



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March 2007

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
22 April 2007

GNHS is a Registered Scottish
Charity Web-site:
<http://www.gnhs.org.uk/>

SPRING EXCURSIONS Morag Mackinnon (acting Excursion Organiser)

The excursion programme is included with this Newsletter and I think it will prove to be very interesting. Drivers - If you can offer lifts please let the Excursion Contact know how many seats you can offer, and to make those accepting and needing lifts feel they are contributing, do take the fuel money offered. Members needing lifts please let the Excursion Contact know as early as possible, and make a contribution to fuel costs. Excursion Contacts will pass on info and where there are enough people wanting transport a minibus or people carrier can be hired. It is really essential to let the organiser know in good time so that arrangements can be made.

Could I thank everyone who has helped with suggestions and information in putting this year's programme together, and also for those who have offered help for next year.

March

Sat 31st John Faithfull will lead us in Rouken Glen Park SSSI, to look at some of the interesting geological features, and since this is down by the river, wellingtons are recommended. There is a big car park at the Garden Centre where there is a coffee shop and toilets. We will meet John at the entrance to the Garden Centre at 10.00am. John has written more about this trip below.

April

Sat 12th Inchcailloch – Birds, Bluebells and possibly Orchids. The ranger will meet us on the Island at 11.00. We will meet at Balmaha slip for boat over at 10.30am. Bring picnic lunch.

May

5th Gartcosh: Great crested newt translocation project. Wellies required. 11.00am. Meet entrance to Gartcosh ex-steel works. Contact Roger Downie to be put on a list of those attending.

14-19th Evening bat / moth hunt at Necropolis. This has to depend on the weather so contact Richard Weddle to express interest on 339 1343, and he will contact you when it is decided which evening it will be.

Thurs 24th 7.00pm Trees of Pollok. Bob Gray. Meet at Pollok House Car Park.

Sat 28th Meet at 10.00am at Loch Lomond Aquarium (Loch Lomond Shores, Balloch). Dominic McCafferty is organising this visit and will need to confirm numbers to get a group rate (£5.60).

GEOLOGY OF ROUKEN GLEN, 31 March 2006

John Faithfull

Rock exposures are surprisingly scarce over large areas of lowland Scotland, especially in urban and suburban areas. They are under constant threat from landfill, site reclamation, and housing and industrial development. Rouken Glen Park provides some of the few remaining exposures of the Upper Limestone Formation of the Lower Carboniferous. Because so few exposures of rocks of this age remain in central Scotland, parts of the park were made an SSSI. Despite the potential interest, the site has hardly been used since it was designated, and few members of the public, or geologists involved in research or education are aware of what the park has to offer.

This trip will provide a short introduction to the geology of the park. You will see a variety of rocks, including the Giffnock Sandstone, one of Glasgow's most important building stones, coal, ironstone, limestone and mudstone, and some good examples of how rock sequences reflect changing environments. There are also some surprisingly accessible fossils, covering life from a range of Carboniferous habitats. I hope to have obtained permission from SNH and East Renfrewshire Council for some collecting during the trip.

Many of the exposures are quite small, and getting to them may involve standing in the Auldhouse Burn, where water, slippery rocks, and vegetation are a hazard, so I may need to restrict numbers.

If you want to come along, please let me know in advance. We will meet at 10am, in the car park by Rouken Glen Garden Centre - bring wellies if you want to get close to the rocks.

WINTER PROGRAMME CARDS

Richard Weddle

Owing to a mix-up, some of the winter programme cards that were sent out at the end of the year contained some out-of-date information. The April and May entries should have read as follows:

April: Tues 10th 7.15pm Changes to Scotland's Birdlife – C McInerny (SOC)
Tutorial 6.30pm Burnet Moths - John Knowler

May: Tues 8th 7.15pm Botanising in Kamchatka, including wildlife scenery and people - Kathleen Cartwright
Tutorial 6.30pm An Introduction to Scottish Seashells - Sarah Longrigg

Please amend your card if necessary.

STONEYMEADOW ROAD/LEE'S BURN, 19th July 2006 **Peter Macpherson**

Apologies to Peter - this should have gone in to the autumn newsletter. - Ed.

