GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August 2013

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
1 October 2013

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

Winter Programme 2013-14 **Roger Downie**

Meetings in the Boyd Orr Building, University of Glasgow, unless stated otherwise.

2013
September
Tuesday 17th - 7.30pm Zoology Museum
Exhibition meeting: wine and nibbles. Members' specimens and excursion photographs. Please contact Maggie Reilly with your table / board requirements: Includes a short talk by Keith Watson on the newly published *Flora of Renfrewshire*, including an opportunity to purchase copies at a discounted price.

October
Tuesday 8th - **6.30pm** Tutorial: Looking at Lichens. Alan Silverside
7.30pm Lecture: Entomological adventures on Mingulay. Jeanne Robinson

Thursday 10th - **7.00pm** *The Black Fish*: film and discussion on destructive and illegal fishing. Jointly with GU Zoological Society and Friends of the Earth Glasgow

Wednesday 23rd - 5.00pm Graham Kerr Building Lecture Theatre 1
Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture; Wallace Centenary Lecture
Making livings: why Darwin's and Wallace's theories are worlds apart; Professor James Moore, Open University. See note on next page.

Thursday 24th - 7.00pm
The butterflies of Ecuador; Marianne Fox. Jointly with GU Zoological Society

November
Tuesday 12th - 6.30pm Tutorial: Observations on a colony of adders, slow-worms and common lizards on Loch Lomondside; Chris McInerny
7.30pm Lecture: The Scottish pine marten: using genetic techniques to study an elusive predator; Laura Kubasiewicz

December
Tuesday 10th - Zoology Museum:
Christmas buffer dinner; see October Newsletter for details and booking form.
Lecture: An orchid gap year: a 19 year old's attempt to see every species of orchid in Britain and Ireland in one summer; Leif Bersweden

Note about Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture - Wednesday 23rd October:
Making livings: why Darwin's and Wallace's theories were worlds apart

Personally no less than professionally, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace were chalk and cheese. 'I fear we shall never quite understand each other', an exasperated Darwin wrote to Wallace in 1868, and the gulf between them was deeper and wider than scholars have yet grasped. Economically they belonged to different worlds: Darwin, Cambridge-educated, Royal Navy-salted, the scion of Whig reforming medical professionals and industrialists, withal a landlord, rich rentier and country gentleman; Wallace, of feckless stock, a school-leaver at thirteen, trainee surveyor, Owenite socialist and self-employed specimen collector who scoured the globe aboard Royal Mail ships and native boats only to land back in London and be hailed as Darwin's alter ego. Often on hard times, short of capital and inept with cash, Wallace was credited, then as now, with devising a theory of evolution identical to Darwin's natural selection, one embedding the same Malthusian doctrine that prompted Darwin's original insight and that underpinned the economic liberalism from which Darwin himself prospered mightily. In assessing this view, it will be useful to ask how far, given their different economic circumstances, Wallace and Darwin differed about the ways in which all species make their livings.

James Moore is co-author with Adrian Desmond of the best-selling biography *Darwin* (1991), now in 10 languages, and *Darwin's Sacred Cause: Race, Slavery and the Quest for Human Origins* (2009), hailed by the London Review of Books as the 2009 Darwin anniversary year's 'most substantial historical contribution'. Moore's other books include *The Darwin Legend* and *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*. With degrees in science, divinity and history, he has taught at Cambridge and the Open University where he is Professor of the History of Science.

Please remember to look at the GNHS website www.gnhs.org.uk for details of society activities, including any changes to meetings or excursions.

Dr JA Gibson **Richard Weddle**

We have sadly to report the death of Dr Jack Gibson in June after a lengthy illness. Jack was one of the longest-standing members of GNHS, having joined early in 1951. He was a family doctor in Kilbarchan, and in his long life made many contributions to natural history in the west of Scotland, particularly in Renfrewshire. He was responsible for founding – or re-founding - the Renfrewshire Natural History Society (as distinct from Paisley NHS), and a journal, *The Western Naturalist*; he also set up, with grant funding, the Scottish Natural History Library (which, I understand, is destined for the National Museum of Scotland), and he contributed an abundance of records of the wildlife of the west of Scotland.

