GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Next Newsletter Deadline 10 January 2025

GNHS is a Registered Scottish Charity Web-site:

November 2024

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www.gnhs.org.uk/

GNHS Talks Programme, Winter 2024-25 Roger Downie

Our talks programme for the period November to March will all be in-person presentations, often jointly with other groups, which helps to ensure good audiences. Some talks will be in the University of Glasgow's Boyd Orr Building on the second Tuesday of each month at 7pm. **BUT** look out for other dates and locations, as listed below. In October, we tried out a different venue, the lecture theatre in the Kelvin Hall (for those coming by car, parking is available nearby), and are booking it for another meeting in January. It would be very helpful if members could provide feedback on how suitable/convenient they find the Kelvin Hall theatre.

N.B. We warmly encourage members to bring specimens or brief accounts of recent noteworthy observations for presentation at the start of meetings. If these include photographs, please bring on a USB stick.

November

Tuesday 11th: Boyd Orr Building LT C at 7pm. Ann Lindsay, journalist and author. 'David Douglas, plant collector- the best kind of clever, adventurous and energetic Scot'. This lecture commemorates the start of Douglas' (and John Scouler's) expedition to collect plants in north-west America. Jointly with Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens and Glasgow Treelovers.

December

Tuesday 3rd: from Pat Thomson
The plan for this year's Christmas social is to go to Elena's restaurant in Old Dumbarton Road, at 1830 for 1900. The meal will cost £35 per head, and it will be a selection of starters and then paellas to share. There will be a mixture of vegetarian and meat/fish options. When booking please state any dietary preferences or allergies. I will put out an email soon about booking for this meal.

Tuesday 10th: Boyd Orr Building LT C at 7pm. Nicole Digruber, GNHS on 'The impact of dogs and veterinary flea treatments on pond biodiversity'; David Stone, University of Glasgow on his research on guillemots in the Baltic.

2025
January

Tuesday 14th: Kelvin Hall LT at 7pm. (**NB not our usual venue**). Professor Ria Dunkley of the city's GALLANT project on 'Connecting communities through urban biodiversity: a pathway to sustainable engagement'.

February
Tuesday 11th: Boyd Orr Building LT C at 7pm. Photographic Night: results of this year's photographic competition. Any members wishing to show recent photographs or short videos should contact the photography convenor, Andy Wilson.

March
Tuesday 11th: Boyd Orr Building LT C at 7pm. **Annual General Meeting** and talk: Catherine Whatley, NatureScot on 'Scotland's National Herpetological Strategy, 2025-45'. **NB The lecture will precede the AGM**. Information on the AGM agenda will be circulated separately to members.

Four non-GNHS events coming up soon:

TWIC Conference **Natalie Harmsworth**

Bookings are open for the TWIC Autumn Conference & AGM. Join us for captivating talks on the theme of "*Grassland recording & conservation"*, engaging displays, and a chance to meet with like-minded individuals. All interested welcome!

Getting to the venue: The venue is close to Galashiels railway station (1.2 miles away), with regular buses available to the campus. There is a large car park.
Cost: Tickets are £20 (£15 students), including a buffet lunch and refreshments. **Booking is essential** for catering.
Full details and programme of talks can be found on:
https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/twic-autumn-conference-grassland-recording-conservation-tickets-1049622187217?aff=oddtdtcreator .

SWT Glasgow Group talk on Seabirds

Northern Gannet by David Palmar

SWT Glasgow Group would like to invite anyone interested to attend a talk by Professor Bob Furness, formerly of Glasgow University and now a professional ecologist on "Seabirds - the Crown Jewels of Scotland's Wildlife" in the Airlie Theatre, Hyndland Secondary School on Wednesday 27th November at 7.30 pm.
Entrance via the playground through the big gates on Clarence Drive, then go into the building on your right. For further details, see: https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-group/glasgow/

SOC Conference, Pitlochry

Atholl Palace Hotel - public domain

Bookings are now open for the SOC Conference on 23-24th November in the Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry, on the themes of bird migration and conservation. Bookings close on Sunday 17th November. Full programme details can be found at: https://www.the-soc.org.uk/pages/event/soc-annual-conference-2024

RSPB Glasgow Group outing to Caerlaverock

Barnacle Geese at Caerlaverock by David Palmar

RSPB Glasgow Group's November outing is to WWT Caerlaverock by coach, and the trip is open to non-RSPB members. It is estimated that the cost will be between £10 and £15 depending on numbers, plus admission to Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (free to WWT members). It is hoped that interest from other groups might help boost the numbers and reduce costs.

Sat 30th November, WWT Caerlaverock, Coach pick-up at Anniesland 9am, and possibly Milngavie earlier - TBC). Contact Karen Hill

RSPB Glasgow group outdoor events page:
https://group.rspb.org.uk/glasgow/news-blogs/news/outdoor-events-programme-2024-25/

2024 Subscriptions — Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fall due on January 1st 2025 (except for those who have joined since September 2024). 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.

GNHS & BRISC Bursaries — Richard Weddle

Since 2009, BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and GNHS have been offering bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field studies.

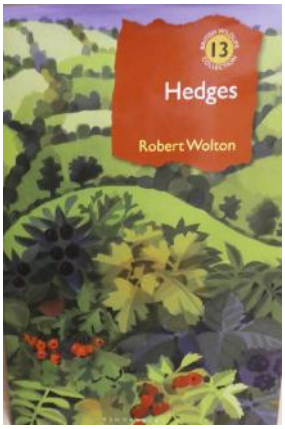
These bursaries are open to anyone living in Scotland who wants to improve their skills and contribute to biological recording.

Since 2024 we have been we are pleased to be able to offer bursaries of up to £400, up to £100 of which can go towards transport costs, to make it easier to attend courses, particularly those outwith Scotland.

An application form and full details of the bursaries on offer can be found at www.brisc.org.uk/bursaries. The closing date for applications is Jan 31st 2025. The bursaries are not restricted to GNHS members, so please feel free to forward this information to anyone you think may be interested.

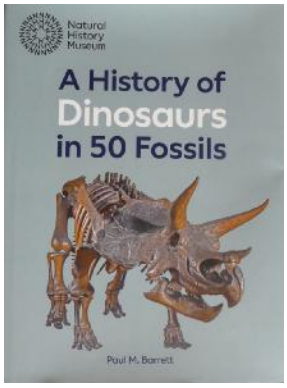
Book Received for review by GNHS — Anthony Payne

Four new books and four booklets have been received:



"Hedges" by Robert Wolton (2024) Bloomsbury Wildlife (HB) 400pp, £40. ISBN 9781399411714.

