

SWT PERTH CENTRE NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013

Charity No. SC005792

Osprey Season at Loch of the Lowes 2013- so far!

It's been another successful nesting season for our famous Ospreys here at SWT Loch of the Lowes reserve.

After a slightly later than usual start, due to the incredibly cold spring (the birds arrived after migrating from Africa to a frozen loch!) our Ospreys took up their traditional nest. Our veteran female returned for an amazing 23rd year in a row, and took up with the same male partner as last year.

Despite her age, this bird surprised us yet again by laying four eggs- only the second time this has happened on this nest and surprising considering only 1% of ospreys lay four eggs, with 2-3 being more usual.

The 24hour Nest Protection watch took place as ever this year, with our wonderfully dedicated team of volunteers contributing over 1300 hours to make sure the birds bred in peace undisturbed.

On the 1st of June one of the osprey eggs hatched to great celebrations both at our visitor centre and amongst worldwide viewers of the webcam on the nest. Unfortunately none of the other three eggs hatched – these were later examined by experts and were found to be infertile, which may be caused by the females advanced age.

With its parent's undivided attention, the chick has progressed really well and matured quickly, with plentiful food and good warm weather.

On the 15th July the osprey chick was ringed and satellite tagged by an expert team and this will enable us to follow her progress over the coming weeks, month and years, as she faces the hazardous first migration. You can follow her progress online at swt.org.uk. *Ranger Emma Rawling*

Programme for indoor season 2013-14

Friday 4th October : Helen Cole (Chief ranger at Ben Lawers) - Ben Lawers and its Alpine Flora

Friday 1st November : AGM plus Helen Dickinson (Tayside Beaver Project Officer) - Beavers in Tayside

Friday 6th December : Moira Hutchison - The Maya, motmots and manatees in Belize

2014 programme to follow. Meetings *will be held in the Luncarty Church Centre, starting at 7.30 p.m other than the joint meeting with PSNS in December, to be held in the Perth Museum.*

Swift/Starling success and more

My garden at 6-8 Queens Road, Scone, which I have tried to convert into a small nature reserve has had an interesting and reasonably successful summer so far. Swifts again nested in the house (only one nest though) and produced two healthy chicks. One left on the morning of July 30 followed by its twin the next day. Three starling nests were also successful with around 9-12 young fledging. Plenty of house sparrows and in late July I was pleased to record a male tree sparrow. It may have been resident for a while as I have not paid the sparrows much attention, and there may be a few more for all I know. Wildflowers were planted in the early spring and with vipers bugloss, marjoram, cornflower, foxgloves, etc., along with the perennial cotoneaster horizontalis, hypericum and escallonia bumblebees and even honeybees were in abundance during late June and July. A neighbour has a sea holly plant and I was amazed at the prolific amount of bees it was supporting. This is a must plant for next year. Few butterflies yet but perhaps August will provide these winged beauties. *Charlie Macpherson*

SWT Perthshire contacts

Perth Centre: (Newsletter, etc.): Charlie Macpherson (01738 552972) (cemacpherson@supanet.com); (Secretary): June Brazendale (June797@gmail.com) . **Pitochry:** Beryl Coope (01882 634224). **Upper Strathearn Group:** R. Fryer (01764 670526).

Contributions needed

Members – this is your newsletter, so if anyone has an item to contribute please contact Charlie Macpherson, 6 Queens Road, Scone, Perth PH2 6QJ (cemacpherson@supanet.com). There are over 900 members in our area – surely someone has something they wish to contribute to the newsletter!

The Positive Face of Italian Wildlife Protection

Many people, even those who support conservation organisations, view Italy as a country where shooting and trapping migratory birds is the favourite pastime of most of its population. However, this is not all that takes place in this Mediterranean area and I was mildly surprised when an SWT colleague was unaware of LIPU. The Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli, the Italian Birdlife partner, is a conservation charity with a fine track record.

