



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2015

**David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)**

**Next Newsletter Deadline
22 July 2015**

**GNHS is a Registered
Scottish Charity
Website: www.gnhs.org.uk/**

2015 Meetings – In the GU Boyd Orr Building unless otherwise stated

April

Tuesday 14th

6.30pm Tutorial: Govan's graving docks: documenting an urban wilderness; Ruth Olden

7.30pm Lecture: New insights to inform the conservation of aquatic resources: an overview of the IBIS project so far; Jennifer Dodd

May

Tuesday 12th

6.30pm Tutorial: The Cuningar Loop - a Commonwealth legacy, Joneen Clarke (Forestry Commission)

7.30pm Lecture: Crater lake colonisation and rapid speciation by cichlid fishes Kathryn Elmer (University of Glasgow)

June

Tuesday 9th Summer Social at Buchanan Arms Hotel – see last page for details

Winter Programme 2015-16

Roger Downie would like any suggestions for the winter programme 2015-16, which is being drawn up at the moment. Please provide the name and if possible email address of any potential speaker to Roger.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary: Mary Child

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd July 2015 please.

Contributions by members are particularly welcomed. Please send preferably by email, as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names, and use Verdana font, size 12 points.

Photos are welcome – Please send any to David for the newsletter, especially if it illustrates an aspect of the work of GNHS, e.g. if it was taken on one of our excursions. If sending photos, please send separate jpgs under 100Kb each (**not** embedded in a Word file please).

Summer Excursion Programme 2015 – Additional information Alison Moss

All Meetings or Excursions attended by Society members or their guests are entirely at their own risk. Participants should follow any safety advice given by Organiser/Contact. Where information is currently not to hand, details of some excursions should appear by email nearer the time.

The full amount of any costs will be payable in advance. If you have to cancel, the cost will only be refundable if a replacement is found.

Be aware that if an outing is cancelled or postponed your phone details are essential so please give these to the named GNHS contact. Please notify contact in advance of your intended attendance. When indicating your interest, say if you can offer or would like a car space. Also, please do advise this contact if you are unable to attend.

If help with transport is required or if you can offer a lift please let the Organiser/Contact know.

Please wear appropriate clothing/footwear.

Leaders of excursions please send records to Richard Weddle and Newsletter reports to David Palmar.

May

Sat 9th Lenzie Moss Nature Reserve 10.15am. Mixed interest. Meet at Lenzie railway station car park (North side) NS 655 719. A lowland raised bog with plants, including bryophytes, insects, birds and pond life. Terrain – marsh/bog. Bring wellies/waterproof boots, warm clothing, snacks, lunch.

Directions to meeting place – By road from Glasgow, follow M8 east to junction 13 (M80), take junction 3 exit off M80 to Lenzie, then first left again at next roundabout onto B757. Follow for 2 miles until the train station is reached after passing under railway bridge. By train, take 9.48 from Glasgow Queen St – takes 12 minutes. The car park is on the side you exit the train. Contact George Paterson.

Sat 16th White Bay, Cumbrae, 2.15pm at Largs ferry terminal for ferry at 2.30pm (or meet at Nardini's opposite the ferry terminal prior to this) – start on shore at 3.30pm. Shore walk at low tide – 5pm. One car will be taken across with collecting gear and ID books. Members can walk from Cumbrae ferry terminal to White Bay (NS 175591) or get a lift. Good shoreline with much to see. Bring wellies, warm and waterproof clothes, snacks. Contact Mary Child.

Thu 21st Kelvingrove Park, 7.00pm, trees. Terrain, park paths. Meet at Gibson Street /Park Road entrance, NS573666. Contact Bob Gray.

Sun 31st Caldwell House Park, 11am – approx. 2.30pm Plants, insects, bryophytes, galls, birds. Meet in front of roofless Caldwell House NS 415 542, near Uplawmoor. Estate entrance is on B775. Paths with no specific walking difficulty. Bring packed lunch or go to Uplawmoor Hotel. Contact James Milner-White.

June

Sun 7th Kelvin medicinal plant walk, 1-4pm Meet at Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery. As part of Kelvin Biodiversity Network, RSPB Scotland will be leading a walk exploring the medicinal properties of plants found along the River Kelvin. RSPB members £7, non-members £10. Bookable event please contact Sarah-Jayne.Forster@rspb.org.uk A follow on from Glasgow Science Festival Conference on 6th June.

Tue 9th Summer Social, 6.30 for 7.00pm, Buchanan Arms Hotel, Drymen. Car parking available at hotel, also on bus route. Pre-dinner excursions – options include post boat leaving Balmaha at 11am, visiting four islands and stop for lunch at Inchmurrin. Trip to Luss narrows in afternoon, harbour walks or Conic Hill climb. Contact Mary Child. See further details and Booking form at end of the Newsletter.

