



## GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2023

Newsletter Editor  
David Palmar

Next Newsletter Deadline  
22 July 2023

GNHS is a Registered  
Scottish Charity

Website: [www.gnhs.org.uk/](http://www.gnhs.org.uk/)

### Talks: 2022-23 session and the future

Roger Downie

Meetings in the Boyd Orr Building, Lecture theatre A, Glasgow University at 7pm:

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April: Andrew Brownlow** on 'Dead useful? What can strandings tell us about marine wildlife health?'

Andrew has veterinary degrees from Dublin and Edinburgh. Since 2009, he has directed the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme, and is also now a senior lecturer at the University of Glasgow, as well as chair of the International Whaling Commission's expert panel on strandings. He is interested in developing techniques to improve the quality and value of data collected by stranding programmes, and is a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust fellow for work on optimising marine stranding networks.

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May:** two talks by younger scientists -

**Jonny Yardley** on 'Identifying vertebrate host species contributing to Lyme disease emergence in an atypical hotspot within the Outer Hebrides'.

The Uists, Barra and Harris have Lyme disease incidences of about 600 cases per 100,000 people, around 100x the Scottish average. To identify which species contribute to persistence of the pathogen (*Borellia burgdorferi*), many animals have had their tick burdens counted and tissues tested for the pathogen. The evidence collected by Jonny and his colleagues is feeding into a community vote on South Uist on whether to cull the entire deer population!

**Emily Waddell** on 'Restoring resilient ecosystems: future restoration programmes should enhance ecological complexity and emergent properties'.

Emily studied Zoology at Glasgow, and then undertook a traineeship with Froglife, before a PhD at York on invasive plant impacts on Bornean tropical forests. She is now a postdoctoral fellow based at the University of Stirling, working on a major restoration ecology project headed by Professor Kirsty Park.

### The future

I am currently working on the 2023-24 programme, and would welcome speaker suggestions from members. As many of you will know we had a useful discussion at the AGM on in-person vs. on-line vs. hybrid meetings. Cost is the big problem for hybrid meetings. Comments on this issue from members are also welcome.

# The Scottish Herpetological Conference, 2023

## Preliminary Announcement and Call for Short Contributions and Posters

Following the publication of *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland* (McInerny and Minting, 2016), a conference on current research and future challenges was held in Glasgow, June 2018, with the Proceedings published in *The Glasgow Naturalist* (volume 27 supplement, 2018). Now that the worst of the pandemic seems to be over, it feels like a good time to look again at the latest work going on in herpetological research and conservation in Scotland.

**Time and Place:** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, University of Glasgow.

### **Talks:**

Angela Julian on the national adder survey

Kathy Wormald on Froglife's Forth Valley and Fife projects

Colin Dunlop on the Gartcosh local nature reserve's first 21 years

Jenny Tse-Leon on protecting the UK protected species list

Myles O'Reilly on marine turtles as vectors of exotic fauna

Ehm Downie on the recent Greater Glasgow Pond surveys

Catherine Whatley on land use and water quality effects on frogs

Jude Wilson on the impact of beaver re-introduction on amphibians

Daniele Muir on pond surveys in Tayside

John Smout on viviparity evolution in lizards

Fairlie Kirkpatrick Baird on the impact of drought (in Scotland!) on amphibians

Chris Cathrine on non-native amphibians and reptiles in Scotland

John Howieson on using eDNA to detect coastal environment amphibians.

**Discussions:** optional small group facilitated discussions on topical issues, including whether the international trade in wild-caught amphibians and reptiles should be banned.

**Posters, Stalls, Specimens and Short Talks:** We will have exhibition space in the Hunterian Zoology Museum for stalls and posters (there will also be herpetological specimens on show), and plan to have a time slot for short presentations (5 mins each). If you have a topic you would like to present either as a short talk or a poster, please contact Nicole Digruber by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Proceedings:** Conference Proceedings will be published in *The Glasgow Naturalist*, including the content of short talks and posters.

**Registration and Refreshments:** The conference will be free to attend, including provision of light refreshments. Watch out for conference booking information.

**Organisers:** Roger Downie, Ehm Downie, Chris McInerny, Erik Paterson, Nicole Digruber, Debbie McNeill (Glasgow Natural History Society and Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group).

## **Summer Social, Tuesday 13th June**

**Pat Thomson**

The meal is booked for Elena's Taverna in Old Dumbarton Road at Yorkhill for 18:30. Meal will cost £25.

The offer includes a selection of starters of tapas, so no need to select beforehand and main of paella.

Choice of vegetarian and or fish/meat for both the starters and paella.

