GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2024

Next Newsletter Deadline 22 July 2024

GNHS is a Registered Scottish Charity

Newsletter Editor David Palmar

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Website: **www.gnhs.org.uk/**

GNHS Talks Programme Spring and Summer Roger Downie

Our talks programme for April to May will all be in-person presentations.

Talks will all be in the Boyd Orr Building Lecture Room D, University of Glasgow. Most talks will be on the second Tuesday evening of the month at 7pm, as usual, but watch out for one irregular date. Talk abstracts will be circulated later by email.

April

Tuesday 16th: Boyd Orr Building LT D at 7pm- Nigel Willby: 'Beavers in Scotland: a 20-year journey'. Nigel is Professor of Freshwater Science at the University of Stirling. His team works on the ecological effects of Eurasian beavers, water policy, invasive species and habitat restoration.

NB This talk is on the third Tuesday, not the second. It is a joint meeting with Paisley Natural History Society.

May

Tuesday 14th: Boyd Orr Building LT D at 7pm: two half-hour talks. First, Louisa Maddison on the work of the Green Action Trust. Second, Stuart Whittaker, Community Woodland officer of the Cassiltoun Housing Association on 'the Castlemilk Project: nature and community'.

Glasgow Science Festival Roger Downie

Saturday 8th June: Graham Kerr Building, 14.00-16.30

Not part of the GNHS talks programme, but a GSF event is being planned as a contribution to the Graham Kerr Building Centenary. This will include a revised version of the lecture 'John Graham Kerr and the Flourishing of Glasgow Zoology' given to GNHS by Roger Downie in December, plus a guided tour of the Graham Kerr Building, including some special exhibits. A supplement to *The Glasgow Naturalist* covering the history of the Zoology Department is in preparation and should be available on the day (free to GNHS members who subscribe to *TGN*). Please register for this event through the Science Festival (but there will be walk-in places on the day).

NB There will be several interesting natural history events during this year's GSF (6th -16th June), so check out their website.
https://www.gla.ac.uk/events/sciencefestival/

Summer Social, Tuesday 11th June — Pat Thomson

The summer social excursion this year will be a guided walk around Kelvingrove Park, led by Colleen Turner, RSPB, mainly flowers and insects.
Meet in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery car park at 5pm. This will last to about 6.30pm; all welcome even if you don't want to come to the meal afterwards.

It will be followed by a meal at Elena's Taverna, 90 Old Dumbarton Rd, Glasgow G3 8PZ (Yorkhill) at 6.30 for 7.00pm. The meal will be a buffet as before, menus to follow, price £28 per head.
Anyone interested in attending the meal for 11th June please contact Pat, and if there are any special dietary needs e.g. gluten free or vegan/ vegetarian, or allergies please state when booking.

Talks Programme 2024-25 — Roger Downie

The talks programme for after the summer is in preparation. If you have any good suggestions for a speaker or topic, please contact Roger Downie providing a contact address for the speaker if you can.

2024 Subscriptions — Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fell due on January 1st 2024 (except for those who have joined since September 2023). 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 before the next newsletter.

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.

Obituary

Professor James Milner-White, 1945-2023 — Morag Milner-White

My dear husband, James died in May 2023 after a brave fight with prostate cancer.
James grew up in Sutton Green, near Guildford, Surrey. He attended Sherborne School in Dorset and intended to study architecture. At a time when it was the norm, he had made insect collections as a schoolboy and his passion for life sciences and natural history convinced him to change his subjects by attend Guildford County Technical College. He then completed a BSc at the University

of Aberdeen 1964 to 1967 and was accepted to study for a PhD at Guy's Hospital Medical School, London University with DC Watts.

He continued research in protein structure, hydrogen bonding, structural biochemistry and bioinformatics throughout his career at the University of Glasgow where he was appointed to a lectureship in 1972. He remained at Glasgow throughout his academic career, progressing to senior lecturer and the Chair of Bioinformatics, a new area within biochemistry where he developed an MSc course. He loved his research and studying with his students as they developed their own research skills. He felt very privileged to have a career which allowed him to do this.

James Milner-White **Alison Moss on behalf of GNHS**

Members of the Society were greatly saddened by the death of James last May. In recent times, James has led 4 excursions each year. He researched each location meticulously and composed hand-outs with site history and species lists particularly of bryophytes. This he did right up till the day he died and, in this context, the Society wishes to honour this by having our first excursion this April at Geilsland - the excursion for which James apologised that he could not lead in April 2023. James' delight in tackling these excursions perhaps reflects his academic background.

James (3rd from right) leading a GNHS excursion to Glen Douglas in April 2022 to study bryophytes; photo - David Palmar

The care James showed for detail and the pleasure he took in small things, particularly insects. Creatures others would not notice or even see, he patiently and enthusiastically shared his knowledge and interest. This is what made James such excellent company on excursions. He is being very much missed, as is his wife Morag, at excursions, but also at meetings and social gatherings. Our thoughts are very much with Morag and their children, Douglas and Mary and the four grandchildren.

Excursion Programme 2024 Alison Moss

All meetings or excursions attended by members or their guests are entirely at their own risk. All those wishing to participate must contact the leader in advance with their contact details. Participants should follow any safety advice given by the leader.
Any remaining health restrictions or advice will be observed with the safety of the whole group being paramount.

Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. If you have to cancel, notify the leader. For reasons of personal safety would members and friends attending excursions supply the leader with their mobile number and have their phone with them on excursions. Any problems with this, notify the leader on or before the day as appropriate.
Also, if you have transport problems, make it known to the leader and it may be possible to arrange help. There is no obligation to attend the whole excursion. However, the full amount of any cost will only be refundable if a replacement is found.
Note - grid references can be understood by copying and pasting them into streetmap.co.uk.