Founded in 1965 it has 42,000 members and a staff of 95.

Its mission is to strive to protect wildlife with a particular focus on wild birds and their habitats, and through this works for the conservation of biodiversity, the growth of public awareness and environmental education, and the sustainable use of natural resources. A list of LIPU's key activities are: Species protection; Sites and habitat conservation; Public awareness and education; Lobbying and policies; Anti-poaching actions against the trapping of migrant passerines and illegal shooting of birds of prey have been very successful. These have involved volunteers in concrete action and also increased public awareness. The local branches are active in schools, coordinated by the Education Department; About 100,000 paying individuals a year visit LIPU's reserves (we call them "oases") and education centres, which play a key role within our conservation education programme; At the Carloforte Oasis, an outstanding section of cliff in south-east Sardinia, tourists can watch a colony of more than 100 breeding pairs of Eleonora's Falcon through telescopes and with the guidance of a warden; The Oases of Torrile near Parma is a re-created marsh, renowned for over 100 breeding pairs of Black-winged Stilt, can be easily seen from the hides; The "Seabird Rescue Centre" in Tuscany and several "Bird of Prey" or "Urban Birds" Rehabilitation Centres reach many people through symbolic "adopt a bird" schemes or public releases of rehabilitated birds in LIPU reserves. National events and intensive press campaigns play a major role in spreading LIPU's message countrywide; Conservation projects have been carried out on White Stork, Red Kite, Lesser Kestrel, Audouin's Gull and White-headed duck. The only wild breeding colony of Griffon Vulture was restocked with Spanish birds, and in 10 years has developed from 18 to 41 pairs. National campaigns on legislation have gained the support of hundreds of thousands of Italians and have obtained: more rigorous hunting laws, a reduced list of hunting species and a shorter hunting season; a new law on Protected Areas; and gazetting of new Reserves and National Parks, including many IBAs. A very successful "swallow and agriculture campaign" is under way, related to the BirdLife Agricultural Task Force objectives.

The attitude of Italians towards wildlife has changed dramatically in the last thirty years. In 1970 there were over 2 million hunters and 3% of protected landscape. Now we have less than 800,000 hunters; Reserves and centres will continue to be a central area of LIPU's future development, as well as public awareness and management.

LIPU has some very important recent achievements (too many to list in this article) and I urge any SWT members who are looking to expand their conservation support to give LIPU serious consideration. They have a UK branch, so just look up their web site or have a look at their excellent magazine "ALI" that I will bring along to our meetings.

Reminder

We are now unable to send out Membership cards and the newsletter with the Wildlife magazine. Details of our programme can be found in this newsletter and in the 'Events and Activities' booklet.

Views with a Smew

Morning arrives so late in winter and as we say hello to December 2012 a glance out the front door tells me all I need to know, white is the morning night, it is just after seven dark is the sky, a thin covering of snow brightens the dark start. Surprisingly for the -2^o C the thin layer of snow on the car is a simple brush away dusting no ice, that I hope means it will not be icy underfoot or for that matter under tyre, a bright three quarter moon looks down on a cold start to what I hope will be a good day.

As light begins brightens the sky I make my way down to the bay a low water level shows a lot of high ground, on the far side of the high centre section, a large gaggle of Grey Lag Geese, I estimate around 50 to 60, many with heads rested on backs, some just beginning to preen feathers some starting to move about, it must have been a chilly night out there. Off to the right of the centre section gaggle a smaller gaggle of Canada Geese 8, with two pairs away to my right 12 in total.