Please let Pat Thomson know if you would like to come.

It would be helpful to indicate to Pat if you would like the vegetarian option, or if you have any dietary requirements, so that she can pass this on to the restaurant.

Meet at the park entrance on Old Dumbarton Road at the Junction of Ferry Road and Benalder Street at 5pm, for an optional walk round Yorkhill Park beforehand, led by Scott Shanks. It is possible to attend this part of the event even if you do not wish to go for the meal.

Yorkhill Park has a new rain-garden installed since we last visited.

## **2023 Subscriptions**

**Richard Weddle**

Subscriptions fell due on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 (except for those who have joined since September 2022). Members who pay by standing order need take no action; others will receive a subscription renewal form either as an email attachment or in the envelope containing this newsletter.

**We would be particularly grateful if members who subscribe to The Glasgow Naturalist could pay their subscription as soon as possible, because this year's issue is expected to be mailed out soon.**

If you do receive a reminder, and will be paying by cheque, it would still be best to send it to my home address: 89 Novar Drive (1/2), Glasgow G12 9SS, as our visits to the Graham Kerr Building are less frequent than they were pre-Covid. This information will be given in the reminder, but I thought it worth repeating.

## **Excursion Programme 2023**

**Alison Moss**

All meetings or excursions attended by society members or their guests are entirely at their own risk. Participants should follow any safety advice given by the leader. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

Notification will be circulated prior to each meeting. Please check for any changes or additional information. For reasons of personal safety, would all members and friends attending excursions please supply the leader with their mobile number and have their phone with them on excursions. Any problems with this, or if you have to cancel, notify the leader on or before the day, as appropriate.

Covid - Any remaining Covid restrictions or advice will be observed with the safety of the whole group being paramount. If you test positive or have any symptoms

which you feel might cause health problems within the group, please be considerate and do not attend.

If you have transport problems, make this known to the leader and it may be possible to arrange help. There is no obligation to attend the whole excursion so long as the leader is kept informed for your own safety and the integrity of the group.

There is no charge for most excursions. However, the full amount of any costs will be payable in advance. If you have to cancel, the cost will only be refundable if a replacement is found.

## **April**

**Sun 30<sup>th</sup> 10am, Brownside Braes.** Joint GNHS and Paisley Naturalists, leader, Tom Byars. Focus on birds, particularly Lesser Whitethroat. Meet at Brownside Farm car park, Caplethill Road, Paisley, PA2 7TR, NS48887 60692.

**Directions** - head east out of Paisley on the B774, Neilston Road. This becomes the Caplethill Road. The car park is on Brownside Farm Lane which is 2nd turn on the right after Glenfield Road. This car park can hold 10+ cars and there is also parking on the grass verge before the car park if it is full.

**Brownside Braes** plays host to many bird species and is important locally for Willow Warbler, Song Thrush, Bullfinch and Linnet. Main focus is to look and listen for Lesser Whitethroats which start to arrive on their breeding territories at this time. Chances in Renfrewshire may be slim, but task of surveying is vitally important in the study of Lesser Whitethroats. Paths may be slippy and steep in places - wear suitable footwear and bring snack or lunch.

**Leader** Tom Byars

## **May**

**Sat 13<sup>th</sup>, 11am, Ayr Gorge Woodlands,** Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve, bluebells, mixed interest. Paul Cobb will be on hand to show us galls and leaf mines. Meet at the entrance to the Gorge in Failford village, NS45972615 on the B743 between Ayr and Mauchline. Meet at the bus shelter opposite the Failford Inn. Parking is limited and the Reserve is popular at weekends, so please car share if possible.

**The Gorge** consists of a steep ravine of sandstone cliffs in deciduous woodland. Steep paths so wear suitable boots. Bring packed lunch.

**Leader** Gill Smart

**Thu 18<sup>th</sup>, 7pm, Cowlairs Park,** mainly trees. Meet at North entrance, off Killearn Street, NS59296757. Easy walking on park paths.

**Leader** Bob Gray

**Sat 27<sup>th</sup>, 11am, Newlands Park,** mixed interest, including pond. Meet near Dandelion Café NS57096063, just inside the main Lubnaig Road entrance to the Park, NS57136058 (100yds north of Airlour Road). G43 2RY.

**Directions:** from M77 J2 follow signs to Pollokshaws as far as Pollokshaws Toll, (the roundabout after Pollok Golf Club). Take the 2nd exit (to Cathcart) on to Nether Auldhause Road (B762); continue for 1 mile, crossing Kilmarnock Road - B762 now becomes Merrylee Road. There, the road takes a sharp left turn, just

after a traffic lights warning. This is Lubnaig Road. Park is on left hand side with entrance about 250 yds along. Kerbside parking. Easy walking on park paths. Bring refreshments, or use Dandelion Cafe.

