



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August 2010

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

**Next Newsletter Deadline
1 October 2010**

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

Winter Programme 2010-11

2010

September

Tuesday 14th

Exhibition meeting: wine and nibbles
Zoology Museum, 7.30pm.
Let Maggie Reilly know your table or board requirements

October

Wednesday 6th Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture (and Presidential Address):

Adventures with amphibians
Roger Downie. 5.00pm

Note time and day

Saturday 30th and

Sunday 31st

Conference: Urban Biodiversity

See below for full details. You will need to fill in a booking form.

November

Tuesday 9th

Tutorial: Victorian women naturalists: Elizabeth Gray's fossils and Hannah Robertson's marine biology: Maggie Reilly and Anne Orchardson. 6.30pm.

Lecture: Wildlife disease research in Africa: protecting the health of parks and people.

Sarah Cleaveland. 7.30pm.

Thursday 11th

Lecture: Wildlife conservation issues in the Scottish Parliament. Bill Wilson MSP (BSc, PhD). 7.30pm. Jointly with GU Zoological Society. **Note time and day**

Thursday 18th

Lecture: Tigers and Leopards and Bears, Oh My! Identification of Endangered species in Traditional East Asian Medicines.

Shanan Tobe. 6.00pm. Jointly with GU Zoological Society.

Note time and day

December

Tuesday 14th

Christmas Dinner(Café Connect, 348 Cathedral Street: see next Newsletter for details and booking form).

Speaker: An island biosphere: Menorca's plants.

David Hawker

Urban Biodiversity: Successes & Challenges

Richard Weddle

The programme for the forthcoming conference, taking place in the Graham Kerr Building on 30th–31st October 2010, is now complete.

On the Saturday morning we have contributions from Scottish Government, SNH, RSPB, Buglife, Glasgow City Council and South Lanarkshire Council; and in the afternoon, reports on research on: urban birds, invertebrates, bats; the biodiversity of woodlands, wetlands, waterways, gardens and allotments; and integrated habitat networks.

On the Sunday morning we have workshops: practical demonstrations and discussions on botanical aliens, pond life, moth-trapping, mammal identification, and environmental education; and in the afternoon, a choice of at least 3 excursions: Hogganfield Loch, Bingham's Pond, and Partick trail are confirmed; we hope to add a further interesting location in North Lanarkshire.

Full information about the programme and how to register is available at <http://www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/urbanbio.html>
Members without email will receive a registration form with this newsletter.

As with the last conference, we would like to hear from any members who would be willing to offer accommodation on the Friday and Saturday to participants coming from a distance. Also, as we expect there won't be a large number of people requiring lunch on the Sunday, we are hoping that a group of GNHS members could take the catering in hand; please contact Svetlana Coussins if you would be willing to help.

Excursions 2010-2011

Coordinator: Anne Orchardson

Sat 21st August - Aberlady Bay LNR, East Lothian - Birds, botany and invertebrates. Meet at 10.30am at Aberlady Bay Car Park (there are toilets at the car park). Please bring packed lunch, walking boots/wellies, appropriate clothing etc. The group will be led by the Seasonal Warden Paul Johnson and the excursion will take about 3 hours. Please notify Mary Child if you intend to go and whether or not you need or can offer a lift. Further information about the Reserve can be found on www.aberlady.org/Nature%20reserve.html

Sat/Sun 25th/26th September - Argyll Weekend - Mary Child



Scottish Beaver Trial – this excellent sculpture is part of the interpretation in the Barnluasgan Visitor Centre Knapdale.

It's a useful retreat in case of rain or midges!

Photo courtesy of David Palmar

We have organised accommodation at the Kilmartin Hotel for the Friday and Saturday nights.

We have a guided tour booked at Dunstaffnage on the Saturday morning and plan to visit Knapdale on the Sunday to explore the beaver trail (The beavers were released into Knapdale Forest in May 2009, and have just produced their first kit).

Please can you let me know as soon as possible if you would like to join us. The hotel costs £65 for the two nights.

Fungal Forays

We have three forays this autumn, all in **October**:



This seems to be a Chicken in the Woods fungus (unless you know better, as Esther Rantzen used to say), found at the Falls of Clyde, with a GNHS librarian for scale. Why not go on a fungus foray and see if you can find a bigger one?

