



# **GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

**April 2009**

**David Palmar  
(Newsletter Editor)**

**Next Newsletter Deadline  
22 July 2009**

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

## **Forthcoming Meetings**

**Mary Child**

### **Tuesday 14th April 7.30pm**

Bird's nests in museum collections: why? Mike Hansell

### **Tuesday 12th May**

**6.30pm** Tutorial - Dragonflies Jeanne Robinson

**7.30pm** Ben Lawers: the peak of plant conservation Helen Cole

## **Excursion Programme 2009**

**Anne Orchardson**

The Excursion Programme is now available, but there are a few specific excursions for which I have some supplementary information. Please use the booking forms which are enclosed with this Newsletter where stated.

### **Isle of Coll/Tiree**

After my earlier canvassing of ideas there was quite a bit of interest for a few days on the Isle of Coll. Unfortunately, it appears that the company with which I was liaising has gone out of business. As this only happened recently, I have not had the opportunity to research a suitable alternative. I will look into this idea for 2010.

### **Portencross Shore Walk, 24th April 2009**

Please meet at the car park at Portencross at 5pm. There will be a very low water that evening and we will be going down the beach as far as the low tides let us. Going will be slippery and rocky so bring wellingtons or stout boots. A bucket for collecting specimens would also be useful. We hope to find an extensive and exciting variety of animals that live in the intertidal zone.

### **Cumbræ, 10th May 2009**

We have rearranged last year's cancelled visit to the Marine Station and Dr Phil Cowie will show us round explaining the range of work that goes on there, including a tour of the station, a visit to the museum shop and, if available, a tour of the recompression chamber.

In addition, Neil Gregory will set up a moth trap the previous evening, and after lunch he will show us what he has caught.

If anyone else would like to lead on any other aspect of Cumbrae's wildlife during the afternoon, please let me know.

### **Wildlife Quest, 30th May 2009**

This is part of a Wildlife Heritage Day. The Bishop's Estate area around Provan Hall was historically known as a huge county estate. A wildlife quest is being carried out to find out what plants and animals live in Bishop's Estate today.

Guided expeditions, leaving from Provan Hall, will visit nearby Local Nature Reserves and wildlife sites to find and record the species present. Local wildlife experts will lead these trips to look at specific groups of animals and plants. There will be something suitable for both beginners and specialists. Numbers are limited so please phone to book your place.

For more information visit <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/biodiversity>

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### **Wildlife Quest surveys**

To help gather as many records as possible, surveys are also being carried out on **Friday 29th May**. If you are interested in carrying out a survey or want to join a survey group please get in touch, at the above details.

**Summer Social** – Tuesday 9th June - see end of Newsletter for menu and booking form.

### **Ben Lawers, 11th July 2009**

Helen Cole, National Trust, will talk to us on 12th May about the plant conservation work on Ben Lawers. To link with this, we have arranged a visit which will allow one small group to be taken to see the high alpine plants, while a second larger group will be shown low level plant rehabilitation. **It has just been announced that the Visitor Centre on Ben Lawers will not be open this summer** and there will be no toilet facilities on site. Consequently we have adjusted arrangements so that the two groups will travel separately. The high level group will need around 2 hours for their walk to the plant site. The low level group will have a guided walk but be free after that, with options to stay on/around Ben Lawers, or go elsewhere e.g. Killin. If it looks as if traveling will be problematic, we may arrange a minibus for the larger group with the cost spread between participants. Booking is essential for this excursion as numbers are restricted. See booking form.

### **Badger Watch, Falls of Clyde, 15th July 2009**

The evening's SWT guided walk through ancient woodland provides opportunities to see badgers emerging from their sett, various types of bat, and possibly the resident otters. I have provisionally booked 8 places in a group of 12. If places are available, we can fill the whole group. The cost of £8 is SWT's fee for the walk.

## **Lichens**

I'd like to draw your attention to three events focusing on lichens, hopefully developing knowledge through the year:

- Sun 29th March - Alan Silverside will give an introduction to lichens at Muirshiel Park, consisting of a talk followed by field identification. There should be photographic opportunities.
- Weekend 13/14th June - During Bob Gray's trip to the Black Wood of Rannoch, Edna Stewart will be helping to identify lichens found there.
- Sun 4th October - John Douglass will looking at lichens in Pollok Park.

## **Palacerigg Country Park, 25th July 2009**

**Edna Stewart**

Meet at Palacerigg 10.30am. The Park is signposted from the A801 Cumbernauld Town Centre road. Phone to arrange cars and lifts.

There is a cafe but take a packed lunch. There are various habitats - grassland, moorland, woodland and ponds. There is a Treetop Walkway for those who like to be high, Rare Breeds of animals, and sites of historical interest.