April

Sunday 21st, 11am, Geilsland Estate and Nature Reserve, Beith
Mainly mixed woodland. This excursion is being held substantially to honour the memory of James Milner-White. Only 2 days before James died last May he made apologies that he would be unable to lead this excursion, but he emailed the full details to me. Such was James' enjoyment of and dedication to our excursions.

Directions - Coming from Glasgow, turn left off the A737 from the middle of the Beith bypass, along the B777 signposted to Gateside and Lugton. After a few hundred yards, the Geilsland Estate is on your right. On entering the driveway of Geilsland, drive straight on to the overflow car park at NS354535, where the excursion will begin.

Please note, on entering the driveway of Geilsland, at the first car park on the right you will find a cafe with a toilet. If you wish to make use of this prior to the meeting please leave plenty of time to gather in the overflow car park for 11am.

We will walk through a small woodland on the Estate and then cross the narrow Geilsland Road and enter the woodland nature reserve associated with Spiers School (all buildings now demolished). This has paths through very attractive broad-leaved woodland with botanical and fungal interest particularly rich in bryophytes and lichens. Paths can be muddy, so boots are best. James would have extended the excursion way round to Gateside, but given the time of year, the decision was made to enjoy the woodland and gather back at the cafe. Food and drink is available there, but bring a snack or packed lunch - cafe is quite small.

An invitation to this excursion is being extended to the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group where James was an active member and had many friends.
Contact Alison Moss.

Not a GNHS event, but members might like to know about a **Bioblitz on April 24 at the University Wildlife Garden**, Lilybank Place, from 12 noon till 3pm. Members may participate if wished. There'll be opportunities for practical conservation too.

May

Sunday 12th, 11am, Glasgow University SCENE (Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Environment), Rowardennan; mainly oak woodlands. Meet at the car park at the Centre, NS 377 960 - the access gates will be open for us. Leader, Dr Cameron Easton, Honorary Senior Lecturer at the Centre, and is writing a book on the oak woodlands. The excursion will look at how the structure of the oak woods has been shaped by both natural and human factors and explore how GNHS members can expand our understanding of the woods by filling in the many gaps in our current knowledge of species and communities.
Facilities at the Centre are available and there are paths throughout. Paths vary in quality so boots best and bring packed lunch. Please be dressed for the weather.

Directions - from Drymen, take the road to Balmaha. Approx. 4.5 miles after Balmaha and about a mile beyond Sallochy, you will see a sign for the Centre on your left. Turn left and follow the private road to the Centre and the car park. Contact - Cameron Easton.

Thursday 16th, 7pm, Cowlairs Park east side, G21, mainly trees, leader Bob Gray. Meet at SE entrance. NS597672, on Keppochhill Road near the junction with Carlisle Street. Easy paths.
Contact Bob Gray.

Saturday 25th, 11am, Neilston Pad and Snypes Dam. Mixed woodland and heath and loch. Leader Kirsty Menzies. Meet in the first car park on the left, off Harelaw Road.
Directions - Heading south-west, in Neilston, at signpost to Stewarton, turn left on to High Street and continue for 2 miles. At the signpost for Harelaw Fishery turn left onto Harelaw Road.
If you use Google Maps for navigation, search for Harelaw Trout Fishery and Coffee Shop to help find the turning. The car park is just up ahead on the left, at NS466545. There is a night barrier. Some rough paths and inclines so walking boots are best. Bring packed lunch and dress for the weather. There is an excellent cafe with facilities further up Harelaw Road at the Harelaw Fishery. Leader and contact Kirsty Menzies.
Kirsty is also a member of the Paisley Natural History Society so we plan to extend a welcome to them for this excursion.

June

Sunday 2nd, 11am, Fernbrae LNR, mixed interest. Leader, Nicole Digruber, (Malls Mire Site Manager and Chair of Friends of Fernbrae Meadows). Meet at Fernbrae Meadows car park just off Fernbrae Avenue, past Fernbrae School, NS6198 5901, G73 4SG.

Directions from Glasgow: public transport - Bus number 21 to Fernhill. Nearest railway station is Burnside, a 30-40 minute walk to Fernbrae Meadows. By car - follow M74 and exit junction 1A turning left (north) into Polmadie Road, then immediately right at the lights on to the A730. Stay on the A730 towards Rutherglen/East Kilbride for 3½ miles. From Willow Boulevard, it's a right turn

at the traffic lights (signposted Fernhill) into Burnside Road and then second right again at the Fernhill School sign on to Fernbrae Avenue. The car park is up the hill on the left after Fernhill School, and the entrance is signposted Fernbrae Meadows.

Fernbrae Reserve has many interesting features, including wild flower meadows, wetland areas, board walks, an outdoor classroom and pond dipping area along a stream, woodland and an allotment site including a community orchard. It spans 20 acres. There are paths throughout, but walking boots are always best and bring packed lunch. Please dress for the weather. There are no facilities on site. Nearest toilets are at Tesco superstore, 241 Stonelaw Rd, Rutherglen, Glasgow G73 3RJ
Contact Nicole Digruber.
Tuesday 11th, Summer Social - see separate item above.

Saturday 15th, 11am, Shewalton Woods, Scottish Wildlife Reserve, mixed interest, leader Gill Smart, Reserve Manager. Meet at the Reserve car park, NS 337356.

Directions - leave the A78 at the Newhouse Interchange. If you are approaching from the south, the sign says Irvine A737 (green sign), then Meadowhead etc, (green sign). If approaching from the north, look for a white sign with Meadowhead etc. On the roundabout, you want the B7080, marked Meadowhead, Papermill, Riverside. At the next roundabout, take the last exit. It is marked Meadowhead Paper Mill and is a dead end. Go along until you see a white sign with UPM Welcome to Caledonia Paper Mill. The Reserve car park is on the left just behind that sign.

