

**Number 100 - March 2009**

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## Introduction

We've had a much more severe winter than has been usual these last few years, although the weather still has been milder than many times in the past. There's always some wildlife to see at any time of year and several interesting bird sightings have enlivened the naturalists' winter. However, the chilly and wet conditions only serve to encourage us to look forward to the spring and the wildlife to come. We were fortunate to have a series of excellent and fascinating excursions around Angus last year and hope that we'll be as lucky again in the year to come. Furthermore, watching wildlife is a great way of taking your mind off the 'credit crunch' and our economic troubles! Finance, though, is important to the SWT as much as to anyone else and this newsletter contains an appeal for new recruits to help with 'flag day' collections. Can you spare a few hours? The committee looks forward to meeting you at several of the outings and other activities, at least, this coming year.

## Marvellous Moths, Beautiful Butterflies

Paul Kirkland, of Butterfly Conservation, was the speaker on 27th November 2008 and his first slide contained an apology that his talk would not match the published title. However, none of the audience were disappointed as by the end of the evening they had a deep insight into the state of moths and butterflies in Scotland with special reference to their habitat requirements.

With such encouragement who would not join BC?

## Water Vole Project

Water voles have become much rarer in Scotland in the last 20 years. In many areas they have become locally extinct. Why should this be? Pollution, perhaps? Has it been due to predation or, the usual culprit in so many cases, habitat changes?

Over the last few years a project has been running to monitor and help restore the populations of water voles in the rivers and streams of North East Scotland. The two main regions involved are Aberdeenshire and the Cairngorms, particularly the headwaters of the Dee and Spey. Over the last two years the project has been extended down into North Angus. Indeed you may have noticed one or two of the survey and control rafts during a visit to some of our local SWT reserves.

A significant and interesting find this year was that water voles are now recolonising the top of Glen Esk, where none were recorded during the last survey of the Glen in 2001. Healthy populations were recorded in other localities within the main regions, such as on the Balmoral Estate and in Glen Feshie. In fact, the project reports good progress in encouraging the return of water voles in both the Dee and Spey catchments.

Investigations elsewhere have pointed the finger at predation by American mink (originally escaped from fur farms) as one of if not the main cause. Pollution is not a problem in most of our region and a lot of prime habitat can be seen along many of our streams but with a distressing lack of water voles. A



questionnaire survey of public knowledge and attitudes in the north-east, by Anna Evely, a PhD student of Aberdeen University, showed that many respondents agree that mink are a problem. More encouragingly, a considerable number of people are interested in volunteer action. In response, the main action has been to set up some 400 'mink rafts' to monitor mink numbers. These have a moist clay surface, protected from the

elements, on which the tracks of mink (and a range of other animals) are recorded. The rafts are being monitored by a wide variety of volunteers including gamekeepers, land owners, residents, farmers and even some schools as well as the project officers and conservation organisations. The results are reported back.

From the returns the distribution and approximate numbers of mink can be deduced. From this information the need for efforts in specific areas can be identified and mink are trapped humanely and removed. Over the last couple of years, most of the work has been carried out by the volunteers and results are very encouraging. Catches have increased and mink numbers have been reduced in some areas. What is important is that the project covers a very wide area, as it does, because mink are highly mobile animals. They tend to breed in the lowlands and then move upstream to feed and clear out water voles and a wide range of other small prey items from the river catchments. They move far and fast. Results are still being analysed but closely related mink have been recorded as far apart as the Ythan near Aberdeen and the Spey in the heart of the Cairngorms, a distance of 100 km. This reinforces the belief that monitoring and trapping are required in the long term over a wide area. Only then will our water voles and other small wildlife have a chance to rebuild their populations.

Ros Bryce

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## Outdoor Access Code

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is circulating a consultation document on the workings of the Outdoor Access Code. It seeks comments and views on the Access Code from as many sources as possible. The Dundee and Angus Member's Centres are concerned about access by dog-walkers and dogs to nature reserves and the resulting disturbance to wildlife. The general principle is that the code does not provide enough protection for wildlife. Another general point is that a system is required to allow the designation of paths for different users, particularly for horses and motorbikes to be separated from walkers. Since legislators are more likely to respond to comments and criticisms from larger numbers of members of the public, it is important for as many people as possible to respond.

Please, please find the time to respond to the consultation document. We need you to do this. Feel free to give your ideas and suggestions but you may also include some or all of the comments provided above.

The document can be accessed from [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/default.asp?PageRef=1.3.6](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/default.asp?PageRef=1.3.6).