There is a great deal more that could be said about Dr Gibson, but that must be left to someone better acquainted with him than I. In my limited experience he was a charming man who was full of fascinating information. I'm sure I will not be alone in looking forward to consulting some of the items from 'his' library when it reaches Edinburgh.

Natives, Aliens and Reintroductions Conference **Richard Weddle**

Our latest conference entitled 'Natives, Aliens and Reintroductions: how does ecology inform wildlife conservation in Scotland?' took place in the University of Glasgow on 22nd and 23rd June 2013.

It was a contribution to the Centenary Festival of the British Ecological Society (BES), and the Year of Natural Scotland, and was organised by Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS) in collaboration with other members of the Glasgow Biodiversity Partnership and Glasgow Science Festival.

The topic is highly relevant because of the considerable resources expended on attempting to rid the country of non-native plants and animals deemed to be harmful, such as giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed, while at the same time expending more resources on reintroducing species deemed to be desirable, such as beavers, and also worrying about the effects of climate change on the distribution of native species.

After introductions by Roger Downie, Vice President of GNHS, and Julie Hodgkinson of BES, Chris Smout set the scene with an interesting and thought-provoking 'species history' of Scotland in the last 10,000 years asking 'What is Natural'? This was followed by Stan Whitaker (SNH) outlining the legal framework on introduced and non-native species, and the risks and benefits of moving species around; Colin Adams (SCENE) on conservation 'Ark' sites and the potential benefits they might bring, using case studies from rare freshwater fish species in Scotland; and Jim Dickson on the futility (in many cases) of trying to eradicate invasive non-native plants, and the largely undeserved tabloid 'demonisation' of Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed.

The afternoon proceedings included case-histories and research on conservation of: farmland waders, the aspen and pine hoverflies, the chequered skipper, the Loch Lomond NNR; pollinators in agricultural landscapes; updates on the reintroduction of beavers, and on the threats faced by badgers; an overview of the many invasive pests and pathogens threatening Scottish forests; invasive weed control in a riparian environment; and the status and impact of the white−clawed and signal crayfish in Scotland.

Saturday's talks ended with the 'breaking news' that the Small Blue butterfly has now been reintroduced to the Ayrshire dunes.

A large number of posters and displays were presented, on topics including NZ flatworm, invertebrates in The Necropolis, water-vole reintroduction, golden eagle, various reptiles, maerl, spurdog shark, lampreys, invasive freshwater fish, storm petrel, mink, grey squirrels as vectors of ticks (and Lyme disease), and the activities of some Glasgow voluntary conservation groups.

In addition, a schools' poster competition organised as part of this project resulted in an impressive display. Four P7 classes took part, working in groups of 3 or 4; each school was given £100 towards a visit to The Glasgow Science Centre or to an event in the Glasgow Science Festival, and their school libraries received copies of Wildlife Around Glasgow.

The second day started with a choice of workshops on: conservation ethics, management of a wildlife reserve, translocation, alien plants, and squirrels. And the proceedings ended with field excursions in the West End of Glasgow, looking at native and non-native plants in Kelvingrove Park, the Botanic Gardens, the banks of the River Kelvin, and recent habitat-creation and conservation work there and at Bingham's Pond.

Fortuitously, delegates were also able to see a display, in the Hunterian Zoology Museum, on Alexander Wilson the Paisley naturalist, poet and artist, known as the 'father of American ornithology' which also formed part of the BES Centenary Festival.

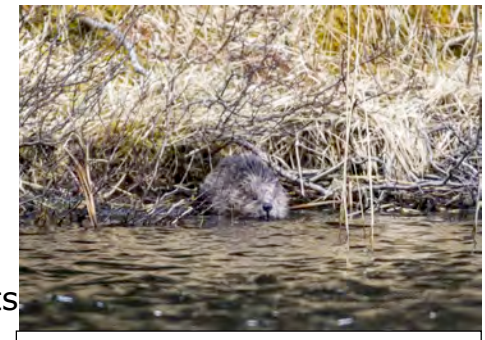
Further information about the programme, including abstracts of the presentations and posters can be found at www.gnhs.org.uk/2013conference.html These will be replaced by full accounts in due course, in advance of the publication of the proceedings in a forthcoming issue of *The Glasgow Naturalist*.