This is a follow up from last year's very successful excursion where we got so hot we did not manage to cover some interesting parts of the site. This time we will approach in an anti-clockwise direction to cover new ground from the start. The site contains mixed woodlands, grasslands and wetland areas, hosting small mammals, amphibians, many species of birds and insects. Our approach will also take in a brown field area which we did not take in before. There are many paths throughout, but boots are best particularly if venturing off piste. Bring packed lunch and dress for the weather (may not be a heatwave this time)!
N.B. the nearest facilities are at Sainsbury's on the A737 in Irvine, just south of the roundabout with the A71.
Contact Gill Smart.

Sunday 30th, 11am, Dunure, mixed interest, including shore; leader Alison Moss. Meet at car park at the ruined castle - car park entrance signposted Kennedy Park. There is a fee for the day - was £3 - will confirm. NS250719. Toilets are available here.
There is much to explore both north and south of the Dunure Harbour. The shore line, with wet and dry meadows is rich in botanical interest and invertebrates. A highlight of the shore line is oyster plant colonies. Depending on the tides, there are extensive colonies of *Zostera* - sea grass - to be seen to the north and south of the harbour. The site has geological interest too, being mainly a raised beach.

Walking boots are best for this mixed terrain. There are some cafe facilities with ice cream, but do not rely on this. Dress for the weather and bring a packed lunch.

Directions - From the A78 heading south, take the turnoff for Alloway. When you reach the Burns Museum at Alloway, it is best to follow the road directions to Dunure and the Heads of Ayr. This takes you on to the A719. Follow this past the Heads of Ayr until you reach Fisherton - there is a sign to turn right for Dunure. Follow Station Road which becomes Castle Road above the harbour and up the hill again.
If you miss the turn in Fisherton, there is another right turn at Dunure Mains off the A719. Continue down the hill and you will see the big car park on your left.
Contact Alison Moss.

July

Saturday 13th, 11am, Auchlochan Estate, Lesmahagow , mixed interest. Meet at the Bistro on the Estate, NS809375, M11 0GJ. Auchlochan Garden Estate has 50 acres of exceptional grounds which include 4 lochans, extensive unimproved lawns, wild flower meadows, walled garden, various broad-leaved woodlands and paths down to the River Nethan. We will be guided round by Fiona Phipps, a resident with wildlife knowledge of the Estate.

Directions - from Glasgow, take the M74, leave at junction 9 (B7078) for Lesmahagow. Follow the signs for Lesmahagow, turning right at the first roundabout, crossing the M74 then left at the second roundabout. Drive through part of Lesmahagow, turning right after the bank, following the brown signs for Auchlochan Garden Village. Finally, you will be on a narrow road up a hill out of Lesmahagow. The entrance to the estate is clearly marked shortly after a steep humped bridge. Turn right into the estate and follow the signs to reception and Bistro where there is parking and a toilet facility.

There are good paths throughout, but to explore the woods and meadows, walking boots are best. Please wear clothing suitable to the weather and bring packed lunch, though some refreshment is available at the Bistro. Excursion is expected to last well into the afternoon; however, there is no problem about leaving early if wished.
Contact Alison Moss.

Thursday 18th, 7pm, Richmond Park, mainly trees. Meet at car park at SE entrance, NS604 629, on Shawfield Drive. There are easy paths. Contact Bob Gray.

Saturday 27th, 11am, Hurlethill Local Nature Reserve , leader Kirsty Menzies, mixed interest. Meet opposite the entrance to St Andrews Academy, Ben Nevis Road, PA2 7LF, NS50273 62226.

Directions - **From junction 3 of the M77** , head north-west towards Paisley along the A726, Nitshill Road/ Hurlet Road. As you approach the outskirts of

Paisley double back around the roundabout at the top of Hawkhead Road and head back south east along the A726. After a short distance take the first left turn (signposted Hawkhead Estate) on to Ben Nevis Road. St Andrews Academy is on your left.

If you're coming from the centre of Paisley, taking the A726 towards East Kilbride, proceed to the roundabout at the top of Hawkhead Road. Go straight through, keeping on A726, take 1st left as above.

This extensive site has mixed woodland, grassland, meadow and ponds. The Reserve has a network of paths, but they can be muddy so walking boots are best. Bring packed lunch. There are no facilities on site; the nearest toilets are at Morrisons on the A726 going south-east towards East Kilbride from the centre of Paisley.
Contact Kirsty Menzies.
Kirsty is also a member of the Paisley Natural History Society so we plan to extend a welcome to them for this excursion.
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, probably including one to the Claypits on Saturday 14 th September. 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. We are lucky to have several experts including Paul Cobb. This aspect often overlaps with fungal associations and would be an interesting addition to our records.

For this, and all our excursions, notification will be circulated prior to each meeting. Please check for any last-minute changes or additional information and please notify the designated leader of your intention to attend, including your contact details. If you have any questions, just contact the leader. Also, if you have transport problems, make this known to the leader and it may be possible to arrange help. Remember, there is no obligation to attend the whole excursion so long as the leader is kept informed.

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.

We are receiving 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 City Nature Challenge Events in Glasgow 2024 are:

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 26th April – Mon 29th April. 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.

Eastfield Park Sat 27th April 9:30am – 11am
This will be a community training bioblitz event, to upskill groups on biological recording. There will be experienced recorders on hand to identify specimens, if you want to come along and lend your expertise please do!

