



Message from Alison Irvine, Chair

I holidayed this year at the end of May in the lovely Borders countryside around Duns. The weather was perfect and I had an enjoyable time exploring. Highlights included having Nuthatches feeding on peanuts just outside the kitchen window of the holiday cottage. They have not yet reached my home area but I understand that some are often seen in Dunfermline and St. Andrews

so I expect they will soon be much more regularly recorded through out Fife. I also visited Gordon Moss SWT nature reserve which I thoroughly enjoyed, although I failed to find any information about the reserve on site and as I had not researched it beforehand I was a bit disappointed at the lack of interpretation. It is very important that SWT blows its own trumpet as we good at looking after important wildlife sites, often relatively small areas close to towns or villages and we are a recognised authority on land management for conservation.

Back in Fife, I would like to welcome our new reserve convenors at Dumbarnie (David Jenkins) and at Cullaloe (Wilson Dunlop & Andrew Ferguson). It is great to have new faces involved in the work of the Trust and of course it goes without saying that anyone else who would like to offer to help in any way will be made very welcome.

Reserve Manager's Report

By Rory Sandison



Over the last few months work on the reserves in Fife has been particularly busy. Our Rural Projects Teams have been completing a number of projects at Carlingnose Point, Cullaloe Reservoir, Bankhead Moss and Kilminning Coast. Laura, the Trust's Conservation Grazing Coordinator, with help from her volunteers, is just coming to the end of lambing and will be getting the stock moved around in preparation for our Shetland cows to calve. Many thanks to the volunteers that helped with the litter pick at Kilminning Coast back in April.

Feeding Garden Birds

By Stewart Collier

Feeding garden birds has many benefits to humans. The increased sense of wellbeing when connected to wild-life is now well documented, but there are probably more incidences of wild birds spreading avian diseases when they gather at garden feeders. Professionals suggest people should continue to feed birds all year but should be aware of the risks if hygiene at feeders is poor.

While living in North East Fife we have provided a birdbath and fed sunflower hearts to birds all year from hanging and platform feeders, all being dismantled and thoroughly cleaned each month. Slowly the number of different species visiting on a regular basis increased with 11 Greenfinch in autumn 2016. In April 2017 it was noticed that one of the Greenfinch did not fully close its beak and would drink more regularly than the others. Soon the individual could not eat without leaving sunflower remnants around its bill and started wiping these fragments onto the platform feeder and birdbath. The bird was constantly trying to feed, fluffed up and lethargic and the same symptoms quickly took hold on further visiting Greenfinch. Contacting the British Trust for Ornithology for advice it was strongly suspected that the Greenfinch had a parasitic disease of the throat that is transmitted with saliva (Trichomonosis). We were advised to clean the feeders more regularly and that food should be withdrawn for two to four weeks if the disease continued.

The cleaning routine was increased to three times a week but the disease continued to spread. Two dead Greenfinches were

found near the feeders and the local Sparrow hawk dined on another three. The feeders and birdbath were cleaned and stored away for four weeks. Within hours of returning the clean feeders and bird bath the Greenfinches were back with only two or three looking disease free. It was now June and we agreed to clean and store away the birdbath and feeders until autumn.

In November we put out the birdbath and feeders but on the second day an infected Greenfinch arrived. The feeders were cleaned and stored for three weeks before once again putting them out. This time no diseased birds were seen in the garden but only on the odd occasion has one Greenfinch been noted.

As avian trichomonosis infects pigeons and doves it is likely that the disease was passed on to finches following the increased use of garden bird feeders by Woodpigeon. While pigeons could not feed directly from our modified feeders large plastic plant saucers have now been fitted to catch stray sunflower hearts. This has considerably reduced the number of visits made by the pigeons and also prevented feeding spillage by Corvids. As avian diseases are spread through visits to birdbaths and feeders it is vitally important to have a regular cleaning routine. Everyone who feeds wild birds should be aware of their responsibilities for preventing disease.

Completing this article on 7 May 2018 I note a sick Greenfinch at the birdbath and feeders so all seed feeders have now been removed until autumn.

As a direct result of Trichomonosis the British Greenfinch population has decreased from 4.3 million in 2006 to 1.5 million pairs in 2016 and is now red-listed.

