GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Bonus edition
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Autumn-Winter Meetings Programme 2020 — Roger Downie

Members will be wondering how GNHS plans to deal with the Covid-19 crisis as we emerge gradually from lockdown. Some members may be particularly anxious about the resumption of meetings, if they have underlying health issues.

Some organisations and individuals have got used to using computer-based meeting platforms such as Zoom in the last few months. Since it is likely that the Society will not have access to our usual University-based meeting room until the New Year (and other venues face the same issues), we are contemplating having a Zoom-based lecture in the early autumn, to start the new session. We are aware that not all members have access to, or the expertise in Zoom; however, we guess that many do, and that having a talk on Zoom might actually attract more members than venture out for normal evening meetings.

Our plan is to do an e-mail poll of members to assess how many would welcome a Zoom meeting. If the response is favourable, we will send details once the date and topic are finalised.

Several speakers have agreed to give talks in the coming session, but we are keeping them on hold until we have more information on the venue.

Summer-Autumn Excursion Programme 2020 — Alison Moss

Official Society excursions still have to be on hold. Most of us have been out and about in our local countryside and finding nice things and there would be no harm in linking up within the rules with known Society locals, but organised excursions can't happen yet. Rules change quickly, but we need to be careful as a society to comply ultimately for members' safety as things open up. I would prefer to err on the side of caution.

Obituary: J. Denis Summers-Smith **Chris McInerny**

GNHS members may be interested to know that a Glasgow educated ornithologist, J. Denis Summers-Smith, has died recently.

Summers-Smith was well known for his studies on sparrows of the genus *Passer*, particularly the House Sparrow and work to understand its decline throughout Scotland and UK (though happily this decline seems more recently to have been reversed). He published a series of papers and books on the sparrows some of which are listed at the end of this note.

Summers-Smith was educated at Glasgow Academy and the University of Glasgow (engineering), interrupted by WWII, completing a PhD in physics, before working for ICI. This work allowed much travel which enabled him to study sparrows around the world. In 1992, he received the Stamford Raffles Award of the Zoological Society of London for his "world-renowned work on sparrows".

Summers-Smith, J.D. 1963. *The House Sparrow*. Collins, London.
Summers-Smith, J.D. 1988. *The Sparrows*. T. & A.D. Poyser, Calton.
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Summers-Smith, J.D. 1995. *The Tree Sparrow.* J. D. Summers-Smith, Guisborough.
Summers-Smith, J.D. 1999. Current status of the House Sparrow in Britain. *BritishWildlife* August: 1381-1386.
Summers-Smith, J.D. 2003. The decline of the House Sparrow: a review. *British Birds* 96: 439-446.

Recent work on House Sparrows in Glasgow **David Palmar**

Since much of Dennis Summers-Smith's work was on House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), and especially since Glasgow University has been involved in recent work on them, together with the RSPB, an update note about them here was thought appropriate.

In Glasgow, 98% of our House Sparrows have disappeared since 1969, so the Glasgow House Sparrow Project was formed jointly by the RSPB and Glasgow University to see how widespread House sparrows still are across the city, and try to help them.

In the first two years of surveying, volunteers recorded 121 colonies across greater Glasgow, and were struck with how localized the colonies are. This means there are large areas of urban habitat which are no longer suitable for house sparrows.

Summary of findings:

Full, dense hedges which were left untrimmed were 85% more likely to have sparrows in them than gardens that lacked green cover. Birds prefer native species, including hawthorn, blackthorn, alder, wild privet, and wild cherry. Planting these species provides valuable cover and food (insects and berries) for House sparrows and other garden wildlife while making sure that native plant species are also preserved.

Feeders - House Sparrows readily eat most seed mixes, but can also be attracted with peanuts and sunflower seeds. Avoid mixes that are largely composed of wheat or cereals, as the sparrows largely toss these on the ground. During the busy breeding season, when the birds are actively rearing their young, offering mealworms can help ensure a steady supply of the high-protein invertebrates that the growing chicks need. To keep from spreading disease, make sure you clean feeders regularly, about twice a year. Feeders should within 1 metre of hedges. This allows the birds to quickly dart into cover.
Meadow plots - A wide mix of species increases the species richness and therefore the food availability for the sparrows. Research found that the sparrows preferred taller vegetation, so letting this section of your garden or green space go a little wilder would also help to attract the birds.
Nest boxes - Cracks and crevices in buildings previously used for nesting have become scarce. Sparrows are social nesters, and 3 or more boxes near each other with an entrance hole 32mm diameter are ideal.
House Sparrow-friendly gardening - Minimise management of the garden, e.g. leave brush piles and wildflowers, and don't cut grass till late summer.

See housesparrowscience.com for more details.

House Sparrow - recent status from BTO website bto.org
Most House Sparrows in the UK are found in towns and villages, with some on farmland and relatively few elsewhere.
House Sparrows went from being on the green list in 1996-2001, to Red-listed in 2002 onwards, mainly because of recent breeding population decline.
There are perhaps about 5 million pairs left.
Increases in Scotland and Wales since 1994 are dwarfed by previous declines.