Springburn Park Sat 27th April 12pm – 4pm
A bioblitz family fun day to encourage people to spend time in nature as well as doing some recording. We are hoping to have some partners along.

Botanic Gardens Sun 28th April: 11am – 4pm
Another family friendly bioblitz with activities, alongside biological recording. People will be 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. We are hoping to have partners attending this event.

Another (non CNC) Event:

May22nd: Bioblitz at The Hidden Gardens, Pollokshields as part of world biodiversity day; further details by email nearer the time.

The Glasgow Naturalist — Richard Weddle

The papers and short notes published to date for the next Glasgow Naturalist are at www.gnhs.org.uk/gn28_2.html

Tour Guides at Glasgow Botanic Gardens Dr Robert Jamieson

Last summer The **Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens** along with staff at the Gardens trained a group of volunteers to lead trips for the public as well as interested organisations and clubs. During the peak season we delivered up to four tours per week. Over the winter we have been carrying out tours of The Kibble Palace on Thursdays at 11am and 2 pm.

Currently we are a group of about ten guides who would enjoy having a few more colleagues! We are planning a refresher and training course starting in the coming weeks. Members of GNHS would be very welcome to attend our meetings or indeed join a tour of the Kibble with a view to seeing if you would enjoy becoming a tour guide. Any commitment is not onerous. It is an opportunity to share with others the extensive collections at GBG often to tourists there for the first time or locals who have been visiting all their lives. It is a great way to engage with the public in a health-giving way as well as helping promote wider access to our green spaces.
If you would like to make enquiries please email.

Dr Robert Jamieson, Chair
Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens
glasgowbotanicgardens.com
Registered charity SC022622

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.

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.

Description	**Availability**	**In care of**
15 compound microscopes 3 dissecting microscopes	occasional use 1 in use / enquire	Zoology Museum 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[#]	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: recent additions and remarkable records Richard Weddle

In my report on the November newsletter, I mentioned that we'd had the intention for some time to report on significant species added to the GMBRC database, but that it can present quite a task – for this report that's because over the winter months many datasets covering the whole of the previous year arrive, and this year I had also gleaned some historical records from various publications, as well as further **iNaturalist** and **iRecord** data. But for this newsletter, I'll cherry-pick some of the more recent records, particularly those that have stories to tell.

Beaked Earthstar

In the last report I mentioned the Striate Earthstar fungus (*Geastrum striatum*) that was seen in Lambhill Cemetery; yet another new earthstar can now be added to the list: the Beaked Earthstar (*Geastrum pectinatum*) which Gill Smart found under a Lawson Cypress in Lochwinnoch Cemetery. Cemeteries are a good place to find fungi - there were over 70 species found on the joint GNHS / CAFG excursion to Glasgow Necropolis in October, though I'm still waiting for the finalised list.

Dappled Hawkweed

Winter is also the time when I send caddis-fly specimens found in moth traps to the national scheme for identification. Two species from last year's catch stand out: *Leptocerus tineiformis* and *Rhadicoleptus alpestris.* The 2022 FSC guide to the group describes the former as 'increasing its range in England and soon to be expected in Scotland' so it is gratifying to prove them right; it was found both at the Botanic Gardens and at the Claypits LNR. The second species was from a trap at Little Sparta, near Dunsyre in South Lanarkshire, and is described by the FSC guide as 'very rare in Scotland'.

Corn Snakes

Back in Glasgow, the Dappled Hawkweed (*Hieracium scotostictum*) was discovered growing on the walls of the University Library by Gustaf Fredell, an undergraduate. It was identified by Michael Philip, and confirmed by the UK expert on the genus; it is the first

record for Lanarkshire (VC77) and a welcome addition to the biodiversity of the Gilmorehill campus.

And more from the Botanic Gardens: a recent visit by an expert on ants found three species of tiny ants living in the glasshouses. The most numerous, *Plagolepis alluaudi,* had not been recorded there previously, and seemed to have almost replaced other two; however only one of these was included in the recent 'Wildside Revisited' notes in The Glasgow Naturalist (*Tetramorium* sp. was included but *Linepithema iniquum* was not). Another newcomer is the Corn Snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*) also in the glasshouses, and obviously unwanted pets.

Indian meal moth

Lastly another exotic: the Indian meal moth (*Plodia interpunctella*) also known as the pantry moth, as it's a common pest of stored foods. This specimen was found by Paul Baker at Glasgow Caledonian University; it's not the first Glasgow record, but the only previous Glasgow records date back to 1981 and 1995, and there's a Renfrewshire record in 2006.

BLB Grants awarded in February 2024 Alison Park

Investment income earned from the Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest enables GNHS to provide funding to members (including members of GU ZooSoc) to support projects which have a direct benefit for natural history in Scotland, and to some extent further afield. After careful consideration grant applications for the following projects have been awarded:

- Student expedition to 'Remote Scotland' exploring otters, bees of the machair, and sea stars.
- Student expedition to Egypt exploring marine biodiversity of the Red Sea and participating in schools' outreach.
- Student expedition to marine Thailand researching topics regarding coral reef ecology.

These expeditions will all take place during summer 2024. Subsequently, we will learn about what was achieved from the recipients' reports within upcoming GNHS Newsletters, or perhaps in our Winter Talks programme or in *The Glasgow Naturalist* journal.

In addition to supporting these student expeditions we also approved BLB spending for the purchase of a set of portable display boards for GNHS to use at various events and exhibitions.

The next round of awards for this year will be decided in May (for applications received by 15th April 2024). If you are considering applying for a grant, please visit the GNHS website for further information.