Weekend 12-14th, Galloway Forest Park area. Details to follow. Bob Gray

Tue 23rd 7.05pm Uddingston area, plants. 'Midsummer Madness'. Meet at Uddingston railway station. Contact John Lyth

July

Thu 2nd Garscadden Burn Park trees, 7.00pm. Meet outside Donald Dewar Leisure Centre NS 522709 on Garscadden Road near the junction with Duntreath Avenue
Contact Bob Gray.

Wed 15th Botany, 7.00pm. An evening of plant recording. Details to follow.
Contact Peter Macpherson.

Sun 19th Cathkin Marsh Wildlife Reserve, 11am. Plants, insects, birds etc. A beautiful area of fen and marshy grassland with good paths. Meet at Cathkin Marsh Reserve car park NS 621574. Take M77 from Glasgow. Exit at Junction 3 and follow A726 to East Kilbride. After 5.5 km turn left onto B759 Carmunnock Road to Carmunnock. From Carmunnock follow B759 Cathkin Road for about 750 m then turn right onto minor road. The Reserve is 1.6 km on the left. Parking is restricted, so car-share if possible. Can park at Cathkin Country Park and arrange shuttle if problem. Bring snack, packed lunch. Only 1.5 km from national Museum of Country Life. Contact Alison Moss.

Sun 26th Kelvingrove Bioblitz, mixed interest recording of wildlife. Look for signs at Kelvin Way park entrances; meet at marquees in park near skateboard park beside Kelvin Way bridge. There's likely to be a dawn-chorus walk; the main event starts at 9.00am and will include further guided walks. Full info when available by email.

August

Sat 8th Scottish Owl Centre and Polkemmet Country Park (Owls and woodland walk), 10:30am.

Where: Polkemmet Park visitor centre. Leave M8 at J4a and follow brown signs to Scottish Owl Centre (EH47 0AD) on the B7066 halfway between Whitburn and Harthill. Cost : Adult £7.50, Concession £6.50 Bring: Sandwiches, although there is a snack kiosk.

Sun 16th Summerston to Balmore walk, 11am along River Kelvin, Mixed interest. Walk lead by Allan Twigg of FORK to create awareness of this Green Belt along River Kelvin and to obtain wildlife information from GNHS expertise. Walk 2.5 – 3 hrs, easy to moderate walking. Meet at R-Biopharm Rhone Ltd, 45 Acre Road G20 0XA. By car Maryhill Road at Science Park roundabout take Todd Campus exit. At mini-roundabout take 1st exit (Acre Road). Drive to end of road and park opposite R-Biopharm Rhone. By bus – First bus 60 and 60A or City bus 16 or 17, Walk from Science Park as above. GNHS contact Alison Moss.

Sun 23rd Ravenswood Marsh (Cumbernauld), 10am - mixed interest including ponds, newts, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and meadow plants. Directions: M80 Junction 4a on to A8011, left at roundabout onto Seafar Road until Island Road on left is reached. Follow road until entrance to site at NS748738 <http://streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?X=274819&Y=673833&A=Y&Z=115> Footwear : walking boots. Bring: Sandwiches. Leader: Carrick Crawford - Ravenswood Marsh Conservation Group. Contact: George Paterson

Thu 27th Bioblitz RSPB Loch Lomond (Endrick Marshes). Details by email later.

September

Sun 6th Milarrochy and Cashel woods 11am, fungal foray. Joint meeting with Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group (CAFG). Meet at Milarrochy car park NS 411921. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park facilities - toilet and free car parking. Rough paths - walking boots, warm and waterproof clothing etc. Bring snack, packed lunch and fungus collecting gear. Check out woods behind Milarrochy and across the road - uneven ground. Return 1.00pm Lunch and those attending for half day session depart. Afternoon - Cashel woods. Meeting place NS 398940 - Cashel Forest millennium car park (voluntary car parking charge). Walk through old-established oakwoods on uneven ground , and / or newly created woods with established path system. Requirements - walking boots, etc. and lunch. Getting there - there is NO public transport to these sites. You can walk from Balmaha to Milarrochy - it will take approx 45 minutes. GNHS Contact – Sandra Hutchinson.

Sun 27th Glanderston Wood and Balgray Reservoir, 11am, mixed interest + fungi. Walking fairly easy. Meet in car park beside Glanderston Reservoir on Balgraystone Road, south of Barrhead – NS 506569. Bring packed lunch or go to 'Dancing Goat', Neilston. Contact James Milner-White.

October

Sat 31st Dawsholm Park 11am, fungi etc. Joint meeting with CAFG. Details in August Newsletter

River Kelvin:

In the last I mentioned that the Kelvin Biodiversity Network are organising a conference provisionally entitled "The River Kelvin: History and Natural History" on Saturday June 6th in the Graham Kerr Building under the auspices of the Glasgow Science Festival.

The programme will include talks on:

- The history of the Kelvin, including its use as a source of power in the past and possibilities for the future
- The aquatic biodiversity of the Kelvin, the botanical biodiversity of its surroundings, and its importance as a wildlife corridor
- Importance of the associated greenspace to human health and wellbeing
- The future of the Kelvin: Glasgow's strategy and infrastructure

There are a number of other events on this theme:

On **May 21st**, Bob Gray will be telling us about the trees of Kelvingrove Park.