GCSE in Natural History Consultation **Roger Downie**
The English examination board OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and the Royal Society for Arts) has launched a public consultation (opened 4th June; closing date 19th July) on the need for a GCSE in natural history. The consultation is a response to a campaign by the natural history documentary producer and writer Mary Colwell, and is supported by a wide range of organisations, including the Natural History Museum, Field Studies Council, Wildlife Trusts etc.
Jill Duffy, CEO of OCR says "We think there's a gap in the curriculum, that isn't encouraging a connection with the natural world, and at the same time, we know that young people are very much engaged in the debate on the environment, and they understand what their role should and could be in protecting it for the future".
This thinking accords with developments like forest schools and eco-schools which encourage more environmental engagement, while, on the other hand, there is growing concern about the small amount of time young people spend outdoors in nature. Whether the development of a new examinable school subject is a useful contribution will be part of what the consultation is about.
In Scotland, we have the Curriculum for Excellence, and not GCSEs, but this does not mean that GNHS members should play no part in the consultation. Thinking about a GCSE in natural history may help in considering the possible relevance of an equivalent run by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.
I encourage all members to use some of their lockdown free time to take part in the consultation. It is easily accessible on the internet via a Google search for 'GCSE in natural history consultation'.

PhotoSCENE Prizewinners 2019-20 **David Palmar**

The PhotoSCENE competition, sponsored by GNHS and Glasgow University Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine, aims 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), promote linkage between the Institute and the Society and provide pictures for publicity. All entrants are thanked for making the effort to enter the competition. Prizes totalling £800 per year have been awarded at the Society's photographic nights. Since the first competition in 2011, and together with talks from members, the competition has provided us with an interesting photographic evening each February. This year there were 72 entries from 20 people. Here are the prizewinners:

First Prize - Common Frog by Andy Wilson

There were 10 Second Prizes:

Arctic Tern chick feeding
by Thomas MacGillavry

Four spotted chaser
by Jaime Villacampa

Common Dolphin off
Cumbrae
by Jonas Gaigr

Snails
by Richard Sutcliffe

Hoverfly
by Gabriel Lawson-Duck

Leaf-tailed Gecko
by Crinan Jarrett

Rock pooling
by Robyn Haggard

Bar Jacks by Eric Vaughn
Captain Schneider

Elephant Hawk Moth
caterpillar by Michelle
Bellingham

Saxifaga granulata
by Sarah Longrigg

PhotoSCENE 2020-21 Natural History Photographic Competition

Win your share of £800 worth of prizes! **David Palmar**

The deadline for submitting entries is the end of October 2020. Entry is restricted to GNHS members and students and staff of the University of Glasgow Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine.
Some of the winning entries will be published in the Glasgow Naturalist, and may also be used in the GNHS newsletter and online presence, or by the Institute.

All photos should have been taken in Scotland, or on University expeditions including abroad, or on GNHS excursions or your lockdown excursions. Permission must be given to the organisers to use submitted images for non-commercial purposes for 5 years. The copyright holder may continue to use the images for his/her own purposes.

Entries should have a natural history / biodiversity content, i.e. featuring animals, plants, geological subjects and / or the work of researchers and natural historians in science – e.g. work in a lab, students on field courses etc. Entries will be limited to 5 per entrant, and must be accompanied by a note detailing when the image was taken, with what equipment, and any digital enhancement. Entries should be renamed, i.e. not Image1.jpg but Leopard.jpg.

When photographing animals, entrants should ensure that as little disturbance as possible e.g. of occupied nests occurs. Close-up photographs of Schedule 1 species in Scotland will not be accepted unless a current photography licence has been obtained from SNH.

Simple digital enhancements are allowed, but must be declared, e.g. cropping, boosting contrast or sharpness, but whole scale alteration of pictures is not allowed. Panoramas consisting of more than one picture are acceptable.

Entries should be submitted digitally by high quality jpeg suitable for printing, with prizes likely to be awarded to images comprising at least 4 to 6 megapixels. (6 megapixels means in practice 3072 x 2048 pixels or similar, enough for printing to A4 at 300 dots per inch). Smaller entries may be submitted, but are unlikely to win a prize. Entries should be submitted to Lorna.Kennedy@glasgow.ac.uk.

Prizes will be awarded by a judging committee, on the combined basis of photographic, artistic, and biological interest. The judging committee will be drawn from GNHS and the Institute. The judges will be looking for images which have impact. Judges, their immediate family members, and previous prizewinning entries will be ineligible to enter the competition.

The total prize fund will be £800 per year, paid for jointly by GNHS and the Institute. Prizes will be distributed at the judges' discretion.

The competition results will be announced and prizes awarded at a members' photographic night slide show as part of the GNHS Winter Meeting Programme, probably on Tuesday evening 9th February 2021. See GNHS website (from autumn

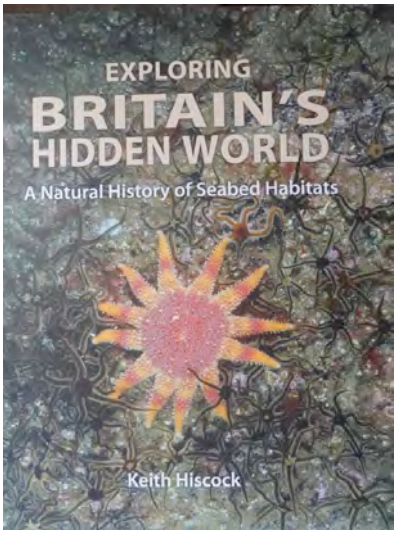
2020) for confirmation of the time and place of this meeting. These arrangements will be published by email. Full details are on the GNHS website at www.gnhs.org.uk/photoscene.html

David Palmar has run the competition in conjunction with Professor Dan Haydon for the past 9 years. David has retired from this post and the competition will now be run for the GNHS by Darren O'Brien (photoscene@gnhs.org.uk), with help from David during the changeover period.

