



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2017

**David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)**

**Next Newsletter Deadline
22 March 2017**

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2017 MEETINGS – In the GU Boyd Orr Building unless otherwise stated

February

Tuesday 14th

7.15pm Photographic Night

Members' digital slide shows followed by the show of entries and presentation of prizes from the Photographic Competition (see next article).

March

Thursday 2nd

7.30pm Paisley Museum, High St, Paisley

Lecture: Scotland's dinosaur isle; Neil Clark (Jointly with Hamilton NHS and Paisley NHS).

Thursday 9th

6.00pm Graham Kerr Building lecture Theatre 1.

Glasgow University Expeditions Report Back (jointly with GUExSoc; most expeditions are supported by the BLB Bequest).

Tuesday 14th

6.30pm Annual General Meeting, followed by:

7.30pm Lecture: The Geology Collections in Glasgow Museums; Ann Ainsworth.

April

Tuesday 11th

6.30pm Lecture: Conservation of epiphytic lichens in Scotland's temperate rainforests; Sally Eaton.

7.30pm Lecture: Seabirds and climate change; Bob Furness

May

Tuesday 9th

6.30pm Lecture: Can we live with the lynx? David Hetherington

7.30pm Lecture: tbc

June

Tuesday 13th Summer Social – see April Newsletter for details and booking form.

Members' Photographic Night and Photography Competition Results

David Palmar

On Tuesday 14th February in the Boyd Orr Building we will again have members' own digital presentations. There is still space in the programme, so please let me know in advance if you would like to present a slide show, and what the subject is, to enable me to organise the evening more effectively. Even just a few slides and a few words about each can be interesting for members – sophisticated presentations are nice, but unnecessary – and not longer than 10 minutes, please!

This will be followed by the results of the Photographic Competition which is now in its 6th year, and is run jointly by GNHS and the Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine.

This year there have been 117 entries from 30 people, up from last year's 65 entries from 17 people. Anyone who submitted an entry is encouraged to attend. This year there are so many entries that only the commended and prizewinners can be shown, or we will be there all night! The rest will form a slide show at the refreshments afterwards.

Flowers at our feet – a summer evening walk along the River Kelvin **Wednesday 12 July, 6-8pm**

Kelvin walkway, Glasgow

A surprising number of wild flowers grow along the river Kelvin tucked away behind the busy West End of Glasgow. Along with the unwelcome "invasive" species, there are many lovely flowers to see. Come and join Plantlife on this summer evening walk along the Kelvin in Kelvingrove Park, and see what you may have been missing!

How to book: Please book in advance, by email to scotland@plantlife.org.uk or phone 01786 478509. Free event open to all, but donations welcome to help cover the costs of the event and to support Plantlife's work.

This is very much a general interest walk as the event listing suggests, we hope to open peoples' eyes to the wild plants growing along the Kelvin. Keith Watson has kindly agreed to lead the walk for us, and Janey and Dorothy to come along and lend their support if they are able to do so. We will be publicising the walk nearer the date, in outlets around Glasgow such as visitors centres and libraries, and if you want to use the above listing to publicise the event in your networks you would be very welcome to do so.

2017 Subscriptions

Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fell due on 1st January 2017 (except for those who have joined since the start of the winter session). A subscription renewal form is enclosed for those who haven't yet paid; email recipients have received a separate reminder by email. We would be grateful if you could pay your subscription as soon as possible, to save us having to send further reminders.

Gift Aid

HMRC require that, from April 6th 2016, Gift Aid declarations include the following text: "I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference."

Previously it seems that charities might have been responsible for paying any difference.

We have still to receive signed new GA forms from many members who had previously signed up for Gift Aid; we enclose a blank SA form with this Newsletter (email recipients have received a separate reminder).

We would of course encourage others to sign a declaration as well – the form is also available on our website at

www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/documents/application_ga.doc

- you don't need to complete the 'application for membership' section as well of course.