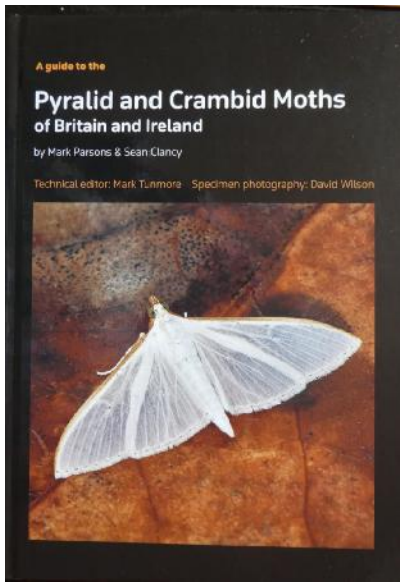
This is the 14th. title in the British Wildlife Collection and is a wide-ranging and beautifully-illustrated volume. The earlier chapters deal with definitions and the history of hedges in Britain and Ireland. A block of chapters deals with the hedge as a reservoir of life, a highway for wildlife movement and dispersal and the plants and creatures to be found in hedges, banks and ditches including hedgerow shrubs and trees. This is followed by a block of chapters on the usefulness of hedges for pollination, pest control, carbon capture and fuel. The book ends with a long section on hedge management and the future of the hedge.



"*A History of Dinosaurs in 50 Fossils*" by Paul M. Barrett (2024) Natural History Museum (HB) 160 pp £17.99. ISBN 9780565095338.

This is a popular publishing format which the Natural History Museum has already applied to "*Life*" and "*Plants*" and which they use here to highlight 50 of their dinosaur specimens. The first ten objects are used for "Setting the Scene", mostly using early members of the group and the divergence into specialist herbivores and carnivores. The second section is entitled "Key dinosaurs" and takes the reader through some of the stars (triceratops, stegosaurus) as well as lesser-known but important types, ending with the birds. The final section "Dinosaur biology" covers a range of items which shed light on topics such as skin, feathers and colour as well as brain size, senses, locomotion and parenting. There are tables of geological times, catalogue details of each specimen and further reading.

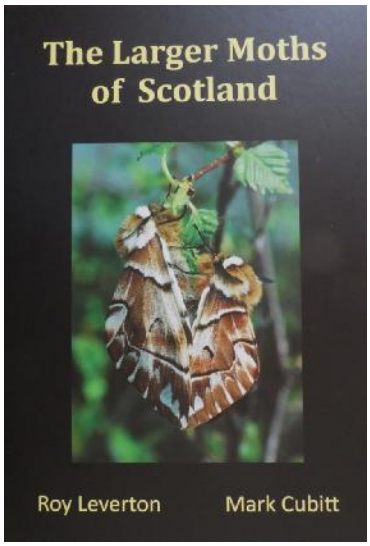
Two books have been received from Atropos.



"*A Guide to the Pyralid and Crambid moths of Britain and Ireland*" by Mark Parsons & Sean Clancy (2023) Atropos Publishing (HB) 508pp £80. ISBN 9780955108648.

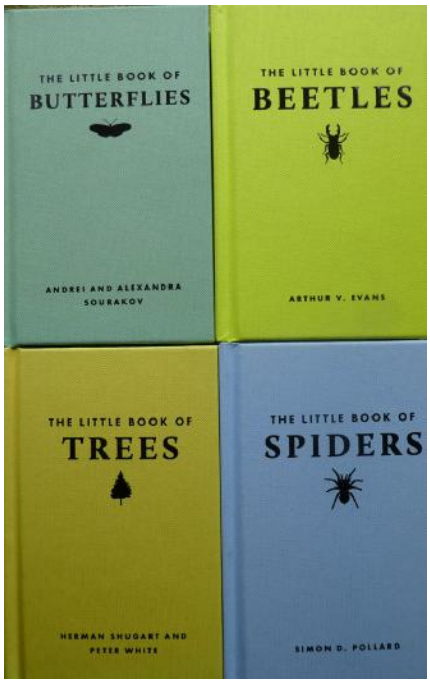
There are far fewer books on micro moths than on their larger counterparts, but this one, which deals with two major families, is an extraordinary effort by the authors that has resulted in a magnificent and spectacular volume. Over 400 pages are devoted to the individual species, each one getting two or three pages. A typical entry has photos of the adults and larvae, habitat and a distribution map. The accompanying text contains a description, flight season, larval food plants, status and distribution; where necessary, it points to confusion species and highlights id features to distinguish between them. There are also plates of moths in traditional "collectors cabinet" pose with outstretched wings, plates of male and female genitalia, lists of food plants and vernacular names.

"*The Larger Moths of Scotland*" by Roy Leverton and Mark Cubitt (2024) Triphosa Publications (HB) 340pp £45. ISBN 978-1-3999-7626-8.



This beautiful, large format book covers 577 species known to occur in Scotland, either as residents, migrants or vagrants – along with some unproven claims and adventives. The authors state that there has never been a book of Scottish moths and have taken it upon themselves to remedy the deficiency. Each species has a photo of the adult (sometimes including additional subspecies or variants) a flight period calendar and a distribution map; there may be additional photos such as the larval stage and even fungal infections and habitat. The text includes discussions of the Latin name, range, distribution and habitat, flight period and population trends. Difficulties that have beset recorders are also touched on.

The Little Book of Spiders (Simon D. Pollard), *Trees* (Herman Shugart & Peter White), *Butterflies* (Andrei & Alexandra Sourakov) and *Beetles* (Arthur V. Evan) (2024) Princeton University Press (HB) 160pp £12.99 each.



There is probably a proper name for this type of book, but I think of them as "stocking-fillers". Each is about 160 pages long, hard backed and (as their name suggests) little. They are the first four titles in what is to be a series with the promise of Fungi, Dinosaurs, Whales and Weather to come. As an example, "The Little Book of Trees" covers tree anatomy, diversity, architecture, habitat and conservation, also "fun facts…trees in myths, folklore and modern culture". You will find entries on topics as diverse as Devonian trees, arithmetic models of tree growth, bark and fire resistance, nitrogen fixation, the devil's walking-stick, the longbow and the didgeridoo.

