



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December 2006

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
1 Feb 2007

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

NEW WEB DOMAINS

The society now has two new web addresses:

www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk and www.gnhs.org.uk

And there's a new email address info@glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk which forwards to Richard Weddle.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS - All to be held in the Graham Kerr Building

Wednesday December 6th at 5.00pm. Annual BLB Lecture Prof Mike Majerus will be talking on "Badly Behaved Ladybirds"

Tuesday December 12th at 7.15pm Christmas Dinner –see page 8 for last minute booking information!

Guest speakers Joanna Smith and Dan Thornham - "Sampling Trinidad's Rainforest for Frogs, Beetles and Bromeliads"

Tuesday January 9th at 7.15pm

Prof John Smith - "Medical Mushrooms - Past, Present and Future"

Tuesday 13th February

6.30pm - Tutorial Lichens - Keith Watson

7.15pm - Ailsa Craig and its Puffins - Bernie Zonfrillo

Tuesday 27th February 7.15pm AGM, followed by

Geoff Hancock and Jeanne Robertson - St Kilda – an alternative view

BETTY CROWSON, 1928-2006

Ronald M. Dobson

The Council was sorry to learn that Betty Crowson died in February this year after a prolonged period of ill health. Betty was a member of the Society for some fifty years and was Convener to the Zoology Section from 1960 to 1969.

An expert on spiders, she was married to the late Dr Roy Crowson, an authority on beetles, and between them they made significant contributions to the knowledge of the fauna of British Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Importance. Her extensive collections were bequeathed partly to the Hunterian Museum (Zoology) at the University of Glasgow and partly to the Glasgow Museums and her field notebooks to the Natural History Museum in London.

A full obituary will be published later in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

Our summer visitors have gone (my last Swift sightings: 6 on Aug. 6) and Winter's refugees are on the way or already in Britain - notably whole migrant populations of geese, swans and ducks. The change is shown in our urban gardens - currently in seasonal transition - and it occurred to me to glance at my November records for Hyndland Court. A modest annual average of 15.5 species were recorded for 1971-80, 15.8 for 1981-90, 16.1 for 1991-2000, falling to 13.4 in 2001-05. Most were the expected common birds of gardens (dominated by Greenfinches until recently) but notable were Kestrels (6 November records in 1975-81), Peregrine (one 1976), Sparrow-Hawk (2 in 1981 & 1992), visiting Redwings (1987, '93, '95, '96 ; 40 in 1997, 14 in 2000), overflying Heron, geese & swans, Tree creeper (1976, 1980), and a share of the Goldfinch boom in 1999. We shared the national decline in house sparrows, once so numerous and active residents here but now long gone, and of starlings but we enjoyed the recent success of Goldfinches.

At our previous house nearby I once noticed what I later realised was our first collared dove, rain drenched and miserable on a telegraph pole about 1957 when they first reached Scotland. It amused me that their transcontinental spread from Indonesia so closely resembled the maps of spread of cholera to Europe that century (with no obvious connection!). Some settled as regular customers at Hyndland Court, including one bad-tempered male with disturbed head feathers suggesting past injury (and irritable headache?). We valued him as antagonist to repel the messy feral pigeons, though in later life he mellowed and lost dominance. He tolerated a gentle, friendly female who "adopted" us for many years. She flew in from distant south-west to perch on a window sill and attract attention by tapping if we did not notice her quickly to supply peanuts.

We enjoyed the company and songs of robins, their delicate sub-song while watching us from close by. Together with sometimes ear-splitting wrens, their song lightened the burden of dark winter nights and early dawns. Magpies of course in any season enjoyed teasing the cats and foxes, less popularly raiding nests and preying on nestlings. The only nest-robbing by squirrels I once saw pillaged a nearby magpie nest!

Participants in the *Garden Bird Surveys* organised by the British Trust for Ornithology enjoy the regular summaries, progress reports and articles in the *Bird Table* received by those taking part in this national scheme which is contributing valuable data to help in conservation and further our understanding of Nature's web.