A botanical field meeting was held on the evening of 19th July with an attendance of seven. The venue was primarily the area between Stoney Meadow Road and Lee's Burn, more or less north-east of East Kilbride. There was a suitable lay-by for the cars, at which site we started recording, but had to begin over again in about 100 yards, as we were then in a different quadrant (GPS checked).

Smooth Tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*) was seen in rough grassland at the lay-by and thereafter plants seen were mainly those to be expected at the sides of a woodland track and burn's edge. These included Woodruff (*Galium odorata*), Wood Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) and Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). By crossing a tiny stream and scrambling up the bank we came on to the road at the point where the old railway bridge had crossed over. On the return trek, Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*) was noted, particularly at the roadside.

All told we recorded 121 taxa. Of these, 14 were grasses, the most interesting of which was Wood Millet (*Milium effusium*), 10 trees, five ferns and three rushes. The only sedge was Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*).

NEWS ABOUT JOYCE ALEXANDER

Ian McCallum

Most members are aware that Joyce had a stroke, which resulted in her being paralysed down her right side with a loss of speech. The good news is that she is making progress and enjoys visitors. Several of the members have visited her. It is probably best to visit in twos. She can say a few words now and can smile. Her left arm is fully mobile. At present she is at the Victoria Hospital, Ward North 3, Mansionhouse Unit, Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow G42. The Mansionhouse Unit is outwith the hospital complex. Further details can be had from Joyce's daughter Ruth at ruth.alexander4@ntlworld.com

DR. ALEXANDER REID HILL, 1919-2006

Ronald M. Dobson

Alex died peacefully on 21st October aged 87. He was well-known, particularly in agricultural and horticultural circles, as a distinguished entomologist. In 1949 he was appointed to the teaching staff at the University of Glasgow and finally retired in 1985. He taught many undergraduate and post-graduate students, organised new courses and researched on aphids and other Hemiptera. In 1958 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The bulk of his insect collections were donated to the Hunterian Museum (Zoology).

Alex joined the Glasgow Natural History Society in 1951 and remained a member until the end of 2005. He was a Trustee from 1979 until 1986, lectured to the Society, published papers in *The Glasgow Naturalist*, attended field meetings and demonstrated at exhibition meetings. He will be greatly missed and deepest sympathy is extended to all his family. A full obituary will be published in a forthcoming *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

It is now the end of January and the Paisley squirrels are very much alive, despite having sampled widely over the months from my newly-planted winter bulbs. They may not actually eat my daffodils, which I understand are poisonous to them, but this winter they have certainly put paid to their chances of making an attractive flowering display by hoiking out several bulbs from each pot and tearing them apart. Their favourite tulips I no longer grow, but a newly-planted raised flower bed has been more or less reduced to a ploughed field as they obviously return again and again to devour my scillas and other expensive delicacies.

A trio of baby squirrels seriously chanced their tails recently as they defied several magpies in my willow tree. The squirrels sat furiously lashing their long tails, occasionally advancing up the tree towards the magpies who were protesting noisily. It was interesting that, at the end of a lengthy encounter, it was the magpies that withdrew into another larger tree.

Throughout recent balmy nights the foxes have been barking as usual and a tawny owl has called, this year alas with no response that I have heard.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY EVIDENCE OF THE GOAT MOTH?**John Knowler**

The Goat Moth (*Cossus cossus*) is a scarce moth throughout the UK and appears to be declining in range (Waring *et al.* 2003). The large grey-brown adult is seldom seen. It rarely comes to light traps but it has been found at sugar bait which is surprising as the adult does not feed; indeed it has no mouthparts. The larva feeds under the bark and in the heartwood of broad-leaved trees particularly willows, poplars, elm, birch and ash but sometimes oak, alder and apple.