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

Excursion Reports

Auchlochan Estate, Lesmahagow. 13th July, 2024 **Alison Moss**

Sometimes I feel slightly weary running the Excursion Programme, but then these events turn up special places I never knew about and, always, a bunch of people who are such good company. Auchlochan Estate was one such place. This is an exceptional site of 50 acres with such a variety of habitats. There are 4 lochans, ancient woodland, newer native species deciduous woodland, specimen trees, an amazing walled garden, woodland to the River Nethan, wild flower embankments, meadows and unimproved grassland. Thankfully we were guided round this heady mix by Fiona Phipps, a resident who has extensive natural history experience.

Heath Navel fungus by David Palmar

I was made aware of Auchlochan by Richard who had received moth records from Fiona. After an exploratory visit in January, I realised the potential and called in the BSBI recorder for VC77, Michael Philip. Michael and Peter Wiggins wasted no time in visiting the site and kindly gave me their up-to-date plant list. So we were well prepared.

Red-legged Shield Bug nymph
by David Palmar

There were 18 of us, including 5 residents and a very observant 9 year old. The weather was heavily overcast, so we decided to start with some pond-dipping in the hope that temperatures picked up for butterflies etc. The first observation was an unusual water lily - fringed water lily, *Nymphoides peltata, a* yellow flowered lily with small leaves and covering quite a large area. All the lochans here are man-made, so although this species is native, it is hard to know whether it is introduced or arrived spontaneously.

The pond dipping produced juvenile newts (probably Palmate *Lissotriton helveticus*), pond snails, *Planorbis* sp., and water-hoglice, *Asellus aquaticus*. Away from the lochan, several fungi were noted in the cut grass including tiny Heath Navel, *Lichenomphalia umbellifera.* Wax caps, too, were beginning to appear, so there is great promise for a successful foray at Auchlochan in October. Already we found a Blusher, *Amanita rubescens;* a fungus with a long fruiting season, growing under deciduous trees on our way to the walled garden.

Narrow-Bordered 5-spot Burnet Moth
on Black Knapweed by David Palmar

The walled garden amazed us. It had been laid out from scratch by a local nursery and contained a very skilfully designed assemblage of shrubs, trees and herbaceous plants. We could have spent hours there alone, but this was not a horticultural outing and with the weather, still dull, meant that invertebrates were lying low, apart from the occasional bumblebee. We pushed on to the wilder places along grass paths lined with native trees where Richard's net took action immediately catching a Red-legged Shield Bug nymph, *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*. More fungi caught our attention too, a cluster of hornbeam milk caps, *Lactarius circellatus.*

Yellow Shell moth by David Palmar

We then reached the first of the wild flower meadow embankments. In the landscaping of the whole estate, much recontouring was done including the construction of two wild flower meadows on embankments of excavated soil of low nutritional value. Wild flower mixes were sown, resulting in stunning range of wild flowers and associated invertebrate richness. The previous day had been warm and sunny and these meadows had been buzzing with insects. Although still overcast, we were delighted to see considerable activity.

Ringlet underside by David Palmar

Two species of burnet moths – the Narrow-Bordered 5-spot *Zygaena lonicerae* and the commoner Six-spot, *Zygaena filipendulae,* were flying. Several species of bee, including Common Carder *Bombus pascuorum,* Tree Bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum, W*hite/Buff-tailed Bumblebee workers *Bombus lucorum/terrestris* and Western Honey Bee, *Apis mellifera*, and several species of hoverfly*.*

Cranefly *Pedicia rivosa* by Richard Weddle

Other invertebrates worth noting were Yellow Shell moth *Camptogramma bilineata* and Meadow Brown butterfly *Maniola jurtina.*

The second embankment had damper soil conditions and slightly different selection of wild flowers. At this snapshot in time both had dazzling numbers of Oxeye daisies, trefoils and knapweeds. To date, Michael's plant list has 128 taxa! We added five, but the meadows and the site as a whole were so rich that a dedicated botanical recording event is needed. There was so much to see that we didn't even manage to take the rather overgrown path down to the wet meadow and the River Nethan.

After the meadows we were taken via a deciduous woodland of recent maturity, slightly over the edge of the estate but very much integrated. This was very atmospheric with Bryophytes forming a lush carpet; at the woodland edge Su spotted a spectacular Cranefly *Pedicia rivosa* (photo) which is associated with marshy areas such as are found in that woodland. Time and energy were

Poplar Hawk Moth by David Palmar

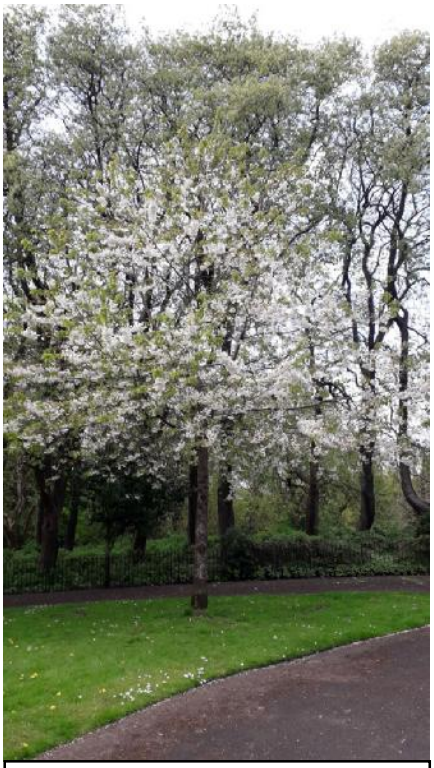
running out, so we headed back past the lochans where Canada geese *Branta canadensis,* were being noisy. This drew our attention to gulls and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus,* which nest on the roofs of the buildings. Apparently their safe island in one of the lochans was removed because the gulls were thought to be a nuisance - a mistake perhaps! Nearly at the cars and another special surprise - a Poplar Hawk moth, *Laothoe populi,* on the trunk of a lime tree beside the exit road. What a treat!

The site has such a lot to offer that one visit is not enough. Fiona's guidance was essential and excellent. We know that a sunny day would have been better, but there was much of interest and it whet our appetite for more. The planned CAFG foray should be very interesting, but all seasons would have rich flora and fauna.

Richmond Park - 18th July, 2024 **Article and photos by Bob Gray**

[1] Common Hawthorn

This 12 hectare park, located in Oatlands south of the River Clyde just east of Rutherglen, was opened in 1899 and named after the lord provost of the time, Sir David Richmond, who had some works nearby. Under the Oatlands Masterplan of 2003 Bett (now Avant) Homes were appointed to deliver some 1400 housing units. In exchange for part of the park being given over to housing, the developers' obligation included £2 million of improvements to Richmond Park. Construction of the homes began in 2005 and the completion date was supposed to be 2022. In 2019 the Polmadie Burn, which runs through the park, was fenced off when SEPA discovered chromium contamination derived from the dumping of hexavalent chromium in claypits by JJ White Chemical Works. The clean up however was incomplete and it is claimed that GCC and SEPA knew of the contamination for over 10 years. Avant Homes claim they did not know until 2019. Under "the polluter pays principle" JJ White would be liable, but as they no longer exist, it is unclear who is responsible.