**Leader** Alison Moss

## **June**

**Sun 11th, 11am, Shewalton Wood**, SWT Reserve, mixed interest. Meet at Reserve car park, NS3373 3567. If it is full, it is ok to park across the road at the north end of the paper mill car park at NS33663563.

**Directions** - leave the A78 at the Newhouse Interchange. If you're approaching from the south, the first sign says Irvine A737 (green sign), then the next one says Meadowhead, (green sign). If approaching from the north, look for a white sign with Meadowhead. On the roundabout you want the B7080, marked Meadowhead, Papermill, Riverside. At the next roundabout (Oldhall), take the last exit. It is marked Papermill, Meadowhead and is a dead end. Go along till you see a white sign with UPM Welcome to Caledonian Paper mill. The Reserve car park is immediately down the hill on the left, just behind that sign. There is a height barrier.

**The Reserve** contains woodlands, wetlands and grassland areas. Reserve hosts small mammal, amphibians, and birds, including raptors. There are paths, but boots recommended particularly if venturing off piste. Bring packed lunch. **Leader** Alison Moss

**Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> - Yorkhill Park and Summer Social** - see information above.

**Sat 24th, 11am, The Saltings**, mixed interest, including wild flower meadow and Forth and Clyde Canal. Meet at car park on the west of Erskine Ferry Road, Old Kilpatrick, NS465724, G60 5EU. Directions - from Erskine Bridge exit or if heading west on A82, take the first exit on the left, Bowling/Old Kilpatrick. Turn left on A814 to Old Kilpatrick. Continue to lights at Erskine Ferry Road, and there, turn right. The car park is on your right. There are paths throughout, but strong footwear is always recommended as even paths are often muddy and meadows and woodland to be explored. Bring packed lunch. **Leader** Pam Murdoch

## **July**

**Sat 8th, 11am, Cochno Reservoir**, mixed interest including Exmoor ponies, Osprey, butterflies and mixed botanical habitats. Meet at Auchnacraig car park, NS50307401, G81 5QW.

**Directions**- From the west, come off the A82 at Duntocher, turn left just after Esso filling station, Faifley signpost, on to Cochno Road. Keep heading up until you reach a right hand bend, keep on main Cochno Road until you reach the junction. Swing right and car park is immediately on your left in the woods. From Bearsden, get on to road heading to Duntocher. At the roundabout, turn right, then immediately right on to Cochno Road. Follow this until you reach Auchnacraig car park on your right. This excursion is entirely weather dependent and will only take place in suitable conditions. It involves a pathway climb to Cochno Reservoir and rough paths thereafter. Walking boots and sensible clothing essential. Bring packed lunch. Please only consider attending if you can cope with these conditions.

**Leader** Alison Moss

**Thu 6th, 7pm, Robroyston Park East**, mainly trees. Meet at south-east entrance on Quarrywood Road at NS6295 6775.

**Leader** Bob Gray

**Sun 23rd, 11am, Ardmore Peninsula**, mixed interest, coastal path, grassland, shoreline, woodland. Meet at car park by shore, NS324786, G82 5HE.

**Directions**- take A82 till Dumbarton turnoff, A814. Continue on A814 through Dumbarton and Cardross. Continue approx 2 miles until see Ardardan Garden Centre/ Monty's Farm Park on your left. Continue a short distance and take first turn on left. Proceed downhill, over the level crossing until you reach the car park by the shore.

**The coastal path** round the peninsula has been improved; however, walking boots are best to allow shoreline, grassland and damp meadow / woodland to be explored. Bring packed lunch. There are facilities and excellent shop and restaurant at Ardardan.

**Leader** Alison Moss

## **August**

**Sun. 6th, 11am, Portencross**, mixed interest. Meet at Portencross car park, NS1766 4882. The turning to Portencross is at the north end of the A78 through Seamill, West Kilbride, signposted Portencross B7048. The car park is on your left at the end of the road. There are no facilities here. We will head north towards Hunterston. Stout shoes or boots essential as paths are rough and venturing off them rougher. **The area** is rich in wild flowers and insects and includes the possibility of newly discovered harvest mouse nests. It includes woodland, some shore, meadows and brown field habitats.

