Scottish Wildlife Trust

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Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

Dundee and Angus Wildlife News

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

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Introduction

Although the autumn and early winter were notably wet, we're looking forward to another good summer this year, following on from last year's great wildlife season. Some events, such as the summer barbecue in Carlingheugh Bay were well attended but several others, particularly the Dawn Chorus at Barry Mill and the Wader Walk at Montrose Basin, attracted only very small numbers. The committee organise the events for the interest and enjoyment of local members and we hope that they prove attractive. Please let us know if you would prefer other types of events. We'd be delighted to hear any ideas, either through our website, by emails or direct contact with Montrose Basin Visitors' Centre. Meanwhile, we look forward to meeting and welcoming you to any or all of this year's programme of walks and talks.

Walk for Waders

Sunday 26th October 2014

Disappointingly, only three members turned up at the Montrose Basin Visitor Centre for the walk, but this might be expected on one of the windiest days of the autumn with the threat of rain. The weather conditions also precluded the planned goal of Scurdieness lighthouse as the exposed site would have been very miserable. Instead a more modest walk round the east end of the Basin provided some respite from the wind and the waders were happy to settle down in shelter at Rossie Spit. We were able to get good views of black-tailed godwit, redshank, dunlin, oystercatcher and curlew, while wigeon, teal and mallard also were evident, together with many cormorants and several grey herons.

Further round the Basin-side road a confiding curlew gave close views and eiders were seen surfing under the rail bridge on the in-coming tide. A seal popped up to have a close look at us after washing off the sandbank where a number had basked at low tide. Having conquered the wind, we lunched in the welcoming warmth of the Basin Visitor Centre after a very pleasant and successful walk.

Dunlin
Photo A. Wakelin

Andy Wakelin

'The Cairngorms'

Thursday 20th November

Graham Christer, Angus Council Ranger at Glen Doll, delivered a fact-filled evening lecture on the National Park in the Upper Reid Hall in Forfar. He began by describing the size and extent of this still new NP, by far the largest in Britain, more than twice as large as the Lake District, and its principal habitats ranging from the High Tops with the only substantial area of sub-arctic habitat in the country, the many crags and rocky areas, down to large areas of plantations and semi-natural forests and farmland in the glens. He reminded us that the National Park included parts of Angus, the tops of the Glens, including Glens Clova, Prosen and Isla, and supports a population of some 16,000 to 17,000 residents, mostly around Aviemore. The whole area attracts the staggering total of roughly half a million to a million visitors each year, with some 73,000 enjoying Glen Doll and as many as 17 to 20,000 reaching the prime wildlife site of Corrie Fee itself.

Graham described the difficult job of the rangers and other managers to balance these numbers with the many interests involved, including Nature Conservation, Forestry, Deer Stalking, Fishing, Grouse Shooting, Farming and Crofting, Recreation and Tourism and restrictions on their development. He discussed the many opportunities for conservation of the rare plants and animals, deer and grouse management and changes in farming practice such as controlling the numbers of sheep in sensitive upland areas. Management work for recreation includes bringing in footpath contractors, a very expensive option, to improve and 'harden' the paths and requests to climbers to avoid certain prime cliff sites even

in winter. The rangers also organise publicity campaigns about controlling dog roaming and against dropping litter. A new idea has been to plant several orchards further down the glens help attract numbers of visitors away from some of the prime honeypot sites.

He described the role of Scottish Natural Heritage in opposing further ski developments and controlling the siting in the National Park of renewable energy generation sites, which can be highly intrusive visually and are very disruptive and damaging. One or two wind farm sites are in surrounding areas and may cause the deaths of some golden eagles and other large birds. Graham finished by describing the roles of the rangers based at Glen Doll. Perhaps surprisingly, they are not NP rangers; Graham and the others are employed by Angus Council. They work to improve the environment for all and reduce conflicts by monitoring visitors and sensitive sites and, at the same time, informing, protecting, helping and educating the public. In short, they are kept very busy.

News from the Reserves

Lintrathen Loch

No mink have been sighted recently. The bird numbers, however, have been rather low, perhaps because of the flooding. Peak counts so far have totalled 5,180 pinkfeet geese, 180 greylags and 478 Canada geese. Some of the peak numbers of ducks have been 275 wigeon, 30 goldeneyes and 76 tufteds. There are plenty more to see.

Balgavies Loch

Work on the path, by Duncan Budge and his team, has progressed well. The path has been upgraded and the stiles replaced by kissing gates and two self-closing gates in the field grazed by cattle. Rather more worrying is the report of an outbreak of leprosy in the red squirrels – as if they don't have enough problems as it is. A poster has been put up asking visitors to report any sightings and recover any dead ones. In mid-summer we'll be running a bioblitz event. Please see the note below.