[2] Wild Cherry

Despite the relatively small accessible area of the park it possesses a large number of different tree species, unusual in that they are practically all hardwoods. Despite the damp forecast eleven of us set off in a clockwise direction around Richmond Park loch. Early on we looked at the flowers of a common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)[1]. As the name suggests each flower possesses a single style.

[3] Double Gean flowers

We also viewed a few cherry trees. The single flowered wild cherries (*Prunus avium*) had produced some fruits but the double geans (*P. avium* 'Plena')[2] with double flowers[3] had produced none.

[4] cotton-wool fruits of 'Balsam Spire' Poplar

At the boundary of the wooded area leading to the side of the pond grew a Highclere holly (*Ilex* x *altaclarensis*) its main feature being its leaf spines growing in one plane. This holly is a cross between the tender Madeira holly (*I. perado*) and the common holly (*I. aquifolium*) and first appeared c. 1835 in the grounds of Highclere Castle of Downton Abbey fame. A healthy wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) escaping the ravages of Dutch elm disease was growing in a corner near here.

[6] Paul's Scarlet' hawthorn

A number of cotton-wool fruits on the path[4] confirmed that the poplar with the steeply rising branches and silvery smooth bark higher up was the female clone balsam spire poplar (*Populus* 'Balsam Spire') the canker-resistant cross between Western and Eastern balsam poplars. This was growing in the woodland bounding the Polmadie burn, fenced off owing to the pollution history of the area.

[5] Hybrid Cockspur thorn leaves & flowers

The poor growth of many of the trees in this area probably reflected the conditions arising from this pollution. However a golden-fruited rowan (*Sorbus* '*fructu luteo*') was noted. This tree is similar to the rowan 'Joseph Rock' which also has yellow fruits but the tree here has leaves that are smaller than those of 'Joseph Rock'.

[7] Paul's Scarlet' hawthorn flowers

Nearly opposite, over the fence enclosing the lochside woodland, it was surprising to find a rare manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) which possessed no flowers.

[8] Hubei Cherry graft

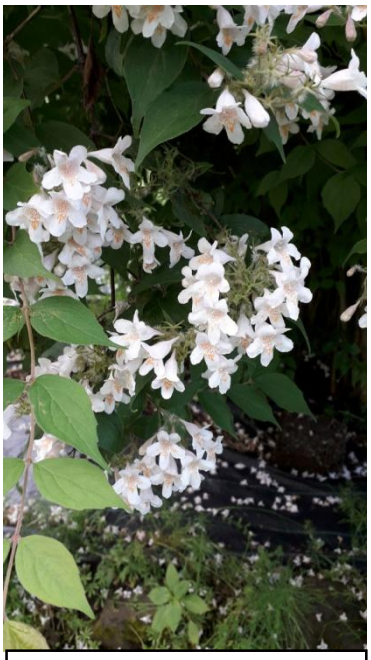
In a small triangle to the west of the loch grow three specimens of hybrid Cockspur thorn (*Crataegus* x *lavallei* 'Carrieri'), few thorns with distinctive leaves[5] and a solitary 'Paul's Scarlet' hawthorn (*C. laevigata*)[6], a crimson flowered[7] sport of midland hawthorn. The 'Paul's Scarlet' has fruits with two styles that distinguish this hawthorn from the common hawthorn we observed near the start of the evening.

[9] Hubei Cherry leaves

A row of grafted cherries[8] grows alongside the path running northeast from here. Their glossy leaves[9] suggested these are Hubei cherries (*Prunus hirtipes*). Then, over a small bridge on the west side of the loch, grows a solitary crack willow (*Salix fragilis*)[10] accompanying abundant silver birches (*Betula pendula*). On this side of the bridge was some regeneration of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and grey sallow (*Salix cinerea*), growing amongst some planted shrubs that included, in full flower, a beauty bush (*Kolwitzia amabilis*)[11] and two goatsbeards (*Aruncus dioicus*)[12], one male and one female shrub as the specific name indicates.

[10] Crack Willow

North of the loch we found a group of four mature lime trees, all flowering. One of these was a silver pendent lime (*Tilia* 'Petiolaris')[13] grafted onto a common lime. This lime is a cultivar of the silver lime (*T. tomentosa*) whose heartwood rots quickly so few grow in GB. Another was an easily overlooked American lime (*T. americana*) having yellow tipped leaf teeth. We were able to compare these leaves with those of the other two common limes (*T. x europaea*) growing here.



[11] Beauty bush

On our way to the bank of the River Clyde we passed a very fine solitary specimen of Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*). The river margin possesses many saplings of different species such as ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), wych elm, white willow (*Salix alba*) and Norway maple. On the landward side of the riverside path grows a large group of wild cherry saplings and occasional saplings of white willow and goat willow (*S. caprea*). A single weeping willow (*S. sepulchralis* 'Chrysocoma')[14] that grows here and a few very big white willows[15] are the most distinctive feature of this area,

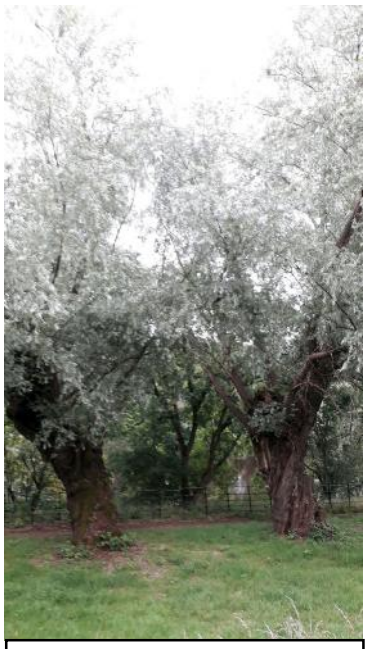
[12] Goatsbeard

as well as being a feature along both sides of the river for many miles. Alongside the steps leading from the path to Rutherglen Bridge grows a large group of wych elm saplings and, at the top of the steps, we found common privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) in full flower.