New Books Received **Anthony Payne**

Two books on marine life have been received from Wild Nature Press. It is hoped that full reviews of these books will appear in The Glasgow Naturalist in due course.

The Essential Guide to Rockpooling (2019) by Julie Hatcher and Steve Trewhella. Wild Nature Press. 304 pages PB. £16.99. This is a profusely-illustrated guide to life on Britain's rocky shores. The bulk of the book consists of a systematic survey of some 400 species to be found not only in the water (fish, molluscs, echinoderms etc) but also amongst the rocks (birds, mammals, insects); for the botanist, there are sections on seaweeds and marine lichens. Each species gets a colour photo and a short piece of descriptive text including size; there may be supplementary photos of (e.g.) tracks or eggs. A short introductory section covers tides, zonation, types of shore and rock pools. Throughout the book there are also "how to" sections on diverse topics including safety, recording, photography, seaweed pressing and much more.



Exploring Britain's Hidden World: a natural history of seabed habitats by Keith Hiscock (2018) Wild Nature Press, 272 pages, £25.00 HB. Another beautifully illustrated book which brings a systematic approach to bear on the types of seabed surrounding the British Isles and the creatures which inhabit these diverse depths. The first two chapters deal with the history of seabed exploration – initially from the surface by means of dredging, latterly by direct observation through improved diving techniques. The next chapter reviews determining factors such as current (ocean and tidal), wave action, light and salinity. The largest single section (some 140 pages) reviews the variety of seabed types, both natural and man-made, and what species each contains. There are final sections on seasonal and long-term change, legislative protection, threats such as non-native species and new technologies for understanding the seabed. Although written by a diver the book can provide much pleasure for the less aquatic reader.

This event was scheduled to be centred on Kelvingrove Park in what turned out to be the early days of lockdown, so it was rapidly converted to an on-line event where participants reported from their local green-space.
A good number of GNHS members took part; it was rather tricky to work out exactly how many, as some were using on-line aliases, but 92 records were submitted by myself (mine and some other members' records) and other members submitted records independently, and from what I have been able to deduce there would seem to be at least another 380 GNHS records to add to that.
Sarah-Jayne Forster (RSPB) the organiser of the Glasgow 'event' sent us the following:
I just wanted to get in touch with you all to thank you for taking part in City Nature Challenge, and also for inspiring others to take part.

Over the course of the weekend, we were delighted to have 106 participants recording 2086 observations from across Greater Glasgow, including experienced naturalists and many first-time recorders. With the increased numbers of observers across the city and Greater Glasgow area, we saw recordings of 589 different species.

Some rare sightings found were a hoverfly *Eumeris funeralis* (Lesser Bulb-fly) at Old Station Park by Richard Weddle. This is a new species for the site and only the third time it has been recorded in Glasgow. Another very exciting are rare find (still being verified by experts) was a Small Amber Snail (*Succinella oblonga*) only known from a few sites in Scotland. Scott's Small Amber Snail was found at the mouth of the Kelvin opposite the Riverside Museum (the area which is currently proposed as a riverside retail park). It's not the first Glasgow record - that honour goes to Richard Sutcliffe, but as Richard's records are all from GMRC, Scott's is the first north of the Clyde and in the vice-county of Lanarkshire! Scott Shanks was our top recorder with over 515 observations. It was also interesting to see ravens (*Corvus corax*) making the most of the lockdown quiet at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

We also had good representation from our ambassador species, species that we have identified as needing more conservation support in Glasgow. With House sparrows *(Passer domesticus*), and five different species of bumblebees recorded. As well as the European Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) which is found in the east of Glasgow in grassland habitat. You can see the full list here on the Glasgow City Nature challenge page: www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2020-glasgow

In the UK City Nature Challenge, Scotland was much better represented than in previous years. People took part submitting records from as far north as Orkney, Annan in the south and widely across Scotland. You can see how Scotland fared by looking at the Map of Observations on the UK wide City Nature Challenge page.

We are hoping we are able to build on the success of this year's City Nature Challenge next year, so please let me know if you would like to be involved (sarah-jayne.forster@rspb.org.uk). We also have a short evaluation survey www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MLJR3GV if people wouldn't mind completing and sharing about their experience of City Nature Challenge.

I also wanted to highlight to our partners who do so much for the natural world that the nominations were open for the Nature of Scotland Awards (www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/at-home-and-abroad/scotland/nature-of-scotland-awards/) until the 1st of June. If you have someone in mind who does amazing work for the environment this is a fantastic way to celebrate their efforts. [Note: this deadline has now passed, but you might still be interested to read about the awards, and there's always next year!]