Seaton Cliffs

As you may have seen, the cliff-top path just beyond the route down into Carlingheugh Bay has become dangerous and is being downgraded to encourage visitors to use the lower one. At the same time the path down into the bay is being upgraded and the steps reconstructed and improved. Meanwhile, the plants and birds had a good season last year and it won't be long, now, before the new breeding season kicks into high gear.

Montrose Basin

The greatest numbers of pink-footed geese ever recorded, a total of 78,970 birds, flew in on the 19th October, a thrilling sight – and sound! Kingfishers and water rail were seen daily during the autumn and a yellow-browed warbler, a rare migrant, appeared in early October. A desert wheatear was seen near Montrose Harbour for a week in November. A plaque to commemorate one of the most influential members of earlier times and a prime mover in setting up the Basin reserve, John Compton, is being considered. We hope to site it at the Visitors' Centre.

The Miley

Members have been monitoring the state of the path and continue to clear the site of dumped and blown rubbish weekly. It will be interesting to see how the recent initiative to encourage the use of more permanent bags by charging for plastic carrier bags affects the numbers of the thin plastic bags blowing about, particularly the ones caught up in trees – which some people call 'witches' knickers'. In late autumn a number of Dundee Group members carried out a trial clearance of fallen leaves along the track. (See the report in the Dundee Group News.)

Bioblitz at Balgavies

We hope that you will be able to join us on one of the two days set aside for this, the weekend of 18th and 19th July. The idea is to collect in as many records as possible about the wildlife at a single site during the short period set aside. Although based at the car park and hide, we'll be peering into the waters of the loch, keeping sharp eyes peeled for the birds, sweeping for insects and walking around to record the plant life. All members and friends of wildlife are welcome to add to the fun; you don't have to be an expert. We'll have them on hand already. So, why not come along, enjoy yourself and add your own contributions?

Street Collections

The Collecting activities proceeded as usual in 2014, although we decided to skip Dundee for the one season, at least, due to difficulties over the date and to the fairly low returns for the effort needed. Takings were variable, some lower than last year but others had increased a little. There are other benefits, though. Our volunteers help to remind passers-by of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, of the need for wildlife conservation, the work being done locally and of some of the wildlife highlights in this area.

The collection in Arbroath totalled £156.93 and Brechin brought in £56.09, while that for Broughty Ferry reached £175.56. The session at Carnoustie netted £183.00, Forfar brought in £157.09, Kirriemuir contributed £87.82, the Monifieth collection was £72.00 and that in Montrose reached £143.85.

We all are very grateful to the good citizens of these towns and Dundee suburbs for their generous contributions, which totalled £1,032.34p, a little less than last year, and also to the enthusiasm – and dedication – of the volunteer collectors. However, we still need more helpers. Wouldn't **YOU** like to volunteer an hour of your time with us during this year? The dates are:

Forfar	Sat 4th April 2015
Arbroath	Sat 25th April 2015
Brechin	Sat 23rd May 2015
Kirriemuir	Sat 13th June 2015
Monifieth	Sat 8th August 2015
Montrose	Sat 29th Aug 2015
Carnoustie	Sat 29th Aug 2015

The dates for the Dundee area were not settled before this newsletter was printed. Please check our website for further details.

Quiz winners

Our congratulations go to the two joint first places – Shiona Baird from near Auchterhouse and Elizabeth Steven from Arbroath, who were the only two to send in completely correct answers. They both won a prize of £12.50, amalgamated from the first and second prizes.

Well done Mary Harwood for devising yet another fascinating – if a little frustrating – quiz! She says that she's made good progress on the new version for 2015.

Dundee Group News

'It's Your Neighbourhood' Award

The 'It's Your Neighbourhood' award scheme is part of the Royal Horticultural Society's efforts to improve the British environment.

The Miley was assessed in August for the third year running by a small team from the 'IYNA' scheme, one of whom was also doing the 'Bonnie Dundee' assessment. They were very pleased to note that the reserve was being maintained as an excellent wildlife site and at the same was fully accessible to the public. They rated it highly, changing its status from 'developing' to 'thriving', and were very impressed by the amount of hard work that has been put in by our helpers, the Conservation Volunteers and the SWT's Dundee Conservation Team to sustain its quality.

On behalf of the Dundee Group, the Miley organisers, Mary and Tom Harwood, joined volunteers from other groups at a seminar in Stirling in early October where they received a Level 4: 'Thriving' Certificate, signed by both the RHS President and the CEO of 'Keep Scotland Beautiful'.

In November, at a Council Ceremony in the Marryat Hall in Dundee, Mary and Tom received the Award on behalf of the Miley Group. It was framed and now hangs in a place of honour in their house, with the hope of another one next year!