The organisers are grateful to British Ecological Society, Blodwen Lloyd Binns Bequest and Glasgow City Council for grants towards the costs of the event, to RSPB and SWT for assistance in kind, and to Glasgow Museums for donating copies of Wildlife Around Glasgow.

Excursion Reports

Knapdale Weekend, April 26-28th 2013

Morag Mackinnon, Mary Child and Alison Moss

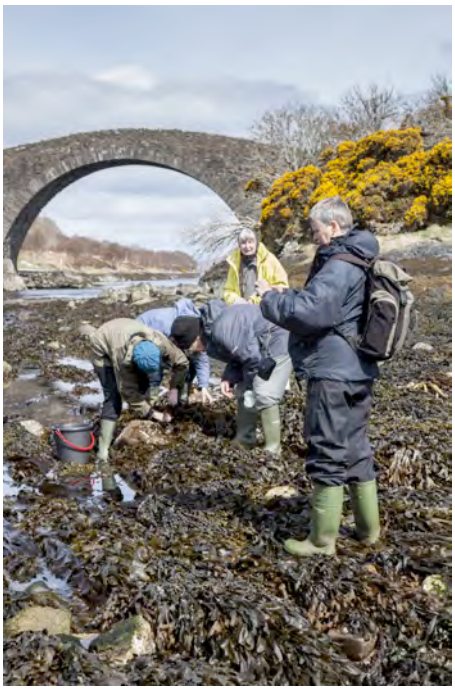


Woody, a yearling Beaver

Seven lucky GNHS members actually saw a beaver! David Palmar had arranged for us to meet on the Friday evening with Roisin Campbell-Palmer of the Scottish Beaver Trial to show us a family of European beavers in Knapdale. We were thrilled to get to get good views of Woody - the yearling kit - on the shore, swimming in the loch and at the lodge. She looked quite big to us, although Roisin told us that the parents were much bigger. We were very impressed by the size of the bite marks where the beavers had felled trees round the loch. Signposted from Barnluasgan is another walk and here you can see the dam the beavers have built to raise the level of the water and enlarge the loch where they have built their lodge. They have raised the water level by over a foot.

The following day found us on a fascinating shore walk at the Bridge over the Atlantic on Seil Island where we explored for a couple of hours and made a good collection of marine flora and fauna. We found eight species of seaweed common on sheltered shores, including the budding buttons of *Himanthalia elongata* which grows as two thongs from each 'button', each thong dividing several times until it is over 2 m long. Sponges accounted for five or six finds and three of the more common anemones were seen. The sand mason worm *Lanice conchilega* was admired. Other worms included *Amphrite johnstoni* with its spectacular long tentacles, *Spirorbis borealis* coiled on *Fucus serratus* and the encrusting triangular tubed *Pomatoceros triqueter.*

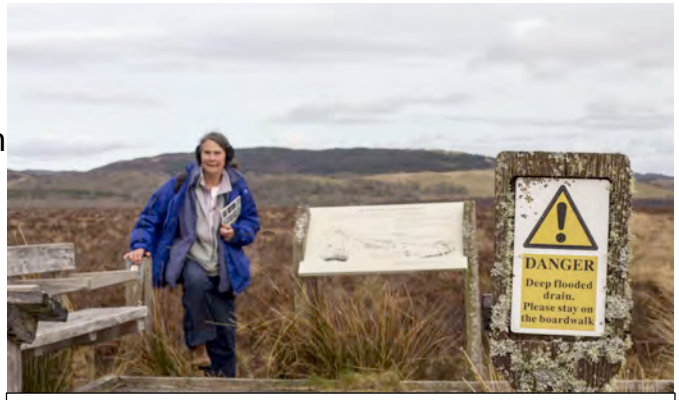
A variety of molluscs were collected including chitons, various topshells, limpets, colourful littorina, whelks and buckies and a good number of bivalve species. The quite unusual find from the shore was a live European cowrie, *Trivia monacha*, which delighted us by showing off its yellow mantle. We also had one beautiful white nudibranch, *Cadlina laevis.*



Shore and edible crabs, spider crabs, common starfish and two species of brittle-stars were found, but no sea-urchins or sea-cucumbers. We saw several species of sea squirts and were able to identify two, these were remarkable in that Janet found them adjacently living on one frond of wrack. They were *Botryllus schlosseri*, the star ascidian and another colonial ascidian *Botrylloides leachi.* One species was captured and a butterfish was admired before we returned it to the sea.