Nomada Bee sightings **Richard Weddle**

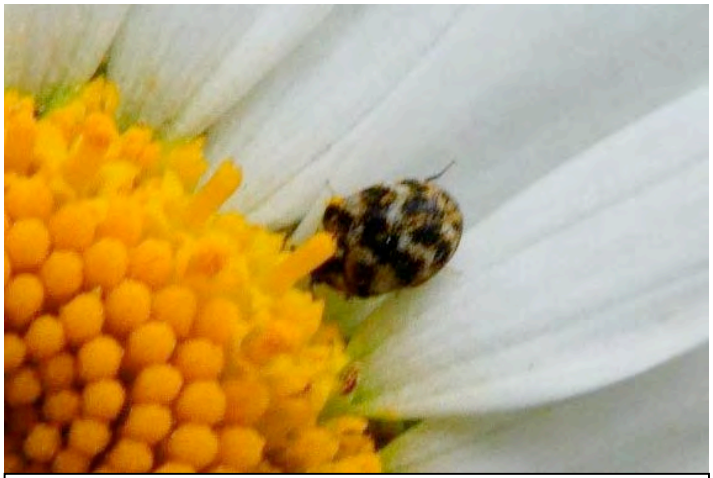
One of my Nature Challenge sightings was at the old stone wall in Ford Road, where there were about eight *Nomada marshamella* bees apparently hunting for nests in which to lay their eggs; they're particularly associated with Andrena species, though it seems more likely they'd find Mason bees (Osmia) in walls.
Gary Williamson's was in his garden in the King's Park area on April 26th - so it is within the Challenge weekend, but I saw mine first!

Nomada marshamella - Gary Williamson

Lockdown Recording **Richard Weddle**

Hyndland
I'm pleased to report that there has been a good response to my suggestion that members send us reports of what they've spotted during their lockdown exercise walks. I myself have found that being constrained to my home area has forced me to look closer at things I might otherwise have overlooked because they were 'not what I was looking for', so I have found, in Hyndland Old Station Park (OSP) alone, several tiny sap-sucking bugs that were hitherto unrepresented by records in the Glasgow Museums BRC database.

On a visit to OSP last week I noticed a rather magnificent Broad-leaved Dock hosting a conspicuous blackfly population which turned out to be *Aphis rumicis* - as the name suggests, it is specific to docks – and again a new species for the database. Next to the docks was a group of ox-eye daisies and on them, feeding on the pollen, were several tiny beetles – *Anthrenus verbasci* known as the 'varied (ie variegated) carpet beetle' on account of it being commonly encountered as a domestic pest, yet in spite of that, we have rather few previous records.



Anthrenus verbasci - Richard Weddle

Cinerous Pearl (*Anania fuscalis*) - Richard Weddle

Botanic Gardens

Happily I have been able to trap moths as usual at the Botanic Gardens: there were only two moths that I hadn't encountered there before, the Cinerous Pearl (*Anania fuscalis*) and a micro-moth *Aspilapteryx tringipennella*, both had been recorded in 'Glasgow' in the 1980s, but it was good to be able to pinpoint a location for them. However I was also able to take more interest than usual in the mass of tiny insects that accumulates in the bottom of the trap. This consists, at this time of year, mainly of micro-caddises, may-flies, gnats and even tinier flies; but on closer inspection, I discovered a couple of tiny bugs one of which (*Zygina flammigera*) was rather striking, but hitherto unrecorded in the area, as well as another couple of micro-moths, and couple of tiny water-beetles (*Helophorus* sp.)

Havoc Meadow, Dumbarton

We had planned to have a field excursion to this site in July, so I'm particularly pleased to have received a number of interesting sightings from there (many of these have featured on our Facebook page): Golden-ringed Dragonfly, Field Digger-wasp (*Argogorytes mystaceus*), a tiny white micro-moth Water *Elachista argentella* which has aquatic larvae, and the Kidney-spot ladybird. In view of a probable future excursion there I should add that there is also considerable floral and avian interest. There's an occasionally updated species list at www.gnhs.org.uk/biodiversity/Havoc_splist.pdf

Golden Ringed Dragonfly at Havoc - Zoe Weir

Mammals

There have been useful reports of both Mink and Otter on the Forth and Clyde Canal in the Possil Marsh area, and Mink by the weir near the Kelvin Hall. There was also a weasel spotted near the Dumbarton Road Gate to the University Campus – it ran into Kelvingrove Park, thereby creating two biological records! I've heard on social media that rats and mice seem to be more prevalent in recent weeks, allegedly because of less frequent refuse collections, however I've not seen any myself, so I'd appreciate hearing about any definite sightings.

Beetles and Flies

We were pleased to have a report of Orchid Beetle (*Dascillus cervinus*) from Cathkin Braes, this is the first sighting in Glasgow since 1875 (JJFX King at Ruchill Wood), though it seems to be quite common in the Kilpatricks – I found one on a GNHS excursion to Overtoun House a few years ago. Also the colourful ground-beetles *Carabus problematicus* and Green Tiger Beetle along the Kelly Cut Trail in Inverclyde. The same location gave us the White-barred Peat Hoverfly (*Sericomyia lappona*) which is usually found in such upland areas, unlike its Yellow-barred sister (*S. silentis*) which is common in almost any grassy meadow.

Carabus problematicus at the Kelly Cut, Greenock - Gaie Brown

Our Treasurer, Su Futter, recently found Britain's largest cranefly, *Tipula maxima,* in her moth trap.

