GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2012

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
10 January 2013

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

GNHS Indoor Meetings - in Graham Kerr Building unless noted

November
Tuesday 13th
6.30pm Tutorial: Are Glasgow's swifts disappearing? Clare Darlaston
7.30pm Film 'The strange disappearance of the bees' plus discussion

Wednesday 28th
5.00pm, Graham Kerr Building LT1
Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture, How to conserve bumblebees in a crowded world
Professor Dave Goulson

December
Tuesday 11th
Zoology Museum. Christmas buffet dinner – see end of Newsletter for details and booking form
Lecture: Big cat conservation; Graham Law

2013
January
Tuesday 15th 7.30pm Hopkirk's "Flora Glottiana" Bicentenary
Talks by Jim Dickson, Dick Peebles and Keith Watson
Jointly with Friends of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens

February
Tuesday 12th
7.15pm Photographic Night: members' slides or digital slide shows, plus photographic competition results

2013 Subscriptions **Richard Weddle**
Subscriptions fall due on January 1st. A renewal form is enclosed for those who, according to my records, do not pay by standing order.

Natives, Aliens and Reintroductions Conference **Richard Weddle**
We are planning to hold a series of events next year, including a conference in June entitled "Natives, Aliens and Reintroductions: how does ecology inform wildlife conservation in Scotland?" It's a joint venture between GNHS, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Museums, Glasgow Science Festival, RSPB, SWT and others. It

also forms part of the festival marking the 100th anniversary of the British Ecological Society, and is partly funded by BES.

The main conference weekend will take place in the Graham Kerr Building on June 22nd and 23rd; the first day will be a series of talks, and the second workshops and excursions; there will also be posters on display during both days. We also plan to have a schools event, probably on June 14th, and we hope that a number of next year's summer excursions will also address this theme.

There will be further events, including schools activities, during the Glasgow Science Festival (6-16th June). And on Saturday June 15th, also in the Graham Kerr Building, there will be a day devoted to the work of Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), the Paisley naturalist and poet, organised by the Hunterian Museum and the University's Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine; this is also part funded by BES.

Excursion Programme 2013 **Anne Orchardson**

Thank you for helping to make this year's programme a successful one. Although the weather wasn't always the best, attendance was reasonably good for most excursions and some very interesting sites have been visited.

I will soon be thinking about possible excursions for next year's programme. As always, I am looking for ideas from as many sources as possible. We already have some suggestions, linking with talks to be given over the winter, connected with other events next year, finding out about developments in the management of sites, recording various species in a variety of locations. If there is somewhere you know well, but would like to learn more about its wildlife this would be an ideal opportunity to find out more as we tap into the considerable expertise within our ranks.

Please let me have your thoughts, or if it's easier you can discuss your ideas with George Paterson, Alison Moss or Morag Mackinnon who will be helping me put next year's programme together.

Excursion Organiser **Anne Orchardson**

As I have moved away from Glasgow to live in Crieff, 2013 will be the last Programme I will be organising, with help as mentioned above.

If you enjoy the excursion programme, have some ideas about how it could be organised, and would like to take over this role, please let me know. You don't have to be an expert in any particular field (I'm not!) but if you are a good organiser, and are keen to see the programme develop to provide a range of excursions to meet the wide interests of the Society, then this could be for you!

I had only just joined the Society when I volunteered for this role several years ago; I knew very few people and had no connection with the relevant University departments. But I have been well guided and have made good and lasting friendships within the Society, so please don't be put off! It's great fun!

Reports on two courses supported by GNHS:

1) Spider Identification course for beginners — Ian Boyd

Following kind support from Biological Recording in Scotland and Glasgow Natural History Society, I attended a Spider Identification Course at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre from 29/6 to 2/7/2012 under the excellent tutoring of Alistair Lavery.

Possibly like many people I have a particular curiosity about spiders without knowing much about them. Spiders seem to have a connection to the human psyche. Even if some people are put off by them, they may have an interest in this group of invertebrates, even more so than other groups, and if that interest became informed knowledge - even to some extent – people may grow to have a better relationship with this much maligned group. I am in a position to help people learn about all aspects of the environment and as a Countryside Ranger I could offer information whenever the opportunity arises, especially if I knew more myself.