We had one other find (pictured left) which we are calling "sputnik" until we get it identified. It is about 2 mm long, rotund and orange. It has three moveable appendages on each side and a head with small tentacles. Lovely little beastie.

On our way back to our base caravan at Loch Sween we stopped to examine the Moine Mhor raised bog and woodland with an amazing variety of lichens, the other highlights of this excellent weekend. As Alison Moss said, "More lichens than even we could identify".



Alison on the Moss!

On Sunday morning we took the SNH Taynish trail hoping to spot otters. None was seen but the trail was lovely with gean trees in flower, primroses, wood sorrel, wood anemone, common violets, bluebells and even red campions. We were all amazed by the sheer abundance and diversity of the lichens. Oaks and hazels were festooned with *Usneas* making the still leafless trees quite ghost-like in the light. On the hazels, the *Lobarias* (tree lungworts) were most striking. *Lobaria pulmonaria*, the largest caught our attention especially when covered with tan-coloured fruiting bodies. *Lobaria amplissiama* changed from pale green to bright green when wet. Other tree lichens included the grey-brown leafy *Leptogonium cochleatum*, a specialist of the Atlantic woodlands, several *Parmelia* spp and *Evernia prunastri*. On the ground were large patches of dog lichens, *Peltigera canina* and *P. polydactyla* and the fluffy *Cladonia portentosa*, all especially abundant around the moist tree stumps. Crustaceous lichens were everywhere - an expert would have been handy!

After a late lunch at the café in Tayvallich, where we chatted to the ferryman of the Jura Ferry (making plans for another year!) we had a quick visit over to Carsaig Bay before heading back to Glasgow.

Bridge of Weir Lade Walk, 12th May 2013 **Alison Moss**

Eleven people attended the walk. The rain was more gentle than last year's wash-out. However, it was amazing to see how far behind the plants were in comparison to the same date in 2012. The bonus was a superb display of 'early' flowers including native bluebells, sterile strawberry, wood anemone, wood sorrel, golden saxifrage, butterbur, marsh marigolds, golden saxifrage, violas (*V. riviniana*), ivy leaved speedwell (*Veronica hederifolia*), pink purslane and town hall clock (*Adoxa moschatellina*). The water avens (*Geum rivale*) were just opening, including the mutant one with no red pigment, but the wood avens (G*. urbanum*) and the many hybrids along the lade were still in bud. We also missed the flowers of dames' violet, Pyrenean valerian and hedge garlic amongst others. Of the many trees, the bird cherry and gean were flowering together as were the abundant blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The population of young elms, recovered from the destruction of Dutch elm disease 25 years ago were flowering too.

Despite the rain, blackbirds, thrushes, robins, various tits and chaffinches were in good voice. We also saw a dipper, grey and pied wagtails, 2 blackcaps as well as various members of the crow family and some wet mallards. Sadly the full river was hostile to the kingfishers, goosanders and herons I have seen before.

I must thank Stuart Nisbet of the Paisley History Forum for his superb articles of the history of the mills on this stretch of the River Gryfe. The history of the use of waterpower is amazing. Over time, there were 12 mills operating on a stretch through the village of Bridge of Weir, the oldest, a grain mill from medieval times. Some substantial remains can be seen, including dams (weirs), tunnels, walls, lades and heavy machinery. Three early mills (1770s) were a waulk mill for leather, a lint mill and a grain mill. These were followed by the 1790s by massive cotton mills, the two largest being 44 and 60 m long and 4 and 6 stories high with up to 18,000 spindles and employing hundreds of workers. Reservoirs were constructed at the edge of the village as water back-up. Even marriages were arranged to obtain best control of the water resource - upstream girls got the better choice of husbands!

Anyway, lots to see and find out. We did get a bit muddy, but not too uncomfortable and I think all enjoyed the day.