Photo courtesy of David Palmar

Sat 2nd with Robin Jones 0141 552 3822 at Rouken Glen Park. Meet at 10am in the main car park adjacent to the garden centre. Entrance off Rouken Glen Road, opposite Glenwood Drive (OS NS 548 587). One of the Wardens may attend, and Friends of Rouken Glen Park have also been invited.

Sat 9th with Keith Watson at Daldowie. Meet 10.00am at the council's Daldowie Nursery car park (NS6737.6191), which is just west of the crematorium, by the sewage works. Easy access off London Road or the M74 and M73 (watch out for 'Crematorium' slip road access). Railway station at nearby Baillieston/Muirhead (c. 15 min walk). For late arrivals we will initially check the 'ancient' Daldowie Wood (NS6734.6208) and then can explore riverbanks, nursery grounds and crematorium lawns.

NB The nursery is under 'review' so if by chance the car park is closed we can park by Daldowie Wood itself.

Sat 17th with Alan Silverside at Mugdock Country Park.

All our fungal forays this year are linked with the newly formed Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group (CAFG) and GNHS members may be interested in attending some of their other excursions. See the Scottish Fungi website for more details on the excursions and other fungi related topics.

<http://sites.google.com/site/scottishfungi/local-groups/west-of-scotland-fungus-group/cafg-diary>

Retirement of Professor Roger Downie

Prof. Neil Metcalfe - Head of the Division of Environmental & Evolutionary Biology

A large part of the credit for keeping the GNHS running smoothly must go to Professor Roger Downie.

You may be unaware that Prof. Roger Downie is retiring, after many years as a highly valued researcher, teacher and colleague in the Division of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Glasgow University. We would like to mark this occasion, and Roger has agreed to give the Blodwen Lloyd Binns talk (part of the Glasgow Natural History series) on Wednesday 6th October 2010, at 5pm, in the Graham Kerr Lecture Theatre 1, which will be followed by a drinks reception (between 6-7pm) in the Graham Kerr Building Museum.



Common Frog
Frogs are one of Professor Downie's lifelong interests and specialisms.

We very much hope that you will be able to attend the talk and reception. It would help us greatly with catering arrangements if you could indicate whether or not you are able to attend on the form below.

Please also complete the relevant section if you wish to make a contribution to a gift for Prof. Downie; forms should be sent to Ms Lorna Kennedy by Friday 24th September 2010.

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Ms Lorna Kennedy
Graham Kerr Building
Faculty of Biomedical and Life Sciences
University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ

I would like/am unable to attend Prof. Downie's talk, 5-6pm (Lecture Theatre 1)
I would like/am unable to attend the drinks reception, 6-7pm (GK Museum)

I enclose _____ as a contribution to a presentation to Prof. Roger Downie.

(cheques should be made payable to 'University of Glasgow')

Name _____

Address _____

Professor Norman (Roy) Grist

David Palmar

It is with considerable regret that I report the death, on Monday 7th June, of Professor Norman (Roy) Grist, one of our longest-standing members, who was also distantly related to me. Several members of the GNHS represented the society at his funeral. For many years until the end of 2003, he was the society's Newsletter Editor, a post which he passed over to me from 2004. He was also one of our most active members, making observations over the years on subjects as varied as swifts, which he saw and counted from his flat in Hyndland, and on the behaviour of slugs in his garage, latterly reporting these observations to me, and helping me to fill the Newsletter with many interesting articles. He spent the last years of his life in the Erskine Home, from where he continued to send me observations, being active in his research and writing almost to the end. He will be sadly missed as one of Glasgow's most eminent scientists. A fuller appreciation will appear in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

Volcanism - Then and Now

Ian McCallum

I recently did a book review on the *Geology of Madeira* finishing up by saying that I was looking forward to sitting in the sun, drinking the local wine and listening to the authors explaining about the fascinating geology of the island.

When we arrived on the island the devastation caused by the flooding and extensive mud slides had just taken place, which incidentally will take about four years to fully make good. Professor Rodriguez – a local geologist - showed us the extent of the devastation which caused roads and houses to be swept away. The beach at Funchal had about fifteen to twenty feet of boulders and soil covering it. In spite of minor road problems we had excellent excursions over the whole island. The sun shone while the authors explained the volcanic development of the island showing us dykes, sills, ash cones and lapilli etc. These actions took place millions of years ago, which made for relaxing erudition.