Mary Harwood

Leaf Clearance along the Miley

Sunday 23rd November

A total of 14 SWT members from the Dundee area gathered at the Miley with a collection of garden and leaf rakes, brushes, leaf collectors and litter-pickers to clear away the fallen leaves and any other rubbish lying on the path.

Kate Treharne was the first to arrive and used her litter-picker to help remove the usual blowing plastic bags and similar rubbish from the surface vegetation and then Jack Moodie and Peter and Margaret Bainbridge started with their rakes and brush at the Loons Road end and were joined by Graham Cross and Daphne and Bill Macfarlane Smith to work a little further along the track.

The deepest leaf covering was towards the Clepington Road end where Tom and Mary Harwood came along with an assortment of rakes to begin their efforts there. Fortunately it was a pleasant day, which made the task seem a little easier. Several walkers came along the path and seemed surprised to find a voluntary group from the SWT was doing the work. One or two even expressed a wish – perhaps – to join us in future!

The Harwoods and Wynne Tennant and Marjorie Gillan did a power of work to help free the gravel chips on the path surface from the sodden leaves which were being trampled in. Meanwhile Peter and Jim helped to clear some of the path-side drains and improve the water flow. This involved cutting back many of the clogging brambles, clearing out fallen wood and lifting old railway ballast stones. At one point an unusually large number of fallen apples had to be removed as well. The trouble, as usual, was that the drain had become blocked and Tom said he'd come back with his drainage rods and have a go at improving the flow.

Soon the leaf piles began to build up beside the path but the sodden leaves were very heavy and difficult to load into bags, which could be only partly filled. Shiona and Ian Baird joined us later in the morning with a wheelbarrow to help carry the leaves and bags back to their trailer at the Loons Road end. They also were able to help some walkers wearing shoes to cross the large puddle at the road bridge over the Miley.

The many willing helpers managed to clear most of the fallen leaves by lunchtime and left for a very welcome bite to eat with the satisfaction of a job well done. The Bairds then were able to remove the gathered piles and take them off for composting. The clearance is obviously a job that needs doing every year and we'll have to pencil it into our diaries for 2015.

Montrose Wildlife Watch Group

The Wildlife Watch group at Montrose has been re-started and meet on the first Thursday in the month at Montrose Basin Visitor Centre for a variety of activities for the younger people interested in wildlife.

The next meeting is on
Thursday 2nd April 6:30 – 8pm
All about Eggs!
Egg identification, make nests of all kinds

For further information on activities or on joining the Scottish Wildlife Trust, please call the Montrose Basin Visitor Centre on 01674 677036 or email montrosebasin@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

The Wildlife Watch has its own website at http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/

Dates for your Diary

Members' Centres Events

Thursday ~~12th~~ 5th March (Note change of date)
Dragonflies of Tayside - Talk by Danielle Muir, BDS Scotland
7:30 pm in the Upper Reid Hall, Castle St, Forfar. Admission £3.50 - children free.

Thursday 23rd April — **Angus Barn Owl Project** - A talk by Carol Littlewood, Environmentalist. Following AGM Admission free. 7:30pm, either Upper Reid Hall, Forfar.

Saturday 2nd May — **Montrose Coffee Morning** - Old & St.Andrews Church Hall, High St. Montrose. 10am-12noon.

Saturday 23rd May — **Dundee Plant Sale** at the Demonstration Gardens, Dawson Park, Caenlochan Rd, Dundee. 10:30am-3pm.

Sunday 21st June — **Glen Clova** - A gentle walk towards Bachnagairn for highland wildlife, orchids etc. Meet at Glen Doll car park (charge), (NO284762) at 10:30am. Bring lunch.

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th July — **Balgavies Bioblitz** - Joint event with Dundee Naturalists at Balgavies Loch Reserve NO528509. Help our experts recording flowers, birds, insects & water creatures etc. From 7:30pm Sat. & 10am Sunday. Activities for families. See website for programme details.

Sunday 16th August — **Barry Buddon Open Day** - Guided walks for birds, insects and flowers. Meet at 9:45am at Monifieth Playing Fields. (NO502 323). Bring lunch, binoculars.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

Full details of events can be found on www.swt.org.uk or www.montrosebasin.org.uk on the MBVC pages.

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.swt.org.uk

Group	Leader	Meeting Place	Phone
Montrose	Watch leader	Basin Visitor Centre	01674 676336

*(SWT Family Membership includes children's **WATCH** membership)*

August 2015 Newsletter Copy Deadline - 15th June 2015

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for August to November 2015 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the address below: My email address is jim.strath91@gmail.com

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