You will see in the excursion programme that RSPB are leading a walk in Kelvingrove Park on medicinal plants on June 7th, the day after the conference.

RSPB are organising a second Bioblitz in Kelvingrove Park on July 26th (all day) to which various members of GNHS will be contributing their talents.

On **Aug 16th** there is a walk along the river from Summerston to Balmore (a joint event with Friends of the River Kelvin).

On **Oct 31st** a fungal foray in Dawsholm Park (a joint event with Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group).

Booking will be through the Glasgow Science Festival (website or phone). There will be no charge, but we'll be inviting donations towards light refreshments.

More details of the conference and Bioblitz will be sent out by email.

Loch Lomond NNR / RSPB Loch Lomond Reserve:

This area forms a second theme in our programme for the year. You may recall that we recently made a donation to RSPB in support of their purchase of land at Endrick Mouth and that the Site Manager, Paula Baker, gave us a talk about their plans for conservation and improving public access. That access provision will be completed shortly, and in celebration there is to be a Bioblitz there on August 27th. Several GNHS members will be taking part; the details are as yet unfinalised, but the programme is likely to include walks / talks etc., or you can just go along and see what others have found, and perhaps make some interesting finds of your own. More information by email in the course of time.

The RSPB Reserve overlaps the National Nature Reserve, which was declared in 1962. GNHS members helped make that designation come about, and as we failed to mark the 50th anniversary (2012), we thought it would be appropriate to celebrate it belatedly by having our Summer Social on Tuesday 9th June at Drymen, and at the same time, to celebrate the contribution made by John Mitchell to nature conservation on Loch Lomondside and that his 50th contribution to *The Glasgow Naturalist* will appear in the forthcoming issue.

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 be available to others for a short time. 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. 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
6 compound microscopes	occasional use	Hunterian Museum - Geoff Hancock
10 Longworth mammal traps	occasional use	Countryside Ranger Service
Batbox Duet bat detector	occasional use, often available	Richard Weddle
2 Garmin GPS (basic)	1 in use	Ian McCallum, Richard Weddle
2 Garmin eTrex GPS	1 in use	Richard Weddle
Skinner moth trap (mains operated)	In use	
Heath moth trap (battery operated)*		Richard Weddle
2 pond nets: large / small	occasional use	Richard Weddle
2 sweep nets: large / small	occasional use	Richard Weddle
3 Butterfly nets	1 in frequent use	Richard Weddle
1 Beating-trays	occasional use	Richard Weddle
Emergence Traps (80) (for rearing caterpillars etc.)	most available	Richard Weddle
3 sorting trays	occasional use	Richard Weddle
4 remote video cameras	available	Richard Weddle
camera traps (3)	enquire [#]	Stewart White

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

available by arrangement

If you'd like to borrow any item, contact me; or I can put you in touch with the current holder of the equipment.

GNHS/BRISC bursaries

There were this year some 60 applications for the GNHS and BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) bursaries (worth up to £200) towards attending a training course in natural history field studies skills. So the decision process was particularly difficult and a good number of applicants who we thought were worthy of a bursary missed out. We are actively seeking sources of further funding for this clearly worthwhile project – if you work for or know of any potential donor, we'd really like to hear from you. One of the existing bursaries is donated by an individual who wishes to remain anonymous – perhaps you yourself would be willing to donate, or contribute to, a second such bursary?

2015 Subscriptions

Subscriptions fell due on 1st January 2015 (except for those who have joined since the start of the winter session). A subscription renewal form is enclosed for those who don't pay by Standing Order; email recipients will receive a separate reminder by email. We would be grateful if you could pay your subscription as soon as possible, to save us having to send further reminders. Remember that if you pay by the end of January in future you may deduct £1.

GNHS joins Social Media

Laura Allen

Glasgow Natural History Society has recently joined the world of social media. Our Facebook page has been established for just over a year, and in that time we have built up a following of over 260 people. Many of these people are not able to regularly attend meetings, so it is valuable to be able to maintain a connection with them and continue to share advice and enthusiasm. It is also an additional method of notifying people of upcoming workshops, talks and other events, which will hopefully help increase participation.

More recently, we began our first venture into Twitter. Whilst Facebook is good for keeping in touch, Twitter is a useful networking tool, allowing us to connect with organisations that share our interests and thereby receive tailored news and event alerts within this field. It is also a useful platform for sharing other media, such as interesting videos and research articles on topics we have been introduced to in our meetings.

We hope that Twitter and Facebook can help us to engage more people with natural history. This can be through sharing news, photos and advice online, as well as by encouraging more people to become members and attend our events in person, where they can take full advantage of the fantastic pool of expertise we have available. Those of you who are already established Twitter users, please do join us @GlasgowNatHist, or search for us on Facebook. For anyone who has not yet joined, there are plenty of online introductions and people willing to offer advice to help get you started.