North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood

Richard Weddle

This naturally re-wilded area of former blaes football pitches and tennis courts, between Clouston Street and Kelbourne Street in Kelvinside, has been adopted by the local community in recent years as a community green-space and outdoor education area.

I am pleased to report that their recent appeal against a proposal to develop the area for housing has been successful, ensuring the continuation of their activities, which include growing vegetables in raised beds for food-banks, for community events and as a general 'back garden' area for local children, as well as those from more deprived areas not so very far away. It fulfils a need for an informal green-space in the area, which is not met by the nearby more formal Botanic Gardens.

At a 'mini-bioblitz' organised by RSPB's Giving Nature a Home team last year some 60 species were found, though there is plenty of scope to add to that list with further visits, particularly as the area matures. Now the site is 'official' I'll make the species list available in the 'Biodiversity' section of the GNHS website in the next week or two.

Though no more than 2 ha in area, it is well worth a visit, if only to witness the level of activity – relatively formal daily toddler groups and classes from local (and not so local) schools, as well as informal visits from local residents and people nearby Maryhill. The site is being proposed as a model for other green-spaces in other cities as well as in other parts of Glasgow.

"What we need is a fundamental shift in understanding that green space within cities is important," says Emily Cutts, a researcher who has been involved with the campaign since its inception (*The Guardian Online*).

See www.facebook.com/northkelvinmeadow/ and www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=growing%20north%20kelvin%20meadow

New Members

Richard Weddle

At a recent Council meeting it was suggested that I, as Membership Secretary, publish a list of recently joined members in the Newsletter. Of course since the Data Protection Act we can't publish full details, so I'll restrict myself to names and general area. Since the start of the winter session we have welcomed the following new members: Ashleigh Wylie (Glasgow), John Halpin (Kelvindale), Deborah Davy (Charing Cross), Louise Smith (Rutherglen) and Rob Strang (Eaglesham). We hope you will make them welcome at meetings; and, in view of some relatively poor attendances at recent meetings, it would be good if you could encourage someone you know to join the Society.

Bicentenary of Glasgow Botanic Gardens

Richard Weddle

This year marks the bicentenary of the founding of Glasgow Botanic Gardens by Thomas Hopkirk and colleagues; the original site was at Sandyford at the west end of Sauchiehall Street, and it relocated to Kelvinside in 1842.

There will be a number of events throughout the year, including two GNHS excursions (details in the next Newsletter). The main event will be on Saturday May 20th (the exact 200th anniversary of the opening) – it will be a large public event which will include many of the groups and organisations that utilise the Botanic Gardens for some of their activities. GNHS will have a display in the marquee, and will also contribute to a display in the Kibble Palace which will run from May 12th-30th.

It is also 20 years since a GNHS project entitled 'On the Wildside: the Natural History of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens' which was reported in *The Glasgow Naturalist* 23 (3), 1998 and 23 (4) 1999. The 2017 excursions I referred to are intended to update the findings of the 1997 excursions, but not all the 1997 sightings originated from excursions – some members also visited throughout the year, and noted their sightings.

In the meantime I have updated the species list for the site from the records in Glasgow Museums Biological Record Centre database –

www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/biodiversity/gbg_splist.pdf - so that you can see what hasn't been recorded since 1997, in the hope that it will stimulate individual visits throughout the year; please let us know what you see (email info@gnhs.org.uk)

There seems to be plenty of scope for updating the list, both in terms of adding new species, and re-finding those that haven't been recorded since before the millennium. I should also point out that some of the non-native invertebrates were recorded in the glasshouses, and that the list (generally) doesn't include 'planted' species. There will be more on this topic in the next Newsletter, and I'll be notifying those members who have email about many of the events as we get nearer the time.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd March 2017 please.

Thank you very much to all the contributors who have made the Newsletters so interesting and worthwhile publishing. Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names, and use Verdana font, size 12 points.

If sending photos, please submit only a few as separate jpg files (not as part of a Word document), and make them under 100Kb each for emailing).