## **Travel**

As in previous years, we have several excursions which are away from Glasgow, a couple of which include using ferries. A number of people do not have cars, so it would be helpful if members could indicate when confirming attendance if they can offer, or require, any car places. When using ferries, we will try to minimise the number of cars we take and share the cost of any cars on the ferry.

I hope you enjoy this year's Programme. If you have any comments (good or otherwise!) please let me know. Also, any ideas for the future are always welcome - several of this year's excursions grew out of conversations on last year's trips!

## **Training Bursaries**

**Richard Weddle**

BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and GNHS (Glasgow Natural History Society) are each offering 2 Bursaries of £150 to attend a Natural History course at the Field Studies Council's centre at Kindrogan, Perthshire or any other FSC centre in the UK.

The Bursaries are open to anyone aged 18-30 and living in Scotland. Courses must be chosen from the FSC's taxonomy courses listed under Professional Development Programmes.

For more details and an application form see

<http://www.bris.org.uk/news/Bursaries.rtf> - there will shortly be a link to this page on the GNHS website.

The closing date for applications is 1st April 2009.

Please note that courses at FSC centres do generally cost more than £150; the bursary is not intended to cover the full cost of a course.

Many members will remember Dick Hunter who was an excellent mycologist and botanist. Less well known was his artistic ability - If he wanted to paint - he painted, possibly painting on a Kellogg's Corn Flakes packet or similar, or anything else which was available. If he was having problems identifying a fungus he would make a painting of it - with the relevant mycological description - and send it to our friends in Edinburgh for an identification. The painting /drawing is the frontispiece on the current Fungus Group of South East Scotland Newsletter.



**Reply to points made by June Mackay in her article in the last Newsletter**  
**"Can We Influence Officialdom?"** **Keith Cohen**

"I'm sure I'm only one of many who agree wholeheartedly with June's thoughts, and lamentations about the lack of thought and understanding in the maintenance of public places, and in the control of development. But I'd just like to add a cautionary note about the benefits of building on "brownfield sites" as opposed to "greenfields". Picture a new house, or indeed a new estate of houses, being built on a pleasingly green farm field, maybe bordered by some hedges, perhaps with a small wet rushy patch, and which is also a necessary part of our agricultural

industry at a time when the world struggles to feed itself. It seems an outrage to build on this when other "brownfield sites" are sitting idle! But what IS a brownfield, and indeed June has already pointed out that a garden may count as a brownfield site, allowing for the infilling of older large gardens with new houses, losing the 'greenness' of a neighbourhood. The key identifier of a brownfield is prior 'development', which is a broad category, and takes no account of the recent history or current status of the site. But, a long-abandoned factory or other 'developed' site may now be covered in self-regenerated habitats: grasslands are often species rich on the often thin soils on developed sites; marsh and ponds, and woodlands may develop; these areas are often home to orchids and other locally scarce plants, butterflies and bumblebees, and so on. Yet, because a policy defines them as "brownfield", they can be considered as prime development locations by developers and the planners. Thus, an intensively managed farm field, which apart from soil may not even have fences, let alone hedges or trees, plants or other established habitats is seen as more important and worthy.

If you are concerned about this or other issues of planning policy or implementation in your area, one of the key ways to influence the process is to make comments on the Local Plan when it is up for review, or even between reviews. These plans contain the policies by which biodiversity and public greenspace are meant to be protected, and if it is written in the Local Plan then it is harder for the council to ignore it. The more comments received to protect biodiversity, whether on a green field or a brownfield, the better protected it will be - so call by your council offices and ask to read the local plan, and ask when it is next up for review. Make your voice heard.

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Keith: I have to thank you. You have made my day - this is the very first time over the many years that I have been writing letters or articles to organisations like the GNHS, and editing Newsletters that ANYONE HAS EVER MADE COMMENT. This is always particularly galling with NCCPG where as Editor I have on more than one occasion requested a response to a subject which should be of lively interest to my readers!!! "My readers" - one wonders if they ever get further than page one!! **June Mackay**

## **Grants awarded at the last BLB executive meeting in January 2009**

**Morag Mackinnon**

|                                        |                                         |               |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------|
| BLB Grants awarded in January totalled |                                         | <b>£5,500</b> |
| W Lee                                  | Mathematical modelling for sticklebacks | £500          |
| Kirsty Park                            | Bat assessment in woodland fragments    | £1000         |
| Ian Canning                            | GU expedition to Gambia                 | £500          |
| Richard Sutcliff                       | Extracting records – Crowson            | £1,000        |
| Richard Weddle                         | Hover Fly training                      | £700          |
| Siobhan Clennell                       | Tobago Turtles                          | £700          |
| Sofie Rogers                           | Cyprus Turtles                          | £700          |

## **Greetings Cards**

The Society now has greetings cards for sale. These will cost £1.00 each and will be available for sale at meetings. The cards feature a beautiful painting by Jean Millar and have the Society's logo printed on the back.