**Leader** Gill Smart

**Late Summer - Autumn** - as usual, for the rest of the season, there will be at least 2 joint meetings with the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group. Their programme retains a degree of flexibility to respond to the whims of the fungus world. There is also the possibility we might include galls and autumn invertebrates in these meetings with the expert help of Paul Cobb. This aspect often overlaps with fungal associations and would be an interesting addition to our records.

## **Participation at Forthcoming Events**

**Roger Downie**

GNHS is often asked to participate in events organised by other groups and organisations. Such participation allows us to reach out to sometimes large numbers of people of all ages to show what we are about, and may help us recruit new members.

To help with this, we have an attractive roller banner, display materials for mounting on boards, some 'mystery' specimens aimed at children, and information/recruitment leaflets. Sometimes the events link several organisations to provide information/education on biodiversity (such as the annual 'Kelvin at the Kibble' event). Some events include a 'bioblitz' where attendees are encouraged to record as many species as possible. Others are aimed at schools.

During the pandemic, invitations to attend such events largely dried up, but we are beginning to receive invitations again and want to be able to participate as much as

possible. This is where members can help. We would like to re-establish a group of contacts: members willing to help with such events on occasion. No-one would be expected to be available every time, so the larger the group of the willing, the better. If you feel you can help, please contact Richard Weddle.

We should add that participation in these events can be very enjoyable, meeting people willing to be enthused and interacting with other participant groups, and that visitors often pass on useful sightings/observations/records that we would otherwise miss.

## **Forthcoming events are:**

## April 29th: City Nature Challenge, Kelvingrove Park, bioblitz

April 30th: City Nature Challenge, Hamiltonhill Claypits, bioblitz with GNHS table

## May 16th: Cashel, Loch Lomondside, bio-recording

June 3rd: Scottish Herpetological Conference, Graham Kerr building, University of Glasgow

July 1st: Cashel, 'Midsummer Bash'- more recording.

# City Nature Challenge Events in Glasgow

## Richard Weddle

RSPB Scotland are encouraging people to get closer to nature by taking part in this year's City Nature Challenge across greater Glasgow over the four days Fri 28 April – Mon 1 May. The City Nature Challenge is an international effort for people to find and document plants and wildlife in cities across the globe.

You don't need any previous experience of nature recording – all you need is your phone with the iNaturalist app on it. The only criteria for submitting records are that photos must be of wild species so no pets or garden plants. No expert knowledge needed as the app will help to ID findings, or photos can be shared for an answer with the global community who use the app.

**Kelvingrove Sat 29<sup>th</sup> April 12 noon-4pm**, a bioblitz with experienced recorders on hand to identify specimens, and lots of family fun is promised.

**Dawsholm Sat 29<sup>th</sup> April:** Friends of Glasgow's Local Nature Reserves are asking people to come along on the day, take photos and submit them to the CNC web site ensuring that they log the photos as being from Dawsholm Park LNR. There will be two members to greet visitors, and Paul Baker will also be present recording birds.

**Claypits Sun 30th April: start 10am.** GNHS will have a table. We hope there will be moths from the moth trap to show; 11am pond dipping with Louise from Froglife; there may also be a bat walk in the evening. Otherwise people are encouraged to go for a walk and record what they see on iNaturalist; there will be several experienced recorders on hand, to advise on any finds.

## GNHS Field Equipment

## Richard Weddle

As we are within sight of the next field-recording season, it seems a good time to remind everyone that the Society possesses a number of items of equipment for

the use of members. Many of these were purchased with the aid of a recent generous bequest from Thomas E Kinsey.

The list indicates that some items are 'in use' but which may available to others for a short time; those marked 'occasional use' will usually be available for temporary use by others. However, there are also some items that have been purchased for particular research projects, and will not be available until the end of those projects. Items such as nets and sorting trays are sometimes needed for GNHS field excursions and other such events.

Items not marked 'in use', are stored in the Zoology Museum in the Graham Kerr Building. If you'd like to borrow any item, contact me in the first instance; or if appropriate, I can put you in touch with the current holder of the equipment. If for any reason I'm not available, contact Mike Rutherford.

