



Message from Stewart Collier, Chair



It was rewarding to see our Group Field Meetings fully booked with different members attending and appreciating our events. Next year the Group Committee intends to arrange a further selection of outdoor wildlife meetings.

As we move into Autumn, Fife and Kinross is fortunate in having several northerly bird species arrive to take advantage of our relatively mild winters. During cold periods of ice and snow both parks and gardens can become a life saving source of food for many species. At this time of year my wife and I store fallen fruit we find on our walks so that we can supplement the sunflower hearts in the hanging bird feeders. Last year we were thrilled at having a Fieldfare feed regularly on our fallen apples. Unfortunately after two or three days the bird became a toughie, gorging on the fruit then chasing away all the other birds that tried to feed. Placing supplies of apple at additional sites only made the bird more determined to keep everything at bay by patrolling the food with gusto. It was with mixed feelings that as soon as the temperature improved the fieldfare disappeared.

THE BEST TIME TO PLANT A TREE IS 20 YEARS AGO,

THE NEXT BEST TIME IS NOW!

From November to the end of February is the best time for hedge trimming and tree planting. In 2022 the Government's tree planting agenda will increase the price and reduce the availability of trees for sale. Even the smallest plot can accommodate a wildlife friendly tree if it is chosen wisely. A native tree should be your first choice with Rowan, Hawthorne and Silver Birch supporting numerous invertebrates that attract many species of bird. In winter, Rowan and Hawthorne berries are sought out by Thrushes and Blackbirds. The Silver

Birch canopy permits sufficient sunlight through to allow planting right up to the trunk. An ideal native plant for growing under trees is Woodruff, its bright green leaves form a backdrop for the white flowers that are produced in spring

Smaller trees tend to establish themselves more quickly and when planting I find that Mycorrhizal Fungi around the roots promote better and faster root growth. Don't forget to place the supporting stake on the windward side and secure the tree with a strong tie. As the tree grows water well in dry and windy weather. I have "rescued" drought stressed trees that are planted in roadside verges. Even the smallest native tree in your garden will be of great value providing shelter, roosting sites, nest sites and natural food. Trees are used by birds as a song post and can be a convenient place to position a nest box or feeder.

One of my highlights this September was finding an Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar (see photograph) climbing around in our patch of Kidney Vetch. Larvae are usually seen when looking for somewhere to pupate. The adults are nocturnal and feed from honeysuckle and other tubular flowers. Its common name is derived from the caterpillar's resemblance to an elephant's trunk.



I hope to meet some of you at this years AGM on Sunday 31 October.

Tracy Lambert: New Reserve Manager



Hello everyone, I am Tracy, the new Reserve Manager for East Central Scotland with Scottish Wildlife Trust, I am seconded to the role until end of June next year while Rory is developing a new and exciting project based around repairing Scotland riparian woodlands.

My background is in community engagement with a degree in ecology and I was with the Cumbernauld Living Landscape initiative since it began in 2013. My role there was to reconnect people with wildlife in urban environments through

educational workshops with young people, family events and conservation volunteering and to coordinate the Beautiful Scotland entry. I have just heard that all our hard work has paid off, as we won Silver Gilt with Beautiful Scotland and the discretionary Biodiversity Award.

As I grew in that role, I began to really take an interest in looking after the sites I was linked with. Not all of them were Trust sites, as the town's other major landowner is North Lanarkshire Council and the differences in management styles were interesting to see, learn and understand. When this position popped up, I jumped at the chance, finally a role where I could utilise my degree better! Now it has been a while and if you don't use those ID skills you lose them, so it will be great to learn from very knowledgeable people with an interest in nature that matches my own.

My passion is for woodlands, meadows and pollinators, and I am excited to learn about new habitats I will encounter across Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Fife. I feel very lucky to have gained this role and personally I think I have the best reserves, as they cover a wide range of habitats with a huge variety of wildlife and fantastic people who help support the Trust and those habitats.

Jim Cobb and the 'Patch'



Sadly, Dr James Cobb, always known locally as Jim Cobb, died on 15th August after a period of ill health.

Jim was the inspiration behind, and the mainstay of, the ringing station at Fife Ness Muir for a number of years. He saw the opportunity in the early 1970s to develop the area as the first landfall in Fife for migrating birds by providing trees and shrubs for shelter.