Previously I listed various plants contributing yellow to the countryside and gardens of Haute-Saône (the Goldenland) with, however, no mention of Ginkgo (*G. biloba* L.). That, I now realise, was an omission. In autumn this very distinctive tree provides a blaze of yellow and it's a rich yellow quite unlike that of any other tree.

The just published *Flora Gallica* gives a vernacular name of "arbre aux quarante écus" (tree at forty gold coins). Disappointingly, this is nothing to do with the delightful autumnal colour. In 1788 a French botanist paid an English nurseryman no less than forty écus for five Ginkgos in a pot – a very large sum. Well, at that time very little known in Europe, it is after all a fascinating tree, quite unlike any other in more ways than one. However, our devoted botanical friend Albert Piguet tells us that an alternative name is "arbre aux mille écus" (tree of 1000 gold coins) and this he says does indeed refer to the thousands of the golden autumnal leaves.

You seldom see large groups of Ginkgo except when it is planted in lines as a street tree, as in Jussieu. According to Peter Crane no less than 74.4 billion have been planted in the United States, many of them in streets. I have never seen Ginkgos in streets in Scotland. Just after I wrote that unequivocal statement tree-loving Bob Gray tells me he has seen five or so outside a new housing development in Govan. Great! I shall watch them with much interest from time to time – doomed to thrive, linger or fail?



In Haute-Saône you also see brilliant splashes of yellow here and there in gardens where it has potentially the chance to develop strongly, as the photos show. Notice the leader forging ahead and the strong boughs - quite a stunning sight the whole year not just in autumn. Jenny planted it as a sapling in 1999 and so it is about 18 or 19 years old. Just look at it now. It was given by an old friend, Henri Aubry, who lives in Fougerolles near the south side of the Vosges hills. He planted one in his garden at the same time and similarly it thrives,

Photo 1. The Ginkgo in Jenny's back garden, November 10th 2014. A male with pollen cones that appeared a few years ago, it is 8.33 m tall and 0.58m girth at 1.50 m. The Fougerolles tree is 8.88m tall and 0.69 m girth at 1.5 m.

indeed perhaps even more so. So the climate and soils seem to suit it well enough in Haute-Saône, at any rate in gardens.

In spring as the leaves appear they are frost tender; suddenly one morning a few years ago Jenny's tree was a sad sight with many of the leaves damaged. Not however all over the tree because those lower down fared better. Never having lived close to a Ginkgo before I was alarmed, wondering if the effect might be serious but not a bit of it. A fresh crop of leaves quickly followed with not even one little branch killed. So just an ephemeral tiny setback, that's all. Ginkgo is resilient. It can cope with well below zero temperatures in winter.



Photo 2. A different view of the same tree showing the wonderful autumnal colour to full advantage.

Do the oceanic climate and often very acidic soils suit it well in Scotland? Has any reader ever noticed a really well grown, free standing one in Scotland? There is a very well grown one fully in the open at Kew Gardens, London (The Old Lion, about 240 years old, and two, one very large, trained against a wall of the Department of Plant Sciences in Cambridge). Offhand I can think of two Ginkgos in back gardens in Bearsden and one in a front garden in Milngavie, all free standing but none can be thought of as a fine, thriving specimen. However at Auchincruive there is one planted in the 1950s and 15m in 2007 and one at Dalkeith planted in 1851 and 16m in 2013. Referring to the UK In his online pages, Cor Kwant states "Around Birmingham lies the border below which the Ginkgo is relatively fast growing."

What is it precisely about Scotland that is restricting? Summers too cool? Soils

too sodden and cold in winter? Simply too many late spring frosts? A combination of these? Or what?

There is an old Ginkgo in the Botanic Garden at Pisa which I saw in 1997. It is known to have been planted in 1787 and so is now well over 200 years. It has a great girth but is otherwise now something of a wreck. Ginkgo can reach about 30m (100 feet or so) or more. In both China and Japan there are very large ones which some, on no firm basis, claim are several millennia old. (Shades of the Fortingall Yew!)

Fingers crossed that Genevieve's glorious Ginkgo is left undisturbed to flourish and then I wish I can come back in 2115 and see how well it has done.

Further reading: Crane, P. 2013. *Ginkgo The Tree That Time Forgot*. Yale University Press; Kwant, C. *The Ginkgo Pages*. Online.

2015 AGM and Changes to GNHS Council

Mary Child

30 people attended the 2015 AGM and reports were given about a very full and successful year for the Society.

There were several changes to Council. David Palmar stood down after 3 years as vice president, to be replaced by Laura Allen. David remains on Council. Two other Council members left us, Eilidh Malcolm and Morag Mackinnon. Morag has been a member of Council for many years and has served in many capacities, she will be sorely missed. In recognition of all she has done for the Society it was decided to award her Honorary Membership. Tony Payne and Sandra Hutchinson were elected as new Council members.

It was also noted that Barbara Mable, our university liaison officer, has now become a professor at Glasgow University.