Our next holiday was located in Mallorca where ornithology was the main interest. The ash clouds emanating from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano gave us an interest in volcanism which was certain not relaxing and actually delayed us on the island for five days!

On the recent Gargunnock outing the party were shown ash deposits on Rhododendron leaves which were presumably tephra deposits from the ash cloud.

A Question to "Bat" About

Anne Orchardson

Recently, while waiting in the airport at Girona, Spain, with outside temperatures of around 30°C, and brilliant sunshine, my husband and I noticed a small bat constantly flying at the junction of the window and roof of the terminal building in which we were standing. It appeared to be flying in to take insects to be found there, and worked its way along the length of that particular part of the building, before disappearing from our sight. At first I had not paid much attention, thinking it to be a bird, but then we realised it was definitely a bat. But what bat flies in broad daylight (about 17.30hrs) and in those temperatures? If anyone has any ideas, I'd love to know.

Book received in exchange for reviews in *The Glasgow Naturalist*

***Mayfly Larvae (Ephemeroptera)
of Britain & Ireland***

Elliot J M & Humpesch U H

Freshwater Biological Association 2010

Softback £27.00

FBA Scientific Publication No. 66 consists of a key to and reviews the ecology of the above group. The two authors possess a considerable practical knowledge of the mayflies of north-western Europe.

This edition replaces the key by the same authors in Publication 49 and adds three species recorded since 1988. It makes changes to scientific names and reflects advances in classification whilst new sketches and colour photographs are also incorporated.

Diagrams illustrate the life histories of most species and their ecology is summarised in tables and text. The importance of mayflies in ecological site classification is covered from a historical perspective and brought up to date. The range of references is comprehensive. A most entertaining final section describes fishermen's names for a variety of mayflies.

Excursion Reports:

Spring Moth Event - Mugdock Country Park

Anne Orchardson

On a beautiful spring morning of Saturday 10th April 2010, four of us joined John Knowler at Mugdock Country Park for what turned out to be a spectacular moth event to kick off this summer's Excursion Programme. Before we examined the trap that John had set up the previous night, he gave us a talk on some of the issues facing spring moths, and told us about some of the species we might expect to see. The main points were on how moths have adapted to make the most of the available food at this time of year, how they protect themselves from the cold, and how they strive to escape from hungry predators.

We then inspected the trap set overnight in the machinery pound at Mugdock. This is a location John has used on a number of occasions, but this time even he was surprised by the number of moths present. The trap had caught 271 moths, representing 12 species - see list below. For the novices amongst us, this was a marvellous opportunity to study the differences between similar species: for example the Mottled Grey and Early Tooth-stripe, or the Common Quaker and the Twin Spotted Quaker. Arguably the most beautiful were the Yellow Horned Moth, or the Oak Beauty, though the silver sheen on the Red Chestnut was also very attractive. The most numerous were the Clouded Drab and the Hebrew Character, as there were over 70 of each. Because of the numbers present, it was also an ideal chance to see the variations that can occur within one species.

Having inspected our "catch", and recorded them, all moths were released into the bushes unharmed - all that is except for those that had already escaped!

Moth Species in order of numbers seen from 79 to 2:

Clouded Drab
Hebrew Character
Common Quaker
Twin spotted Quaker
Mottled Grey
Early Tooth-stripe
Yellow-horned Chestnut
Red Chestnut
Small Quaker
March Moth



Emperor Moth – ok we didn't catch one, but not all moths are brown and boring, so come along to the next moth hunt!

Photo courtesy of David Palmar

Gargunnock Estate

Ian McCallum and Bob Gray

This was a combined outing of members of the Glasgow and Edinburgh Natural History Societies together with the Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society, on 15th May 2010, attended by a total of 21 persons – nine Glasgow and 12 Edinburgh members.

The estate overlooks the valley of the Firth of Forth, six miles to the west of Stirling and just south of the Carse of Stirling. This is overlain by the sands and silt of the 50 foot post-glacial raised beach. The annual rainfall is about 1 metre (40").

The east gate and car park areas where we met contained, amongst many mature trees, the very primitive spur-leaf (*Tetracentron sinense*), a 3-needled pine considered to be a Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and a coastal redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*). The few drops of rain as the party set off made the rest of the day seem even better as the sun came out and the temperature rose.

Scattered throughout the estate were purple Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*) that we had been told by the estate gardener, Willie Campbell, were the cultivar, 'Goldsworth Purple'. A few seedlings of these were found.