Hogganfield Park Visit, 23rd May 2013 **Bob Gray**

A few people braved the unseasonably cold weather to investigate the trees surrounding the well-known wildfowl loch, Hogganfield. At an altitude of 85 m the park is as high as Springburn Park and is above the drumlins that compose much of Glasgow's lower lying areas. Most of the perimeter is surrounded by fluvio-glacial ice deposits of gravel, sand and silt although, on the east side, is an outcrop of igneous whinstone.

Sir Robert Hamilton of Silvertonhill sold much of the land to the City in 1667. Water from here together with Frankfield Loch was used to power mills, whilst two publicly run ice houses at the north end sold ice to local people for many years. Ashcraig whinstone quarry operated from 1860 and was infilled in 1955. From 1920 onwards, land was added to create today's 60 ha (150 acres) park.

The management plan (2013 -2018) emphasises conservation. The body of water is Glasgow's second largest at 52 acres. In the southeast corner a channel was cut through the existing hayfield to create the 7 acre island. c.1922 James Whitton, Glasgow's renowned Superintendent of Parks, planted many groups of trees. In 1989 part of the park including the loch was declared a site of interest for nature conservation (SINC) – one of 46 in Glasgow. In 1998 it was designated a local nature reserve (LNR) – the second to be declared in the city (currently 10).

The party followed an anti-clockwise circuit of the loch. The park contains four trees that have been designated 'Commonwealth 60 Trees'. These are trees that were chosen from the 11 city parks that have been twinned with different parts of the Commonwealth in connection with the 2014 Games and the 60 celebrates the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. An educational booklet is being published. The four trees at Hogganfield are a large-leaved beech (*Fagus sylvatica* f. latifolia) in the southwest, a hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) on the south shore, a black poplar (*Populus nigra* var. *betulifolia*) in the southeast and a silver birch (*Betula pendula*) in the north of the park. Black poplars are unusual in Glasgow parks and, indeed, in Britain. They are considered to be rarer than the giant panda (*The Ecologist*) and so are reckoned to be an endangered species. There are four of them, widely spaced apart, planted along the south shore, in the southeast and on the east shore. They are all craggy specimens and clearly of some considerable age. The species is one parent of some of the widely grown, important hybrid poplar species. Another tree that is a rarity in Glasgow parks (unless they've been overlooked!) is the large-leaved beech. Ian McCallum drew the Society's attention to an unusually big leaved beech and it transpired that no fewer than five are to be found around the perimeter of the loch – three (one pollard) on the east shore, onepollard in the northeast corner and, finest of all, a pollarded tree growing in the southwest corner (mentioned above) near the bird feeding station. We found a sole example of the service tree of Fountainbleau (*Sorbus latifolia*) and two of us took the opportunity of measuring its girth. This turned out to be about 17.9 cm (84”) suggesting, at a growth rate of c.1” per year that it may have been one of Whitton's plantings. Many of the aforementioned trees most likely also fall into this category.

Many other younger, interesting specimens also grow at Hogganfield. Along the northern boundary west of the north gate is a fine, long row that contains many purple Norway maples (*Acer* 'Goldsworth purple') contrasting with common and Swedish whitebeams (*Sorbus aria* and *S.intermedia*). Amongst others are attractive columnar hornbeams (*C. betulus* 'Fastigiata'), copper beeches (*Fagus sylvatica* f. *purpurea*), fastigiate Dawyck beeches (*F. sylvatica* 'Dawyck'), both green and purple and suckering grey alders (*Alnus incana*). Especially fine (we were just too early) are some grafted hybrid cockspur thorns (*Crataegus x lavallei* 'Carrierei') and flowering apples (*Malus* aff. *floribunda*). Along the western shore are many naturally regenerated saplings of Wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and what seemed to be smoothed-leaved elm *(U. minor* var. minor) as well as saplings of goat willow *(Salix caprea*) and grey sallow *(S. cinerea* ssp*.oleifolia*). The parents of these saplings were not apparent.

Hogganfield Park will form the western entrance to the proposed Seven Lochs Wetland Park, which it is intended will become Scotland's largest urban wildlife site. So the extensive new plantings of native tree species on the east side of the park will form part of an important wildlife corridor leading to Frankfield Loch, the second loch in the chain.

Hogganfield Park, which has been recently awarded the prestigious 'Green Flag' status, contains many interesting trees. Our visit was most rewarding.