The course began with a perspective into the extent of Spiders, not only British Spiders but Spiders worldwide (Alistair was particularly well placed to do this as he is a Spider recorder for the Falkland Islands), then basic anatomy to note the necessary microscopic markers needed for identification. During the weekend methods for collecting were tried; simple field techniques such as pit fall traps, beating low vegetation and sweeping meadows – room windowsills were of course handy for the usual suspects in our houses-. We also looked at what information was necessary for storage and recording. Fixing specimens in alcohol is necessary to be able to identify them to species level. Now with this basic knowledge I can start my own collection and over time record what species can be found in my area, again this group as many others seem to be under-recorded.

The Linyphidae (money Spiders) are the largest family group with the smallest specimens hardly noticed, although actually, under the microscope they are beautiful animals with wonderful, colours, patterns, body shapes and appendages to keep you marvelled and amazed for hours (maybe!)

Since my main interest is education, it was great to hear the interesting trivia about Spiders that Alistair had to share. He was from an education background and had the stories to keep spiders interesting. So seemingly we have the identification of the "Robert the Bruce Spider" sussed, and there **is** such as thing as a vegetarian spider.

If you're interested, the British Arachnological Society is a good site to head to, to get yourself started, with plenty of good pictures:
http://wiki.britishspiders.org.uk/index.php5?title=Main_Page

2) Identification of Hoverflies — Laura Whitfield

In August I was able to attend a hoverfly identification course thanks to a bursary from BRISC and GNHS. After the summer we have had here in Scotland I was glad that it was being held at Preston Montford FSC in Shropshire. It actually allowed for us to spot and identify a good variety of hoverfly species in the sunshine! Even though I've been a ranger for coming up to seven years I never really knew much

Stuart sweep netting around a pond

about insects apart from the usual suspects; butterflies, dragonflies and bumblebees. It seemed the natural progression to move on to hoverflies as they always seem to be 'hovering' about the place. I currently work for the Scottish Wildlife Trust down at the Falls of Clyde and this ancient woodland site will, according to my excellent tutors Stuart Ball and Roger Morris, support around 80 of the ~200 species that we find in Scotland. These little insects are great environmental indicators, many of which spend their larval stages in places such as rot holes in deadwood or burrowed deep in the stems of thistles.

Stuart and Roger are the founders of the Hoverfly Recording Scheme and there is little that they don't know about hoverflies. The course itself consisted of a few different talks about how to identify hoverflies, where to find them, how to collect and process them. Identification began with firstly keying out to tribes and then later we moved on to keying to species. Hoverfly ID involves a fair amount possible to identify many species in the field. As a conservationist I did find it hard at first to come around to the idea of actually killing these wee beasties. However, in order to find out what they are they do need to be pinned so that you can see such things as hairy eyes and spines on legs. One of the more easily recognisable species found in Scotland which can be identified in the field is known as the Heineken hoverfly (*Rhingia campestris*); it has a very pronounced projecting face!

Helophilus sp. - probably *pendulus*. If you're not too squeamish, it is possible to hold one by its legs!

Once you know what a hoverfly actually is and how to differentiate them from all the other flies (they have false vein running through their wings) you begin to spot them everywhere you go. Since completing the course I have been out a few times catching and recording on the reserve where I work. In just over an hour on quite an overcast day I managed to catch eight different species (only 72 to go!). I also recently attended the weekend course at Rowardennan which has further improved my knowledge on these fascinating flies. I think if you are looking to expand your entomological knowledge from the usual suspects but aren't sure what direction to take then I would urge you to consider hoverflies. It is possible to record over 50 species in your garden alone.

Below are some useful sources of information on hoverflies and identification:

• http://www.buglife.co.uk – for a general overview of hoverflies.
• http://www.dipteristsforum.org.uk – a forum dedicated to Diptera, lots of useful help, advice and information on upcoming meetings and training courses.
• http://www.hoverfly.org.uk – Home of the hoverfly recording scheme, it has a handy tool that allows you to put in your postcode to find out the recorded species in your area.
• *British Hoverflies*, Alan Stubbs and Steven Falk – This is the definitive book on identifying hoverflies, a 3rd Edition is due to be published soon so I wouldn't bother getting a copy until the new edition comes out.