Project on Yellowhammer song

Keith Cohen

This is an international study with multiple aims but including trying to use song dialect to determine the geographic origin of the New Zealand yellowhammers. The males song phrasing, often written as "a little bit of bread and no cheese", is very familiar but includes some learned elements that create local dialects. They ask that volunteers make recordings (on your phone or camera is fine) and send them in, with full details and a brilliant map on the project website, www.yellowhammers.net.



How the Yellowhammer became a Kiwi?

Help us to map the Yellowhammer Dialects!

WHAT WE DO
We are mapping the distribution of different yellowhammer songs (dialects) both in their mother country (Great Britain) and introduced range (New Zealand).

WHY?
We want to know how the song is affected by long isolation and whether it can be used to improve our knowledge about invasion history.

WHAT WE KNOW
New Zealand surprisingly harbours more yellowhammer dialects than Britain! Will we find the missing dialects this year? Do New Zealand yellowhammers really have just British roots?

HOW YOU CAN HELP
We welcome recordings of yellowhammer songs from any locality in Britain or New Zealand. All you need is a camera or a mobile phone!

Check out our website (<http://yellowhammers.net>) to read more!

www.yellowhammers.net

In Search of Lost Frogs

**Bloomsbury, 2014; ISBN 978-1-4081-8633-6; hardback only,
Roger Downie**

Robin Moore

£25

Members will be aware of my interest in amphibians, but I challenge anyone to deny the fascination of these animals after reading this beautifully illustrated book. I had a small part in Dr. Robin Moore's scientific education, supervising his Masters project on foam-nesting frogs in Trinidad in the mid 1990's. Robin progressed to a PhD with Richard Griffiths at the University of Kent and then to work with Conservation International, concentrating on amphibians.

The worldwide declines in amphibian populations have alarmed and perplexed biologists since they were first noticed by participants at the first World Congress of Herpetology in 1989. Robin recounts his own early interests which developed into a career; then the evidence for the declines and their causes. In February 2010, Robin and colleagues in IUCN's Amphibian Specialist Group came up with the idea of a worldwide search for the amphibians thought to have become extinct over the last few decades. They assembled a list of 100 species that no-one had reported seeing for years, and search teams were rapidly assembled, with the project launching in August 2010. What did they find? The book is written as a cliffhanger style adventure story, so I won't reveal the project's results, but I don't think you will be disappointed.

Excursion Reports

Ladymuir Reservoir, 22nd June 2014

Gill Smart

The following list of six butterfly, four moth, five bee, 14 hoverfly and three odonata species were recorded by Gill Smart during the society's outing to Ladymuir Reservoir on 22nd June 2014.

<i>Aphanotopus hyperantus</i>	ringlet butterfly
<i>Apis mellulifera</i>	honey bee
<i>Boloria selene</i>	small pearl-bordered fritillary
<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	common carder bee
<i>Bombus pratorum</i>	early bumblebee
<i>Bombus sylvestris</i>	forest cuckoo bumblebee
<i>Cheilosia fraterna</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Cheilosia longula</i>	northern truffle-cheilosia
<i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	latticed heath moth
<i>Chrysotoxum bicinctum</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	small heath butterfly
<i>Elophila nymphaeata</i>	brown china mark moth
<i>Eristalis pertinax</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Lasioglossum albipes</i>	a bee
<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	emerald damselfly
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	four-spotted chaser
<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	meadow brown butterfly
<i>Melanogaster hirtella</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Melanostoma mellinum</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Melanostoma scalare</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Neoscia podagrica</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Odezia atrata</i>	chimney sweeper moth
<i>Pieris napi</i>	green-veined white butterfly
<i>Pieris rapae</i>	small white butterfly
<i>Platycheirus clypeatus</i>	a hoverfly
<i>Platycheirus scambus</i>	a hoverfly

Pyrrhosoma nymphula
Rhingia campestris
Sericomyia silentis
Syrretta pipiens
Volucella bombylans
Xanthorhoe montanata

large red damselfly
a hoverfly
a hoverfly
a hoverfly
a hoverfly
silver-ground carpet moth

Elder Park, 3rd July 2014

Bob Gray

We met at the St. Kenneth Drive gate near the southwest corner of this relatively small park of 13 ha (32 acres). The weather remained dry (just) but the temperature dropped noticeably as the evening progressed. A guide board at the entrance summarised the park's main architectural features and its history. The park was given to Govan in 1885 by Isabella Elder as a memorial to John Elder



her shipbuilding husband whose firm took over the Fairfield yard. Statues of both stand in the park. Other statues include the K13 memorial, in memory of those lost in this steam-powered submarine which sank on sea trials in the Gareloch in 1917, and the memorial to SS Daphne lost at its launch at Linthouse in 1883 with the loss of 120 lives. (A similar memorial exists in Victoria Park as so many men from Partick were involved in the tragedy).