Tipula maxima, Dumbarton - Su Futter

This is just a brief report of some of the highlights, not all of them are from members.
I apologise for the omission of some major groups such as plants, fungi and birds, and I should stress that we are very grateful for all the records we receive. Can I encourage you to send any sightings as the usual Biological Records address is not available during lockdown; some may also be featured on our Facebook page.

Sericomyia lappona at the Kelly Cut, Greenock - Gaie Brown

Cream-spot Ladybird **Robyn Haggard**

This Cream-spot Ladybird flew on to my foot when I was hanging my feet out of my first floor window. This was on the 25th April, just off Great Western Road near the Botanics. There isn't much more to the story than that! Though now I'm able to keep my windows open, I am having to rescue a lot more nature from my room than before. I hadn't seen a Cream-spot ladybird before so it was nice to be able to identify something new.

Cream-spot Ladybird - Robyn Haggard

Two Ladybird Arrivals **Richard Weddle**

A couple of new ladybird species have reached the Clyde area in recent years, and though they seem to generally well-established and spreading, I feel sure they're probably more frequent than the records in Glasgow Museums BRC database would suggest. So I hope this brief article will stimulate members to look out for them during their lockdown excursions, particularly as you're more likely to find them in or under trees - unlike the more familiar 2-spot and 7-spot which are commonly found on annual herbage (almost anywhere in fact). Try spreading a white cloth beneath a tree (I wouldn't recommend Whitebeam) and hitting the branches sharply with a stick to see what falls out – even better would be sweeping with an insect net - I'm sure there'll usually be something interesting, even if it's not a ladybird.

Kidney-spot Ladybird

This species seems to have moved in from the south-east of Scotland; there have been a few records in Glasgow and two have been found in the Brucehill area of Dumbarton this year – the most westerly sighting in the Clyde area. It looks at first sight like one of the black forms of Two-spot Ladybird, but it's more circular in outline and has a 'flange' along the edge of the wing-cases.

Kidney-spot Ladybird, Dumbarton - Zoe Weir

22-spot Ladybird, Adders' Gill - Davie

22-spot Ladybird

The older reference books say that this species occurs in Scotland only in the southern parts of Dumfries and Galloway, but there was a surprise sighting in 2014 in the woodlands at Adders' Gill, Carbarns (immediately south of Baron's Haugh RSPB Reserve); there have been subsequent records from the new development at Newton Farm, Cambuslang, and it has reached the extreme east of Glasgow – just beside the M73 / M8 interchange. As that last record was in 2017, I'm sure it will have moved further into Glasgow by now – there could well be records from East Renfrewshire too.

Please let me know if you come across either of these - or any other ladybird for that matter. As the Biological Records email address is out of action during lockdown, please send info.

And please remember to send us any records of Speckled Wood butterflies - see the photo and note in the April newsletter; they should be appearing about now.

Cornsalads in the Glasgow Area **Myles O'Reilly**

During the Covid-19 lockdown in April I found myself pounding the pavements on the south side of Glasgow for my daily exercise. To relieve the boredom I started making a tally of all the different weeds spotted on my walking routes. There was plenty of Thale Cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) and Whitlow Grass (*Eriophila verna*) in

flower and also some nice Danish Scurvy Grass (*Cochlearia danica*). On Broom Road in Newlands (NS 56776017) I noticed a weed I did not recognise. It was plentiful on the pavement against exterior garden walls and on the kerb edge (see photo). I counted over 300 plants. It looked a little like a small forget-me-not but with small white flowers - possibly with a hint of blue or was I just imagining that?

Keel-fruited Cornsalad - Myles O'Reilly

I brought some home and after checking through my flower guides determined that it was a species of Cornsalad (*Valerianella spp.*). There are two species known from the Glasgow/Renfrewshire area – Common Cornsalad (*V. locusta*) and Keeled-fruited Cornsalad (*V. carinata*). Previous records are scarce and to distinguish the species requires close examination of the seeds. Shortly afterwards my colleague, Liza Downie, found more Cornsalad in a narrow flower bed at base of wall to the rear of Pollok House (NS 54896182) and in mid-May I also found it again as an abundant weed in a front garden in Arden Drive, Giffnock (this is the house behind my own!) and where one specimen had "escaped" into the pavement (NS 557590).

In June I went back to check all three sites and collected seeds. Examining these under a stereo microscope indicated they were all Keeled-fruited Cornsalad (*V. carinata*). Feedback from Michael Philip and Keith Watson (recorders for Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire) has indicated Cornsalads are becoming more common around the Glasgow area and there is a need to check which *Valerianella* species every time as both species would appear to be significantly on the increase.

Have we got closer to nature through lockdown? Norman Still

Lockdown has been a difficult time for us all, particularly for those who normally spend so much time recording, or simply observing the natural world.
For myself I have had to adjust in a different way. At this time of the year I would have normally been looking out at Ben Ledi from my caravan near Callander. However no early morning walks, no climbing some local hills to witness the lovely sunsets. I miss the nuthatches (*Sitta europaea*) and tree creepers (*Certhia familiaris*), one climbing up, the other coming down on the same tree; this has always fascinated me. Alas their tree succumbed to disease over the winter so now there is only a stump. Not for long, but that is another story.

This year has been different; we have had to adjust to the 5 mile rule. I have lived around Cumbernauld for over 20 years but had to think, do I really know the area I live in? Walks that I had said previously to myself, 'one of these days 'I will explore that area or have a walk, overnight became a reality.

