

DAWN - Newsletter of the North Angus and Angus & Dundee Members' Centres

Number 92 - September 2006

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Introduction

After the very cold and late spring, summer came on with a rush. We had weeks of warm and dry weather that speeded up the flowering of many plant species and encouraged multiple broods of birds. In spring we passed an important milestone at the AGM, with the resignation of Brian Ballinger from a 6-year stint as Chairman of the Angus and Dundee Centre. We owe him a considerable vote of thanks. The North Angus Members' Centre has changed its Chairman as well. Andy Wakelin stood down after a very hard-working six years. As this Newsletter also records, both Members' Centres held a number of highly successful outings over the course of the summer. We hope that you will find the autumn and winter programme as rewarding.

Angus and Dundee Members' Centre: Annual General Meeting

Thursday 6th May

Many of us would agree, if not too loudly, that annual meetings are not the most exciting of occasions – although very important; and this one was particularly significant. Our chairman, Brian Ballinger, handled the meeting very well, as usual. We began with the usual apologies, minutes and notes and continued onto the Chairman's report, the annual accounts and other matters. Brian described the main changes, including the removal of the regional groupings and the restructuring work continuing in HQ. Our treasurer, Peter Bainbridge, was pleased to report that the members' centre finances are in good order. We had

had a most successful year fund raising, particularly the collections in the street, and special thanks are due to the members who had devoted much time and effort to this work. However, the two centres still depend to a large extent on the generosity of a local charitable trust. Reports on the Dundee group and on our reserves were tendered, particularly the work being undertaken to develop the area around Balgavies Loch, under the expert guidance of Hugh Ingram and the management sub-committee.

The most important changes, though, were in the Members Centre committee. Our chairman, Brian Ballinger, had served for two 3-year terms, the maximum allowed under SWT rules and accordingly has retired. He was thanked most kindly and effectively by Hugh Ingram and everyone there heartily concurred. Over the years he's done a huge amount behind the scenes, attending Council meetings, East Region meetings, helping to re-start the Dundee group, playing important roles in the finance and activity planning sub-committees and many other activities. James Ivory was elected to succeed him. He has much experience in management and financial matters and is a member of the SWT Council. He will be able to contribute much in the next few years in developing the Members' Centre.

The evening finished with a fascinating exhibition of members' specimens and prints, the most notable being a display of local beetles and other insects by Richard Brinklow, a collection of excellent prints of local wildlife by Graham Cross and an interesting set of prints of moths by Andy Wakelin.



Alison Prain and Brian Ballinger in action at Letham Fayre.

Letham Craft Fayre

For the past fourteen years over a weekend in mid March, all roads lead to the village hall at Letham in Angus for those specially gifted and sensitive people with a passion for creating lovely things such as jewellery, clothes, woodturning, paintings, soaps, (yes soaps), and many more attractive things; and all created by the use of fertile imaginations, and the skill of their own hands.

The inspiration behind this quite formidable annual venture is local lady Shirley Fergusson, whose fine efforts over the years has put the village well and truly on the craft map. All stands are by invitation only, with three being allocated to charities; Shirley is an SWT member and sees her unbroken free allocation to the Angus & Dundee Members' Centre as being her contribution to the work of the Trust.

In the early years local member Liz Houghton saw to the stocking of the SWT stand, then Hugh Arbuthnot, and now Alison Prain pulls it all together, liaising with Caroline Hendry, manager at Montrose Basin Visitor Centre, in the selection of a fine range of excellent quality goods, the most popular item of which appears to be the bug viewing box!. Other people who contribute include other well known and highly significant personalities such as Audrey Annandale who organised the supply of leaflets, and Steve Gardner who ferried up the splendid Display Boards.

And of course the local membership who man the stand over the weekend and allow us to make a worthwhile show of the flag for SWT. Finally mention should also be made of the local folk who man the all-weekend canteen where the home made soup and bacon rolls provide the energy necessary to maintain the fine level of activity thus enabling Shirley Fergusson to look forward to yet another challenging and successful Craft Fayre.

Beauty of Bluebells Outing

Sunday 14th May

Most of Angus is, perhaps, too dry to support good bluebell woods but Perthshire holds excellent examples. The two nearest sites for bluebells (*Hyacinthus non-scriptus*) are Darroch Wood and Kinclaven Oakwood and both are superb. Other naturalists also agree, as early visitors on the day met a camera team from the 'Landward' TV programme attempting to capture the beauty of the scene.