It favours trees in damp situations that are susceptible to winter flooding but infected trees can be in a variety of habitats from isolated trees on a river bank or roadside to dense woodland. The larvae take 3-5 years to mature and some then leave the tree to seek a place to pupate. It is at this time, as a large, rather grotesque, shining reddish-purple caterpillar with paler sides and a black head, that the insect is most commonly observed. The only other indication that the moth may occur in an area are infected trees which tend to ooze sap from their wounds and as a result are attractive to flies, wasps and Red Admiral butterflies that feed on the sap. This may explain why the moth is attracted to sugar. It may mistake the sweet smell of sugar bait for that of an infected tree that would be a potential site to lay eggs. Infected trees and the larvae are said to smell of goats, hence the name.

South (1908), in his classic two volumes on moths in the Wayside and Woodland series, states that the Goat Moth occurs throughout the UK except for the far north of Scotland. Today it is certainly present in the Spey Valley and around Loch Rannoch. However, the only record for west-central Scotland shown on the distribution map in *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (1985) is a pre-1960 record for the Ayrshire coast.

In 2005 John Mitchell, the ex-Senior-Warden at the then NCC Loch Lomond Nature Reserve, took me to where, during his warden-ship, a tree fell down and revealed workings that he believed to be those of Goat Moth larvae. We were at a corner of Gartfairn Wood that floods regularly and has some grand old willows. Although all trace of the fallen tree had gone, the site appeared to be a textbook locality for the species. However regular trapping and sugaring at the site has produced no Goat Moths and I could find no evidence of infected trees. Nevertheless, the species certainly occurs not far away as I have subsequently been made aware of a larvae that was found in 1999 by the then Stirlingshire moth recorder in his garden in Buchlyvie where it may have matured in his apple trees (Nick Holding, personal communication).

I suspect that the Goat Moth may be under-recorded and more widespread in our area than appears to be the case. This is a request for information on trees that are oozing sap to the extent that they attract flies, wasps and Red Admiral butterflies and might therefore be infected with Goat Moth larvae. Obviously I should also love to hear of records of the adult and/or larvae of the moth. Please contact John Knowler.

South, R. (1908) in *The Moths of the British Isles* Warne.

Skinner, B. (1985) in the *Moths and butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland Vol 2* Harley Books

Waring, P., Townsend, M. and Lewington, R. (2003) *Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* British Wildlife Publishing

ROAD CASUALTIES

Ian McCallum

While looking through files I came across several Donation Certificates from the Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries. These are attractive certificates, which you feel should be framed and hung on your wall. If you donated the Burrell Collection you might well receive a similar certificate.

At one time, if the museum wanted a particular specimen, some one would be sent out to shoot the required bird, animal etc. Nowadays, in our more enlightened times, this is not acceptable. The museum relies on specimens from other sources such as road kills. My certificates cover bats, mammals and birds. The next time you come across a dead animal – e.g. birds flying into windows – it may be that the museum is looking for such a specimen.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Morag Mackinnon and Mary Child

T E Kinsey Bequest Purchases. Two more GPS have been purchased for the use of members. One will be kept by Richard Weddle – so anyone on the north side of the city requiring one should contact him. Those on the south and west side can contact Morag Mackinnon, and Ian McCallum has one on the east side.

We have bought fast-boiling kettles for the canteen and two thermal drink dispensers to speed up water boiling for tea and coffee, and a new corkscrew to aid the speed of bottle opening. Other purchases are being made for use by

members on excursions – or for those who have a particular project in mind - moth traps, a dredge and pond nets to use on the excursion to the Castle Semple Loch, and two sweep nets. Contact Richard Weddle for further information.

Welcome to **Avril Walkinshaw** who has offered to organise the after meeting, social tea/coffee or wine, helpers rota. With the new kettles to speed things up the only thing the helper has to do is bring a litre of milk and some fresh biscuits on the day, having checked the previous time to see that there is enough tea, coffee, sugar and cups. If you can help, please contact Avril to offer your services. Blokes can lift teapots too. Blokes can also operate corkscrews!

REPORTS RECEIVED

Mary Child

The secretary has received the following reports from some of the expeditions the GNHS has supported. These will be kept in the library:

Report on the University of Glasgow Exploration Society Turtlewatch Tobago 2005 Expedition from Andrea Mason and Lauren Kirkland.

Report on the University of Glasgow Exploration Society Ecuador Expedition 2005 from Stuart White.