GNHS Officers and Council members effective from 2024 AGM

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Dominic McCafferty

Vice President
Nicole Digruber

General Secretary
Alison Park

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Su Futter

Membership Secretary & Bio-recording Convenor
Richard Weddle

Social Secretary
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Alison Park (Secretary
Richard Weddle (Scientific Advis
Dominic McCafferty (Scientific Adviser)
Kirsty Kennedy-Wylie (Financial Liaison)

Creating a Wildlife Pond at Grow 73's Community Garden

Alison Park and Alan Millar

Grow 73 is a charity based in Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire. It aims, through gardening, environmental improvements and other community activities to increase local involvement in food growing, composting, awareness of local biodiversity and other environmental issues. Its activities extend across the Rutherglen and Cambuslang areas, centred around a developing community garden on the site of three disused bowling greens in Overtoun Park, Rutherglen.

Excavated pond ready for lining

Firefighters filling the pond

During 2022 Grow 73 received a BLB grant of £2000 to create a wildlife pond and develop other wildlife-friendly features on the community garden site.

The site chosen for the pond lies within the education and social area of the garden, south-east facing for sunshine and easily accessible to visitors and volunteers. Construction began by marking out an elongated irregular oval shape extending to around 9m long and

4m wide and then a hired digger and driver dug out a deep central area to a maximum 0.7m depth. Over a period of several weeks, volunteers dug out much more material to provide a broad marginal shelf of around 0.1-0.15m and a narrower mid-shelf of around 0.35-0.4m with sloping edges between each shelf area. Before laying the EPDM rubber pond liner we took care to remove sharp protruding stones, covered the whole surface with a layer of sand and fitted a pond liner

Planted sculpture made of excavated soil

underlay.

While shaping the pond we realised that rainwater would not fill the large pond quickly enough to fix the liner firmly against the substrate. Without a water supply on site, and a calculated need for around 15-20,000 litres of water, we sought help from our local community fire station who kindly provided a crew and pump to fill the completed pond. After allowing time for the liner to settle in place we secured the edges under turfs and soil from the excavation.

With help of two students from Glasgow School of Art the remaining pile of soil and sub-soil was sculpted into the shape of a reclining woman and planting up with perennials enhanced the feature. The yellow stonecrop *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina' represents flowing hair and a mix of creeping thyme, lesser periwinkle and English lavender form her clothing.

Building the viewing platform

On the opposite side, a wooden platform was constructed for accessible viewing and pond dipping. To speed up development of biodiversity we planted a range of native pond plants including submerged, floating and marginal types and scattered a mix of pond edge seeds from Scotia Seeds all around.

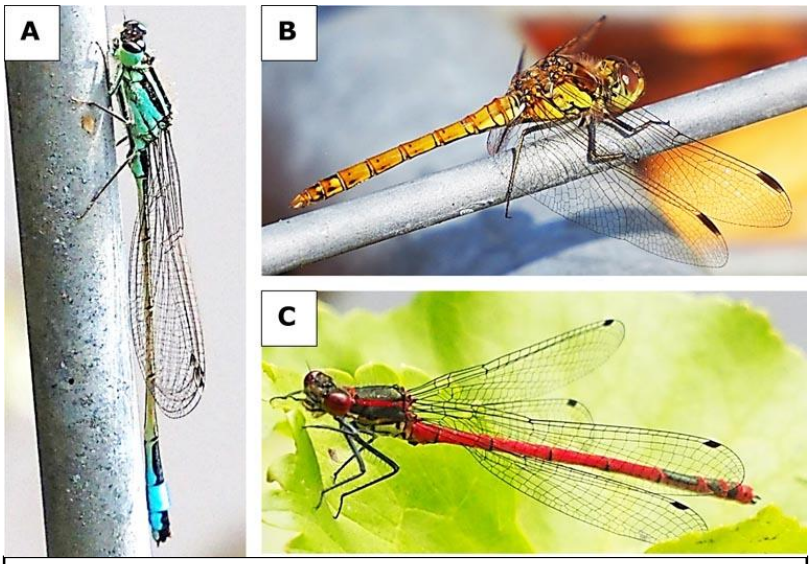
Finally, a semi-circular hedge was planted around the pond to act both as a protective barrier to keep out younger unaccompanied children and to provide an additional habitat. An 'RSPB Approved Ultimate Bird Friendly Hedging Bundle' was selected and planted in a double row. Once established, the intention is to lay the hedgerow in the traditional manner to further improve its wildlife value.

Main image: Hoverfly *Helophilus pendulus*
Inset: Hoverfly eggs, likely *Helophilus*

In the short time since its creation the pond offers a beautiful feature greeting visitors on entering Grow73's site. On closer look, the range of flora and fauna species is impressive for a new habitat.

The plants have established well with good displays of marsh marigold, purple loosestrife, water mint and water lily amongst others. A frog visited for a few days, as did a pair of mallards but neither has yet taken up permanent residence.

Adult damselflies (Blue-tailed and Large red) and a Common darter dragonfly have been seen during the summer and various hoverflies (mainly *Eristalis sp*. and *Helophilus pendulus*) with hoverfly eggs spotted on marginal plant leaves.



A: Blue-tailed damselfly
B: Common darter dragonfly
C: Large red damselfly

Another interesting insect seen was semaphore fly (*Poecilobothrus nobilitatus*), one of the most northerly records of this fly to date [1].

During a pond dipping session in July 2023, we were pleased to find as many as 17 invertebrate taxa including mayfly, pond skater, beetle and snail species.