GNHS Council do stipulate that requests to use items for any significant length of time should be supported by an outline of the project for which they are required, and that the results should be submitted for publication in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

I should also point out that though the bat-detector is quite easy to use, it requires some training and experience to interpret what it picks up, and the Longworth traps can only legally be used by a trained and licensed operator.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Availability</b>	<b>In care of</b>
15 compound microscopes	occasional use	Zoology Museum
3 dissecting microscopes	1 in use / enquire	Zoology Museum
10 Longworth mammal traps	occasional use	Countryside Ranger Service
Batbox Duet bat detector	usually available	Richard Weddle
2 Garmin eTrex GPS	1 in use	Richard Weddle
Skinner moth trap (mains operated) *	available	Zoology Museum
Heath moth trap (battery operated) *	occasional use	Richard Weddle
2 pond nets: large / small	occasional use	Zoology Museum
sweep nets: 1 large/1 small	occasional use	Zoology Museum
3 Butterfly nets	1 in frequent use	Richard Weddle / Zoology Museum
31 Beating-tray	occasional use	Richard Weddle
Emergence Traps (80) (for hatching pupae etc)	most available	Zoology Museum

3 sorting trays	1 in occasional use	Richard Weddle
4 remote video cameras	available	Zoology Museum
Camera traps (3)	enquire <sup>#</sup>	Stewart White
Torch (1million CP)	often available	Richard Weddle
2 Hanna 98129 pH/Conductivity/ Temperature Testers	in use	Various

\* there are additional Skinner and Heath traps owned by Butterfly Conservation SW Scotland, which may be available for use by GNHS members.

# available by arrangement

## Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre Report

**Richard Weddle and Robyn Haggard**

We have been thinking it might be interesting for members to hear about some of the new records from the Clyde area that are being added to the Glasgow Museums BRC database.

Records of seven new species have been added since the beginning of 2023:

spider	<i>Agyneta subtilis</i>
insect - true fly	<i>Phytomyza agromyzina</i>
insect - moth	<i>Cameraria ohridella</i>
insect - moth	<i>Ochsenheimeria taurella</i>
insect - moth	<i>Epinotia subsequana</i>
insect - moth	<i>Grapholita lunulana</i>
fungus	<i>Guignardia aesculi</i>

The moth *Cameraria ohridella* is commonly known as the Horse-chestnut leaf-miner. It is not surprising to find it in Glasgow as it's been gradually moving north, and has been present in Scotland for eight years or so.

The fungus *Guignardia aesculi* is also associated with Horse-chestnut and forms 'blotches' on the leaves. These blotches are quite different from the leaf-mines of the micro-moth. Both were recorded in the Botanic Gardens; we'll be giving more information about how to identify them in the next newsletter (when they're likely to have appeared), and asking members to send us records from other locations. Of course if anyone has already noticed either of these species in the area, please email with details.

In all 21,492 records have been added to the database so far this year, bringing the total number of records to 972,490.

## **A murder in the garden!**

**Richard Sutcliffe**

On 7<sup>th</sup> March I was sitting at our dining table having breakfast, when there was a large thud from the window. Two male Dunnocks had been chasing a female and one had clearly not turned in time. Concerned for its welfare, I looked out of the window to see if it was on the ground below the window. Nothing was there, but on the garage roof was a somewhat dazed male Dunnock. I moved to the kitchen window for a better view. It was sitting on the roof and was making no attempt to fly off. I thought I'd keep an eye on it for a while to see how it got on. However, a few seconds later a magpie landed on a fat feeder we have on a wire between the house and garage and proceeded to feed. It then moved onto the garage roof. At this point it took no interest in the still dazed Dunnock and was looking away from it. Very soon though it turned and realising the Dunnock wasn't reacting, hopped over to it. It was all over in a couple of seconds! A sharp stab from the magpie's beak and then it picked up the small body and flew off with it. It all happened so fast I didn't get a chance to photograph it. I'd got as far as getting my phone out of my pocket, but there wasn't time to take any pictures. It just shows how birds like magpies can take advantage when an opportunity arises.

## **Sample sites wanted**

**Emma Plant**

I am looking for sample sites as part of my PhD project to measure plant-pollinator interactions in gardens and allotments throughout Glasgow. Specifically, I am researching which management regimes influence plant-pollinator interactions and whether these practices change which pollinators dominate the interactions. To do this I will be collecting data at each sample site once a month from May until September, using camera traps and sweep netting. If you have a garden or allotment and are interested in finding out what pollinators are there, consider signing up to be a sample site! Please email for more information.

## **Early Bird**

**Paul Cobb**

On the 19th of March this year, just down the road from where I live in Catrine (Ayrshire), I saw a male Blackbird with a beakful of worms, and still scratching for more in a field gateway, which obviously implies it was feeding chicks - in mid March! This is the same stretch of road where over the last few years I have often seen a male Blackbird in the evening after dark, foraging and singing under the streetlights.

## Book Review

The following book has been received for review:-

*"Edible Fungi of Britain and Northern Europe. How to Identify, Collect and Prepare"* Jens H. Petersen (2023). Wild Guides, Princeton University Press. 154pp HB, £17.99. ISBN 978-0-691-24519-5.