Sunday the 14th was a good day and the small car park behind the hotel in Blairgowrie soon filled. The party of 14 keen naturalists, members and friends intended to visit both sites. Unfortunately, the very cold spell in April and May had delayed flowering so that the bluebells were nearly a fortnight later than

last year. Although the flowers weren't quite at their best both of the woodlands still boasted a beautiful show of that wonderful shade of blue against green that delights the eye. A few white bluebells could be seen as well but, fortunately, neither wood seems to harbour the pink or pale blue colours of invading Spanish bluebells.

There were, however, a number of other native plants to catch our interest, the brilliant white stars of the flowers of greater stitchwort, the elegant creamy white of chickweed wintergreen flowers, pignut's finely divided leaves, three-nerved sandwort, burdock, dog's mercury, wood sorrel and sorrel, male fern and broad buckler-fern, among many others. Above us were calling great tits and feeding blue tits, a tree creeper, a blackcap and blackbirds, robins and thrushes abounded. The party could hear a mewing buzzard circling above Darroch wood and many were fortunate to obtain good views of a great spotted woodpecker in Kinclaven wood.

Den of Airlie

Saturday 10th June

Unfortunately, only a week or two before the date of the excursion the leader, Hugh Ingram, had to call off because of trouble with a painful hip. Instead, Jim Cook stepped into the metaphorical breach and agreed to lead the trip. This was our official contribution to 'Wildlife Week' and was organised as a joint outing with Fife and Kinross Members' Centre. A total of 18 members and naturalists turned out, including a number from Fife and a representative from Headquarters.

Den of Airlie is an excellent wildlife site and its ancient woodlands harbour a very considerable range of species of plants and animals and we were fortunate enough to find and record many of them. The woodland seemed to be full of calling birds including chaffinches, willow warblers and blackcaps, robins, several tits, goldcrest, a chiffchaff, blackbirds and a treecreeper, while a buzzard wheeled above. Among many interesting plant species, the party recorded dog's mercury, wood sorrel, wood sanicle, wood meadow-grass, wood millet, wood vetch and greater twayblade orchids. We found bird cherry trees festooned with the webs of tent caterpillars and many other small creatures crawled or flew about. A few found us. When we sat down for lunch on a flat area beside the river Isla, Trefor Woodford identified an unwelcome visitor – a small tick crawling on his jeans. Of much more interest (but maybe not to Trefor) was Colin McLeod's identification of the tracks of an otter on a sand bank beside the water.

Bob Jaffray was quick enough to catch sight of an osprey winging overhead, although it returned later to

afford everyone a good view. He was also the first to spot a peregrine falcon patrolling over the river. We also heard a cuckoo calling in the distance. A few members had to leave us straight after the lunch stop, which was a little unfortunate because we walked for only a short distance up river and found the highlight of the area – the superbly elegant flowers of Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*), held erect on a delicate stalk above the four-part arrangement of its leaves. And just a few metres further along, right in the middle of the path, were three light-brown stalks of bird's-nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) in full flower. Up on the bank were the irregular flowers of goldilocks (*Ranunculus auricomus*), trailing stone bramble plants and nodding stalks of mountain melick grass. Although the official finishing time was 2.00 pm, Eduardo Gonzalez, Colin McLeod and Peter and Margaret Bainbridge were keen enough to continue long after, until nearly 4.00 pm. It was an excellent day, rich in wildlife memories.



The group of botanists inspecting Den of Airlie's vegetation. James Ivory, our new Chairman, is at the back of the party on the right.

Corrie Fee

Sunday July 2nd

There had been a rumble of distant thunder as we set off from home, but as we approached Glen Doll the sky brightened and the sun shone. A group of 16 members and friends assembled at the car park by Acharn and were greeted by the ranger Ken Slater, who had arranged for us to drive for the first 2 miles along the forestry road (although Joy and Vic Cammock, intrepid hill walkers, made the journey on foot).

After a short walk along the much upgraded footpath, we entered the beautiful amphitheatre of Corrie Fee, a National Nature Reserve, with almost every possible designation for wildlife and, in particular its very special flora.

The hornblend schist rock creates an important habitat and Ken described the various features, including

the unique montaine willow scrub. Along the path, Jim Cook pointed out the various flowering plants and the tiny orchid lesser twayblade (*Listera cordata*) peeped out from amongst the heather. Pat Gaff set out up the slope, over species-rich grassland to some rocky outcrops. The rest of the party joined him and viewed a variety of interesting plants, including holly fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*), Green spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*), purple and yellow mountain saxifrages (*Saxifraga oppositifolia* and *aizoides*), alpine cinquefoil (*Potentilla crantzii*), globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*) and many others.