## Flag Days

In these days of crunching credit levels and melting finances, it's important that the Members' Centre maintains its income to allow conservation work to continue. We need the money for the improvement and maintenance of our reserves in Dundee and Angus, to support the conservation team which carries out many of the heavy and technical tasks in our area and to pay for wildlife survey work.

One important way of raising money and also 'raising our profile' amongst the general public is by collecting in the street during the flag days. Some of the dates for this year, all on Saturdays, are:

Dundee	–	11th April
Broughty Ferry	–	2nd May
Brechin	–	30th May
Kirriemuir	–	20th June
Monifieth	–	1st August
Montrose	–	8th August
Carnoustie	–	17th October

Are you able to help? Why not join us? We need volunteers, no experience required. You can meet lots of interesting people along our streets and it can be fun. Please contact, by phone or email, our Secretary on 01382 (Forfar) 830231 or any committee member.

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## Collections and Donations

In recent years the Dundee and Angus Members' Centre has maintained a number of small collection boxes in a variety of locations in Dundee and Angus. In December, a total of £20 was collected in the Post Office in Letham and £25 was donated to the box in Scott Brothers in the Forum, Dundee, during November and December. We're very grateful, both to the organisations concerned and to the people who generously contributed to the cause of wildlife conservation.

If you'd like to host a collection box for the SWT, please let us know.

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## Balgavies Loch

As you may have seen, there is an important change in the access to the hide car-park. The new access road has been completed and meets the main road some 100 metres nearer to Forfar. The exit is much less steep and the road is straight and flatter at that point, giving much better visibility to the drivers of emerging vehicles. Visitors should find it much easier and safer to leave the site now.

## Montrose Basin VC Events Programme 2009

Also, a new poster has been produced for the notice board at the viewpoint over the loch. It is hoped that the poster will be completed soon and will appear on the notice board soon after that.

The management committee is planning to organise an official opening of the renewed path around the loch to gain local publicity. They hope to organise this during Wildlife Week in June. If you're interested in attending the event, please keep an eye on the media, particularly our own website. We'll announce the details as soon as we know.

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### Miley Leaflets

The committee of the Dundee Support Group are pleased to announce that the leaflets describing the Miley local nature reserve have been re-written. The Miley forms one of the few SWT reserves within a town or city boundary and runs for about a mile between Clepington Road and Loons Road along the disused line of the old Newtyle railway. The leaflets were designed and compiled in colour by John Whyman of the Rangers' Service. The work was completed recently and the results should be available by mid-summer from the Rangers' Centre in Camperdown House, from Mary Harwood, who is Secretary of the Dundee Support Group, at Dundee Tourist Information Office or on our local SWT website.

Many thanks indeed, John, for a job well done. If you haven't been along the Miley recently or at all, here's a golden (or green) opportunity to go along and take a look. You might be surprised by the variety of plants, birds and other animals to be seen and by the peace and tranquillity along the reserve!

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### Montreathmont Wind Farm

A few years ago, the proposals for a wind-farm to be sited in Montreathmont Forest, near Brechin, were announced. As soon as we heard about them, the Members' Centre, along with a number of other wildlife and countryside organisations and others, submitted a range of objections, observations and comments on geese and bats, on the siting of the turbines and their bases, their numbers, sizes and locations.

The first part of the enquiry process was completed in the latter part of last year and the results are back with the reporter. The enquiry report should be completed in the next few months and is expected to be available by mid-summer.

Unless otherwise stated, normal visitor centre admission charges apply to the events in this programme. Children's activities are £2.00 per child and are suitable for those aged 8-12 years. Come prepared! For all children's events, outdoor events and guided walks please wear suitable outdoor clothing. Children under 8 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Booking is essential - phone MBVC on 01674 676336 or email [montrosebasin@swt.org.uk](mailto:montrosebasin@swt.org.uk).

