



**Scottish  
Wildlife  
Trust**

Charity number SC005792

# Dundee and Angus Wildlife News

**Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future**

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

**Number 122 - July 2016**

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### Introduction

As you can see from this newsletter, our efforts to help conserve and promote local wildlife continue as before. Our volunteers have been very busy – as well as enjoying themselves – but would really like others to come along to help them. Couldn't YOU manage some spare time? It can be very interesting and even fun, meeting lots of people and learning more about our local wildlife and conservation. Anyway, with the weather improving after the very wet winter with its cold spells, we look forward to meeting you at one or more of the activities listed in our programme.

### Report on the Dundee Conservation Volunteers

April 2014 to March 2015

The DCV team have had a highly successful time carrying out 12 work days during the year. They meet once a month on a Sunday to tackle some of those tasks which paid workers don't have time for or cannot otherwise achieve. Their varied efforts included helping clean up the Dundee Law for the Council and along the Dighty, controlling the invasive giant hogweed along the same stream, carrying out dune management tasks and tree planting, woodland management, all for the Council, removing Himalayan balsam stands on Moncrieff Hill, drystone dyking on a farm and clearing Rhododendrons from estate woodlands. The conservation volunteers clocked up a total of 105 volunteer work days, which gave an average of 8.75 volunteers per task, somewhat reduced from the previous year.

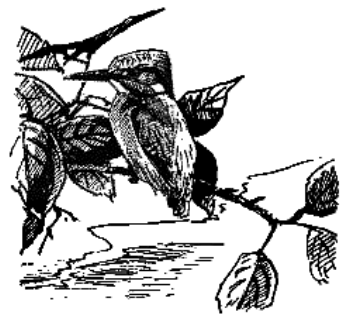
John Whyman handles all the administration, contacts with clients, fund handling and all the training and mentoring on behalf of the Volunteers team. Funding has continued to be difficult. Despite several applications, only £250 was secured from CSV Action Earth and £250 from Asda Carrier Bags. Costs were reduced by Dundee Countryside Rangers agreeing to host three task days, private clients provided £40 per day and the rest of the funding came from the remainder of the Dighty Environmental Group cash held by the SWT local group. The DCV group is very grateful to those who did donate funds or contributed in other ways to the success of the past year.

*John Whyman*

### Wildlife Walk round Forfar Loch

Saturday 6th February 2016

On a grey damp day, 11 members met to walk round Forfar Loch. Much as we would have liked bright sunshine the weather was in our favour as with sparkling water and glare it would have been far more difficult to see the colours of the birds. To our delight the loch was awash with waterfowl - among them mallard, goosander, tufted duck, coot, moorhen, pochard, little grebe and teal etc. The highlight was a kingfisher seen by three sharp-eyed members at the head of our straggling group. Blackbirds were prolific but included among the smaller birds, robins, tits etc., were two pairs of colourful bullfinches. We could only speculate on the absence of geese. Others found one or two plants in flower and numbers of wood-growing fungi.



After a two hour walk around the loch, it was time for lunch. We gathered at the Chapter and Verse restaurant to enjoy a convivial, delicious and good value for money lunch.

*Margaret Bainbridge*

## Pearls in Peril

Thursday 18th March

Jackie Webley, the Pearl Mussel Project Manager for Scottish Natural Heritage, delivered a fascinating lecture about Scotland's native pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). She began by pointing out how important these mussels were to the river ecosystems. They play a vital role, for instance, in clearing the water by filtering out huge quantities of organic matter each day. They also have had historical importance but are very interesting in their own right.

Pearl mussels have an incredible life cycle. Females release up to about 4 million eggs each year which hatch into tiny larvae that can survive only if they become attached to the gills of a small fish, more specifically a juvenile salmon or trout. They parasitise the fish, taking nutrients from the gills and grow slowly, reaching a size of 6.5 mm after about 9 months before dropping off. If they find suitable sediments, the small mussels embed themselves and start to function as adults, taking in water and filtering it to remove nutrients but the mortality rates are enormous. The vast majority of eggs and young mussels, 99.99%, are eaten, are not able to find a fish or else cannot find a suitable place to become embedded after they drop off their host's gills and die. Once firmly embedded, up to 10 cm or more deep in gravelly sediments without too much silt to choke them, they may survive for very many years.

Only relatively small numbers still exist in Scotland, with an estimated 12 million individuals, compared to elsewhere in Northern Europe but only relict populations still hang on in northern England, in Wales and Cornwall. Mussels occur in small numbers in Central and Southern European countries.