The soil parent material consists of freshwater alluvium in the northwest of the park and a late Devensian (late Ice Age) raised beach in the southeast. It is suitable for hardwoods. Indeed the only conifers in the park are a few pines that have been recently planted. Four manna ash trees (*Fraxinus ornus*) is quite a number for such a

small park and one of these is probably the biggest in Glasgow. They are however clearly susceptible to wind damage which has caused branches to break. The bark has been tapped for the monosaccharide sugar, mannose. Their bark, smooth into old age, is often vertically fissured possibly caused by frost susceptibility. In common with quite a number of common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) park trees



bark has been gnawed away by some unknown predator. On two manna ash trees Roger Griffiths found many scale insects (coccids of the order Hemiptera) on the bark as well as long slug trails leading high into the canopy. Ironically the excreta of these insects on the tamarisk (not the manna ash) tree is considered to be the source of manna in the Sinai desert. The manna ash is native to S. Europe and Asia Minor and not found in Sinai. These cultivated specimens are grafted onto a common ash rootstock producing a conspicuous graft union.



Another form of damage encountered was that of fire at the base of a Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), near the John Elder statue at the east side of the park. The tree is managing to survive although much of the bark has been removed and the fungus, *Stereum hirsutum*, is growing on it. The leaves and twigs are reasonably healthy on the side away from the fire but less so above the site of the vandalism.

Lime tree flowers were much in evidence: the upturned bracts of small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) and the flowers of Crimean lime (*Tilia x euchlora*) north of the pond and the very floriferous large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*) west of the Linthouse portico. We were too late to see the flowering of the insect pollinated manna ash and the many thorns in the park, including Grignon's (*Crataegus grignonensis*), the

double crimson sport of midland hawthorn, Paul's Scarlet (*Crataegus laevigata*) and the hybrid thorn (*Crataegus x media*) with its two colours of flower. We also missed the flowers on horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and red horse chestnut (*Aesculus x carnea*).

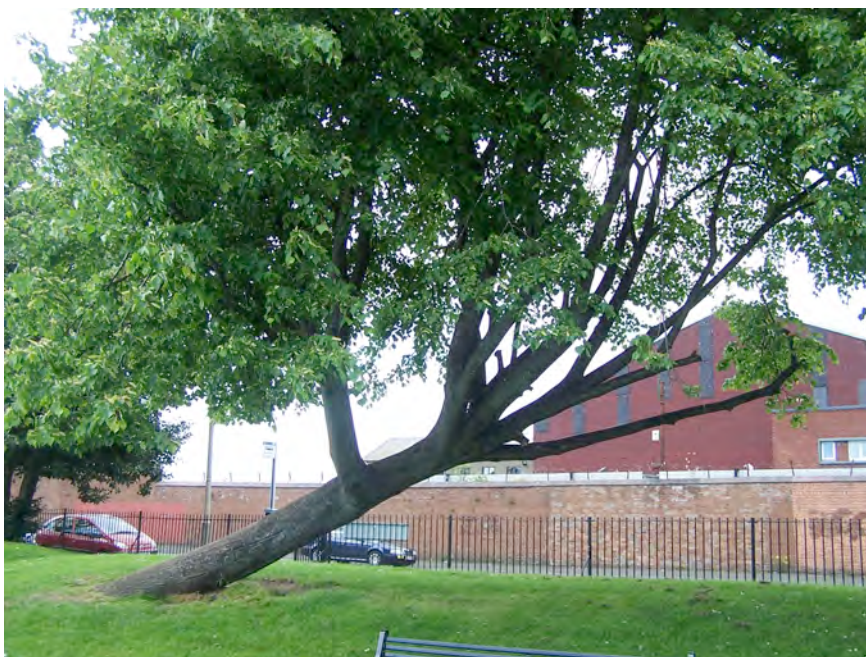


Instead we saw a few fine green samara (keys) covered Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*) and an unusual red samara covered sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus* f. *erythrocarpum*) (keys - left) as well as the normal green keys.

We encountered the occasional sycamore bearing small leaves, probably caused by path induced root stress. The park contains occasional purple forms of sycamore (*A. pseudoplatanus* f. *purpureum*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica* f. *purpurea*). A very large variegated sycamore (*A. pseudoplatanus* f. *variegatum*) was found which could be a Glasgow record.



Despite the low altitude and nearness of the river the park possesses only two white willows (*Salix alba*) (on which James Milner-White found many leaf galls – probably caused by the gall midge *Iteomyia major*) which, although nicely shaped, are not nearly as big as those on Glasgow Green. There is, however, a very big, leaning grey poplar (*Populus canescens*) (above) which also may be a Glasgow record holder.



A leaning small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) near the west Govan Road gate (10) means that this small park contains two stunning leaning trees. The small number of other parks that contain such specimens are much bigger in area. Almost all the hollies in the park are Highclere hollies (*Ilex x altaclarensis*), a cross between the Madeira and Common hollies that is a female clone ('Hendersonii') with matt, often spineless leaves forward pointing

when they occur. Of some interest was a newly planted Norway maple 'Princeton

Gold' having striking yellow foliage – a pity about the minor, avoidable stake damage. Finally, in view of the park's origin and name it was felt it would be appropriate for a few elder tree species (*Sambucus* spp.) and the lovely box elder (*Acer negundo*) to be planted.