A LIBRARY AMNESTY – from the Temporary Librarian**Janet Palmar**

As was stated a previous Newsletter, I have been carrying out a stocktake in the library. I would like to thank the two members, without whose help this would have been very difficult. A large number of books are missing. Please look on your bookshelves, under your bed and behind the wardrobe to see if you have any books belonging to the Society's Library!

If you find any, please sneak into the library and leave them on the very bottom shelf, in the right hand cupboard nearest the door, beside the signing out book.

Nobody will be watching you! Please do not attempt to re-shelve them anywhere else, as I would like to know what has come in, and check it off. Thank you.

Flowers Of Iona - 3rd Edition 2006, Jean M Millar

Richard Weddle

This is the only guide to the botanical richness of the famous and sacred Hebridean island of Iona. In this third edition, the list of flowering plants is brought up to 335, along with rushes, grasses and ferns and an informative guide to the local habitats. Botanical, Gaelic and common names are included.

The late Jean Millar was a botanist and artist, active in the Glasgow Natural History Society and a regular visitor over many years to Iona, where she had family links.

The book has eight fine, full-colour illustrations by the author, showing flowers from Heath, Bog-land, Machair, Rock-face, Shoreline and Springtime plus individual plates of Yellow Iris and Bluebell. These plates are also available as cards.

48pp, A5 paperback, retail price £4.95

ISBN 0-9538938-3-9

Cards: one-sided, A5, pack of 8 different designs £4.00.

Published by The New Iona Press

EXCURSION NOTES

Visit to Mitchell Library

Richard Weddle

Our second visit to the Mitchell Library, took place, like the first, in the room housing the Jeffrey Library, but this time we looked at books from the Jeffrey Collection itself. The collection comprises some 3000 volumes including bound volumes of periodicals such as Punch, through hymn-books, to works on poetry, art, history (local, British and further afield) and of course natural history.

Last year, we saw some of the volumes of Audubon's *Birds of America*. This year we saw the companion volume on Quadrupeds, and were struck by the lifelike, almost strokable, depiction of the fur of the various animals. The colours in *Birds of Britain, Europe and Australia*, by Jonathan Gould (1843) seemed perhaps more vibrant than Audubon's – Gould has been called the greatest figure in bird illustration after Audubon.

Other ornithological books viewed were: FT Booth's *Birds of the British Isles* (1887) and Bewick's *History of Birds, Vols I & II*, 1814, and *Monograph of the Paradiseidae, or Birds Of Paradise and Bowerbirds* (2 vols, 1898), by R. Bowdler Sharpe, who was John Gould's assistant for many years.

South Australia Illustrated, by George French Angas (1846/7) has illustrations of the aboriginal people and their artefacts, as well as of European enterprises such as a copper mine, and the wildlife including some very colourful butterflies.

Other books seen included:

English Botany (Vol III); Sowerby

Ferns, British and Exotic (Vol III); EJ Low (1860)

William Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei (Views of the Two Sicilies)*, which contains illustrations of eruptions of Vesuvius.

We also noted a complete set of twenty volumes of *Conchologia Iconica* ("Illustrations of the shells of molluscous animals"), by Reeve & Sowerby (1843-78), and browsed the fascinating manuscript catalogue of the collection, which we heard may soon be available on-line, like much of the remainder of the Mitchell Library's holdings.

Auchincruive Arboretum, 27th September, 2006

Bob Gray

Six members of the Society attended this excursion, which was organised by June Mackay. We were shown round by Michael Hitchon, a horticultural lecturer retired from the college and holder of the prestigious Dr Andrew Duncan medal for services to horticulture. He gave us a brief introduction to the estate that saw in 1705 the birth of Richard Oswald, who was largely responsible on the British side for drawing up the Declaration of American Independence.