[13] Silver Pendent Lime leaves

Southwest of the park entrance at this point grow four mature hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*) and an attractive willow-leaved pear (*Pyrus salicifolia*). Over towards the loch are a few scattered trees, including a couple of 'Goldsworth Purple' coppiced purple sycamore saplings. This tree retains its dark coloured leaves throughout the whole season. Also growing here we encountered the solitary conifer growing in the park, a blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* f. *glauca*)[16]. This is purportedly the most numerous of conifers found in parks and is the most familiar African tree on our shores, having been introduced by Lord Somers in 1841. Between the cedar and the loch grows a purple Norway maple (*Acer platanoides* aff. 'Goldsworth Purple') together with two small leaved limes, one of them coppiced. A nearby garden contains a blue Lawson cypress, which glories under the name of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Triomf van Boskoop'[17], and has big drooping very glaucous sprays of leaves.

[14] Weeping willow



[15] White Willow pair

Finally, we made or way back to the start where, northeast of the entrance, grows a group of c. 17 ash trees, thus far apparently free of ash dieback, and, along the boundary, a few different species including five sizeable London planes (*Platanus* x *hispanica*) with their familiar peeling bark. They come late into leaf and the shiny leaves are washed clean by rain, features that make them well suited to an urban habitat. The species is a hybrid of the oriental plane and American buttonwood probably originating in Spain c. 1650.

[16] Blue Atlas Cedar

So, despite this being a lesser-known park, it does contain a fair number of trees that are relatively unusual in Glasgow. For an updated tree list please contact the author Bob Gray.

[17] Blue Lawson cypress fruits

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 10th January 2025 please.

Thank you very much to all the contributors. Please send contributions by email. If sending photos, please submit only a few as separate jpg files.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary Alison Park

Hurlethill Local Nature Reserve - 27 th July 2024 Kirsty Menzies

Members of Paisley Natural History Society joined us on our excursion to Hurlethill, which had been designated as a Local Nature Reserve by Glasgow City Council in January this year. Hurlethill offers a variety of habitats including semi-natural grassland, ancient woodland (including beech, oak and pine woodlands) and wildflower meadows with ponds.

Wetland by Kirsty Menzies

In former times the land was part of the grounds of the Hawkhead Estate and in the 1630s Hawkhead House was described as being 'surrounded by woodlands and enclosures'. It became the seat of the Earls of Glasgow in the 1750s until 1886 when it was divided up and sold. The large Hawkhead mansion has not survived, and housing estates have been built around the site from the 1950s onwards. But there is still evidence of past times. A wire fence around an area of grassland indicates the site of a former reservoir and broken-down stone walls remain around some of the original woodlands.

Smoky Wainscot by Pat Thompson

Despite the generally low numbers of insect and birdlife to be found this year, we did manage to spot a number of species. I for one, was very aware of the Clegs (*Haematopota pluvialis*) which made their presence very clearly known as they landed and tried to bite me. We also spotted a good number of moth species including Snout (*Hypena proboscidalis)*, Mother of Pearl (*Pleuroptya ruralis*), Smoky Wainscot (*Mythimna impura*), Common White Wave (*Cabera pusaria*), Yellow Shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*) and Straw Dot (*Rivula sericealis*). Butterflies were very scarce with only an occasional Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina)* and Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus)* emerging from the grassland.

Phoenix Sycamore by Kirsty Menzies

Whilst discouraging insect life, the recent wet weather had encouraged the growth of the distinctive black projecting sclerotina of Ergot (*Claviceps*) fungus on some of the grass florets including Cock's Foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and False Oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). Woodland fungi however were not evident. Further evidence of the wet summer was shown by the contrast in the grasses around Rocks Plantation. Short, bright green grass including Sweet Grass (*Glyceria*) and Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) was growing in

an area regularly flooded, and looked almost dayglo against the contrasting browns and fawns of the Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) and Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*) surrounding it.

Although we didn't spot any of the Jays (*Garrulus glandarius)* known to nest in the area, we did enjoy watching around ten Swallows (*Hirundo rustica)* swooping backwards and forwards above the grassland. There were plenty of signs of Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major)* activity, particularly in some decaying trees which were peck-marked with holes.

Lunch by Simon Stuart

In the predominantly beech woodland we noticed a couple of mature Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) trees. Also, a rather remarkable Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), an ancient phoenix tree where the original tree had fallen and multiple trunks grown from its base, encasing a stone slab within the trunks. The gnarled stumps of the original severed roots could be seen on the side but all except the base of the original trunk had long rotted away. The woodland also offered a welcome clearing with stone walls and a fallen trunk where we could sit and enjoy a bite of lunch.

After lunch we visited the wildflower area which had been created on a slope next to new-build houses, where we spotted one Narrow-bordered Five Spot Burnet (*Zygaena lonicerae*). Downhill from there we walked through a more diverse wildflower meadow with several ponds. We saw some more moths amongst the grass and a few Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum)* dragonflies and Azure (*Coenagrion puella)* damselflies above the water. Some spiders had made webs within the grasses including a Mothercare Spider (*Phylloneta impressa/sisyphyia*) carefully guarding its green egg sack with the remains of a mirid bug (*Leptopterna* sp.) in its web. It seems that we hadn’t been the only ones enjoying a lunchtime snack!

Altogether we noted 53 records including 10 moths, 13 true bugs, 18 true flies amongst others. Thanks to Richard Weddle, Pat Thomson and Milan Pippert for their records and photos.

Contributions from GNHS members

Doors Open Day: Graham Kerr Building — Roger Downie

The Open Doors day organising team - Martha Stone-Shepherd, Emma Plant, Roger Downie, Maggie Reilly and Mike Rutherford

As part of the recent Glasgow Doors Open Day Festival the Graham Kerr Building opened up on Saturday 21st September, and staff past and present put on a variety of activities and events. Professor Roger Downie gave two lectures titled 'Sir John Graham Kerr and the Transformation of Glasgow Zoology' in the newly refurbished Main Lecture Theatre.

He talked about the life and work of Glasgow Zoology's founder, Sir John Graham Kerr, including his hazardous expeditions to South America, his career in Glasgow with the construction of the Zoology Building, including its museum, then his life as an MP representing the Scottish Universities where he attempted to persuade the navy to camouflage its ships using biological principles.

The lecture then outlined the transformation of Glasgow Zoology since Kerr's time and outlined the forthcoming book on the history of the department. This will be available free on the GNHS web-site as a supplement to The Glasgow Naturalist; hard copies will be sent to TGN subscribers and will also be available to purchase. Three tours of the building were conducted by Maggie Reilly, for many years Curator of Zoology. She highlighted the architectural features including the exterior, and showed visitors a typical office, the refurbished main laboratory, the departmental library and then finished in the Zoology Museum. Every tour was over-subscribed as the opportunity to see behind the scenes proved too much to resist.