Semaphore fly *Poecilobothrus nobilitatus*

However, we were alarmed to discover the presence of water fern (*Azolla filiculoides*), a highly invasive non-native plant. We presume this was imported with plants that we had bought (albeit from reputable sources) as there are few records of the plant in the locality. Just weeks later this plant had spread to cover the entire pond surface and we were concerned that it would adversely impact the levels of light and oxygen in the pond water. In an attempt to remove this threat, we introduced the weevil *Stenopelmus rufinasus* [2] *which* has been shown to be of use in *Azolla* control. After several anxious weeks we observed a decrease in coverage of *Azolla* but whether this was due to the weevils' feeding or onset of winter was unclear. In early 2024 there are still patches of *Azolla* present so it is possible that further attempts to control its extent will be required this year and in future.

Main image: *Azolla* surface cover
Inset: *Azolla* filiculoides close-up

Community engagement is embedded throughout all of Grow 73's activities helping to boost on-site impact and raise environmental awareness in the community. Around 30 volunteers were involved in constructing the pond and planting the

surrounding hedge, and specialist help led the creation of the sculpture and wooden platform.

Whenever the pond and its environs require maintenance work volunteers come forward from within those 15 to 25 people attending twice-weekly volunteer sessions.

Several volunteers already had interests in natural history and help with monitoring pond health and biodiversity, but the fascination of viewing pond-life is gaining the interest of many others. Aside from the volunteer sessions the pond may be accessed by individuals and groups who have adopted raised beds, pre-school nurseries and a child-minding group using the garden weekly, several primary school classes, and many other people drawn to seasonal events such as the annual picnic lunch 'Buzzfest' which in 2023 attracted around 800 people.

We owe thanks to GNHS for supporting our habitat improvement project. The grant enabled us to create the wildlife pond and plant the wildlife-friendly hedge and flowers. It was after starting the work that we decided to divert spending to the boundary-marking hedge in place of the planned bee bank. It our intention to build a bee bank as a future project, perhaps as we develop the wildflower meadow area. Meantime we all continue to appreciate the pond area while eagerly awaiting breeding frogs and a greater variety of plants and animals to observe. We would be happy to show GNHS members round our garden.

Footnotes:

[1] ID confirmed and accepted by Martin Drake of the Empid and Dolichopodid recording group.
[2] CABI UK (Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International), Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

Winning photos from the PhotoScene Competition 2023-24

Andy Wilson

Overall winner:

David Stone – Common Buzzard (Buteo buteo)

9th June 2023

Forres, Moray

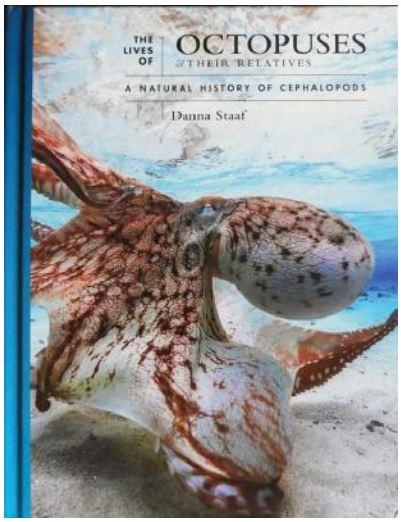
Second equal place:

Robyn Haggard – Mating Emperor Moths (Saturnia pavonia)

Near Ben Shee, Glen Sherup Horseshoe Loop, The Ochils 7 May 2023

Second equal place:
Scott Shanks – Puss Moth Caterpillar (Cerura vinula)
Slamannan Plateau July 2023

Books for Review Tony Payne



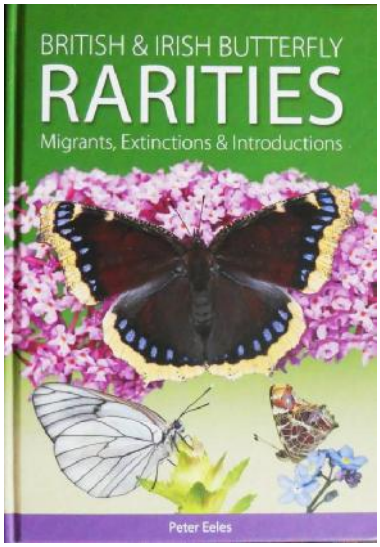
Three books have been received recently for review:-

The Lives of Octopuses and their Relatives: a Natural History of Cephalopods

(2023) by Danna Staaf. Princeton University Press, 288pp HB £30.00. ISBN 978-0-691-24430-3.

There are over 800 known cephalopods with more being discovered all the time. This volume is a beautiful book with a feast of colour photographs illustrating species from around the world. The first 40 pages are devoted to an Introduction and ”What is a cephalopod?” which briefly covers topics such as anatomy, life cycles and camouflage. The rest of the book is arranged by habitat - beaches, tide pools and flats; seagrass and kelp beds; coral reefs; the open ocean; midwater; deep sea; polar regions. Each habitat chapter contains 6-8 double-page treatments of representative species from around the world, as well as posing further questions on cephalopod life. Did cephalopods evolve in polar waters? Why are cuttlefish restricted to the upper ocean waters? How do nautiloids achieve neutral buoyancy? What are statoliths? There is a glossary and a short reference section.

British & Irish Butterfly Rarities: Migrants, Extinctions and Introductions (2023) by Peter Eeles.

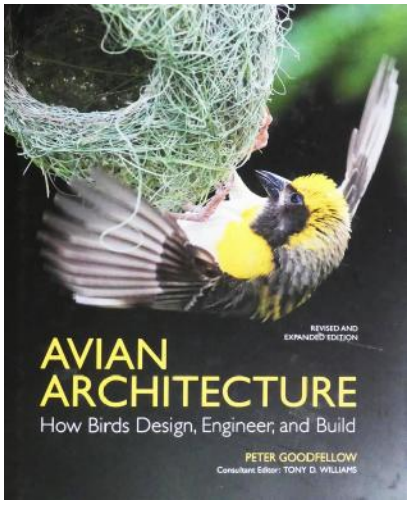


Pisces Publications, 338pp HB £32.50. ISBN 978-1-913994-10-5.