In the morning we visited the older part of the arboretum where some of the trees may be as old as 300 years. A dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) was planted by the American consul in 2005 to commemorate Oswald's birth. Within this arboretum is a herbaceous border in which flowering *Rudbeckia* was conspicuous. Behind it, against a south facing wall, were many shrubs and climbers of interest, such as flowering *Wistaria*, *Crinodendron* and *Hydrangea petiolaris* (the only climbing *Hydrangea*) as well as fruit bearing fig trees and the apple, 'John Downie'.

A small area is devoted to a demonstration of hedging material, such as yew, laurel and *Lonicera nitida*. Some of the trees encountered in the older arboretum were as follows: a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), an Irish yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'), *Sorbus* 'Joseph Rock' with spectacular yellow fruits, a medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) bearing many fruits, Japanese red cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) having unusual branches bearing spirally arranged leaves, a fastigate maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) and a liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) just turning into its autumn colours as was a scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*). Passing through a moongate built of brick, led us into a memorial garden possessing subdued colours and a Kilmarnock weeping willow (*Salix caprea* 'Kilmarnock'). Beyond this we came to a south-facing slope. This contained a small orchard that possessed modern varieties of apple (*Malus* spp.) as well as an area demonstrating older cordons and espaliers of cooking and eating apples. Also on this slope was a spectacular row of outstanding Fleuroselect newly bred annual cultivars. All of these have a gold medal and were trialled in 22 different sites. Amongst these stunning cultivars were: *Rudbeckia* 'Prairie Sun', *Zinnia* 'Aztec Sunset', *Echinacea* 'Prairie Splendour' and *Eryngium* 'Blue Glitter'. All of these had been grown from seed this year and will soon become available to the general public.

In the afternoon we visited the new arboretum. It was designed by Ian Dougall, a horticultural lecturer, who used surplus estate to establish what is probably the

first totally sponsored arboretum in the world. The arrangement is horticultural rather than botanical, the aim of the arboretum being to demonstrate what trees are best for different purposes. The trees were planted in threes and only the best is kept in each case. Phase I (51 trees) was planted in 1986, phase II (225 trees) in 1988, phase III (237 trees) in 1989 and phase IV (396 trees) in 1992. Unlike many arboreta the trees are planted in straight lines radiating from focal points. Each line represents either a function or a group. Examples of function are: grey, yellow, purple, variegated or autumn coloured leaves, fastigate growth, weeping branches, moisture or chalk loving, attractive to birds or bees, seaside or street trees. Examples of groups are: *Ilex*, *Malus*, *Sorbus*, *Acer*, *Prunus*, *Abies*, *Cedrus*, *Picea*, *Pinus* or northwest American conifers. The result is a remarkably eclectic mix of trees. Rarely is it possible to compare in any one place so many closely related members of a genus. Fruits were particularly in evidence with spectacular displays of *Sorbus*, *Prunus*, *Malus* and *Crataegus* (especially *C. prunifolia*). Amongst many outstanding bark displays that of the unusual grey birch (*Betula populifolia*) was stunning. Leaves were just beginning to turn so that the best tints were still to come. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and silver leaf maple (*A. saccharinum*), however, were clearly visible from a long distance.

For anyone intending to visit the new Auchincruive arboretum in wet conditions it is advisable to wear waterproof footwear, as the grass between the trees can be quite long. Thanks are due to Michael Hitchon for making us so welcome and for checking this script, to June McKay for organising the trip, and to the weather for keeping dry.

Trees in Kelvingrove Park, 29th June, 2006

Bob Gray

This evening excursion was stimulated by John Miller's booklet *Trees of Glasgow* in which he has located and shown the dimensions of several trees in some of Glasgow's 73 parks, including Kelvingrove. We met in conjunction with members of Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society and were most encouraged to be accompanied by John Miller himself, a prodigious tree measurer from the north of Scotland.