Botanical report from Falls of Clyde, 2nd June 2013 Alison Moss

Over 160 species of flowering plant and ferns were noted and this with low records of grasses and sedges due to slow growth after a cold spring. Highlights were some beautiful swathes of bluebells particularly thriving under the canopy of native trees such as oak which were still only about 30% in leaf. At the river's edge and on an island were flowering clumps of globe flower (*Trollius europaeus*), always a pleasure to see and sadly much reduced in many sites. A substantial patch of cowslips on higher ground was a bit of a surprise - origin unknown. Interesting too were mutant forms of water avens (*Geum rivale*) - a multi-petalled pink flower on an otherwise ordinary plant and a few plants of a primrose- yellow flowered form. (not a hybrid). Beyond the Falls at an elevation of nearly 600 feet is a section of the Clyde with waysides full of flowers, including meadow cranesbill, red campion, stitchworts, and water avens. Such unspoilt verges and sadly reminiscent of times gone by before herbicides and manic cutting of verges - a delightful addition to the walk.

Crossbasket, 17th July 2013 Peter Macpherson

The meeting held in the evening of 17th July had an attendance of eight. The habitats consisted of wooded paths, with diversions, down to the Rotten Calder and then along the riverside. A total of 111 taxa was recorded.

Of most interest were the natives Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*), Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) and the Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*).

Woodland species included Sanicle (*Sanicula europea*), Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), Hairy-brome (*Bromus ramosus*) and Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*).

Of the aliens, Martagon (Turk's-cap) Lily (*Lilium martagon*) was the most striking, a little colony being present on a bank just above the river. Pyrenean Valerian (*Valeriana pyrenaica*) was abundant and there were a few plants of Leopard's-bane (*Doronicum pardalianches*) and Pick-a-back-plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*).

Hybrids noted were those between Water and Wood Avens (*Geum* x *intermedium*), Hedge and Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys* x *ambigua*) and the Garden Solomon's-seal (*Polygonatum* x *hybridum*).

Argaty Red Kites, 20th July 2013 George Paterson

Six members turned up on a hot, sunny day on the Braes of Doune for a ranger-led tour of the Lerrock's Farm estate, culminating in a spectacular display by the resident Red Kites at the purpose-built feeding station. The farm is able to provide this facility with the help of the RSPB and SNH who reintroduced the red kite *Milvus milvus* to Central Scotland. Lerrocks is a working sheep and cattle farm but also employs a ranger to help manage and create a variety of habitats on their 1300 acres including hedgerow regeneration, three ponds and the planting of 500 Scots Pine.

Before we'd even met the ranger we could see the kites flying above the car park and, unexpectedly, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* flapped frantically a little further away. A short walk down to one of the ponds took us past a small field used by nesting woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. The ranger informed us he used lamping to catch and ring them. At the pond we saw mating azure damselfly *Coenagrion puella*, four-spotted chasers *Libellula quadrimaculata*, heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, speedwell *Veronica* sp., dark green fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*, a carder bee and, at the far end of the pond, a little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*.

Continuing through some mixed woodland, avoiding the hoards of horse flies, we saw a ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* and straw dot *Rivula sericealis* as well as ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and bedstraw *Galium verum* as we approached a second smaller pond. We passed a barn owl *Tyto alba* nest box, whose numbers have plummeted in the area during the last two years due to harsh winters. Climbing steeply over uneven ground and bracken, via a dead mole, we reach a road below Gallow Hill. We were treated to beautiful views towards the hills in the North as we walked through a meadow grazed earlier in the year to encourage diversity. Most plant species were to be found at the far end of the meadow where the ground dropped away towards wetter ground. Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*, harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, yellow-rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and St. John's Wort *Hypericum* sp. were present.

Heading back to the farm the ranger pointed out a well hidden buzzard *Buteo buteo* nest with chicks. After a well earned lunch we wandered up to the hide for the highlight of the day. A good hour or so of watching Red Kites swooping, or rather diving, down to expertly snatch meat from each of the two feeding areas either side of the hide.

None landed, so a fast shutter speed was required to get any kind of a decent photograph. While all of this was going on a whitethroat *Sylvia communis* sang its heart out from nearby gorse.