When the author produced his monumental volume on *Life Cycles of British and Irish Butterflies* (2019) I remarked in a review for *TGN* that it did not include species recently vanished from the UK or rare migrants that might colonise. This is why. This companion volume deals with 25 such butterflies in depth (devoting some 10 pages to each) and at least the same number again get truncated treatments as adventive species, questionable records and future prospects. As with his earlier book, each of the 25 main species is described and pictured at every stage of the life cycle with multiple photographs. For some of the rarest species, each individual British record is analysed. The speed with which some continental butterflies can spread northwards is remarkable, 60-100 kilometres per year. Even the Atlantic may be no barrier, with the North American Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) firmly established in the Iberian peninsula, Atlantic islands such as the Canaries, and perhaps heading this way. Appendices include a substantial list of larval food plants required by migrants and a large bibliography.

Avian Architecture:

How Birds Design, Engineer and Build



(2024) by Peter Goodfellow; Princeton University Press, 175pp HB £25.00. ISBN 978-0-691-25546-0.

This is a revised edition of a book which first appeared in 2011. Chapters examine types of nest which have different forms or occur in different situations; scrapes, holes and tunnels, platforms, aquatic, cups, domes, mud-built, hanging and woven, mounds and colonies. In addition, there are two chapters on avian structures which are not nests; courtship arenas and food stores. Each chapter describes variants of the nest type, how they are constructed and their advantages. In addition, each chapter has a number of case studies from around the world. For scrapes, these include coursers, killdeer, ostrich, arctic tern and common eider; for aquatic nests these include moorhen, black tern, African jacana, great crested and Slavonian grebes. The book is copiously illustrated with photographs and diagrams and includes a number of references and websites.

It is hoped that full reviews of these will appear in a future edition of *The Glasgow Naturalist.*

Three more things I've not seen before **Paul Cobb**

Since my last note I have now succeeded in finding galls of the rare gall wasp *Phanacis centaureae* that I was searching for, hidden inside stems of Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, at Barony Colliery in Ayrshire on 29th January. It seems to be only the second or third for Scotland, but you certainly have to split open an awful lot of knapweed stems before you find one.

Another hidden group is the Agromyzidae fly genus *Phytobia*, whose larvae tunnel out of sight in trees and shrubs, leaving brown feeding tracks beneath the bark. I found my first, *P. carbonaria*, on hawthorn near Oswald's Bridge in Ayrshire on 27th January, a dangerously prickly challenge to find. I mentioned it in the pub to a friend, and much to my surprise he knew exactly what I was talking about. He used to see it a lot when he was hedging!

I've also found (or noticed) for the first time the nearly spineless Highclere Holly *Ilex x altaclerensis*. The same friend at the pub knew this as well. He gathers holly for Xmas decorations, and wants the normal spiny ones, but he says it's getting harder to find with so much Highclere around.
Things we think are rare can appear common to other people if their activities bring them into contact with them, and even in midwinter there's a lot to be found, even if it does take some searching for.

Biodiversity at the Holy Loch Local Nature Reserve

Neil Hammatt

The Holy Loch LNR is possibly Scotland's least well-known nature reserve. It is the only LNR in the whole Argyll and Bute land area, having been created by Argyll and Bute Council in 2014 out of land it owns at the head of the Holy Loch, an inlet off the River Clyde. The 25 acre site roughly breaks down into 20 acres of ungrazed (by livestock) Atlantic salt meadow, with scrub on its highest points, and five acres of woodland, necessarily wet in nature due to half being regularly inundated by high winter tides, and the rest having regenerated on top of areas of old landfill with slow drainage.

Uppermost Atlantic Salt Meadow

Hide in winter

A basic bird hide/shelter, in the elevated woodland, looks out over the marshland and muds of the loch.

The path to the hide is maintained with accessibility for all in mind. Beyond that, access to the woodland and marsh is via an uneven path across various burns, or across the bottom of the loch at low tide.

Path to hide

Alien plants are currently the biggest management headache alongside non-stop arrival of plastic on the tide, the latter having worsened recently due to the tendency of winds to have an easterly element. Sitka and Rhododendrons have been removed in the last year, alongside huge areas of Montbretia in the woodland. One of the tidal islands has a population of Himalayan Balsam. However, Japanese Knotweed is the biggest challenge, being present in large patches in various parts of the reserve.

Saltmarsh pool

Paintings of the head of the loch from over 100 plus years ago show a scene not dissimilar to today, except that some land has since been reclaimed for intensive sheep grazing via a seawall and sluices, the latter having long collapsed. As in many Scottish sea lochs, due to the sea wall barrier, the lowest, muddiest, flattest level of saltmarsh has disappeared, but plant species associated with it still thrive in various places on the marsh.

Due to the collapsed sluices, the sea now floods back behind the seawall on to its traditional lower marsh where it is grazed very short by sheep. Some areas of the marsh have sufficiently elevated piles of gravel to support large trees. The marsh area has at least twenty-five pools, their salt levels varying throughout the year. Spring tides combined with strong easterlies dump huge amounts of seaweed on to the marsh in very specific areas, affecting the plants that can survive there.

Garden Tiger moth

Everything at the reserve results from a complex interaction of sea, weather and life. In 2022, I started the job of evaluating biodiversity on the reserve

Sedge Warbler fledgeling

with very little idea what I was letting myself in for at the beginning. 1450 named species later, I now wonder if I'd have started at all had I known the scale of the task. My main interest used to be the reserve's birds, but a holistic view of reserve ecology and its long-term survival are now my main interests.