GNHS AGM

Roger Downie

The Society will hold its 87th AGM on Tuesday 14th March at 6.30pm in the Boyd Orr Building, University of Glasgow. We hope that all members will make an effort to attend. The AGM gives an opportunity to review the Society's activities over the last year, and to consider suggestions for the future. It also gives all members the chance to scrutinise how well the Council has managed the Society's affairs, especially our finances.

I come to the end of my term as President and Bob Gray to his as vice-president at this AGM, so there will be elections. George Paterson has also resigned from his position as zoology convenor, so we need someone willing to step into that role. If any member is interested in taking on a role on Council, at whatever level, do let us know: we will be very happy to discuss with you what the different roles involve.

After the business of the AGM has been completed, Ann Ainsworth, curator of geology at Kelvingrove Museum, will talk on Glasgow Museums' geology collections. Later in the year, she will lead an excursion to explore the collections. I hope to see you all there.

Excursion Reports

Neilston, 4th September 2016

James Milner-White

One high point of the Neilston outing was finding several harvestman, *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, as illustrated below. It is easy to identify because of the forked pedipalps, which are unforked in other harvestmen. Pedipalps are the



Harvestman *Dicranopalpus ramosus*

harvestman's name for what look like antennae. Richard Weddle tells me it is a new UK species that has been moving north in Britain over the last few decades and is now common in the Glasgow area, especially in gardens. In this picture it seems to have six legs like an insect, but if you look carefully you can see the base of one of the missing front legs, showing that it is an Arachnid, like a spider. It must have lost two. However the picture does show the forked pedipalps.

A second visit to Neilston, along the same route, is planned for Saturday 21st May 2017 with the Clarkston and East Kilbride SWT group. GNHS members are welcome to attend. We meet in the car park outside the Neilston sports centre at 10.30 and finish at 13.00. The path circumnavigates Neilston, beside

Crofthead Mill, traversing the grounds of Cowden Hall, seen below from the north, which was demolished in 1965; relics of the garden, now a park with some

interesting trees, persist. After this the track passes by retting pools for preparing flax from the 18th Century, and then goes up and along the Midge Hole Glen.



The former Cowden Hall, Neilston

Kelvingrove Park, West of the River Kelvin, 7th July 2016

Bob Gray

This event was attended by nine members and was a follow-up to last year's trip which was to the east of the River Kelvin. About 284 trees or groups of trees were mapped in 2016 compared to some 362 the year before. As these numbers often refer to 3 or more taxa and, on occasion, small plantations/riverside plantings, the number of trees growing in this 35 ha (85 acre) park is quite considerable. In the report of our first park visit in 2006, also to Kelvingrove, it was written "the parks of Glasgow contain a plethora of tree taxa, many of which are still waiting to be 'discovered'". This comment still applies.



(1) *Platanus* x *hispanica* 'Pyramidalis' W1

We met at the north end of Kelvin Way and discussed the origin of London planes, which here form a long avenue. They are considered to be the first intercontinental hybrid, the parents being the Eastern (*Platanus orientalis*) and Western (*P. occidentalis*) planes and dating, it is thought, from the middle of the 17th Century. It is famously pollution resistant, on account of its peeling bark, but one of its drawbacks is the way in which its surface roots

lift pavements, as can be seen in Kelvin Way. A potential problem is the spread through France of plane tree wilt or canker stain of plane caused by the fungus *Ceratocystis platani*. It is believed to have been brought into the country from the US on infected ammunition boxes during the 2nd World War. Affected trees have to be destroyed by burning. Thus far it is reported to have travelled as far north as Paris. This particular clone in Kelvingrove seems to be 'Pyramidalis', having three distinctive points to its palmate leaves (1). The three biggest, one at the Honeyman Garden and two at the Partick Bridge entrance, have been measured. The easterly one at the entrance has the largest girth. The garden, named after Tom Honeyman who brought the Dali painting of *Christ of St John of the Cross* to Glasgow, was established by the Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society in 1972, the year after his death.