At migration time, *Jim Cobb's Patch* as it was known could be alive with both birds and birdwatchers. Jim personally planted hundreds of trees and shrubs, as well as undertaking a great deal of the subsequent management. During the migration seasons, he was present almost every day and visited the Patch several times a week throughout the year. He ringed thousands of birds at the Patch and also helped to train new ringers. An incredible lifetime's contribution, achieved with the full support of his wife and family.

Jim later donated the reserve to the SWT and continued to play an active role there until illness prevented this. He had a chequered relationship with SWT but his concern was always for the future of the reserve and the integrity of the ringing station.

Professionally he was an academic in the Department of Zoology, St Andrews where I worked as a demonstrator with him for a few years. He was very supportive of the students, with whom he was a deservedly well-liked and respected lecturer.

Jean Stewart

26 August 2021

BTO Breeding Bird Survey by Paul Blackburn

The BTO Breeding Bird Survey is one of the largest “Citizen Science” surveys in the world. Every year in the UK over 3000 1 km squares are surveyed by keen and experienced volunteers. The survey started in 1994 and before that bird populations were monitored by a survey called the Common Birds Census. This was very labour intensive and involved at least 8 visits a year to a site where the location of each individual bird was mapped, The trouble with this was that sites were self-selected and tended to map the distribution of keen surveyors rather than of the birds.

The Breeding Bird Survey was designed to get a better estimate of bird populations at regional and national level. 1 km squares are randomly selected across the UK and volunteers make 3 visits a year, one to record the habitat and the others to record the birds seen and heard. Two 1 km routes are walked through each square, with each transect being divided into five 200m sections. Birds are recorded in distance bands of less than 25m , 25 to 100m, 100m + and in flight. The results are collated at BTO HQ and from these population trends are obtained for species for which sufficient coverage has been received. These feed into the “State of the UK Birds” report. The 2020 report has just been published. In 2019 a total of 605 1-km squares were surveyed in Scotland allowing trends to be calculated for 69 of the most frequently encountered species in Scotland . Separate indices are created for farmland, woodland and wetland species which are used as a proxy for the overall state of biodiversity.

Whilst the main reason for the BBS is to contribute to the national / regional trends it is fascinating to observe the changes on one’s own patch. I have been surveying a square in Tentsmuir Forest since 1995. My 2 transects both follow drains for ease of access. Although the woodland is mainly coniferous plantations of Scots pine and Sitka spruce there are significant clumps of broad leaved woodland, with decaying Grey alder along Sections 6 to 7 , a line of mature beech in section 8 and areas of birch within the plantations. The extent of birch varies as sometimes they have been selectively removed. There has been considerable change in the forest structure. When I started the plantations were at thicket stage, now they have matured and have started to be thinned / felled. The changes in the bird populations reflect this with Willow Warblers decreasing and Siskins increasing.

When I first started in 1995 Willow Warblers were one of the more numerous species but these have declined as the plantations have matured. In recent years the most numerous species have been Coal Tit, Wood Pigeon, Wren and Chaffinch. The maximum numbers of Willow Warblers and Wrens are shown in Fig 1 . The forest management is changing from even aged stands to continuous cover forestry, with a range of ages of trees, so I would expect Willow Warblers to increase again , particularly as they are doing well in Scotland