Report on the Glasgow University Exploration Society Rio Negro, Bolivia Expedition 2005 from Graham Stirling.

Short Report on the University of Glasgow Turtlewatch Cyprus 2006 Expedition from Rachel Donnachie.

BLODWEN LLOYD BINNS GRANTS

Three grants were awarded at the January meeting of the BLB executive.

£500 to help Land Services make a wildflower meadow at the Necropolis.

£500 to document Lichen collection.

£2000 towards a book on the Flora of Rhum.

The next BLB meeting will be on 20th March and any applications should be sent to the secretary 14 days before. Details on our website.

PECKING ORDER - Swallows and House Martins

Junella McKay

That there is a pecking order at the bird feeder and table seems reasonable – there is a reward for the strongest. But perching places on telephone wires are surely in a different category.

I was staying with friends in a very rural cottage near Newton Stewart over the weekend of September 8–10th and it was clear from the noisy gathering on the wires that the swallows had chosen this very weekend for their departure south.

But set apart from the cluster of chattering birds on Saturday I noticed one lone house martin perching.

By Sunday the swallows had vanished – and in their place was an equally excited gathering of – yes, house martins.

It appears that these birds don't fraternise, but was the timing of these gatherings sheer chance or is there a definite pecking order? And why was this particular stretch of perching wire so important that the house martins felt unable to gather at the same time as the swallows on another stretch of wire?

CONFUSED FROG

Junella McKay

Throughout September, whenever I was awake circa 6am a lone frog was sitting among a batch of flowerpots beneath my bedroom window, advertising his gorgeous presence to whoever cared to listen. Then during the middle of one afternoon he sat in the pond croaking plaintively, whilst on another he trilled loudly from beneath a *Hosta* in another part of the garden. As the weather finally cooled down towards the end of the month reality struck and he was heard no more.

Once again a great many potentially over-wintering tadpoles remain in my pond, although during August I was delighted to see an inch-long baby frog hopping manfully through the undergrowth to prove that at least he/she had metamorphosed.

Next Newsletter deadline 22nd April please.

Newsletter contributions are welcomed from all members, and should be sent by 20th April, preferably to the email address on the front cover, or on a floppy disc in plain text, i.e. the ordinary text of the email is best, or a .txt file or a Word document with **no special formatting applied**.

If you feel you must format it, please use Verdana 12 points, with titles in bold and left justified, and your name to the right of the title as in the Newsletter, otherwise I will have to undo all your formatting! Also, please don't use abbreviations which may be obscure, or use & instead of 'and', or use 'etc.'.

Thank you
David Palmar
Newsletter Editor

June 12th The Summer Social is being held at **Ross Priory** on **Loch Lomond**. The time is 7pm for 7.30, but if the weather is good we can arrive earlier for a stroll about. The ground can be a bit wet, so a change of footwear might be a good idea! It is hoped that after the meal – weather permitting – we can run a moth trap and possibly use our bat detector.

Since the Christmas format of choosing from a mini-menu beforehand seemed to work quite well, here is the menu. Just tick your choices and add your name/s. You will be sent a reminder of date and your menu choice a few weeks before (no changing your mind at that late stage!!!) As at the Christmas dinner we will have a slip for your table place to assist the waiting staff to know your menu choice.

Here are the Menu suggestions - the price will be £20 excluding drink – and transport.

Starters	Member1	Member 2
Hebridean Style Lobster Bisque		
Fresh Pineapple and Melon Cocktail		
Chef's own Pate with Oatcakes		
Spinach Pancakes with cream cheese & chives.		
Main Course		
Honey Glazed Spring Chicken		
Salmon grilled with Herb & Lemon Butter		
Roast Saddle of Lamb with Apricot Stuffing		
Vegetarian Stroganoff and Rice		
Dessert		
Hot Raspberry Pancakes		
Chocolate & Brandy Mousse		
Fresh Fruit Salad		
Cheese and Biscuits		
Coffee & Mints		
I need transport		
I can offer transport		
Name/s----->		

NAME/s...Block capitals.....

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Send this page to Margaret Stead.