Detailed recording of populations and their numbers began as recently as 2002 and numbers still are dropping but there are some signs of improved recruitment of numbers. In the South Esk, with a major population of roughly half a million individuals, the numbers still appear to be declining. The reasons are varied, including increased siltation, altered river regimes, more agricultural chemicals reaching the water, salmon decline, climate changes and historic and continuing illegal pearl fishing.

Jackie described, in the last part of her lecture, the range of measures, both legal and financial, to help conserve pearl mussels. Funding of £3.5 million, 50% from EU sources, is being shared among 22 partner organisations for 48 action projects. The North Esk has been improved for the mussels, after complex negotiations with a number of stakeholders, by tree planting schemes to stabilise and shade the banks, improve fencing to prevent cattle access and remove rock armour in places to allow gravel banks to build up. After numerous questions, she was thanked with hearty applause.

## Annual General Meeting

Thursday 23rd April

A very creditable total of some 40 members and guests attended the local group AGM, somewhat larger than has been usual in recent years. The meeting itself was rather different from normal in that our chairman, Richard Brinklow, who is standing down, was unfortunately unable to attend through illness and was replaced by Jim Cook, one of the vice-chairmen. The other, Trefor Woodford, was also unable to attend. As a result, the agenda was amended at short notice immediately after the annual report of the group's activities had been delivered on behalf of the retiring Chairman.

The Secretary, Liz Houghton, put forward Jim Cook as the new Chairman and, after finding no other volunteers, asked for a proposer and seconder. This was passed with no dissension. The Secretary and Treasurer agreed to serve for the next year and then the committee members, who were due to come off because their terms had been completed, were voted back on as well. The chairs of the sub-committees for the reserves also were confirmed. Peter Bainbridge, the treasurer, then submitted his financial report for the year past, detailing the Local Group's income and spending. The amount that came in this last year was a little less and outgoings were somewhat higher than the previous year, which meant that the surplus was down by around £800. The treasurer reported that the income from the street collections was about the same as last year and the Christmas bag-packing session organised by Barbara Thompson in Arbroath was very successful. The Group continues to be very grateful to the RJ Larg family trust for its continued financial support over the years. Their grant is shared equally with the North Angus Group. Spending on our reserves was lower than anticipated, only just over £800, but is likely to be much more this coming year.

Liz then read out the report of the activities of the Dundee Conservation Volunteers, written by their organiser, John Whyman. (The report has been summarised earlier in this newsletter.) The final section of the AGM was the AOCB and the chairman thanked all concerned, not least Andy and Joyce, from the North Angus Group for their continuing support, not least for the teas and coffees afterwards. The chairman finally had the pleasure of introducing the much-anticipated speaker of the evening, Brian Allan.

### **An Arctic Odyssey, Travels in Scandinavia**

Brian, a botanist who is very well known to the audience as an intrepid traveller on the trail of plants all over Europe, described his adventures in Norway last year. He travelled with Sid, his usual photographic companion, and they met up with a number of helpful

Norwegian colleagues during a long journey up to the Arctic Circle and as far as the Russian border. In a series of terrific images he illustrated his tour with many wonderful views and photos of plants and a few birds and mammals. They found a number of fascinating orchids and Scandinavian primroses in wide range of habitats and out-of-the-way locations. The pair met up with a variety of characters, even including a few Russians working on the highway crossing the far northern border. The large audience found it a most enjoyable talk and thanked him with a generous round of applause after the vote of thanks.

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## News from the Reserves

**Balgavies Loch** The serious flooding in early January washed away the bridge to Weilstaves Cottage. It was rebuilt, but needs to be improved for the future. The flood also left a considerable fan of debris which traps more water in the Fonah bog while the loch gradually recovered. The geese and other winter visitors left in March and April and our usual summer migrants, in particular the ospreys, returned. The otters, also, have been more active and visible than in the past few years. The latest major work has been to rebuild and improve the fences between our visitors and any grazing animals. It is hoped that the long grass and dense vegetation can be reduced this year so that some of the more interesting species will be able to do better.

**Lintrathen Loch** The winter visitors were perhaps a little late in leaving, due to the spells of cold weather brought by the strong northerly winds during April. Similarly the summer visitors were late in arriving but have started breeding in earnest. The paths to the hides are being cut back and the small car park will be cleared as usual.