Seeing the countryside almost every day has been wonderful and it is truly amazing what a new day brings with plants flowering. We may have been in lockdown but nature has continued, indeed thrived. Even my small garden is now friendlier to nature. The water feature that has not worked for many years finally got repaired. Within two days dragonflies were seen hovering over the running water, birds drinking and having a bath. The lawn is no longer cut but now full of clover and bees. Walking over the lawn early one morning three Grass Rivulet moths (*Perizoma albulata*) and a Brimstone (*Opisthograptis luteolata*) flew up.
An area I have really enjoyed is Mosswater Local Nature Reserve, which I have previously never visited. Access to part of the reserve is difficult, having to cross a main road, currently even more dangerous with the speed of traffic! However once inside the reserve there is an oasis of wildlife and tranquillity.

Azure Damselflies - Norman Still

Always something new, the Red damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula)*, many Azure damselflies (*Coenagrion puella*), buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) soaring in the sky above; this morning 15 Long-tailed tits (*Aegithalos caudatus*). Even one day on the way home 15-20 House martins (*Riparia riparia*) on the road, busy pecking at the cut grass at the side of the road. I have not seen such behaviour from these birds before. There are areas of wetland off the beaten track in the reserve all waiting to be explored.

I live in an area which was previously farmland but has now been developed for housing. Cowslips (*Primula veris*) can be found in the spring and, in an area only ten minutes from my front door, Greater butterfly-orchids (*Platanthera chlorantha*) are growing. When I discovered the first orchid, the local ranger service said there were no records and highly unlikely as only scrubland and grass. Over the years the numbers I have recorded have fluctuated, in one year over 200 in the small area.

Large Red Damselfly - Norman Still

Ringlet butterfly - Norman Still

Today I was back to what I now refer as my 'magic' field. Although many of the orchids were still green, making counting difficult in the long grass, I counted118 Greater butterfly-orchids, 68 Common spotted orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*) and 43 Ringlet butterflies (*Aphantopus hyperantus*).

Lockdown may have had its hardships but, by being able to get out in the countryside, even for an hour a day has for me acted as a release valve, away from all the grim news. In the nature reserve there has been time to reflect, helped by a simple single bench, which I now refer to as Grandad's bench! where I witness our changing countryside, our birds, plants and all other animals that have simply carried on through spring and now into summer, as though nothing different has happened. For many birds like the swan who is always happy to show me her eggs there will be new life emerging. For the rest of us freedom to roam in the countryside will return at some point, but for the moment we can appreciate what our 'local patch' has to offer.

A No-spot Burnet moth in Glasgow… **Chris McInerny**

Figure 1. Six-spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendulae*, Ruchill Park, Glasgow, 2 June 2020. Chris McInerny

Through my lockdown walk during the COVID-19 pandemic I have discovered Ruchill Park, 20-minutes from my home in the West End of Glasgow. As well as allowing me to see some interesting birds, the slopes above the ponds above Firhill Stadium have beautiful wild flowers, damselflies, butterflies and moths.

On the 2nd June I saw two Six-spot Burnets *Zygaena filipendulae* on the slope (Figure 1). These magnificent day-flying moths were feeding on Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and clinging to the stems of grass.

Over the next few days the Six-spot Burnet numbers increased to 39 on 8 June and over 100 on 15 June. While witnessing this spectacle on the 15 June, with many moths flying over the flowers and grass, I was struck to observe that one had no spots! Instead this individual had similar red-coloured wing markings, but instead as red panels (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Aberrant Six-spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendulae*, Ruchill Park, Glasgow, 15 June 2020. Chris McInerny

This reminded me of another burnet moth species I had seen in Argyll, the Transparent Burnet *Zygaena purpuralis* (Figure 3). However, I realised that Transparent Burnet is rare in Scotland seen only in Argyll and islands of north-west Scotland, and not in Glasgow. But perhaps this was a vagrant?

On looking in a moth identification guide, and comparing the "spotless" burnet with photos of Transparent Burnets I had (Figures 2 and 3), the wing markings did look similar to Transparent Burnet, but not exactly the same.

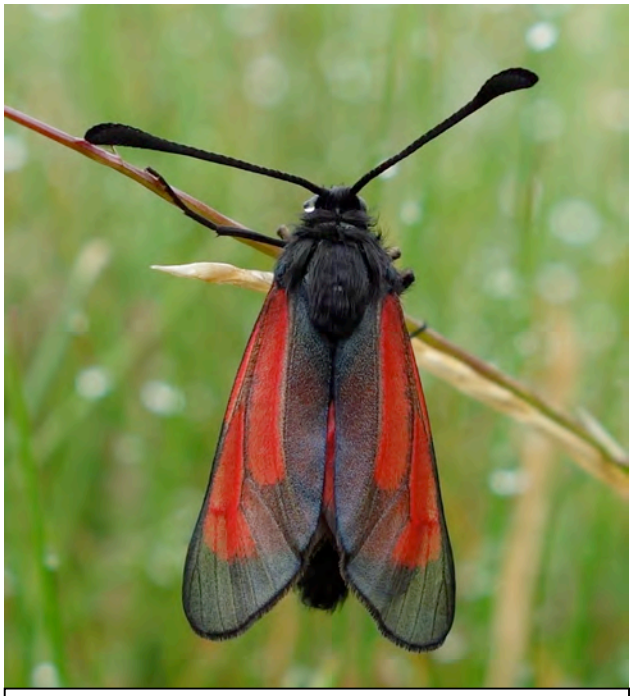


Figure 3. Transparent Burnet *Zygaena purpuralis*, Connel, Argyll, 22 June 2014. Chris McInerny

In a state of uncertainty, I thought to ask a friend, Martin Culshaw, much more knowledgeable and experienced about moths than me. Martin's first impression on seeing my photo was that it was likely to be a Six-spot Burnet, but with aberrant colouration. And Martin posted the image to online moth identification forums, where his identification was confirmed.