Many fine examples were noticed of conifers introduced by David Douglas such as Noble fir (*Abies procera*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), by John Jeffrey such as Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and by William Lobb such as the Giant redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*).

On a sapling of the five-needled Weymouth pine (*P. strobus*) a specimen of White pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) was collected. This rust, which depends upon currant (*Ribes sp.*) to complete its life cycle, was responsible for the devastation of this tree along with other American white and Sugar pines in their native habitats in the 18th Century. The specimen was forwarded to Forest Research whose subsequent detailed report was bad news for the tree. The report was forwarded to Mr. Campbell.

The ground flora included extensive areas of snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*), daffodils (*Narcissus sp.*), Bluebells (*Endymion sp.*). Many different shrubs, including azaleas and rhododendrons, were found growing below the tree canopy.

The party moved along the avenue to the hexagonal 'doocot', which was built around 1775 complete with rotating access ladder, and then to Gargunnoch House where Mrs Campbell had provided chairs and toilet facilities. Lunch was enjoyed in the sunshine in front of the house. The avenue itself, with its fine row of giant redwoods, was originally part of the stagecoach route between Stirling and Dumbarton. Many birds, heard rather than seen, included Blackbird, Thrush, Chiffchaff, Willow warbler, Cuckoo, Pheasant, Green Woodpecker, Yellowhammer and even a Peacock. Butterflies and bees were busy foraging in the sunshine.

After lunch the party split into two with one group, led by Ian, going up the Ladies' Walk and then on to Downie's Loup, whilst the other, led by Bob, investigated further the walled garden and other parts of the estate. On the Ladies' Walk the party was shown deposited on rhododendron leaves tephra (transported ash) from the ash cloud that resulted from the recent eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland. As the party was leaving the tree line heading upwards, Redpoll and Crossbills were seen in the pine trees. The latter were mating, which seemed a somewhat precarious activity. The Loup is a waterfall that tumbles over the Carboniferous basaltic lava flows formed about 340 million years ago. Owing to the earlier dry spell, however, the Loup itself was rather disappointing. Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) was seen in the gully under the Loup.

The other group crossed the field beyond the doocot where of particular interest were a large Common walnut (*Juglans regia*) and, even more exciting, an example of a Bishop pine (*P. muricata*), easily identified by the very sharp spines on its cone scales. Like those of other fire climax species these cones open only after forest fires. In nature these pines are confined to only seven Californian cliff tops and islands. We passed by a building that was originally an inn on the stagecoach route and then stopped by a variegated Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus* f. *variegatum*) to admire the striking view across the Carse of Stirling to the hills of the Highland Boundary Fault beyond.

Part of the old walled garden is being used as a nursery for trees and shrubs, especially rhododendrons, in which the gardener is particularly interested. Some of these are planted out; some are for sale. Amongst the most interesting was the Chinese fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*), the seeds of which had been brought over from Vietnam. The house garden contained a plethora of interesting trees and shrubs, with the scent of osmanthus (*Osmanthus delavayi*) being the most memorable. The Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) is claimed to be the biggest in Scotland. The walk back to the car park yielded yet more interesting trees, chief amongst which were arguably firstly, a yellow Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Gold Rush'), which arose first in Japan in 2001 before being exported to the world via the USA and secondly, a Golden oak (*Quercus robur* 'Concordia').

Thanks should be accorded to Mr and Mrs Campbell for their hospitality and to George MacDougal and David Adamson of ENHS who suggested the outing. The garden is open to visitors during the summer months on Wednesdays (2–5pm) mid-April to mid-June and on Wednesdays during September and October.

If you think that there are too many pictures from a certain Newsletter Editor in this edition, why not send in some of your own with your contribution? – jpgs are best – preferably about 3 megapixels if you can.

Who pays the Ferryman?

John R. S. Lyth

Nine members and friends met at Uddingston station on 22nd June 2010 for an evening stroll to find the site of the old boathouse by the banks of the Clyde. Old postcards of Uddingston helped us to identify the site, where a large black Poplar was roughly dated as 130 years old, possibly one of the trees seen in a 1902 postcard of the boathouse.

The party then went to the old Blantyreferme colliery where a large stand of Vipers bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) was admired. Ten years ago the adjoining bing was covered by planted trees and self-sown Birch.

