



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2004

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
28 February 2005

GNHS is a Registered Scottish
Charity Web-site:

<http://www.gnhs.freeuk.com/>

EXCURSION – AUTUMN 2004

Sat 13th November (changed date) Leader David Palmar.
Red Kite viewing by car. Meet car park at Lerrocks Farm, Argaty, Doune,
Perthshire 1.30pm. Booking through GNHS has now closed, but there may still be
spaces available. **Anyone else wishing to go must make their own
arrangements with the farmers, Niall and Lynn Bowser.**

Niall Bowser reports:

“The kites are gathering really well now for the autumn and winter and we are
feeding in the region of 30 birds per day at the moment. This is around a 50%
increase on this time last year, so we are looking forward to a really good winter
spectacle. There are considerably more birds in the area but not necessarily
using the feed dump.

Earlier in the year we thought that the breeding success of the birds had been
quite poor as a result of the atrocious weather throughout the spring and
summer. Indeed, a number of nests are known to have failed completely or to
have been only partial successes.

However, the good news is that there have obviously been a number of
undetected nests because we are seeing quite a number of untagged juveniles at
the feed now, which is great news.

We are starting to see our usual winter visitors reappearing. Geese have been
with us for a month now; the redwings are back in good numbers and we have
even recovered a stranded gannet on the farm. Yesterday we watched two red
squirrels stocking up for the winter. It must just be that time of year when they
all get set into winter mode!”

Members and their guests attend excursions at their own risk.

Record lists for the excursion should be sent to the Bio-recorder

BOOKS RECEIVED IN EXCHANGE FOR REVIEWS IN *THE GLASGOW NATURALIST*

Ruth Dobson

**1. *Travellers Nature Guides – Spain*
Teresa Farino and Mike Lockwood
Oxford University Press 2003**

£16.99

This addition to a series of travel guides for discerning travellers offers similar authoritative descriptions of where to go to see the best wildlife by authors who have first hand experience of the country. It is lavishly illustrated in full colour with photographs, line drawings, paintings and maps, and includes practical information on access, maps and appropriate field guides.

**2. *Essential Animal Behaviour*
Graham Scott
Blackwell Publishing 2004**

£22.99

This book, written in a concise and engaging style, provides a comprehensive introduction to all areas of the subject and is carefully designed to meet the needs of those coming to the subject for the first time.

**3. *Dormice* *British Natural History Series*
Pat Morris
Whitlet Books 2004**

£9.99

This new volume in a long-running series describes in detail the natural history of the two species of dormice in Britain. The hazel dormouse is a protected and encouraged woodland creature. The edible dormouse, a much larger introduced species which also lives in woods, has become a pest in houses, mainly in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

**4 *Provisional Atlas of the British Aquatic Bugs*
(Hemiptera, Heteroptera)
Thomas Huxley
Biological Records Centre, Huntingdon 2003**

£8

This new atlas, containing 61 species of water bugs in first detailed 10 km grid square survey of water bugs in Great Britain. It contains distribution maps and details with habitat descriptions and helpful hints for each species. These are preceded by an introduction about the insects and the methods used, and followed by several appendices giving extra information.

Obtained from:
CEH Directorate
Monks Wood
Abbots Ripton
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE 28 2LS
<http://www.ceh.ac.uk>

REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Foxes Again

Norman Grist

Reading in my room about 8.50pm, October 8th this year, I heard the high-pitched, harsh barking characteristic of foxes. I looked out of the window and opened it for a better view. An immature ($\frac{3}{4}$ grown) fox trotted in our entrance and along the path to below the doorway canopy. Then a full-grown adult came in and for the next 10 minutes I had a "circus entertainment" watching a second adult (male with pale tail-tip) and a second youngster, all four frolicking at high speed into and around the shrubs, trees, grass patches, paths, wall parapets, across the road and back, but no longer barking. The final dispersal I did not see, except for the last juvenile trotting away southbound down Sydenham Road.

This seemed to be a family group, about the usual time when we have sometimes noticed activity and dispersal of a grown family in earlier years - as, for instance, I recorded in *The Glasgow Naturalist* 2002 24(1): 95-96. "Stumpy", the effective female mentioned there and first seen in 1997 (probably born that year), I have not seen since June 2003, suggesting a life-span of 6 years.

My Wildlife Garden

Ian McCallum

My wife calls our garden in Lenzie my 'wildlife garden' because of its unkempt nature.

Over the last five years I have seen the sparrow population drop from 40 to 30 to 20 to 2. This year the population has recovered slightly to about 6. The starlings have also suffered a set back!

There is always a silver lining to the cloud. There has been an increase in the numbers of chaffinch, goldfinch and siskin. Another advantage of the decline in sparrows is that when you sow or reseed a lawn, the area is not covered with sparrows gobbling up the grass seed.

Most aspiring botanists tend to acquire plants to grow in their gardens. I was keen to acquire a specimen of Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*) and was given a plant by a Botanical Recorder who said 'keep it contained'. It was planted in a container, but when I was not paying attention, it escaped from the container and is now on the rampage.

I have other plants which are fairly rare namely Masterwort (*Peucedanum ostruthium*), Opposite-leaved Golden-saxafrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) and *Luzula luzuloides*. These plants are growing well and I would be happy to donate specimens to anyone for growing in their garden. The plants would have to be collected from my house.

The wildlife garden is a problem/decision area. Do you wage outright war on slugs - using beer traps of course, or, do you sacrifice the odd hosta to encourage the hedgehog on his nightly sojourn?

Seven of us arrived by bus at the Balmaha car park, to be joined by one cyclist and one motorist. We started botanising in the woods behind the car park. Many common flowering plants and ferns were seen, including Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Slender St John's Wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*), Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), and Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*). We crossed the road and walked by the lochside to the old pier.

Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) and Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) were seen close to the water. Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), Pyrenean Valerian (*Valeriana pyrenaica*) and Pick-a-back-plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*), all well established aliens were growing near the track. On the rocks near the pier were English Stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Blaeberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and Great Woodrush (*Luzula sylvestris*).

The wood inland from Arrochymore Point is part of the Conic Hill SSSI. It contains several locally scarce plants which we were pleased to find, namely Globeflower (*Trollius europeus*), Stone Bramble (*Rubus saxatile*) and Guelder – rose (*Viburnum opulus*). In damp ground we saw Whorled Caraway (*Carum verticillatum*) and by the shore Greater Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*). The woods were mixed, with oak, ash, alder birch, rowan and willow and an understory of hazel and holly. We noted over 130 species of flowering plants and ferns – I have only mentioned a few.

After our picnic at Millarochy Bay, the bus party were driven to just south of the Dubh Loch, where the more energetic got off to walk another mile or so up the West Highland Way. This was not so interesting botanically, consisting mainly of felled forestry, but did afford magnificent views of the Ben and loch.

Annual Dinner
Tues. 14th December 7.15pm
Glasgow University College Club

Speaker: Aidan McCormick – “Rare birds Bolivia”

We are looking forward to seeing as many members as possible for another enjoyable Annual Dinner. The cost is £20 pp and again the BLB fund will provide something to drink to the health of the Society!

NAME.....

Address.....

Phone No.

I enclose cheque for £..... forplaces at the dinner.

Dietary requirements.....

Deadline for next Newsletter – 28th February 2005
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