Apparently such aberrant Six-spot Burnet moths are reported, but are rare. Certainly on looking through 100s of Six-spot Burnets at Ruchill, which are still present (as of the 20 June), I have not see another "spotless" individual. But this was an educational experience for me, which I thought readers of the GNHS Newsletter would be interested to see reported.

Another Burnet moth! **Richard Weddle**

Chris's note about his burnet moth with no spots, prompts me to add that the 6-spot Burnet does sometimes have only 5 spots – though as far as I know (as manager of the Glasgow Museums BRC database) this aberration hasn't been seen hereabouts.

Narrow-Bordered 5-spot Burnet - Christine Maxwell

However, I particularly want to report that a Narrow-Bordered 5-spot Burnet was seen on July 2nd 2020 at the South Haugh, Hamilton – that is, near the Mausoleum. This could very easily have been assumed to be an example of the aberrant 6-spot however, in the latter the pair of spots nearest the middle of the wing are of similar size, whereas in the Narrow-bordered 5-spot the middle spot nearest the leading edge is significantly smaller. I should add that there is also a 5-spot Burnet moth (the wider border is on the hind-wing) but again the middle spots are of similar size and there is just one medium-size spot towards the apex of the wing, where the 6-spot has two (though in another variation they are fused together!).

All this means firstly that Christine Maxwell is to be congratulated for spotting the Hamilton moth, and secondly that the rest of us should look twice at the '6-spot' Burnets we see in this area. The Narrow-bordered 5-spot had previously only been recorded in the Clyde area near Dolphinton and at Kingshill LNR south of Allanton in North Lanarkshire.

Thailand Expedition 2019

Shion Reynell, Melanie Long and Fraser Carter
Photographs by Melanie Long

In 2019, the first ever expedition to Thailand from the University of Glasgow was undertaken. The first aim was to conduct research on the coral reefs surrounding the island of Phuket. The team carried out three research projects, with conservation as a focus, over a period of six weeks in the field. The second aim of this expedition was to establish connections with organisations in Thailand to aid with the research and to enable outreach work to be undertaken. Through the maintenance of these connections, the Thailand expedition may be able to return in the coming years in order to establish a long-term dataset.

The first two projects investigated the current status of reef fish and coral communities at the Racha Island dive sites. A benthic photographic survey determined that coral community composition and diversity did not vary significantly between sites. However, percentage coral cover and species richness showed significant variation. Overall image analysis identified 18 genera of coral, the majority of which were Scleractinia (stony) corals. Average coral cover across the six sites was 27.12%.

A total of 107 fish species were recorded. There were an average of eight species recorded per point count and the overall diversity for all point counts was 1.69, calculated using the Shannon-Wiener diversity index. Fish abundance was found to be very similar at all sites, while there was significant variation of species diversity and richness among sites.

This ecological data was used in conjunction with social data to investigate the perceptions of dive tourists on the health of coral reefs, and factors which contribute to diver site choice. The survey found that diver enjoyment can be influenced by biological attributes present at sites, but their perception of these attributes is affected by their experience and specialisation level. This highlights the need to protect these attributes to maintain the enjoyment of divers thereby protecting not only the dive industry, but also reef ecosystems in general. Management regimes could zone sites according to

divers' site requirements to mitigate impacts of less experienced divers on coral reefs, and educate divers to be more aware of the potential damage they cause.

The final project investigated the perceptions of changes to shark populations in the South Andaman Sea. Three key informant groups chosen to participate were divers, fishermen and fish market sellers. Qualitative social science methods using key informant interviews were used to identify trends in shark population changes and, to identify any overarching themes between the key informant groups. The interviews were analysed using Nvivo software and showed that overall shark population numbers were perceived to be declining and fishing practices were deemed to be cause of this. Blacktip reef sharks appeared to be increasing in numbers due to conservation efforts.

The Thailand Expedition provided an opportunity for undergraduate students at the University of Glasgow to gain valuable experience in the design and planning of field research. The expedition would like to thank The Glasgow Natural History Society for their generosity and support which enabled the expedition to conduct successful marine in research in Thailand.

Disease and Population in Polecats **Kari-Anne Heald**

Following receipt of a GNHS BLB grant, Kari-Anne's research report on disease and population in polecats was published in the November 2017 edition of the newsletter. The full paper is now available online in the journal Mammalian Biology by following this link:
https://rdcu.be/b5a9I

Three Birds in Marrakech **Jim Dickson**

During my recent protracted holiday in Marrakech, Morocco, I did some casual bird watching. I had seen White Storks in France and elsewhere but never had seen them nesting. On top of the high walls, part of the ruins of the Bahia Palace, there are several nests which are very large because used repeatedly. I saw and heard the courting call: head bent way back with bill clacking. We visited other towns including briefly to Fez and saw some nests there too.