Excursion Reports

Auchinlea Park, 24th May 2012 **Bob Gray**

This park, located about 6 miles east of the city centre on the edge of Easterhouse, was originally 74 acres in extent and was created in the 1970's from quarries and wasteland to enhance two A-listed buildings: (1) Provanhall House, perhaps some 550 years old, may be older than Provan's Lordship (1471) and considered to be the finest example of a pre-reformation baronial mansion and (2) Blochairn House, modified in 1760 and based on the mansion of a Jamaican tobacco estate. The development of the Glasgow Fort retail centre on its southern boundary has reduced the area of the park to about 20 acres.

The Council had kindly lent us a key in order to enable us to use the car park and access the grounds of Provan Hall which are separate from the park itself. Although the houses are of great historical interest and open more or less daily to the public we were there to view the trees and shrubs in the surrounding gardens, woodland and particularly the bog garden that is a local SINC (site of importance for nature conservation), one of 49 in Glasgow. (These have a lower grading and protection than city wide SINCS of which the city has 46.)

Next to the bog area just northeast of the Hall grows a fine ash tree specimen (*Fraxinus excelsior*) but, in many ways more intriguing and growing lower down, we found three items of great interest: (i) a "phoenix" horse chestnut *(Aesculus hippocastanum*) that had been wind thrown. Unfortunately it was lying partly over the boundary fence and will need to be reduced in size. (ii) a sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) that had split in two in such a way that the fallen half was in the process of layering itself. (iii) an extraordinary double row of silver maples (*Acer saccharinum*) that gave the impression of having grown out from a collapsed parent of which there was no sign and which had presumably rotted away. Certainly these trees had not been planted in this manner.

Around the house to the west, north and east is a large number of historic sycamores that are considered to be some of the oldest trees in Glasgow as they appear on maps dated 1795. Indeed Mr. Mather, a former owner, commented in 1899 on the privacy and shade provided by both sycamore and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), and many fine old specimens of the latter can be found in the grounds. A few had succumbed to wind throw during last winter's storms. Parts of the grounds are quite overgrown as we discovered as we fought our way through undergrowth around the west perimeter. Here we encountered not only some rhododendrons in full bloom but also what is arguably the biggest grove in Glasgow of Himalayan tree

cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster frigidus*). The grounds here have been curiously planted up with a few, scattered exotic conifers, such as giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). These are perhaps 25 years old. The parterre garden (1971) located just west of Provan Hall resembles a medieval monastic or manor garden in design where no distinction is made between vegetables and flowers.

The rings of a specimen felled about 3 years ago of one of the row of old sycamores to the west of the Hall were counted as c.200, which suggests that at least some of the trees on the 1795 map (which must have been substantial at the time of cartography) had been felled and replaced some time after the map had been produced. Another stump, of a horse chestnut felled in 2011 and located to the southeast of the complex, had a ring count of c.250. An avenue of broad-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*) has been planted recently to the southwest of the Hall. Just to the northeast of the entrance to the courtyard of Provan Hall grow two very large sycamores. One of these at c.19.8 m tall is the tallest in the area, whilst the ancient sycamore in the park outwith Provan Hall has the largest girth at 4.45 m. This latter tree is located between the pond in the park and the Hall together with two cherries (*Prunus avium*) considered to be the remains of orchard trees that are a remnant of a previous terraced garden which was removed when Auchinlea Park was established. One of these cherries is particularly large.

As the light was fading we speeded up our walk around the pond observing en route to the west and south of the water an abundance of planting that had apparently been carried out some 10 years ago, perhaps about the time of development of the Fort retail centre. This planting consisted mainly, though not entirely, of native species such as Scots pine, hawthorn, elder, field maple, ash, silver birch, rowan, sallow, common alder, oak and hazel. Also included were sycamore, horse chestnut, beech, Norway maple and grey alder. Much very recent planting of again mainly native species was seen to the south of the older planting.