*All events at MBVC unless otherwise stated.*

- Wed 8th April **Children's Activities "Easter Nest Making"** 10:30-12:30
- Sun 12th April **"Easter Eggstravaganza"** – A great day out for all the Family 10:30am – 5pm
- Wed 15th April **Children's Activities – "Rockpool Ramble"** Wear wellies. 10:30-12:30 North end of Victoria Park, Arbroath
- Wed 6th May **Guided walk – Spring along Seaton Cliffs** FREE WALK. 9:30am – Noon. Meet Car park at the Whiting Ness end of Victoria Park, Arbroath
- Sun 10th May **Guided walk - Up with the Lark** FREE WALK. 5:30am -7:30am Meet Old Mill Car park, Mains of Dun, Montrose.
- Sat 6th & Sun 7th June **Wildlife Week - Optical Fair.** 10:30–5pm
- Sun 7th June **Wildlife Week - Guided Family walk** FREE WALK. 10am – 12:30 Meet Old Mill Car park, Mains of Dun, Montrose
- Sat 13th June **Wildlife Week – Children Activities** "Mud Safari" Wear wellies. 11am – 1pm
- Sat 14th June **Wildlife Week – "Step back in time"** Family walk along part of Seaton Cliffs. 1:30 – 3:30pm. Meet North end of Victoria Park, Arbroath
- Wed 17th June **Guided walk – "Re-Tern to Montrose"** FREE WALK. 1:30 – 3pm. Meet at Montrose Beach Pavilion
- Wed 8th July **Children's Activities – "Step back in time"** – Seaton Cliffs. 10:30am-12:30pm Meet at North end of Victoria Park, Arbroath
- Wed 15th July **Children's Activities "Pondamonium!"** 10:30am-12:30pm
- Wed 15th July **Guided walk – "Where the river meets the sea"**. FREE WALK. 10am-11:30am Meet at Montrose Beach Pavilion
- Wed 22nd July **Children's Activities – "Rockpool ramble"** Wear wellies. 10:30-12:30 Meet North end of Victoria Park, Arbroath
- Sun 26th July **"Journey to the centre of the mud"** (Wear wellies and old clothes. Bring Packed Lunch). FREE WALK. 10am – 2:30pm Meet Old Mill car park, Mains of Dun, Montrose.
- Wed 29th July **Children's Activities – "Bugs & Slugs"** 10:30-12:30
- Wed 5th Aug **Children's Activities – "Clever Camouflage"**. 10:30am-12:30pm House of Dun – meet by the cafe.

## Dates for your Diary

### Members' Centres Events

Thurs 26th Mar	<b>Beavers:</b> Talk by Allan Bantick. 7:30 pm at Upper Reid Hall, Brechin Road, Forfar. (Note: <b>NOT</b> The Meffan Gallery) Admission £3.50.
Thurs 23rd Apr	<b>Wildlife in Angus:</b> 4 short talks. Following <b>Annual General Meeting</b> . 7:30pm at Upper Reid Hall, Brechin Road Forfar
Sat 2nd May	<b>Coffee Morning:</b> In aid of SWT funds. 10-12am in Old & St. Andrews Church Hall, High Street, Montrose. Admission £1
Sun 10th May	<b>Visit to Tay Reed Beds:</b> Led by Hannah Morton RSPB Ranger & Liz Houghton. Meet at 2pm at Inchtute Hotel Car Park (NO 279 288). Approx 2hrs
Sat 23rd May	<b>Plant Sale:</b> Support the Dundee Group. 10am-3pm at Demonstration Gardens Dawson Park, Arbroath Road, Dundee.
Sun 7th June	<b>Wildlife Week: Montrose Basin Excursion.</b> Meet at 10am at Old Mill Car Park, Montrose Basin (NO 669 592). Please book at Montrose Basin Centre 01674 676336
Sun 5th July	<b>Visit to Glen Esk:</b> Scenic walk to the Falls of Unich, +/- Falls of Damff. Meet 10:30 am at car park at the Head of Glen Esk (NO 447 804). Led by Keeper Andy Malcolm & James Ivory. Bring waterproofs, walking boots and lunch. Approx 3 to 5hrs
Sun 9th August	<b>Barry Buddon Joint Outing.</b> Led by Bob McCurley & Jim Cook. Meet 10 am at Car Park at Monifieth Playing Fields (NO 503 324). Bring lunch. Approx 5 to 6 hrs

### Montrose Basin Visitor Centre Events

Event programme starts March 2009 to coincide with Summer Opening Hours. See page 3 for events listing. Full events can be found on [www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk) or [www.montrosebasin.org.uk](http://www.montrosebasin.org.uk) on the Montrose Basin VC pages.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre will open **only** on Fri, Sat and Sun from 10:30am to 4pm between 16th November and 14th March. It will open daily from 15th March to 15th November from 10:30am to 5pm.

#### The World "Wild" Web

The Angus and Dundee Members' Centre 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.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)

#### 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!



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

Group	Leader	Meeting Place	Phone
Dundee	Ranger	Various Parks	01382 435911
Forfar	Craig Borland	Forfar Loch	01307 461118
Montrose	Watch leader	Wildlife Centre	01674 676336

#### August 2009 - Newsletter Copy Deadline - 20th June 2009

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for September to December 2009 that should be included in the next newsletter, please send it as soon as possible to the editor at the address below: Jim Cook, Science Section, Dundee College, Old Glamis Road, Dundee DD3 8LE. My email address is [j.cook@dundeecoll.ac.uk](mailto:j.cook@dundeecoll.ac.uk)

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