Maggie Reilly showing the newly refurbished teaching laboratory

Meanwhile, Mike Rutherford, the current Curator of Zoology, helped by Hunterian Museum staff, was in the Zoology Museum answering queries and showing visitors the self-guided tours and activities. This year's Open Doors Festival theme of Diversity and Diaspora lent itself well to a trail around the museum that looked at animals that migrate and move; there were also origami birds, turtles, whales and butterflies to make, which were very popular judging by the small menagerie that had formed by the end of the day.

Dr Anna McGregor talking about oysters to Lydia Bach and daughter

Also in the museum, Dr Anna McGregor, ably assisted by her son, put on a great show for kids telling a tale of oysters and how they are being reintroduced into the seas around Scotland where they play a crucial role in the environment. Two students, Martha Stone-Shepherd and Emma Plant helped manage the visitors. By the end of the day around 200 people had taken part in the various events and many were asking when the museum would be open on a Saturday again.

Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre: recent additions and remarkable records **Richard Weddle**

I had intended to make this a regular newsletter item but as I didn't manage to contribute to the last newsletter, there is potentially rather a lot to report on now, so I shall summarise much of the data, highlighting only a few invertebrate species and fungi, because these are the groups that have tended, over the years, to be under-recorded. We are aware though, that some new birds and higher plants are also being recorded – but the latter are often covered by our excursion reports anyway.

Earthtongue by Gustaf Fredell

One of our focusses recently has been on the wildlife of the four Glasgow University campuses, as the Campus Biodiversity Committee have been encouraging students and staff to take part in recording projects. These have produced many records of fungi over the last six years (it's only in recent months that these records have been gleaned from iNaturalist); one of the more unusual sightings is an Earthtongue (*Geoglossum* sp.) found by Gustaf Fredell in the wildlife garden beside Lilybank House last year.

Similarly, we have gleaned records of beetles on the Cochno Estate in 1975 from the field diaries of Roy Crowson – he highlighted the rove-beetle *Anomognathus cuspidatus* as of particular significance, and even now there are no Scottish records on the NBN Atlas - which suggests that, if the specimen was retained (in the Hunterian Museum), it should be verified!

As it happens, there were rather few new non-avian records for the Garscube campus in this period, the most notable being a Lizard (presumably *Zootoca vivipara*) spotted scuttling across the path by Tom Byars, an ornithologist who visits frequently. This is the first record of a native reptile within the city boundary,

and the doubt implied by 'presumably' is due to the proximity of the Vet School and its Small Animal Hospital.

The Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group have also made substantial additions to the species lists for Glasgow Necropolis and Hamiltonhill Claypits LNR. Both were joint excursions with GNHS; the former excursion was in autumn 2023, but the list wasn't finalised until spring 2024. Also a large number of records were generated as a result of the Hogganfield Park centenary bioblitz on July 27 th, along with records gleaned from iRecord / iNaturalist, which together added 55 taxa (not all were identified to species) to the list for the park – some of these additions were rather common species, highlighting the remark above about under-recording, though I should add that a few of them were non-native invasives.

Speaking of non-native invasives, we continue to receive many records of the Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*), though we are still receiving healthy numbers of other ladybird species, including the Orange Ladybird (*Halyzia 16-guttata*) which only appeared here about 25 years ago.

This year's highlight is perhaps the Adonis' Ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*) which I myself found in Hamiltonhill Claypits in September; this is the first 'wild' sighting in west central Scotland (one was found previously in imported grapes), though it has also been recorded in several locations in Midlothian in the past couple of years.

Adonis' Ladybird by Richard Weddle

Oedemera virescens by Richard Weddle

Among other beetles found, the false blister-beetle *Oedemera lurida* is becoming increasingly common in the Glasgow area, sometimes apparently outnumbering *Oedemera virescens* which itself is a relatively recent arrival, having been first recorded near Crossford in 2009.

In a 1992 review *virescens* was classed as 'vulnerable' being found only in a small area in NE Yorkshire, though *lurida* was described as 'unusual north of the English Midlands'. And, in following up my short note (https://doi.org/10.37208/tgn27411) on the leaf-beetle *Bruchidius villosus*, which is found typically on Common Broom, I discovered another, rather larger, leaf-beetle *Gonioctena olivacea* which has rather few records in Central Scotland; it was found along with *B. villosus* on Broom at Clyde's Bridge near Abington.

Butterflies and moths have had another difficult year, as no doubt had the birds which depend on caterpillars to feed their broods; also common wasps were much fewer, probably reflecting a general depression in the insect population. However

new species continue to establish here: there have now been many sightings of Holly Blue, particularly in domestic gardens (see Myles' article below), and Speckled Wood is also becoming commoner, as is the Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet moth (*Zygaena lonicerae*) which is one of the new species at Hogganfield (see photo in Auchlochan report).

Clay Triple-lines
by Richard Weddle

The regular moth-trapping sessions at the Botanic Gardens have yielded a few new species this year, despite numbers being generally low. The Clay Triple-lines (*Cyclophora linearia*) is the first record for the Clyde area, with previous Scottish records confined to Dumfries and Galloway; and the micromoth now called Lime Tuft (*Bucculatrix thoracella*), on the lid of a blue recycling bin in Hyndland, is the first adult found in VC77 (Lanarkshire) - I subsequently discovered that larval stages had been recorded in Cardonald Cemetery in 2016.

The moth trap at the Claypits, together with field recording, continue to add to the Claypits species list. There were no notable moths this year, but the trap did yield a large may-fly (*Ecdyonurus insignis*), which is only the second record in Glasgow, the first being beside Kelvingrove Park; it is a strange find, in that the larvae like fast-flowing stony rivers - quite unlike the Glasgow branch of the Forth and Clyde Canal! Sweeping the emergent vegetation in the nearly SuDS pond has added several large flies, including several marsh-flies (Sciomyzidae), otherwise known as snail-killing flies; also from the Typha (Bulrush) heads in the pond, the first Glasgow record of a Lygaeid seed-bug *Chilacis typhae*.

Hairy-footed Flower Bee
by Emma Plant

Also found in the Claypits was the first Glasgow record of Fabricius' Nomad Bee (*Nomada fabriciana*). And among other Hymenoptera records there were three sightings of the Hairy-footed Flower Bee (*Anthophora plumipes*) in April this year, the first of which was in a Pollokshields garden by Emma Plant, and is the first Glasgow record, closely followed by sightings later that month in the Botanic Gardens by RSPB staff.