We made our way back to the car park area where large numbers of pollarded willows and other species may be found. During the course of the evening we had taken the opportunity to look at the differences amongst willow species and their hybrids and discussed the difficulties associated with accurate identification. Finally, in the car park area were two specimens of Schmitt's cherry (*Prunus* x *schmittii*) infected with impressive, remarkable galled outgrowths, caused by the fungus *Taphrina wiesneri*. (This belongs to the same genus that causes witch's broom in birches.) The only other example of such outgrowths known in Glasgow is found in an infected wild cherry (*P. avium*) in Queen's Park (see previous article about May 2010 visit). The curator of Provan Hall has been shown this phenomenon. Hopefully these trees will escape being felled by over-zealous park staff.

Linn Park area, 19th July 2012 **Peter Macpherson**

On account of the weather forecast, the evening field meeting scheduled for July 18th was, fortunately, postponed until the following day.

It was held in the vicinity of Lainshaw Drive (NS5858 and NS5958) with an attendance of eight. A total of 122 taxa was recorded.

At the road sides we noted the native Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) and Common Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*). At a St. John's-wort site mention was made that the plant is used in folk medicine as a mood booster and that there has been a 110% increase in sales so far this 'summer'! The most extensive alien was False Virginia-creeper (*Parthonocissus vitacea*), with good colonies of Dotted Loosestrife (*Lysimachia punctate*) and Russian-vine (*Polygonum aubertii*. Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minus*) was also noted and an *Astilbe* in bud- still to be identified.

A little gap on the south side led up past three sedge species to sloping grassland which was the site for hundreds of Common Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and a few Greater Butterfly-orchids (*Platanthera chlorantha*).

In woodland to the north we recorded Enchanter's –nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europea*) and the alien Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

We noted a relative abundance of slugs and snails on the plants, a bonus for those with an interest in molluscs. We wondered if this was related to the recent wet weather.

Craignethan Castle and Nethan SWT Reserve, 11th August 2012

Introduction **Anne Orchardson**

Following the very interesting and unusual talk given to us by Crispin Hayes about ancient orchards across Scotland, we had arranged to visit Lower Nethan SWT reserve near Lanark, part of which includes the site of an ancient orchard. Unfortunately, the orchard as such no longer exists, other than one very old pear tree which amazingly is still producing fruit! Our hope was to find out a bit about the legacy of the orchard to the area in terms of biodiversity, and we decided to link with the local SWT ranger (Steve Blow) to learn about the reserve's development. In order to record as much as possible, we invited Jo Davis, the local moth recorder, to join us and he set moth traps the previous night.

Lower Nethan Reserve adjoins the site of Craignethan Castle (owned by Historic Scotland) and rumour had it that its dungeons housed a rare cave spider. To confirm this (or otherwise) we also invited Chris Cathrine, a spider expert from Buglife.

We had a most productive and enjoyable day. Rarely for this summer, it was dry and sunny. We met at the Castle and headed for the dungeons where to our delight we found the cave spider (*Meta menardi*). The easiest way to find it was to look for its nest: a small white ball suspended from the ceiling, guarded by a solitary, large spider. We saw quite a few through the dark rooms of the ruined castle, and Chris said he had usually seen it in similar man-made spaces (e.g. old mine workings) rather than in natural caves. Sometimes there are also bats in the castle but we saw no sign of them.

Jo's moth traps, one in the castle and two at different locations in the reserve, had caught lots of moths and it was fascinating to have a chance to see the many different species, spectacular, beautiful – and the mundane!

Our walk through the old orchard area, now completely unrecognisable as an orchard, and on through part of the reserve which has been left to its own devices was interesting and yielded some interesting invertebrates. Steve explained how they are trying to rid the area of invasive species such as sycamore, and it was obvious to see how clearing these from the woodland had allowed light in and enabled more native species to become established. He had kindly hacked a sort of path through the undergrowth for us so that we could get an idea of the site. SWT are keen to have records from the reserve, part of which has only recently been added to the smaller area previously owned.

Moths **Jo Davis**

In early May I received news that GNHS Society were to visit the Nethan Reserve; I was asked to organise some moth recording for the day.