**Montrose Basin** The geese left more or less on schedule, after an autumn and winter when numbers reached record levels. The terns returned and, at the time of writing, are starting to breed on the raft while the sand martins are nesting as well. Apart from a marsh harrier, the biggest cause of interest this spring has been a glossy ibis that frequented the northern and western shores, near the hides, for some weeks.

**The Miley** The weekly litter-pick continues as before, although the pool of volunteers is slowly being reduced. The soakaway drain was successfully cleared earlier but will need regular maintenance. The clean-up session with Dundee Conservation Volunteers was fortunate to have good weather and was highly successful. (See the report in the Dundee Group News.) We're looking forward to the burst of life in spring and summer.

**Seaton Cliffs** The cliffs have been quiet this winter, at least for wildlife, but usually some interest can be seen from the path. The paths are

fairly clear of rubbish and, at the time of writing, there hadn't been much damage caused by the prolonged spell of bad weather in mid-winter. As spring arrived, birds returned and the typical colonies of gulls and fulmars soon began breeding.

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## Dundee Group News

**The Miley**

Sunday 17th April

A small but keen group joined in with the biennial clean-up by the Dundee Conservation Volunteers organised by John Whyman. The usual volunteers came along, Tom and Mary Harwood, Graham Cross, Kate Treharne, Peter and Margaret Bainbridge and Jim, and helped the DCV team clear away large quantities of rubbish, both blown or thrown into the willowherb and particularly along the tops of the high banks, which are almost inaccessible at most times of the year. Other members concentrated on lopping the dense bramble thickets which always seem to threaten to take over the path. The DCV team did a power of work in tidying up the usual debris left after the winter and several spent time digging out the main ditch again to improve the drainage. It was a job well done and we are very grateful to the DCV team for all their hard work.

**Quiz Sheet** – Mary Harwood has recently released her latest quiz sheet, on wildlife which are the subject of or mentioned in a variety of popular songs. If you haven't got a copy, please look out for it at one of our outings or other activities, even as late as the flower show in Camperdown Park at the end of the summer. Alternatively, please ask Mary herself or contact one of our local group Committee members. The quiz sheets costs £1, providing a useful additional source of income to the local group for work on our reserves in Angus and Dundee and the conservation of local wildlife.

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## Street Collections

The usual street collections have taken place this spring. As well as collecting money, the volunteers help promote the Trust and its work for wildlife among the general public.

The collecting day in Forfar resulted in £137 being brought in and that in Arbroath collected just over £100. At Broughty Ferry the total was a little over £161. We have to thank all the many contributors in these towns and are very grateful for the money donated to the Trust.

As always, more volunteers are needed for the later collections. If you'd like to help with any of these, please contact any Committee member or go to our website.

## North Angus Member's Group

The 30<sup>th</sup> April found the North Angus Group hosting its annual Coffee Morning in the Old & St Andrews Kirk Hall in Montrose.

There were stalls selling books, bric-a-brac, home baking, plants and SWT goods, as well as the ever popular raffle. The helpers were kept busy serving coffee and shortbread while Jane Stewart kept the tea and coffee coming from the kitchen.

After a busy two hours, the generous coffee drinkers had contributed £450 to Group funds to help support the Montrose Basin Visitor Centre.

## Fundraising

### Bag Packing

We hope to organise another bag packing session at Morrisons superstore in Arbroath this Christmas. This will follow on from the highly successful effort last year which raised more than £900.

Why not come and join in the fun? Watch this space for more news or check on our website. (See the note at the end of this Newsletter for the address.)

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## Dates for your Diary

**Sunday 11th Sept**

*Rock Pooling at Easthaven*

Discover the denizens of the shore-side pools as the tide recedes. Meet at 2pm in Easthaven car park. To be followed by high tea in the Station Hotel, Carnoustie. *Booking essential.*

**Thursday 17th Nov**

*The Scottish Wild Cat*

Talk by Hebe Carus on the wild cats in the Angus Glens. 7:30pm in the Upper Reid Hall Castle St., Forfar. Admission £3.50 adults, children free.

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## Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

Full details of events can be found on [scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk) or [www.montrosebasin.org.uk](http://www.montrosebasin.org.uk) on the Visitor Centre page.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will open daily from 1st March to 31st October from 10:30am to 5pm.

## 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](http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/adbswt)

and you can email on [adbswt@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:adbswt@tiscali.co.uk)

The SWT's home Web Pages are at [www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)



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

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

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## November 2016 Newsletter Copy Deadline - 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for November 2016 to March 2017 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the email address [jim.strath91@gmail.com](mailto:jim.strath91@gmail.com)

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