesting sea birds seemed to

have a good breeding year, although numbers of many of them were devastated later in the year by the dangerous and highly contagious bird 'flu virus. It was heartbreaking to see numerous gannets, particularly, washed up on the beaches. The virus must have slashed through the dense population of these wonderful high-diving birds on the Bass Rock.

The path and grassy surrounds have been cleared of some of the rubbish left by visitors and several people have camped, without permission, in Carlingheugh Bay. Fortunately, however, they caused

little damage and took away most of their rubbish but that sheltered corner is always vulnerable.

Montrose Basin

The summer brought the daily low tide fishing efforts of osprey but sadly another poor eider breeding year due to predation and loss of mussel beds in the Basin. Up to 100 common terns gathered on the tern raft and went through their pairing rituals but did not stay to lay eggs on the raft. They were plentiful on the mud at low tide in August so must have nested somewhere else close by.

The great white egret was resident from mid-summer and joined up to 10 little egret and many herons in Maryton Bay.

August saw the regular gathering of mute swan to moult in the safe haven of the Basin and were joined by hundreds of canada geese on their short migration from the Moray Firth to the Clyde.

September saw the return of hundreds of lapwings and redshanks, which were joined by the usual influx of pink footed geese. The live video broadcast of the evening arrival of the pinkfeet was very spectacular and will be available for viewing on the SWT website soon.

Andy Wakelin

The Miley, Dundee

The Miley continues to thrive despite the weather extremes this year. Only one tree was lost to Storm Arwen and took a bit of clearing but heavy rain during the winter helped to restore some life back into the reserve. Unfortunately, during the summer, someone set fire to all three litter bins and made a real mess. Alison Keeble, who discovered the damage, did a great job in clearing them up. The City's Rapid Response also were along quickly to help out. A few days later, the two Miley organisers, Mary and Tom Harwood, met councillor Roisin Smith on site to talk over the problems and show her the delights of the Miley. She was much impressed. The litter cleaning teams have continued throughout the summer, trying to keep the



litter in check although it is disheartening to see the amount being dropped so casually.

We will be organising another leaf clearing session in November – keep an eye on the Website.

Mary Harwood

Donations

The Group has received two donations over the past year.

One was from KARL STORZ Endoscopy (UK) Ltd. (who have a base in Dundee), for the sum of £2,500 which was used for improvements to the Miley in Dundee.

The second was a collection from the funeral of a young man who loved wildlife, especially birds and squirrels and the £500 will be put towards local squirrel projects.

The Group is very grateful for both donations.

Programme

Thursday 17th November 2022

Wildlife in the Glens

A talk by Hugh Bell, Angus Alive Ranger, on the wildlife to be found in the Angus Glens. 7:30pm in the Meffan Gallery, 20 West High St, Forfar DD8 1BB.

Saturday 28th January 2023

Walk round Balgavies Loch

Followed by lunch at Sinclair' Kitchen.

See website for the latest times and meeting places.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre News

Opening times from Oct 31st to mid-Feb are:
Friday-Monday, 10:30am-4pm.
(closed Tue, Wed, Thurs)

More details can be found on
www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk
Or
www.facebook.com/MontroseBasin/



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

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!

March Newsletter Copy Deadline - 10th January 2023

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.
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