## **Computer - literate volunteers wanted!**

Can you use Excel? Would you be prepared to enter data?  
Do you have a few hours a week to spare, during normal working hours?

If the answers to the above questions are all 'Yes', you sound like just the sort of person we need! We are looking for a few keen volunteers to help with extracting records from journals and direct from the museum's collections, and entering biological data for Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre.

The Society's old computer has recently been moved to Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, at Nitshill. It will soon be available for use for entering records, which can then be transferred into the *Recorder* database.

If you have some free time during the day on a regular basis, and would be interested in helping out with some data entry, please get in touch.

Even if you can't come to Nitshill, we are always keen to get copies of GNHS members' own biological records which are sitting in notebooks, or have simply never been written down at all. Before the new season gets properly under way, what about passing on your sightings from last year?

Please contact Richard Sutcliffe or Richard Weddle.

## **Glasgow Science Festival**

**Roger Downie**

We intend to have a presence at the Glasgow Science Festival Family Day, based at the University of Glasgow on the afternoon of **Sunday 14th June**. We intend to run a stall with some beasties to see, and possibly a walk to the Campus Wildlife garden (weather permitting!). If you are willing and able to help, please contact Richard Weddle.

## **GNHS Winter Programme**

**Roger Downie**

I am now getting down to assembling our winter programme of talks and tutorials, so I'm looking for suggestions of speakers and topics. It would be especially good to receive tutorial ideas from section convenors. I'm also keen to have at least one talk that links directly to a follow-up excursion – like this year's Ben Lawers coverage. Suggestions please, as soon as possible.

**The Summer Social** this year is to be held in the Strathblane Country House Hotel. Dinner is booked for 7.30pm for 8pm on Tuesday 9th June 2009 and it is hoped that we can arrange for a falconry display to take place before the meal. £25 will cover the cost of the meal, a glass of wine and a coffee.

### **Sample menu**

Lentil and vegetable soup

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Roast Aberdeen Angus Sirloin served on a baby onion red wine just  
with Yorkshire Pudding  
Selection of fresh vegetables and potatoes

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Warm apple pie with vanilla ice cream

.....

Coffee and tablet

If you plan to attend the Social would you please send your cheque for £25 to Margaret Stead at the address below before the end of May. Please make out cheques to the Glasgow Natural History Society. Should anyone find the menu unacceptable, do let Margaret know as there are other options.

Please use the form below when booking.

.....

I intend to attend the summer social on 9th June

NAME/s (Block capitals).....

Address.....

.....Post code.....

.

Telephone number.....email.....

I would welcome transport .....=

I can offer transport.....

Send this form to Margaret Stead, Camas Cottage, Gartocharn G83 8NL

You may have seen a notice in the national press, or heard through other means, of the death on 27th January of Prof. Mike Majerus of Cambridge University, after a short illness.

Mike Majerus had been the Scheme Organiser of the UK Ladybird Recording Scheme for some time, having taken this on from John Muggleton. He was also author, of course, of a number of books about ladybirds, as well as other insect groups, and had recently been President of the Amateur Entomologists Association, helping it in its recent linkage with the Royal Entomological Society, of which he was also a Fellow.

He has also been prominent in recent years in monitoring the spread of the Harlequin Ladybird, particularly in the UK.

We in GNHS will remember him particularly for his 2006 Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture where he was billed to speak on 'Badly-behaved Ladybirds' but, in the event, gave an entertaining talk de-bunking a 'conspiracy theory' concerning the Peppered Moth instead.

[Much of the above is taken from a brief obituary by his colleague Trevor James]

**An Oak Welsh Dresser****June Mackay**

On a recent repeat of an earlier *Antiques Road Show* from Bodnant we were shown a late 18th Century truly Welsh dresser. The expert explained that its provenance could be determined by the two types of wood. The back of the dresser was made from very rough and ready planks of a quality that even an 18th Century amateur might have sawn – uneven and badly cut. These, he stated, were from the high hillside sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), a dark wood which he referred to as 'crude', being hard and brittle and difficult to work. The main body of the dresser was of a considerably smoother, light nut-brown wood from the lower altitude pendunculate oak (*Quercus robur*). In his fascinating discourse he further pronounced with great assurance that the material came from either Denbighshire or Flintshire.

**General Correspondence to the General Secretary****Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd July 2009 please.**

Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names. Please use **Verdana** font and size **12 points**. If sending photos, please submit only a few, and make them small if you know how to do that. (Please ask for advice if you want to know how to make them under 100Kb each for emailing) and always as **separate jpg files**, definitely **not** as part of a Word document.