The party then made its way towards the burn, intending to cross to the other side to reach the important scree and cliff areas where many rare plants are to be found. However the sky had been darkening for some time, raindrops descended, and a torrential downpour commenced. The glen was filled with lightning flashes and thunderclaps. The severity of the storm and the likelihood that the Fee burn would become impassible led us to head back to the cars.

After a brief stop to admire Silver ladys mantle (*Alchemilla conjuncta*), we ate lunch in the car park as the rain hammered on the roofs of our vehicles. We thanked Ken Slater for a wonderful morning and agreed to return in the not to distant future with the hope of better weather.

Dundee Group Activities

John Whyman's conservation group visited the Miley in April and spent a happy Sunday re-digging the ditch near Harefield Road. We thank them sincerely for their work and hope that their tremendous efforts will help prevent flooding in the future.

The group organised an excursion along the Miley in the Spring to record nature in bloom and were pleased to re-find Sweet woodruff, a plant that hasn't been seen there for some years.

Meanwhile, Miley clean-ups continue but the quantity of rubbish never seems to diminish. We're always looking for new members. Can you help?

Welcoming New Faces

As well as a new chairman of the Dundee and Angus Members Centre, James Ivory, we have to welcome another new chairman, for North Angus. Andy Wakelin, having filled and fulfilled his allotted span, has stood down and been replaced by Linda Robertson, long standing member of the Committee and ex-Treasurer.

We also welcome Neil Mitchell the new ranger at Montrose Basin. We hope that this area is much friendlier and flatter than his last post - on remote St Kilda!

Dates for your Diary

Members' Centres Events

Saturday 21st October **Outing to Lintrathen Loch** Led by James Ivory and Bob Jaffray. Meet at 10 am at original hide car park (NO 276 555). Winter birds - especially geese and whooper swans. Stout footwear advised. Approx 2½ hrs

Thursday 23rd Nov **Talk on "The New Red Data List and Scotland's plants"** by Lynne Farrell. At 7:30 pm in Meffan Institute, Forfar. Admission £3.50/Junior £1. *Note: Change of Speaker*

Montrose Basin Wildlife Centre Events

Open daily from 15th March to 15th November from 10:30am to 5pm. Between 16th November and 14th March it will open **only** on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10:30am to 4pm.

Friday 1st - Saturday 30th Sept **Photographic exhibition** Wildlife photographic exhibition by Graham Cross 10.30 - 5pm

Sunday 1st - Tuesday 31st October **Photographic exhibition** Wildlife and landscapes - Photographic exhibition by Graham Cunningham 10:30 - 5pm

Tuesday 17th October **Wildlife Crime** Talk by Blair Wilkie, Wildlife Crime Officer for Tayside Police. 7:30pm

Sunday 29th October **Goose Breakfast** Meet at the Wildlife Centre then on to the reserve to watch the pink-footed geese fly out to feed. Back to the centre for a light breakfast (for a small additional charge). No charge for walk 6:45am - 8:45am approx.

Weds 1st - Weds 15th November **Christmas Shopping** Visit our gift shop for unusual Christmas gifts and stocking fillers. Admission Free to gift shop. 10:30am - 5.00pm

Fri 17th - Sun 24th December

Sunday 26th November **Pink Sunset** Meet at the Wildlife Centre to watch the pink-footed geese returning to their roost as the winter's sun sets across the Montrose Basin. 3.30pm - 4.45pm approx.

The World "Wild" Web

The Angus and Dundee Members' Centre website is at

myweb.tiscali.co.uk/adbswt
and you can email on
adbswt@tiscali.co.uk

The SWT's home Web Pages are at
www.swt.org.uk

Dundee Conservation Volunteers

Contact John Whyman on (01382) 432648 (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 0930hrs 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	Meeting Place	Phone
Dundee	Various Parks (Ranger)	01382 435911
Forfar	Forfar Loch (Craig Borland)	01307 461118
Letham	4 Park Road (Lucy Ainsworth)	01307 818438
Montrose	Wildlife Centre	01674 676336

January 2007 - Newsletter Copy Deadline - 11th Nov 2006

If you have any report or item of news or details of future events for February, March, April and May 2007 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@dundecoll.ac.uk