As a retired plant biologist and an avid birdwatcher, I didn't have a lot of problems getting the species list to over 400 by mid 2022. Mammals and amphibia added 15. I had already been mothing for a few years before retirement, and so I easily added 150 moth species, while butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies added a further 20. Then I exhausted my existing knowledge. I majored in ecology at Southampton University in the early 80s, but although I then went on to become a plant physiologist, I never lost my fascination for the intricate interrelationships of life and the physical world revealed by ecology. During 2022, I never used any traps or nets. But by simply photographing what I saw, and working though possible IDs, I got the reserve species list to 850 by year end. It was a very steep learning curve that first year, and it hasn't got any shallower since!

For 2023, I decided that if I was to be able to monitor species as the reserve faces climate change, speed of identification would need to be quicker. So, I turned to constructing a type collection, alongside the use of sweep netting and pit traps on the land, and a pond net in the water bodies which include 6 burns flowing off the hills into the loch. Resources for identification are diverse, with many groups no longer having a national expert, nor any ID resources, either in paper or digital form. Some groups are very easy with exceptional support. In my opinion, hoverflies led by Roger Morris, are the best served, with many different recording options and identifications offered within minutes via Facebook. I managed to add 53 hoverflies to my list.

Kuehneromyces mutabilis

But, to achieve identifications of all the species at the Holy Loch Nature Reserve in 21st century Britain has required an exceptional effort to liaise with huge numbers of experts in their respectively small fields of expert interest, and to send samples through the post. For those with limited help, I plod away with the huge array of disparate resources out there adding to my experience as I

go. The British Bugs website has allowed me to add dozens of species of Hemiptera, many not on the NBN atlas for Argyll, while Mark Gurney's guide to weevils is absolutely first-class. In spite of this, many species may have to remain unidentified.

Given the almost natural state of the reserve, my aim is ultimately to get as many species as possible on to the NBN atlas, itself an attempt to get all UK biodiversity records listed in one place. At the moment atlases do exist for some taxa such as spiders, hoverflies, bees, Lepidoptera etc. But most of the less high-profile groups do not have such luxury. I have gradually added 1000 species to the iRecord database, but only certain recording schemes add iRecords to their database. Then, not all recording schemes which do add iRecords, then add their records to the NBN atlas. Basically, British biodiversity recording needs to be streamlined. And that is against the background of needing good data for conservation policy reasons.

We are lucky in Argyll to have a dedicated recording centre ably run by Carl Farmer. He is currently helping me to get my records on to the atlas. It is also encouraging to hear that work is under way to try to standardise biological recording in Scotland. See https://nbn.org.uk/news/better-biodiversity-data-project/. A quick, simple route for all authenticated records to the NBN atlas has to be a huge step forward for informing conservation policy.

Parasitoid wasp - *Hepiopelmus variegatorius* by Malcom Storey

For the HLNR, all of my records can be found on iRecord under Holy Loch Nature Reserve as a search term. As in all scientific scrutiny, I welcome feedback about my identification data via iRecord.

Long-term, I hope to welcome experts to the reserve to assist me. Ecology of the future will be about understanding not only how populations interact with each other, but also how they are faring against obvious changes to the local climate. The ability to mitigate against more extreme weather events and rising sea level will require prompt, sound data.

I have just added the 1450th species to my spreadsheet. I have no idea how good that number of species is for a 25 acre reserve, as I cannot find anything to compare it with. In spite of that, my current vision of the reserve is of a complex food web with hundreds of species inter-related in myriad ways. Some species are generalists, while others are specialists. The reserve is an island of undisturbed biodiversity in a landscape dominated by hillsides cloaked in Sitka, sheep pasture and gardens.

The aim of the reserve has to be to keep this community of 1450 plus species intact, and to add a few rarer tree species such as Aspen (*Populus tremula*) and Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) into areas vacated by Sitka and Japanese Knotweed. I hope to attract species dependent on these tree species, such as the Bird Cherry Ermine moth to the reserve so that the reserve can act as an ark for those species as well.

Beetle - *Abdera flexuosa*

As a retired research leader, my approach to recording is simple. If a piece of data is not open-access, and able to be scrutinised, as is a requirement for all quality science, then I will not consider it in my work. So, I only compare my results with what is on the NBN atlas or distribution maps from individual highly-respected schemes mentioned previously. The biodiversity of Scotland is poorly covered by a very limited number of, mostly volunteer, natural historians. But without their data, species could go extinct before having ever been discovered. I am pleased that I have been able to add dozens of new species to those already known from Argyll, hemipterans being at the forefront of these, and also some new species for Scotland such as the Heleomyzid fly, *Eccoptomera longiseta,* and nationally scarce species such as the beetle *Abdera flexuosa*.

As I enhance my collection methodology for 2024 by including water and malaise traps, plus garden leaf "suckers" on the grasslands, I expect to add new species to the reserve list. I have no idea where the number of species will level out. I have spent very little time looking at what lives in the reserve's ponds, nor in its water courses or what comes in with the Spring tides. As time goes by I hope to shift my research from listing to monitoring.

The use of eDNA in monitoring has promise especially if the Darwin Tree of Life programme does manage to become able to identify 70-80000 species over the next few years from DNA sequences. The reserve is now a partner in the Wellcome-Sanger Bioscan project. Each month, samples from 24 hours of malaise trapping are sorted and logged, and then sent to Cambridge for identification using eDNA. Automation and eDNA could well combine to provide statistically-significant data sets on British invertebrate biodiversity to reliably track effects of climate change and inform policy-makers.

Neil Hammatt - November 30th 2023, Amended February 13th 2024

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd July 2024 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).