The first 47 pages of this profusely-illustrated book deal with general matters of fungus anatomy and spores, habitats and symbiosis, and a calendar for the most important edible species. There are do's and don'ts (including superstitions) and a section on how poisonous fungi actually cause harm. Twelve pages are devoted to collecting, cooking and preserving fungi.

The bulk of the book is devoted to important edible fungi, organised by groups. For each fungus, the account usually includes how they should be cooked and "tasting notes". Where there are inedible close relatives, or even toxic confusion species, this is pointed out and illustrated. Overall, the book features over 110 species.

It is hoped that a detailed review will appear in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

## BRISC Spring Conference 2023

**Robyn Haggard**

**Wednesday 26 April, 7pm**

Join us online for the Spring Conference. Speakers include Scott Shanks, talking about biological recording and outreach at Yorkhill Green Spaces in Glasgow, and Graeme Duncan on work to create a new Marine Recorder system. The Conference will be held online using Microsoft Teams.

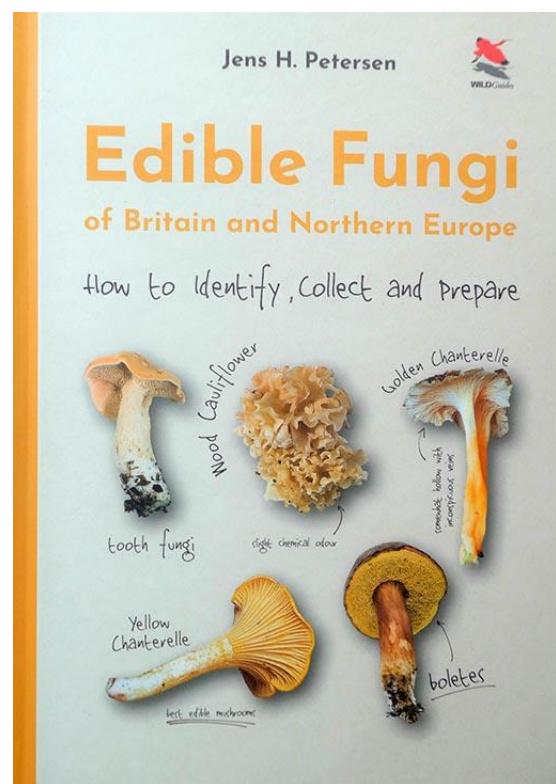
## UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme

**David Palmar**

The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Joint Nature Conservation Committee 'Pollinator Monitoring Scheme' is a useful way in which citizen scientists can make a contribution to conservation. There are two methods of counting pollinators - a 10 minute count or adopting a 1-km square for systematic surveys.

The simplest way to get involved is by taking part in the **10-minute Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count)**, which starts on 1 April, and can be done almost anywhere and any time in good weather until September. BTO, which is a partner in this scheme, is asking people to get involved if possible. If you're able to volunteer or promote the scheme locally to other volunteers, that would be great. All details are on the UKPOMS website.

## Anthony Payne



An exhibition open 10am to 6pm in the Kibble Glasshouse Glasgow Botanic Gardens illustrating some of the organisations concerned with the welfare of the river.

This year the theme is "Pollution". We hope to show the visiting public how aspects of pollution – materials, chemicals, sound, light, heat . . . . can adversely affect the river, its surroundings and its biodiversity. Much of this is a result of human activity; however people can, by changing their behaviour and with the help of the groups participating in the exhibition do something to alleviate the situation.

Participating organisations include Yorkhill Green Spaces, Friends of the Earth Glasgow, Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre /GNHS, Friends of the River Kelvin, Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Photoscot/Scottish Wildlife Trust.

The GNHS/ Biological Records Centre display will have photos of the Kelvin 'before and after' the recent sewage improvement works by Scottish Water in the Botanics area, and lists of species which have been recorded in the Kelvin Corridor in Glasgow over the years.

## **Robroyston Country Park, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2022**

**Bob Gray**

Ten members took part in this visit which started in the southwest corner of the park located in the northeast of the city. It was designated a local nature reserve (LNR) in 2006 and occupies an area of over 43 hectares. It possesses five main different habitats that support many different animals: open water, wetland, grassland, woodland and heathland<sup>1</sup>. It was woodland especially that we looked at. The trees, mainly poplars, willows and alders reflect the wet nature of most of the park.

Although most of the trees have been planted much natural regeneration is taking place. The soil parent material in the southwest of the park is Devensian glacial till laid down over 11.5 mya during the Quaternary era. Till has been deposited from a moving glacier and is sometimes called boulder clay, a mixture of clay and rock

fragments. Such soil consequently holds a lot of water.