(2) *Quercus frainetto*



(3) Norway maple *Acer platanoides*

At the north end of Kelvin Way on its west side is a fine Hungarian oak, *Quercus frainetto*, a suffragette memorial tree planted in 1918 (2) and voted Scotland's Tree of the Year in 2015. Its breast height girth is 296 cm (118"). So its growth rate is close to 1" per year. On the other side of the Way the primary school grounds contain a few interesting trees, including a fine hornbeam hedge. Alongside the Way is a row (3) of Norway maple, *Acer platanoides*, a particularly striking lemon green when

in full bloom in spring. (4) Nearby, in the park, we came across some Highclere holly, *Ilex x altaclarensis*, which is usually a male clone, but some berries were spotted, which indicated the female clone, 'Wilsonii'.

(4) Norway maple *Acer platanoides* in bloom



We left the Kelvin Way turning west along the path near the park's northern boundary.

At the steps leading up to the university campus may be found 3 grafted weeping ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Pendula', in which the common ash rootstock is growing vigorously at the expense of the grafted specimens. (5) Some drastic pruning is needed. A short distance along the north side of the path and growing amongst many Lawson's cypresses,

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana, are several yellow cypresses, 'Lutea', as well as an occasional Sawara cypress, *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Plumosa', the most common clone of these cypresses and introduced from Japan in 1861 by Robert Fortune.

Farther on, to the south of the path we came across a golden ash, *F. excelsior* 'Jaspidea', a modern, vigorous clone. Beside the Port Sunlight cottages (relics of the Great Exhibitions held in the park in 1888, 1901 and 1911) grows a row of seven, fairly recently planted, yellow Monterey cypresses, *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Goldcrest'.

At the western, Partick Bridge gate we turned round to follow the riverside path in a roughly easterly direction, passing the Snow Bridge, the oldest surviving river crossing in the area. Near here a few sizeable Turkey oak, *Quercus cerris*, may be found growing between the path and the river. Farther on, growing on the north side of the path grow a fine example of Erman's birch, *Betula ermanii*, a younger Swedish birch, *B. pendula* 'Laciniata' with cut leaves and a specimen of the Japanese named Keaki, *Zelkova serrata*, related to the elms. A number of white willows, *Salix alba*, growing along the riverbank here were controversially felled. The reason, however, was that their roots were being exposed by river erosion in this area. The bank has now been strengthened with mesh bound rocks and a considerable amount of common ash regeneration is evident.



(5) Weeping ash
Fraxinus excelsior 'Pendula'



(6) Hinoki cypress
Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Crippsii'

On the riverbank near here grows a naturally regenerated sweet chestnut, *Castanea sativa*, relatively unusual in the Glasgow area as we are close to the northern extent of its natural range. Just west of the Honeyman Garden grows a silver pendent lime, *Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris'. A short walk from here leads to the Lister statue around which may be found a few relatively unusual trees including a yellow Hinoki cypress, *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Crippsii' (6), a moss cypress, *C. pisifera*

'Squarrosa' with red bark and all juvenile foliage, a hybrid juniper, *Juniperus x media*, a pencil cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, and the five-needled Macedonian pine, *Pinus peuce* (7).

By the Kelvin statue trees found included a yellow Lawson's, *C. lawsoniana* 'Lane' and two glaucous trees, Meyer's juniper, *Juniperus squamata*, 'Meyeri' and a blue Lawson's cypress, *C. lawsoniana* 'Triomf van Boskoop'.



(7) Macedonian pine, *Pinus peuce*

We crossed Kelvin Way and followed the riverside path towards the footbridge. Beside this path, and replacing some controversially felled whitebeam, have been planted a row of the relatively rarely seen Japanese hornbeam, *Carpinus japonica*. They possess catkins that look like hops. (8) The onset of twilight prevented us from visiting the Museum side of the river. This was unfortunate as it also prevented us from seeing the five dawn redwoods, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, and several golden Irish yews, *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata aurea', which grow in the vicinity of the building.