Beginners' and Improvers' Birding Group

This spring, a few SWT volunteers and friends started up a birding group, for people who would like to get started with the hobby of birdwatching, or learn more about birds in the local area. We aimed to have monthly outings around and about west-central Fife to start with, led by local expert birders, and possibly to go further afield if the group proved popular.

One reason for this venture is that the local SWT group is very fortunate in having plenty of optics for those who might not have their own yet. Regular readers of FAWN may remember that, some years ago, the Wild Things Wildlife Watch group received two generous gifts, a grant from the Russell Trust to purchase children's and adult binoculars, and a donation in memory of SWT volunteer John Munday, which was used to purchase a spotting scope, tripod and smartphone attachment. It seemed very important that these wonderful gifts should not gather dust in a cupboard!

At the time of writing we have had three outings. In February, a small group led by Paul and Ruth Blackburn met at Outhead, West Sands, St Andrews. It was a breezy morning, with the first hints of the Beast from the East storm arriving, but we did see plenty of sea duck including Scaup, thousands of waders including a number of Grey Plover, and good close views of a pair of Slavonian Grebe. Our second meeting four weeks later was to Birnie and Gaddon Lochs, where Tony Wilson had lots to tell about the history of the site, and helped us find 39 species (kindly listed by Mary McIntyre!). Most recently on a beautiful day at the end of April, we visited Kilminning Coast, Fife Ness



and Balcomie beach with Will Cresswell, who shared fascinating bird ID tricks. For example, Shags look pot-bellied when flying and their heads look like an apple on a stick, whereas a Cormorant has a much more svelte appearance; and Red-throated Divers fly hunch-backed and often look behind as if they are worried about being followed!

The group is open to all ages and abilities, the only requirements being an interest in birds and patience to watch them! Children need to be accompanied by adults, however. At the time of writing all outings are at 10am on Sundays. Please get in touch with deborahcottam@gmail.com, or via the SWT Fife and Kinross Facebook page, if you would like more details or to join us next time.

Outings October 2017 to April 2018

By Paul Blackburn , Secretary

For our October outing to Lochore Meadows we were lucky to have with us three past and present Lochore Meadows rangers to give us the benefit of their local knowledge. Our first stop was the semi-natural grassland of the Clune which has never been ploughed and survived undisturbed during the century or so of coal mining. The mounds of Meadow Ant hills indicated that this was undisturbed grassland and amongst the plants we found Burnet Saxifrage . Flocks of Fieldfares and a skein of Pinkfeet flying overhead hinted at the onset of autumn but a Red Admiral flying in the sunshine was a reminder of summer.



Our resident fungi expert pointed out some brightly coloured red waxcaps. Interesting historical features on the Clune included a mediaeval boundary, 8-9th century cottage, and a farmstead abandoned at the start of the 20th century.

From the Clune we walked round to Harran Hill Wood which has been continuously wooded since at least the 18th century and probably for longer. Apart from the evidence from early maps the fact that the landscape feature of ancient rig and furrows to the East do not extend into the wood support this. Harran Hill Wood has sixteen plant indicators of ancient woodland. In places dense Beech and Ash regeneration has occurred but possibly this happened when there was less grazing pressure from Roe deer.

On the December outing to St Andrews we had distant views of the rafts of Common Scoter well out into St Andrews Bay. We had better views of Great Crested Grebe and Goldeneye , and watched a Herring Gull attempt to swallow a flat fish. The Fulmars hadn't returned to the cliffs, but a large flock was floating offshore. On the Castle rocks we managed to see a few Purple Sandpiper and a larger flock of Turnstone as they foraged in the seaweed in the breaking waves.

We had closer views of sea duck on the February beach walk from Kinshaldy with well over 1000 scoter, mainly common but with some Velvet Scoter, close inshore. Other common duck

encountered were over 100 Eider , 10 + Red-breasted merganser with 7+ Red throated Divers and and 5+ Slavonian Grebes. A Sparrowhawk hunted at the edge of the forest and Linnet and Skylark fed on the tide-wrack. A few Oystercatcher and Sanderling fed at the edge of the tide.