Two White Storks on their nest at the Bahia Palace in Marrakech

I have in front of me a copy of *Bird Recognition 2* by James Fisher which I bought in the early 1950s. On page 72 the author states "Nested in Edinburgh in the 15th century…" I always wondered about the details. *The Times* of 16th May this year has a headline "Stork chicks arrive for the first time in 600 years". This concerns the success at Knepp, West Sussex. The story goes on helpfully "nested on St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh in 1416". So we can adapt the familiar Scottish song about the young

pretender. So all together now "Will ye no come back again, will ye no come back again…." Please, please do come back. I do not mean Charles Edward Stewart, of course, but *Ciconia ciconia*, the bringer of babies, not fighting.

White Storks are a delight but the most charming little bird I watched was the well-named House Bunting which I had never heard of, let alone seen. Somewhat reminiscent of the Dunnock in size and behaviour it is very tame. Indeed the very first one I saw was a female which is drab and I thought momentarily "Is that a Dunnock?"

A White Stork on its nest near the Royal Palace in Fez

The ground floor flat we hired was near the centre of Marrakech, a very large town. Enclosed by a high wall there was a courtyard which was on a daily patrol by a pair. The male is quite colourful. So can't be a Dunnock! They searched the courtyard slabs for food and when I was sitting near the open French windows they came into the room to continue searching for a little while; they did get a crumb or two. Subsequently I saw House Buntings in various places, all urban.
In Marrakech we were within easy walking distance of numerous restaurants where we often ate. There was one we frequented which had an enclosed courtyard at the rear (away from the frightful traffic noise) and a dense green canopy of leafy trees and climbers. It was a pleasant place made all the more so by the melodic singing of a bird which I failed to see and did not recognise by the song alone. It was a very pleasing song. We went there repeatedly so that I could finally see the tuneful bird. At last I saw them: a pair of Blackbirds, one of the most familiar birds in Europe! There are lots of them in the big park by the Kutobia Mosque.

Goats placed on Moroccan Argan Trees **Jim Dickson**

Somewhat reminiscent of olive trees, Argan trees (*Argania spinosa*) are cultivated in Morocco, the only country where it is native. Its fruits are a valuable crop with oil pressed from them as from the similarly sized, much more familiar olives.
In Morocco goats certainly climb the Argan trees and they do so specifically to browse the fruits. However, they most certainly do not stand still for long. This climbing behaviour can be viewed online. See the sites concerning the production and marketing of the valuable oil.

In February 2020 travelling by bus from Marrakech to Essaouira I noticed three roadside Argan trees with many goats standing still on the branches with no attempt at browsing. Real or phoney? Almost immediately I thought this is phoney. The sheer number in one tree and the obviously posed arrangement of stationary goats plus people taking photos are the give-aways. Indeed the goats are so arranged in order to get money from passers by taking photos. See the account online by Aaron Gekoski in *The Telegraph.* He states that the small goats are generally in poor condition and very skinny because they cannot forage as normal nor seek shade from the hours in strong sun. This is cruelty.

Gegoski makes no mention that on the Greek Island of Crete goats climb trees to browse. In so doing they turn the trees into very distinctive, extraordinary shapes. Rackham and Moody's 1996 book *The Making of the Cretan Landscape* discusses this topic at length and such browsed trees are called "goat-pollards".

Possil Marsh Update **Walter Douglas**
Volunteer Reserve Convenor

I would like to introduce myself as the new volunteer convenor at Possil Marsh, supporting the Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserve Manager, Billy Gray. As many GNHS members will know, Possil Marsh is located to the north of Lambhill, adjacent to the Forth and Clyde Canal. It contains a diverse range of habitats including a shallow mesotrophic loch surrounded by swamp/fen communities, dry grassland, wet meadow, and willow/birch scrub woodland.

The SSSI statement of 2007 noted the site provided nesting cover and wintering grounds for a wide diversity of birds, with 145 species recorded and up to 22 species breeding. The swan mussel, *Anodonta cygnea*, and tufted loosestrife, *Lysimachia thyrsiflora,* have also been recorded. GNHS had planned a field excursion for 2020, which has been delayed due to Covid-19. However, discussions are currently ongoing to reschedule this. I am hoping that this might stimulate interest in some new survey work to determine the current status of important rare species.

Goosanders **Ash-Lynn Tavener**

Many Goosanders can be seen on the Kelvin, Forth and Clyde Canal, Bingham's Pond and Hogganfield Loch in winter, where they gather in small flocks, but they are also breeding in Glasgow. The ducklings stay with their mother until they can fly at around 2 months old and quickly learn to hunt for themselves. Photo taken on the River Kelvin in Maryhill on 6th June 2020 by Pat Thomson.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd September 2020 please, (a month later than usual because of this extra newsletter)
Thank you very much to all the contributors who have made the newsletters so interesting and worthwhile publishing. Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format.
If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names, and use Verdana font, size 12 points.
If sending photos, please submit only a few as **separate** jpg files (not as part of a Word document), and make them under 100 Kb each for emailing).