Ruth Dobson, 1929-2014

Ron Dobson

Ruth Dobson died on 18th December 2014. She had been a GNHS member since 1969, was a vice-president from 1980 to 1982 and the librarian for 25 years from 1977. For her work she was elected an honorary member in 2001. At least 12 of her papers and numerous book reviews were published in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

Because of her twin contributions – to the Society, and to Natural History, it has been deemed appropriate that her full obituary appear in *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

PhotoSCENE Natural History Photographic Competition

David Palmar

This competition was originally funded for four years and is sponsored by Glasgow Natural History Society and the University of Glasgow Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine. Its aims are to promote interest in Natural History and the work of SCENE (Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Natural Environment, the University's field Station at Rowardennan), linkage between the Institute and the Society, and providing pictures for publicity.

During this time, participation in the competition has increased, and prizes to the tune of £800 per year have been awarded at the Society's photographic nights each February. Four years have now elapsed since the inaugural competition in 2011, and the emphasis of the competition has changed over that time, but the good news is that it has been agreed between the Institute and the Society that the competition will continue at least for the time being, with an attempt being made to increase publicity for the competition in the hope of more than the 50 entries of 2014.

Here are some of the winning entries from the 2014 competition.



Sarah Longrigg –
Cinnabar moth
caterpillar



Geoff Hancock –
Summer sunflower
and red admiral



Chris McInerny –
Adder

PhotoSCENE 2015

A more detailed announcement will be made by email and on the GNHS website about this year's photographic competition. In the meantime, there is another £800 waiting to be won – so go out there and take some photos of natural history subjects, or zoological research activities - what's stopping you? Anyone who does not have an email address but would like details should contact David Palmar.

Voices in the reeds: passive acoustic monitoring for cryptic water birds

Dr Anna McGregor and Ms. Natalie Sinclair

School of Life Sciences, University of Glasgow March 2015

Last spring and early summer 2014, with the support of GNHS, we completed a study to investigate whether passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) could be an effective method of obtaining vocal behaviour and survey data for water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) and other marsh birds. Acoustic recorders were deployed at 3 RSPB reserves in the Greater Glasgow area to ensure collection of calls from separate water rail individuals, and detailed measurements of call structure were measured from the recorded calls of different individuals. These measurements were included in a similarity analysis using Primer 6 software, which plotted the calls according to their similarity to each other.

Over a 3 month period from May to July 2015, we recorded a total of 720 hours, from which a total of 76 high-quality water rail sharming calls (Figure 1) were extracted. These calls are highly distinctive and transmit well even in densely vegetated environments. MDS (Multidimensional scaling) plots of calls grouped by location (0.17) clearly showed differences in call characteristics between locations and individuals (Figure 2). This shows that passive acoustic technology could be an effective method of surveying water rail populations and might be a viable alternative to playback survey techniques. Not only is this recording technique low maintenance and causes little disturbance to natural habitat and animal populations, it allows consistent survey in locations and weather that would be difficult with more traditional technology (i.e. playback and visual techniques).

Along with effectively recording water rail calls of several different types using passive acoustic recorders, we were able to identify other species of interest at the sites. Songbirds such as grasshopper warblers and sedge warblers were frequently documented singing and, later in the study period, red deer began to bark. Interestingly, there was a particularly frequent occurrence of ring-necked pheasants calling, which appeared to elicit vocal responses from the water rail. As a non-native species, the potential for interspecies interactions between these birds could mean that water rail experience some territorial limitations or disturbance from high densities of pheasants in an area. More work needs to be done to fully understand this relationship.

Overall, we found that water rail likely have individually distinctive sharming calls, making it possible to survey for numbers of birds with acoustic methods. This is an important result, particularly as these are generally elusive birds that are difficult to locate visually. This method was found to avoid potential drawbacks of active playback monitoring due to very low human involvement on site. Along with collecting and analysing data on individual species, this passive acoustic technique also provides scope for further studies into the natural soundscape and animal behaviours at each location.