Conspicuous near the southwest entrance were four balsam spire poplars (*Populus 'Balsam Spire'*)<sup>2</sup> of which two were very big. This tree is a female clone and is an artificial hybrid between the north American western and eastern balsam poplars. It exhibits hybrid vigour and towers over other trees. Its spire-like top develops into a distinctive spiky fan of steeply rising branches at the top of a long straight grey trunk as seen here. Its canker resistance makes it fairly abundant.



2. *Populus 'Balsam Spire'*



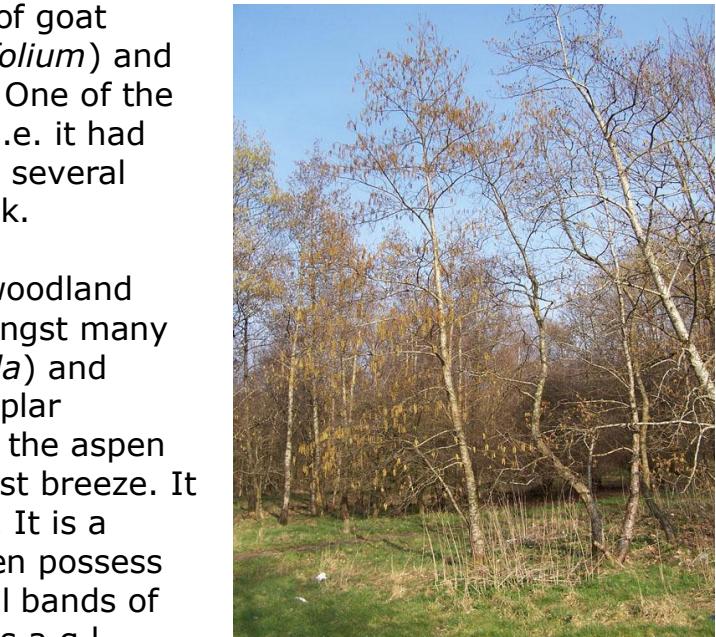
1. General view looking north

Nearby we encountered a small group of goat willows (*Salix caprea*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and three common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). One of the goat willows was a phoenix specimen, i.e. it had fallen to the ground and was producing several vertical shoots from the horizontal trunk.

Along the perimeter of the southwest woodland beside the curving path we found, amongst many other trees, two aspen (*Populus tremula*) and behind them a very spreading white poplar (*Populus alba*). As the specific name of the aspen indicates its leaves flutter in the slightest breeze. It suckers profusely and is rarely planted. It is a native tree. Both white poplar and aspen possess bark that has very noticeable horizontal bands of black diamonds down to about 2 metres a.g.l., below which the bark is more rugged. White poplar is the whitest tree in the landscape, likely introduced in mediaeval times from central Eurasia.



4. *Alnus cordata* male and female catkins



3. *Alnus cordata*

A short distance farther on a solitary, conspicuous black oak (*Quercus velutina*) has been planted. This tree grows from Ontario to southern USA and was introduced about 1800. It is fairly rare. Unlike the European "white oaks" the American black oak is part of the group of "red oaks" whose acorns take two years to mature rather than the one year of the "white oaks". We noticed the particularly glossy green, thick leaves.

Beyond here the margin understorey contained guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*)

and, surprisingly, sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) with its silvery leaves, which grows profusely on the sand dunes of East Lothian, a markedly different habitat from here. We then came across a group of Italian alders (*Alnus cordata*)<sup>3</sup>. A noticeable difference from the native common alder is the large size of the cone-like fruit<sup>4</sup> of the Italian alder. The specific name refers to the heart-shaped leaves.

The next significant tree we encountered was a particularly large and conspicuous white willow (*Salix alba*)<sup>5</sup>, part of a group of big willows. It is characterised by its lanceolate leaves that have silvery downy hairs beneath. It is thought to be native and grows particularly in wet areas along the course of rivers and on loch margins.



5. *Salix alba*



6. *Cornus alba 'Sibirica'*

On the other side of the path here on the corner grows a long row of Siberian dogwood (*Cornus alba 'Sibirica'*)<sup>6</sup>, a deciduous shrub with bright, coral-red stems.