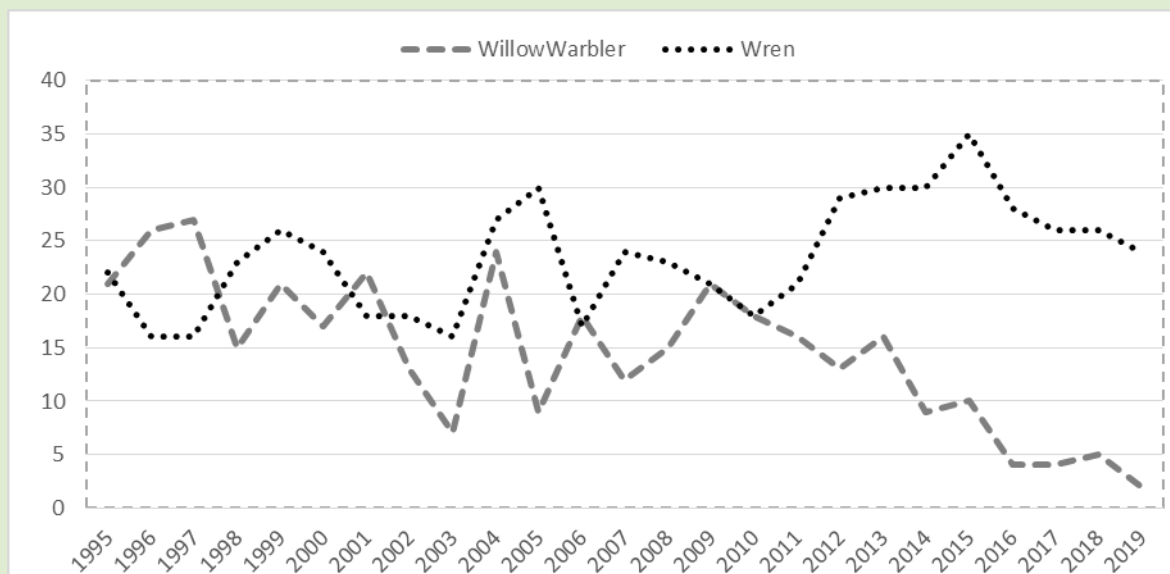


Fig 1 Maximum Numbers of Willow Warbler and Wren recorded in BBS Square NO4925 1995 to 2019

BTO Breeding Bird Survey (continued)

Motivation for taking part in the BBS is a mix of the knowledge that you are contributing to a valuable survey and also of personal experiences. As the Buzzard population expanded through Fife in the 1990s I found it frustrating that I never recorded them in my square, but they would always be seen just out of my square to the north. Green Woodpeckers used to breed in the square but are no longer seen there, although they are on the dunes to the East. Other notable sightings included a large irruption of Crossbills in 2002 when over 80 were recorded. Mallard are occasionally recorded on the drains.

For ease of access my 2 transects both follow drains so sometimes Mallard are recorded. The 2nd one has some old decaying Grey alder which is where the Gt Spotted Woodpeckers are normally found. In the forest most of the species are identified by their songs and calls.

Surveyors can choose to record mammals. Roe Deer are usually seen on each visit and Red Squirrel occasionally. On this year's "Early" visit I found otter spraint along the drain.

As the new BTO Regional Representative for Fife and Kinross I am responsible for allocating the survey squares. Currently 67% of the 132 squares are allocated to volunteers which leaves 44 unallocated squares. To take part you need to be able to confidently identify common birds by sight and sound, with the ability to identify song particularly important for wooded areas. Many SWT members already participate, some doing more than 1 square but new volunteers are always very welcome – especially younger surveyors who can leap across drains and climb over fences with greater ease than some of us. By the time this comes out it will be too late to take part in the 2021 survey but do get in touch if you are interested in becoming a BBS surveyor next year. It is a very rewarding experience as the existing long-standing surveyors will testify. Details of how to take part can be found at:

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bbs/taking-part>.

EVENTS AUTUMN 2021/SPRING 2022

AGM: Sunday 31 October 2021: 10am.

Falkland Community Hall, Falkland, Cupar KY15 7BX

Tea/ coffee will be available from 9.30am but please bring your own cup and face mask. In booking the hall we have considered social distancing and intend the venue to be well ventilated.

Following the AGM short wildlife walks will be available for both members and non-members including accompanied children. Walks will need prior booking via the Trust's events web page, we intend to finish between 1.00 and 1.30pm.

Unfortunately, this year two committee members have had to stand down for personal reasons. If anyone is interested in supporting Scottish Wildlife Trust by joining the committee, please contact Stewart Collier : chairfifekinswt@gmail.com. No particular wildlife knowledge is needed, just enthusiasm to join in. Please check Facebook and the Group's web page (links immediately below) for details of the agenda.

N.B. No further meetings are planned for this year. Outings/Field trips will resume in April.

Events Updates and Latest News

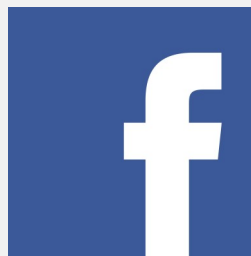
Be sure to regularly check our web site:

(<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/fife-and-kinross/>)

and Facebook pages

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

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



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