Lastly it has been a good year for bark-fly (Psocoptera) records too: nine species have been found, one of which, *Valenzuela flavidus,* found in Hyndland Old Station Park, is the first Glasgow record, and the first record in the Clyde area since 1909. The other species had more recent records from the Greater Glasgow area. Most specimens have been donated to the Hunterian Museum as this is a particularly under-recorded group.

Footnote from Robyn Haggard, Glasgow Museums:
The review of Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre is going well and a successful workshop with local authority staff from across the Glasgow City Region was held at the end of September. The results from the workshop, and from an earlier workshop held with Glasgow City Council staff, will inform the future business case.

A Leaf-miner on Orchids **Paul Cobb**

At Hannahston Community Woodland at Drongan in Ayrshire on 12 September where Broad-leaved Helleborine Orchid *Epipactis helleborine* is abundant I noticed two leaves of one plant had leafmines on them. These proved to be *Parallelomma vittatum*, also known as *Americina vittatum*, a member of the Scathophagidae, which is a family better known for their dung flies rather than leafminers.

Parallelomma vittatum
by Paul Cobb

Since then I have found mines at three further sites in East Ayrshire, also on Broad-leaved Helleborine.

These seem to be the first British records on this host plant, with Twayblade Orchid said to be the usual host. Elsewhere in Europe it is known from a wider range of orchids as well as Broad-leaved Helleborine and Twayblade, and also Liliaceae such as Lily of the Valley and Solomon's Seal, though some authorities consider the ones on Liliaceae to be a distinct species *P. paridis*.

Small Skipper reaches Ayrshire **Paul Cobb**

The Small Skipper butterfly has been spreading northward for some time now into SE Scotland and along the Solway coast, and it has now reached Ayrshire.

At Meath Hill, between Sorn and Muirkirk, on 28 July, I succeeded in catching one of several I saw to confirm it as Small Skipper and not the very similar Essex Skipper. It is a very ordinary site, recently replanted clear-fell forestry, where grasses have become abundant beside the forest road. I had in fact seen skippers there two years ago, but wasn't then able to catch one for certain identification (they're very fast)!

I also saw Small Skipper last year, only just outside Ayrshire, in the middle of nowhere to the south of Loch Doon at another clear-felled forestry site now dominated by grasses.

(N.B. Richard Sutcliffe recorded one at Dumbrock Meadows SSSI, to the N of Mugdock in July - RW)

Holly Blues in the Glasgow area **Myles O'Reilly**

In August 2023 I was surprised to see a blue butterfly flitting through my garden in Giffnock on Glasgow's south side. I had never seen a blue butterfly before in my garden in the last 30 years! The butterfly briefly alighted on some *Escallonia* flowers and I was able to get a quick snap of its under-wings before it flew off. The chalky white undersides with a few black speckles indicated this was my first ever Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*). I wondered if this was a one-off wandering individual or the harbinger of a new colonisation. At the end of November I found a moribund male Holly Blue lying on the ground among ivy leaves in my garden. The Holly Blue has two generations; the first in Spring using holly berries as the larval food, with the second generation in late summer switching to ivy flower buds as food. The adults die at the onset of winter (as with my November specimen), with the chrysalis stage hibernating though the winter months.

Holly Blue underside
by Myles O'Reilly

According to Richard Weddle the Holly Blue seems to be spreading north from Ayr, where it has been established since 2011. It has since then appeared in the Hamilton area in 2019, and was first seen in Glasgow (Linn Park) in 2020. In 2023 it was seen in Langside as well as my Giffnock sighting mentioned above.

I hoped it might re-appear in my Giffnock garden in 2024. My first 2024 Giffnock sighting was a blue butterfly flitting across Orchard Drive in May. This was probably a Holly Blue though the identification was not confirmed. No others were seen until July when single blue butterflies flitted through my garden on the 20th and 28th with six visits of a single Holly Blue on 30th July. The butterflies flitted up and down along my ivy-clad garden wall stopping to nectar on the *Escallonia* bush, allowing photo confirmation of the underside.

Male Holly Blue
by Myles O'Reilly

Numerous visits of a blue butterfly occurred on August 3rd, again feeding on the *Escallonia* and sunning nearby on a guelder rose leaf allowing its determination as a male Holly Blue. Three further visits occurred in the garden on 10th and 14th August and finally on 8th September. It is not clear if all the sightings in the garden represent repeat visits of a single male individual or several butterflies passing through. An abundance of both holly and ivy in the garden would provide a good location for breeding but no evidence for this has been found yet.

In summer 2024 Liza Downie has also seen probable Holly Blues nearby in Mansewood and 2024 Holly Blue sightings in the Glasgow area have been received by Richard Weddle from Overtoun Park, Cathkin Braes Park, and Kelvinside allotments as well as other nearby areas outwith the city. It seems likely that the Holly Blue may be becoming established in the Glasgow area and would be a very welcome addition to the lepidopteran fauna of our parks and gardens.

BLB Grants update **Alison Park**

Funded by the Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest, GNHS has recently awarded three grants for natural history projects, adding to the eight projects already supported in 2024. The three new projects encompass a range of interesting topics all with significant nature conservation implications.

An award of £200 will assist a Glasgow University student on a year's work placement in Canada. Based at the Cochrane Ecological Institute (CEI), Rebecca McArthur will investigate phenological patterns of passerine birds. She will use CEI's past bird and weather records and current data to look for changes in migratory timing potentially correlated with climate change.

Canadian passerine monitoring by Rebecca McArthur

Checking mammal traps by Maria Jose Lopez Jara

A postgraduate researcher Maria Jose Lopez Jara, also from Glasgow, will receive £1965 to extend the longitudinal scope of a study into the impact of woodland restoration on viral diseases amongst small woodland rodents. As tree and woodland planting is currently seen as beneficial for climate change and biodiversity loss, the research area is topical.

The third successful grant application gains £750 towards a fascinating multi-disciplinary project devised by a group of Glasgow University staff from both Biodiversity and Humanities Schools.

Quote from Anna McGregor:

We are pleased to receive support from the Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest Fund in order to continue our work on the 'Tracing the historical distribution of native oysters through place-names and historical records; adding a new source through the Argyll Estate Archives'. This work will allow Dr Anna McGregor and Dr Carolyn McNamara from the University of Glasgow to visit the historical archive maintained at Inveraray Castle to look for place-names and records related to historical distributions of native oyster in the west coast of Scotland from records held by the Duke of Argyll's collection, and make comparisons with NatureScot's current oyster distribution map. Knowledge of past oyster locations will assist in planning for restoration of oyster sites and deriving the ecosystem benefits provided by these animals.