Owing to constraints of time we restricted ourselves to identifying, but not measuring, many of the more interesting specimens that may be found in the park. This is not the place to write a comprehensive list of all the trees we encountered, but the following are some of the more unusual ones:

Conifers included dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens*) (the less common green one as well as the widely grown blue Colorado spruce) and maritime pine (*Pinus pinaster*)

Hardwoods included red maple (*Acer rubrum*) (uncommon in Glasgow), silver maple (*A. saccharinum*) (not uncommon in Glasgow parks), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), fastigate hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Indian bean (*Catalpa bignonioides*), narrow-leaved ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*), single-leaved ash (*F. excelsior* f. *diversifolia*), manna ash (*F. ornus*), honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), cypress oak (*Quercus robur* f. *fastigiata*), pyramidal London plane (*Platanus x hispanica* 'Pyramidalis') (all the plane trees except for one at the south gate, but including those in Kelvin Way, belong to this cultivar), Schmitt's cherry (*Prunus x schmittii*) and silver pendent lime (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris'). Arguably the rarest tree in the park, and perhaps in the whole of Glasgow, is the oak-leaved

hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Incisa'), a fine old specimen located north of the west end of the long herbaceous border.

The black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) has been felled but the writer has been in touch with Glasgow Parks, who indicated that their intention is to replace this tree, rare this far north and which had to be felled on account of wind damage, with another of the same type.

The parks of Glasgow contain a plethora of tree taxa, many of which are still waiting to be "discovered". Future similar excursions would be worthwhile. Anyone reading this who has encountered a seemingly unusual tree in the Glasgow area is encouraged to contact the writer, Bob Gray, on 339 9802.

Fungus Foray, Bothwell Woods, Uddingston, 21st October 2006

Robin Jones

Maybe the ominous-looking weather early in the morning deterred many, as it was a small band of forayers that gathered at Uddingston railway station. As it turned out, it brightened up at the start and although clouds gathered during the day, it remained dry until afterwards when we were making our return to the station, when the heavens opened! We stayed on the right bank of the river following a trail along the bank, then up to Bothwell Castle. From there we followed the ridge footpath, eventually returning via the road to Uddingston.

This course took us through a diversity of habitats and we encountered a pleasingly wide range of species. The list was enlarged by there being two 'experts' present as Graeme Walker added his considerable knowledge (and eyesight) to identify some smaller species which proved as interesting as they were initially inconspicuous. In this regard it was a good foray for the club as we saw some lesser-seen species of *Clavaria* agg. species. The playing field revealed species of *Hygrocybe* and *Mycena* and under conifers we found Wood Mushroom (*Agaricus sylvicola*) and *Clytocybe flaccida*.

The riverbank also produced a large colony of the impressive ascomycete *Helvella crispa*, and 'Jelly Babies' (*Leotia lubrica*) always a joy to find. Several species of *Mycena* were seen, from tiny specimens requiring a hand lens to those with obvious ID characteristics, such as the milk giving *M. galopus* and strongly scented *M. alcalina* to the impressive *M. inclinata* with its contrasts of dark and light tones.

More *Hygrocybe* species were found amid the grass of the castle area, including the pretty Parrot Wax Cap (*H. psittacina*). There also, were several fine specimens of *Melanoleuca melaleuca*.

Species of *Russula* and *Lactarius* were scarce at first, but more were seen on the return walk along the ridge and roadside grass. Some were easily identified by their hot milk such as *L. rufus* and *L. blennius*. *Russulas* included the geranium scented *R. fellea* and the (by then totally black) *R. nigricans*. A few defied ID in the field. As we neared the town, we spotted a large group of *Agaricus* in fine condition. Probably *A. sylvaticus* or *A. langei*, but frustratingly out of reach behind a fence.

Everyone enjoyed the walk and the total list was considerable which demonstrated that one does not have to go to distant or obscure locations to see interesting fungi.

Minutes of meeting 11th October 2006

Chair Prof John Knowler

Held in Graham Kerr Building No Attending 40

Tutorial - Digital Imaging was given by Norman Tait and was thoroughly enjoyed by over 30 members.

He showed how to straighten horizons; cropping; selecting an area to adjust the lighting or colour; cloning; colour values or hue and saturation, adjusting colour; copying and pasting then locking the layer, erasing and pasting; adjusting image size and compressing depending on what use the image is to be used for.