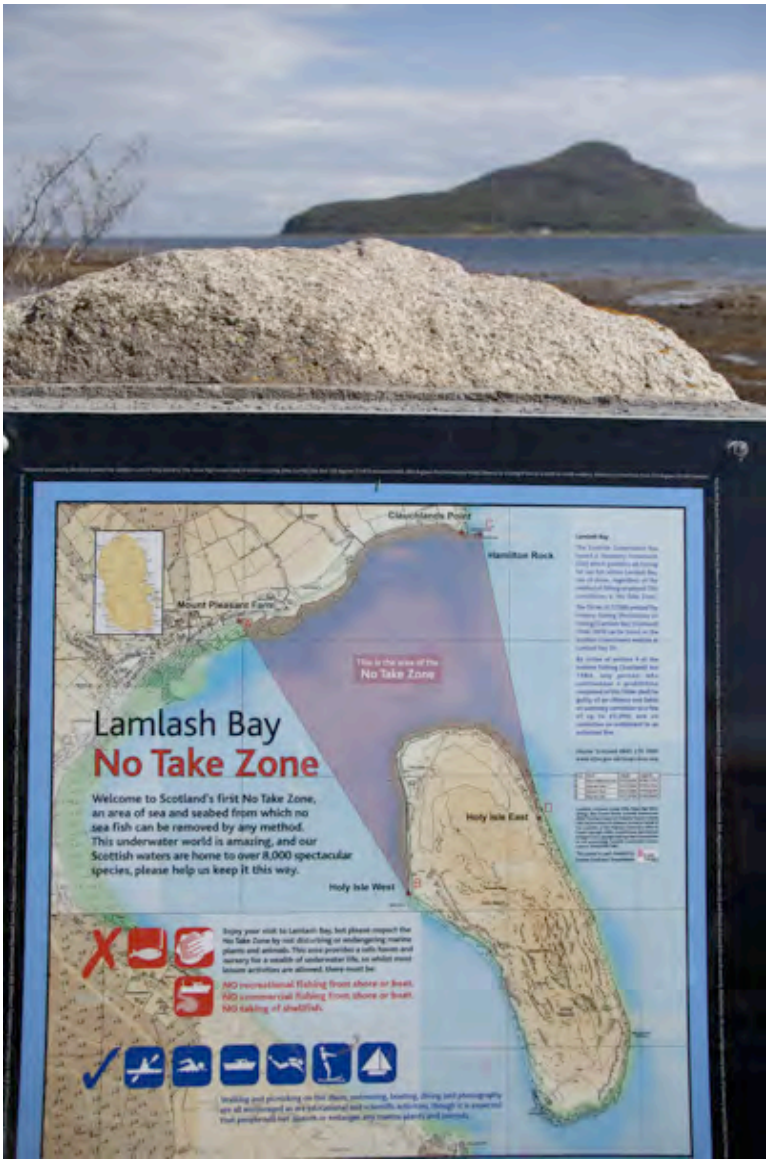
Many thanks to the Ranger, Mike McDonnell, whose knowledge and help throughout was greatly appreciated.

Photographs of GNHS members and Red Kite by George Paterson

Arran Excursion to COAST **Morag Mackinnon**

In spite of an appalling forecast, Saturday 17th August saw 10 of us meeting at Lamlash to be greeted by Katie Thomson who has spent the last year on the island with the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST) who set up a "No Take Zone" (NTZ) in Lamlash Bay in 2008 after a decade of campaigning for protection for their seas. In their office Katie told us the history of the work they have been carrying out and of the surveying that York University have helped with since 2010, using diving surveys; high resolution photographs of the seabed; baited underwater video footage and crustacean surveys with the help of the local fishermen.

Measuring, tagging and release have allowed growth and movement to be recorded and the use of cameras have let researchers count and measure fish populations and assess the recovery of the seafloor in Lamlash Bay. The results are showing that within the NTZ there is significant recovery of the plants and animals – maerl, seaweeds, hydroids, bryzoans and sponges which will provide shelter for juveniles of scallop and lobster. Increased reproductive possibility in an enhanced environment should have the desired effect of boosting populations outside the NTZ.