Among a stand of rushes (*Juncus effusus*) was found an unusually large Club rush (*Scirpus* sp.). Peter Macpherson took a specimen to identify. He identified it as Common bulrush or Club rush (*Scirpus lacustris*). This is only the third site in Lanarkshire (Vice County 77) where this has been recorded.

Bogleshole, 21st July 2010

Peter Macpherson

A botanical field meeting was due to be held on the evening of 21st July. From midday it had poured steadily and most of those who had given notice of their intention to attend, telephoned to cancel. On the off chance that anyone was prepared to brave the elements, daughter Elspeth Lindsay and I went to the meeting point. On the way, we had to make a detour because of flooding—but the result of a burst water main and not the rain!

Two stalwarts were waiting for us at 7.15pm, John and Margaret Lyth. The rain had eased slightly as we arrived, so that we were able to make quick explorations of a hollow and road verges, during which we recorded over 75 taxa. The most interesting plant was Goat's-rue (*Galega officinalis*), a new record for Lanarkshire (VC 77) when seen earlier in the year. Second of interest was Large-flowered Evening primrose (*Oenothera glazioviana*), known at the site for over 15 years. There was also an interesting collection of rough ground and roadside plants. We had completed almost all of the intended programme when the rain came on heavily again and we agreed to abandon the meeting.

River Kelvin Excursion with Clyde River Foundation

Anne Orchardson

On the fine evening of 4th August 2010, conveniently between showers, seven of us met up with Willie Yeomans and his team of Caroline McGillivray, David McColl and Justyna Olszewska, at the Graham Kerr Building. Following his talk to the Society in May, Willie had planned to demonstrate some of the techniques the Foundation uses to monitor the waters of the River Clyde and its tributaries.

The main technique they showed us was that of "electric fishing". Between early July and mid October, the team uses this technique to survey fish populations. Usually they take an area of about 150 square metres, delimited by nets across the river and either an electro-fisher run from a generator or in some more remote areas a portable one. The team are highly trained and we were made aware of the potential hazards involved in the work.

For the demonstration, Caroline carried the portable electro-fisher on her back.

With the anode and cathode placed in the water, an electric charge, controlled by Caroline, was formed in the water. This attracted the fish which were then caught in the nets being swept through the water by David and Justyna, who brought them back to shore for us to examine.

By moving through the different habitats within the river from shore out into the deeper water, they caught a range of fish: minnows, stone loach, three-spined stickleback, eel and salmon parr. The last were two years old, and next May will embark on their long journey out to sea. The eel was probably around 10-15 years old. The number of eels has dropped dramatically in recent years, though the reason is as yet unknown.

Also present was Alistair Stewart, a member of the local angling club. This club has worked with the Foundation as the anglers are aware of the risks of over-fishing the rivers. As the team had been unsuccessful in catching a brown trout, Alistair obliged in a pool slightly up-river. It was very interesting to compare it with the salmon as they were very similar. All fish caught were returned to the river.

The second technique demonstrated for us by Justyna, was that of collecting a kick sample. By kicking up the riverbed for three minutes while at the same time walking backwards through the water, a range of invertebrates can be collected. The number and varieties found will give an indication of the health of the water. When an area is being surveyed, the catch is scored: creatures that can live anywhere are given a low score, while those only found in high quality water are scored more highly. Until 1983 there were no salmon in the Clyde river system; now there are, and the water is regularly tested across the whole system.

The previous weekend, Willie and his team, together with volunteers from local angling groups, had walked most of the River Kelvin catchment, mapping the invasive plants on the riverbanks. Three of the four most invasive plants were present on the banks of the Kelvin where we were: Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. The other plant is Skunk Cabbage which is present from Milngavie down to Kelvindale.

The evening was most interesting and we look forward to a similar excursion in 2011 when Willie suggested showing some further aspects of the work carried out by the Clyde River Foundation.

Newsletters by Email Receiving future Newsletters by email will save the GNHS money in distribution costs, and allow you to see any photos in colour. If you haven't already done so, please send the Society your email address - info@glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk and indicate that you wish to receive Newsletters by email. Thank you.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 1st October please.

The format should if possible be electronic, preferably plain text, or Microsoft Word (any version), or rich text format. If you change the font or point size, please change it to Verdana 12 points, otherwise the work that you do will be undone again by the editor! Finally, my thanks go to all contributors who have made this Newsletter possible. David Palmar