The park contains many more fascinating specimen trees than there is space here to mention. Interested readers may obtain a copy of a tree map and list from the author. Additions and corrections would be welcome.

(8) Japanese hornbeam
Carpinus japonica

The Travelling Bug

Gill Smart

The owner of the towbar-fitting garage next to the Scottish Wildlife Trust's office in Irvine occasionally pops in with wildlife questions. In early January, he was dismantling a car bumper and dozens of crawling insects fell out. He wanted to know if they were fleas or anything else that could bite him. I took a sample and was quite surprised to discover they were true bugs (hemiptera); a species called *Heterogaster urticae*, sometimes referred to as the nettle bug. This was confirmed by Dr Joe Botting and Dr Tristan Bantock the authors of the British Bugs website www.britishbugs.org.uk whom I contacted at Richard Weddle's suggestion.



Heterogaster urticae
By ©entomart, Attribution,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=823070>.jpg

H. urticae is a ground-bug of open habitats that can form noticeable aggregations on its host plant, the common nettle *Urtica dioica*. The car in question must have spent time next to a nettle patch or possibly some wetland. The dark and light patterning on this species legs and body are quite distinctive. Erect hairs on its head and pronotum are diagnostic. Overwintering adults emerge to mate in the spring.

H. urticae is rare in Scotland so it was thought that they are more likely to have travelled to Ayrshire from elsewhere in their mobile habitat, having taken shelter in it at some point last year in order to overwinter. Mr Towbar undertook

some detective work and found out that, while the car came from Wemyss Bay, and was purchased from the local garage, it had been sourced for the customer from a dealership in Bristol in August 2016. The Bristol area appears to have been the car's home since 2015. There is strong evidence, therefore, that the bugs are from down south but there are still questions to be answered. Is August not quite early to enter hibernation? Had they been generally living in the bumper so just carried on their life-cycle on the road? With bugs extremely under-recorded in Scotland, is *H. urticae* actually rare here, or just overlooked? The only way to find

out for sure would be to go looking in suitable habitat around Wemyss Bay next summer.

If they survive their time inside the garage's vacuum cleaner, the Irvine specimens may establish a new colony near the waste site they end up on. It's interesting to ponder how many insects get about the country in this way. It could be worth scheduling some GNHS outings to garages in industrial estates and the hinterland of landfill sites!

Basil Ribbons

David Palmar

As we go to press, information has come to light about the death of Basil Ribbons, botanist, member of the Andersonian Naturalists of Glasgow (as the GNHS was formerly called), and former Editor of *The Glasgow Naturalist*. This is simply a brief announcement and it is intended that a fuller appreciation will be made available in due course.

Coll Bird Festival, 12th-14th May 2017

David Palmar

The Inner Hebridean island of Coll has held a bird festival for the past few years.

Coll is a beautiful island which has a range of habitats from massive sand dunes and sweeping sandy beaches, to farmland and rocky and peaty moorland. Because of this range of habitats, it has a rich and fascinating birdlife which attracts visitors all year round. The Coll Bird Festival will introduce you to some of the key species of breeding and passage birds with guided walks and family activities from Friday to Sunday. Boat trips to neighbouring Lunga with its seabird city and through Gunna Sound between Coll and neighbouring Tiree offer an opportunity to spot a wide variety of wildlife and plant life.

There is photography workshop on Friday afternoon, talks on Friday evening, and the programme also includes a ceilidh and a beach clean.

Travel to Coll is easy – three hours by CalMac ferry from Oban.

There is accommodation in the Coll Bunkhouse, a modern facility, and the festival is centred around An Cridhe (the Heart in Gaelic), the fairly new community centre in Arinagour.

Details of all the activities can be found easily by searching for Coll Bird Festival. The full programme can be seen [here](http://collbunkhouse.com/coll-bird-festival-may-2017/), and there is also a link to information on accommodation: <http://collbunkhouse.com/coll-bird-festival-may-2017/>

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