On completion of these three projects, GNHS members can look forward to learning what has been discovered when end of grant reports feature in future newsletters. Natural history research is a key activity for GNHS and the BLB bequest can enable members to take their interests further. The next round of awards will be offered in February 2025 (for applications received by 15 th January 2025). If you are considering applying for a grant, please visit the GNHS website for further information.

University of Glasgow students dive into Thai marine research and conservation **Mia Weir**

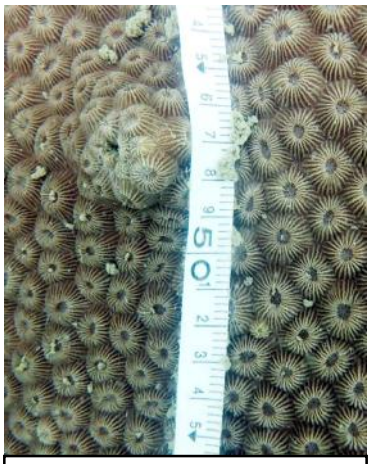
Heading out to collect data by Mia Weir

Earlier this year, a team of eight undergraduate students from the University of Glasgow embarked on a research expedition to Koh Phangan, Thailand, to study coral reef ecosystems. This venture, supported by a BLB grant from the Glasgow Natural History Society, provided an unparalleled opportunity for hands-on fieldwork in a region rich with marine biodiversity. For many of us, it was a transformative experience, far removed from the colder waters and coastal ecosystems of Scotland.

Our research focused on three distinct projects, all centred on understanding coral reef dynamics. The first project examined the role of giant clams (Tridacna spp.) in coral health and diversity. Giant clams, the largest living bivalves, are crucial for the health of coral reefs. These molluscs obtain nutrients by filter-feeding on suspended particles in the water column and through symbiotic photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae, much like corals. Giant clams are essential reef builders, improve water quality, and serve as a food source for other species. However, they face significant pressures in the Gulf of Thailand due to overexploitation for meat consumption, the aquarium trade, and environmental stressors like coral bleaching and ocean acidification.

Giant Clam by Mia Weir

Our study involved measuring clams on two distinct reef habitats: reef flats and reef crests, where four species of giant clams were identified. We carefully examined their shell features and their position on the reef to assess size and distribution patterns. We were particularly interested in understanding how coral bleaching has affected clam populations, as bleaching can also impact clams. By comparing bleaching effects between reef zones, we aimed to identify changes in clam size and distribution across the study sites.



Coral being measured by Katie Grieve

The second project explored coral bleaching and biodiversity. Coral bleaching has emerged as a major threat to coral reefs worldwide, and our study sought to assess its effects on Koh Phangan's reefs. The current bleaching event allowed us to investigate how different coral growth forms—massive, branching, solitary, and plating—vary in their resilience to these stressors. We also examined whether colony size influences a coral's ability to avoid full bleaching, offering insights into the relationship between size and survival under stress.

To measure the bleaching status of the coral colonies, we calculated their projected surface area. This involved measuring both the longest axis of the coral colony and a second axis perpendicular to the first, allowing us to estimate the surface area for each coral. Using the live coral cover (LCC) survey method, we also recorded the diversity of the benthic reef community underneath the transects. This approach provided valuable data on how the wider ecosystem responds to coral bleaching, including changes in species diversity, live coral cover, and the health of the benthic fauna in these stressed environments.

The final project focused on the development of barrel sponges (Xestospongia spp.) in Koh Phangan's reefs. These sponges play an important role in reef ecosystems, adding to habitat complexity and serving as both shelter and a food source for many marine species. They are also crucial for filtering seawater, helping maintain reef water quality. Barrel sponge data has been collected in Koh Phangan since 2015, when a mass mortality event occurred following a fatal bleaching event.

Giant Barrel Sponge by Mia Weir

Our study aimed to examine how the barrel sponge population has recovered since 2015 by looking at changes in abundance, age distribution, and size distribution. We also explored how the ongoing coral bleaching event is impacting the local barrel sponge population. By comparing current sponge populations with historical data, we hope to better understand the long-term impacts of environmental stressors on these important reef organisms.

The financial support from the GNHS was vital in making this expedition a reality. The grant helped cover essential costs such as research station fees, travel, accommodation, and field equipment. Without this support, the scope of our research would have been significantly limited. We are deeply grateful for this opportunity to not only expand our academic knowledge but also to contribute to the ongoing scientific exploration of coral reef ecosystems.

This expedition was an invaluable learning experience for all involved. It allowed us to immerse ourselves in the complexities of coral reef ecosystems, hone our field research skills, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge needed to

protect these fragile environments in the face of global climate change. We are excited to share our findings with the wider scientific community and remain committed to advancing the study and conservation of coral reefs worldwide.

ZooSoc and Bats Without Borders **Sam Gibbons**

At ZooSoc, we're incredibly enthusiastic about supporting Bats Without Borders (BWB) because their work highlights the crucial role bats play in maintaining healthy ecosystems, especially in South Africa. BWB's efforts to protect bat species through research and habitat conservation deeply resonate with us, as these creatures are often misunderstood despite their importance in controlling insect populations and promoting biodiversity.

Their work focuses on protecting bat habitats, raising awareness about the vital role bats play in ecosystems, and conducting research to support conservation efforts. With the global decline of bat populations due to habitat destruction, disease, and other threats, BWB's mission is more critical than ever. As ZooSoc, we are passionate about their work because it aligns with our commitment to biodiversity and wildlife preservation. We believe that raising awareness of bat conservation can inspire others to take action and support these often-misunderstood creatures.

As many of us in ZooSoc take part in conservation work, we feel inspired to support BWB's grassroots approach to take action. Their dedication to raising awareness and actively engaging local communities is something we admire and want to support.

Although bats around the world are facing serious threats, we chose to support Bats Without Borders because they focus on an often-overlooked region where conservation needs are urgent. We feel that by raising awareness of the challenges faced by bats in South Africa, we can shed light on the global crisis bats are facing.

While GNHS doesn't typically promote fundraising appeals, if you're curious to learn more about why we care so much, we encourage you to explore their work at www.batswithoutborders.org. ZooSoc has also launched a GoFundMe initiative, and we would appreciate any support from the GNHS community as we work to promote bat conservation and biodiversity. You can kindly donate here if you wish: BWB Donations
https://www.gofundme.com/f/zoosoc-bats-without-borders