At the next path junction grows another willow, a common osier (*Salix viminalis*)<sup>7</sup>, which used to be grown for basket weaving, making use of its long, flexible stems. Its entire leaves are narrower than those of the white willow. Between the two willows, and in the woodland behind, grows a tall hybrid poplar, at the base of which was growing a small sapling of what

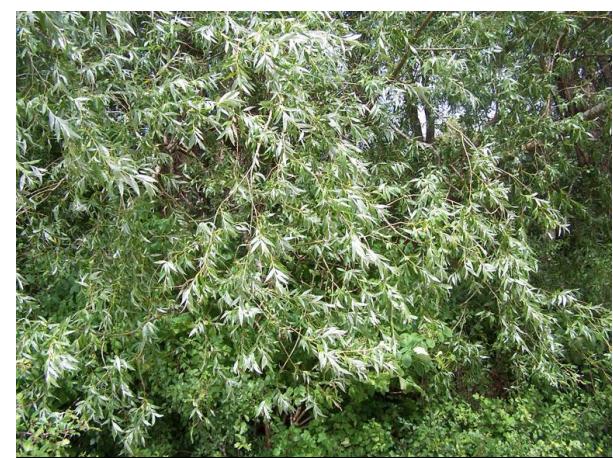
seemed to be a hybrid rowan (*Sorbus x thuringiaca*)<sup>8</sup>, a cross between rowan and common whitebeam. It has an occasional pair of leaflets at the base of a leaf, deep lobes towards the base and sharp teeth towards the pointed tip. If correctly identified this is a rare find.



8. *Sorbus thuringiaca*

At the other side of the path junction grow

many saplings of common alder<sup>9</sup>. Occasional putative parent alders grow in the vicinity.



7. *Salix viminalis*

Opposite these alder saplings grow yellow dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera 'Flaviramea'*)<sup>10</sup>, with brightly coloured stems and clusters of white flowers when we visited.



10. *Cornus stolonifera 'Flaviramea'*

Also growing there was a widely separated pair of hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*).

Superficially similar to beech, hornbeam can be distinguished by a bark<sup>11</sup> that looks like the forearm of someone with a clenched fist and the leaves are rougher than those of beech with more veins and a serrated margin. The fruits with three-lobed bracts are very distinctive<sup>12</sup> and copious in the case of the trees we looked at.



9. *Alnus glutinosa* saplings



11. *Carpinus betulus* trunk

Hornbeam was present during interglacial periods but was a late-coming arrival after the last Ice Age, its pollen first appearing apparently c. 5000 years ago. Traditionally it was extremely useful. It produces the best charcoal and, being the hardest European tree, very dense and close grained, it was used before iron for cogwheels, pulley blocks and the like.



12. *Carpinus betulus* fruits



13. *Populus. alba* seedlings

On the east side of the path here a white poplar was producing many seedlings<sup>13</sup> by vegetative propagation, a characteristic of this species.

At the park entrance next to Gadburn Primary four fine field maples (*Acer campestre*) grow. This is regarded as the only native maple and has the hardest of all maple timbers, excellent for fine carving.

By the school grow two 'Okame' cherries (*Prunus 'Okame'*)<sup>14</sup> and a purple leaved Myrobalan plum (*Prunus cerasifera 'Nigra'*). The deep pink of these cherry flowers appear early, about a month before the leaves. It is a 1947 hybrid between two Japanese cherries.

Before we headed back to our starting point we



14. *Prunus 'Okame'*

came across a grey alder (*Alnus incana*)<sup>15</sup> with its characteristic grey bark, hairy grey young shoots and deeply toothed leaf margins. It is a native of Europe and the Caucasus, introduced in 1780 and is fairly commonly planted in shelterbelts in this country.



15. *Alnus incana* fruits and leaves

Our visit covered only part of the west side of this LNR. Another outing is called for in order to view some of the woodland on the east side as well as some areas of wetland and heathland.

## **GNHS Officers and Council effective from 2023 AGM**

**Alison Park**

All of those listed will help to arrange GNHS activities for the following year. Any enquiries may be addressed to the General Secretary using the contact details below.

### **Vice Presidents**

Tony Payne  
Dominic McCafferty

### **General Secretary**

Alison Park

### **Treasurer**

Su Futter

### **Membership Secretary & Bio-recording Convenor**

Richard Weddle

### **Social Secretary**

Pat Thomson

### **Winter Syllabus**

Roger Downie

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### **Geology Convenor**

Ann Ainsworth

### **Photography Convenor**

Andy Wilson

### **BLB Chair**

Chris McInerny

### **Additional Councillors**

Bob Gray  
Emma Plant  
Janet Palmar  
Kirsty Kennedy-Wylie

**Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 please.**

Thank you very much to all the contributors. 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, and make them under 100Kb each for emailing).

Lyn Dunachie  
Robyn Haggard  
Ruth MacLachlan  
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