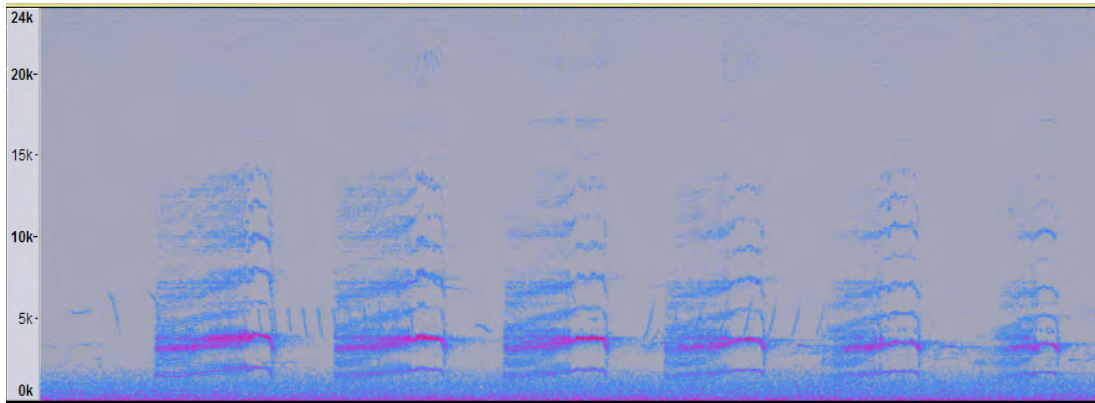


Figure 1. Spectrogram (changes in frequency over time) of a water rail sharming call recorded from Baron's Haugh in early May. Call consists of a repeated series of 3-4 kHz elements, with darker colours indicating louder components.

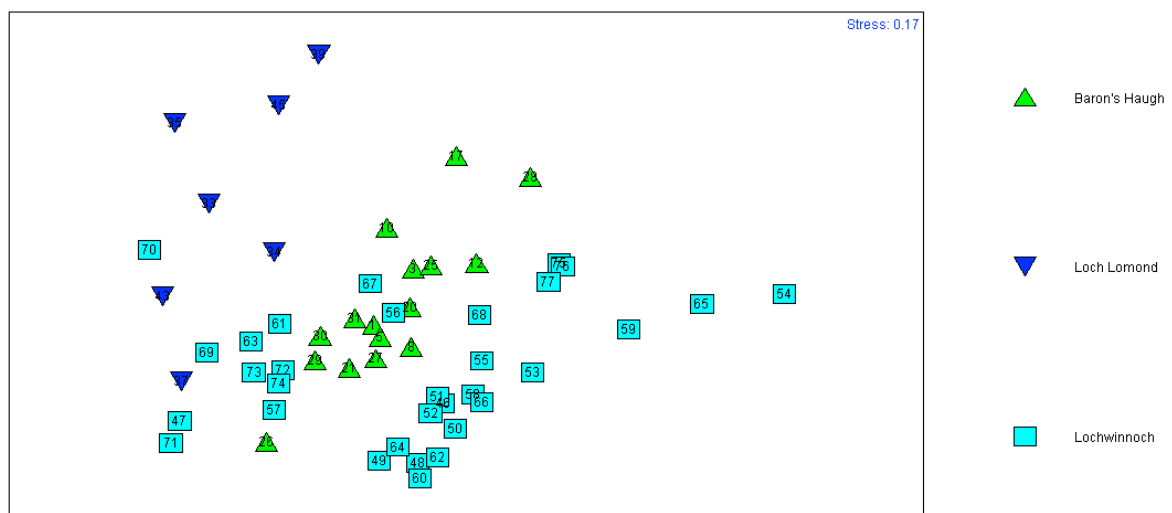


Figure 2: MDS plot of call similarity as divided by location, showing obvious grouping of calls by location that is indicative of individual differences due to only a few water rail being present at each location. No groups would occur if no differences in call structure were present.



Water Rail at Baron's Haugh
David Palmar
photoscot.co.uk

Summer Social 2015

Mary Child

This year's summer social will take place on Tuesday 9th June and will be held at *The Buchanan Arms Hotel* in Drymen.

The hotel has been recently refurbished, and for our meal we will have a very nice private room with its own bar and sitting area. The meal is booked for 7.00. Please meet at about 6.30 in the conservatory area of the main lounge for a drink. There is parking available at the hotel.

Menu:

Cream of leek and potato soup
Rosette of seasonal melon and citrus sorbet
Grilled goats cheese on an herb crostini

Breast of chicken served with grilled Mediterranean vegetables and a balsamic drizzle, market vegetables and potatoes
Penne pasta with Scottish salmon, mussels and prawns bound in a chive and garlic sauce
Strips of tender beef and mushrooms in an Arran mustard cream sauce served with steamed rice
Vegetarian option

Fresh strawberry meringue with dairy cream and raspberry drizzle
Citrus cheesecake with orange compote
Chocolate profiteroles with a toffee sauce

For those wanting to explore the area during the day there are many exciting possibilities. The post boat leaves Balmaha in the morning at 11.00am, visits four islands and stops for lunch at Inchmurrin. There is a trip to visit the Luss Narrows in the afternoon and Inchcailloch is another possibility for a visit. There are also several good walks from the car park across from the harbour at Balmaha. Please email Mary Child at mary@gnhs.org.uk if you are interested in a pre-meal activity. The cost for the meal is £20 per person. Please complete the form below and return it to Mary Child before May 20th.

.....
I/We wish to attend the Summer Social on Tuesday 9th June 2015

NAME/S.....

ADDRESS.....
.....

PHONE NOS

EMAIL ADDRESS.....

Amount enclosed £..... (Cheques to Glasgow Natural History Society)

I need transport..... I can offer transport.....

Please complete this form and send, along with a cheque (£20 per person) to Mary Child.