Katie showed us an excellent DVD of the species filmed in Lamlash Bay and hopefully there will be an opportunity to show this to members during the coming season. We thanked Katie for her hospitality, interesting talk, literature and and film show and will give them support for the proposed Marine Protected Area for South Arran, which would create an area protected from bottom trawling and dredging; promote sustainable fishing such as creeling, hand diving and sea angling and protect important habitats and fish nursery grounds.

Due to the high winds forecast, the Lamlash to Holy Island Ferry had been cancelled for the day and as the boat we had hoped to go out in had had engine trouble, our visit to Holy Isle has been put on hold for another day. We sat by the pier in beautiful sunshine to eat our lunch and then had a lovely walk along by the shore, enjoying the views, the birdlife, plants, insects and rock pool life until it was time for the bus back to the ferry for a smooth sail in the sunshine back to Ardrossan.

Notes from Members

Scottish Badgers conference, 21 September 2013

Richard Weddle

Oatridge College, Broxburn. The programme and booking information can be obtained at www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/resources.asp - or contact info@gnhs.org.uk if you'd like them sent as email attachments. You can book by post: send details of : 1) Your name and address 2) Whether you are a member of Scottish Badgers or not 3) The number of places you want to book 4) Any dietary preferences (vegetarian, vegan etc) 5) Any special 6) Your name and organisation as you wish it to be included in the attendance list and on your badge, to: Susan Tierney, Fife Badger Group, 11 Kinloch Street, Ladybank, KY15 7LF

Cranefly identification workshop - Saturday 5th to Sunday 6th October 2013
Glasgow Museums Resource Centre (GMRC) in Nitshill; FREE
For more information and to book your place and please contact Richard Weddle info@glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk

TCV Introduction to Pseudoscorpion workshop - Saturday 12th October 2013
10am-4pm. Balallan House, Stirling (£50)
Contact Scotland-training@tcv.org.uk or call 01786 479697.

BRISC Conference
Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith, October 26th 2013
The theme of this year's conference is "New technology for biological recording" (eg smart-phone apps and web-based ID resources)/
Cost is £35 per delegate to cover costs; student concession rate £15.

Scottish Arachnologists meeting
Perth Museum, October 26th 2013
This is some time hence, but requires booking (£16 registration fee).
Contact: grb31@st-andrews.ac.uk (sorry, no telephone details supplied)

Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group
See https://sites.google.com/site/scottishfungi/local-groups/CAFG for details of forthcoming fungal forays

JELLY EAR - small, but deadly!

Alison Moss

With the main fungus season upon us, here follows a cautionary tale I e-mailed to the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group - and their helpful responses.

I think I may have made an error in the cooking instructions for jelly ear (*Auricularia auricula* - judae). "Fry till crispy" was my understanding. So, a little cooking oil went into the stir fry pan - warmed up nicely - then 3 small jelly ears, about 2 cm across, freshly picked from my garden, went therein. This was with eager anticipation of a whole new taste experience. What followed was a cacophony

of squeaks and whistles - pan heat turned right down in response. Then - BANG - two little ears exploded out of the pan - shot past my head with the speed of Exocet missiles and landed intact 10 feet away in different directions. When I got up off the floor, I approached the remaining ear with caution (and protective glasses). It was skipping about the pan in a sort of legless Riverdance. It had lost its chance of escape. I trapped it and heartlessly nibbled round the edges. It squealed no more. Was it worth the risk? No - it was quite tasteless. Crispy, yes, but no culinary delight. Where did I go wrong?

Readers of this sad tale might find the following responses of culinary and safety value. Firstly - best to slice and dab DRY before frying. Garlic and butter help the flavour. The Chinese cut them into strips and stir fry for interesting texture. Lastly, in casseroles they can add a little flavour, but mainly a texture experience.
So, good luck. My alternative suggestion was a new competition to see who could fire an ear the furthest!

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General Correspondence to the General Secretary

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

GNHS welcomes contributions to the Newsletter from members, without which the Newsletter would be a poor production! It would be of enormous help in getting the Newsletter out in time if you could please send them either as plain text or in a Word file as Verdana 12 points, which saves them being reformatted by the Editor. Scientific names should be italicised if you have time.

Please send photos separately from the text as jpg files, and indicate where you would like them inserted into the text. The more photos, the better the Newsletter!

Thank you

David Palmar, Newsletter Editor