The "Beast from the East" resulted in the cancellation of the outing to Dunnikier Park (this has been re-scheduled for October) but Spring had sort of arrived by the time of the outing to our reserve at Kilminning in April. Elizabeth Gray, one of our convenors for Kilminning, gave an overview of the grazing regime. Ideally the reserve would just be grazed in the winter months but the constraints of limited grazing stock and many reserves means that it is difficult to get the timing right. Lesser Celandine was in flower and Skylarks were singing in the fields above the reserve. Several corpses of Shags/Cormorants were washed up on the reserve and all were mysteriously headless. On one of the corpses a sexton beetle was found. This is a very distinctive beetle with black and orange markings on the wing which is associated with dead mammals and birds . There was little movement of sea-birds offshore but a few Gannet and Red Throated diver were seen flying by.

Trees were still not in full leaf on our evening outing to Riverside Park, Glenrothes at the end of April. Four species of warbler were in song (Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest and Willow Warbler), with the Willow Warbler appropriately singing from a thicket of willow. Spring flowers included Lesser Celandine, Golden Saxifrage, Wood Anemone, Kingcups and a clump of Primrose. On the River Leven we found Otter spraint on a boulder below a foot bridge, with fish bones visible in the drop-pings, and watched a Dipper hunting underwater for insects.



If you have any ideas for future outings let me know.

Events Updates and Latest News

Be sure to regularly check our web site:

(<http://www.swt-fife.org.uk/>)

and Facebook pages

(<https://www.facebook.com/swtfifeandkinrossmc>)

for news and important changes and updates to the programme plus FAWN in colour!



EVENTS SUMMER/ AUTUMN 2018

Any suggestions? Able to lead a walk? Give a talk? Get in touch with Paul Blackburn on 01382 542826



All welcome. We advise sturdy footwear and suitable clothing for outdoor events.

Sun 22 July 10 am - 4 pm Outing: Tayport to Tentsmuir Point

A leisurely walk looking at plants, butterflies and birds with the chance of spotting dolphin and osprey. Bring packed lunch if you want the full outing or just come along for the morning if you prefer.

Meet at links road car park, Tayport NO 463 282

Sat 29 September 2 – 4 pm Outing: Findattie

A walk by Loch Leven to look for signs of Autumn.

Meet Findattie Car Park NT 170 992

Sat 13 October 10 am – 12.30 pm Outing: Dunnikier Park, Kirkcaldy

Parkland and specimen trees.

Meet at car park at the bottom of the hotel and golf course access road - grid ref NT277 938

Wed 17 October 7.30 pm Joint Talk with Pitcairn Society

Topic and Speaker to be confirmed.

Collydean Community Centre, Glenrothes KY7 6UL

Tue 6 November 7.30 pm Joint talk with Friends of the St Andrews Botanic Gardens.

Roy Sexton: "Orchids of Central Scotland"

Lecture Theatre B, Chemistry Department, North Haugh, University of St Andrews

Thu 6 December 7.30 pm: AGM followed by a talk from Rebecca Crawford of Butterfly Conservation

Age Concern Hall, Provost Wynd, Cupar, KY15 5HE

N.B. We have vacancies for committee members. Contact the secretary if you would like to play a role in our Fife and Kinross Members Centre

Sun 18 November 2-4pm Outing: Newburgh – River Tay

Mugdrum island and the Tay waterfront. Hopefully some spectacular murmurations of Starlings over the reed beds.

Meet Mugdrum Park Car Park at W end of Newburgh

For more information on all outings contact

Paul Blackburn on 01382 542826

MOTHING DATES FOR 2018

DATES	RESERVE	START TIME	MEETING PLACE
Fri. 13 th July	Bankhead Moss	21.30 hrs.	Car Park
Fri. 3 rd August	Dunbarnie Links	21.00 hrs.	Car Park at Shore
Fri 7 th September	Bankhead Moss	20.15 hrs.	Car Park
Sat 6 th October	Cullaloe	18.15 hrs.	Car Park

Please telephone Tim Brain on 01577 840317 to confirm event as they are very weather related. Any extra traps and generators always welcome

IMPORTANT : PLEASE OPT-IN

Recent Data Protection Legislation means that if you would like to continue to be kept informed about all of our events by email then you **MUST** email Paul Blackburn to confirm that you want to remain on the circulation list.

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