Talk – “The restoration of the Kibble Palace” was presented by Ewen G. Donaldson the General Manager of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens.

The story of the Kibble Palace begins at Coulport, Loch Long, where John Kibble started to build his conservatory to the north of his home - Coulport House. By 1872 Kibble had an agreement with the Royal Botanic Institution of Glasgow to relocate his glasshouse to the Botanic Gardens on their site at Kelvinside. The move was completed in 1873 with the entire structure being dismantled, moved by barge, and re-erected and enlarged in the Botanic Gardens.

From the 1880s the glasshouse has been a prominent architectural feature of the Botanic Gardens, displaying a large collection of temperate plants from around the world; especially the collection of Australasian tree ferns.

After some one hundred and thirty years it was apparent that the Kibble Palace required major structural attention to ensure its continued prominence in the Botanic Gardens. The City Council secured £7 million funding (City Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland) and in September 2003 the glasshouse closed. The plants were moved out to temporary accommodation in Bellahouston Park.

The main contractor Shepley Engineers Ltd. took control in October 2004 and over the next 24 months the entire glasshouse (floor area 2,195 square metres) was dismantled and transported to their works in Shafton, South Yorkshire for repair and restoration. The re-assembly of the glasshouse commenced in April 2005 and was completed in August 2006 after the tree fern collection was moved back in – the ferns were too large to fit through the doors!

The Kibble Palace will continue to house the temperate plant collections of the Gardens. The large dome will feature plants from four major geographical regions of the World – South America, Southern Africa, Temperate Asia and Australasia. The transepts extending to the north and south of the small dome will feature carnivorous plants and Canary Island flora respectively. The Kibble Palace is due to re-open in November 2006 although internal landscaping and planting will continue over the winter months.

If you are interested in learning more about Marine Biology, you may like to join up for a course on Marine Biology starting in January 2007. The course is being run by the Department of Adult & Continuing Education (DACE) at the University of Glasgow and includes fieldwork at the University Marine Biological Station, Millport.

For further information visit www.gla.ac.uk/adulteducation or to request a brochure please contact DACE on 0141 330 1835 email dace-query@educ.gla.ac.uk

SPELL CHECK**Ian McCallum**

In the Society Journal - Part 1 2002, I wrote an obituary for Dick Hunter. In the script I said that Dick had recounted that his sisters would 'clype' on him to his mother. Clype (Scot.) vi to tell tales - is a good Scottish word that Dick used more than once! The origin seems to be from the Middle English clepien - to call. The Editor, presumably using a spell check, altered the word to 'clypeus', which means the 'shield-like plate on the heads of some insects'. Dick would have been amused!

HOUSE SPARROWS**Ian McCallum**

With the recent fall in the numbers of house sparrows, I thought I would try to do something to help the situation. One of the suggestions for the fall in numbers was the declining number of suitable nest sites. My house has the usual plastic soffit boards at the eaves - but I have a few bird boxes with the small access holes suitable for blue tits. Last year I enlarged the holes and although I still have blue tits nesting, I also have house sparrows nesting - and am looking forward to a happy event - and perhaps several!

Annual Dinner - December 12th 7.15pm in Museum, Graham Kerr Building

If you are off the mark quickly, there should just be time to phone through to Morag Mackinnon to book a Christmas Dinner! We are having outside caterers, so **no advance booking - no dinner!** Price £18 per person for one Starter, one Main Course and one Dessert.

Starters

Soup - Carrot and Coriander

Thai Fishcakes with cucumber relish

Creamed Goat's cheese with Orange & Walnut salad

Main Courses which will be served with crusty bread and salad

Teryaki Tuna Steak with steamed rice & spring onion

Breast of Chicken with Tarragon. Cream & Orange Sauce with Puy Lentils

Venison Casserole with Herb Dumplings

Vegetable & Herb Flan

Desserts

Cream profiteroles drizzled with Chocolate Sauce

Tarte Au Citron with Mango Coulis

Coffee and Tea