A flash of white across the scope, has to be investigated, I follow the bird to where it lands with a splash, only for it to promptly dive out of sight under the surface. A Goldeneye maybe, where will it surface, a few moments later I have my answer, a brilliantly turned out drake Smew in the scope, yes the day is turning into a fine one. The Smew moves to the bank where it stops to preen feathers, I take a look around. An incoming Great Black Backed Gull drops down onto the far side of the raised section, next to the Grey Lags. A drake Goosander, one then a second is soon followed by drake Goldeneye, then Tufted Duck bobbing up and under I count 4 Tufted but I'm sure there are more. The Great Black has I think speeded up the movement of Grey Lags, so another check of the Grey Lag Geese and the total number is now around 70, they are now moving off to what I would call the take-off area on the far side of the bay, they are a little talkative a sign they may soon be off.

Looking up in response to a cackling call, I see a large flock of Jackdaws, perhaps a hundred plus flying over in the direction of Killiecrankie, the three quarter moon, now in a clear blue sky is beginning to pale and fade, the sun now casting its bright rays across the farside hills, chilly but nice. Back at water level, I catch sight of a Little Grebe, Mallard, don't forget the Mallard about 25 here, there and everywhere, Teal in small numbers all over the bay 14. I look again for the Smew but do not see it, flying over a Herring Gull who looks around then continues off up river, two female Goldeneye

join the growing list, as is the increasing Mallard numbers now standing at 36, a second Herring Gull spirals down but has a change of mind flying up off and away. At water level, in fact just in front of the jetty I follow a female Goldeneye, as she slowly moves from right to left, all of a sudden, a reverse thrust, sends her back the way she came at a rate of knots. While she races along a pair of Widgeon cross the view, I watch the Goldeneye the Widgeon and then into full view of the scope the Smew, so close what a stunner, two black eyes, those head, neck and side black line, the grey, a wonderful sight, and it stays on the surface as if on show, not even the approach of a pair of Mallard, swimming either side of him sends him into a dive, I become so involved in watching this special visitor, that when he does dive, a quick look to the far side of the bay and I discover the Grey Lags have all gone, how did I miss that, oh well a review of Teal numbers bring them up to 23, all in all a nice trip to the bay.

The passage up to the Cuilc, looks smooth, too smooth in fact, I have the terrible feeling of getting half way up Larchwood Road and against my will, the laws of gravity will send me backwards, I know the Cuilc was frozen yesterday so I know it will not have thawed last night, I take a drive up the clear West Moulin road and toward the moor, checking on the time and the fact it may be a little scary trying to get up to the moor I just check on the lower fields over Kinnaird then head back home for a warm up.

Conservation Volunteer Work Days

August 6 (Tuesday, 10.30-3p.m.) – Balnaguard Glen – Juniper Rescue, Bracken Bashing (meet at car park).

August 14 (Wednesday, 10.30-3p.m.) – Tummel Island, Ballinluig – Weed Removal, Himalayan Balsam pulling (meet at Roadside off A827).

August 22 (Thursday, 10.30-3p.m.) – Tummel Island, Tomdachoille – Weed Removal, Himalayan Balsam pulling (Contact Emma 01350 727 337 for meeting arrangements).

August 30 (Friday, 10.30-3p.m.) – Keltneyburn Meadow – wildflower Meadow work, Bracken and thistle pulling (Meet at top reserve car park).

September 17 (Tuesday, 10.30-3.30p.m.) – Seaton Cliffs – Autumn Cleanup at the Seaside, rubbish collection in the company of the Ranger (Meet at north seafront car park at Arbroath).

October 17 (Thursday, 10.30-2.30 p.m.) Keltneyburn Meadow – Autumn Maintenance of Dragonfly Habitat (Waterproofs provided) (Meet at top reserve car park).

Thought for the Future

“Great are the tasks ahead, terrifying are the mountains of ignorance and hate and prejudice, but the Warriors of the Rainbow shall rise as on the wings of the eagle to surmount all difficulties. They will be happy to find that there are now millions of people all over the Earth ready and eager to join them in conquering all barriers that bar the way to a new and glorious world. You’ve had enough now of talk. Let there be deeds.” (From *Warriors of the Rainbow* by William Willoya and Vinson Brown).