Several visits were made earlier to reconnoitre suitable. On the evening before the visit four moth traps were set up. Two were 120w Mercury vapour traps, one within the grounds of Craignethan Castle, in the resident curator's garden; the other took its electricity from a property on the banks of the River Nethan so that a cable could be taken into the reserve. Two battery-operated Heath traps were also set up in the new part of the reserve in an area that had previously been an orchard.

Saturday 11th turned out to be an excellent day and the night before had been reasonably warm and dry. Consequently the moth trapping was very satisfactory.

The group convened around the Castle MV trap, which had been moved to a sheltered site. The most common moth, as with all the traps, was the Bird Cherry Ermine *Yponomeuta evonymella* with well over 1,200 being recorded for the day. Noctuid moths were otherwise the most common, and in order of frequency in the Castle trap:

Large Yellow Underwing	>130
Dark Arches	>20
Lesser Broad-Bordered Yellow Underwing	>10
Dotted Clay	>10
Small Square-spot	>10

These are common species so it was no surprise they topped the list. No other moth was found in double figure numbers except for the Slender Brindle *Apamea scolopacina* (13 individuals). This is an interesting record as it is a species not recorded north of the Borders before 2004, although several have now been recorded in Central Scotland.

37 species were caught in the Castle trap, over 475 individual moths in all. There were only four species of micromoths identified. Of interest was the Brown China Mark, *Elophila nympheata*, whose caterpillar lives in a floating leaf case. The trap in the Castle was positioned well above the river.

The highlight of the other traps was a Poplar Hawkmoth *Laothoe populi* caught very much at the end of its flight season, but given the unusual wet and cool weather many moth flight seasons were late this year. The Dotted Carpet *Alcis jubata* was a first for me in Lanarkshire and is another moth that has recently extended its range

northwards. These traps recorded another 23 species of moth (216 individuals in all), plus over a thousand Bird Cherry Ermine moths *Yponomeuta evonymella.*

A successful day, and I trust the local VC moth recorder will be happy with a tally of 60 moth species from a 1 km square that has not been studied before. [I am! (Richard)]

Other Observations **Richard Weddle**

In addition to moths, Jo's MV trap at the Castle contained a number of beetles: a burying beetle *Nicrophorus investigator*, a ground beetle *Aphodius rufipes*, and the brown chafer *Serica brunnea*; the ground beetle was carrying about 8 mites (probably *Poecilochirus* sp.) – these are not parasites, merely hitching a ride to their next meal. And near the old-pear tree, a 'swollen-thighed' beetle *Oedemera virescens* was collected by sweeping herbage.

The day-flying moth Shaded Broad-bar *Scotopteryx chenopodiata* was also seen in the same area, and a number of hoverflies, notably the large wasp-mimic *Sericomyia silentis*.

There is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Shaded Broad-bar on account of a steep decline in numbers because of intensive agriculture in much of the country, but it is not difficult to find in this part of Scotland.

Butterflies, both Green-veined White, and Ringlet were spotted at various places during the day.

We also found couple of fungi growing on an old fallen tree; one was a *Ganoderma*, we didn't cut it to determine whether it was *australe* or *applanatum;* the other was similar to 'Dead Man's Fingers' though again we didn't check it in detail.

As well as the cave-spider in the dungeons, Chris collected several specimens from each of the locations visited. We hope to have a report on these in a later Newsletter.

Fungus Foray Strathblane, 16th September 2012 **Robin Jones**

This was one of our forays combined with Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group. It was arranged as a follow-up to the 2011 foray at which the small band of enthusiasts almost drowned, so unrelenting and extreme was the rain. This year we hoped for better weather as the forecast claimed the rain would relent after midday. So much for forecasts - in fact the sun eventually came out to illuminate our return six hours late! Nevertheless a larger band of forayers were undaunted by the - thankfully - less extreme rain on this occasion and were rewarded for their efforts by some good finds. I have mentioned those species of particular interest. Dick Peebles was present with his GPS and recorder and has the complete list.

On our way up to the start of the Gowk Stane path, we again saw the pretty ballerina *Hygrocybe calyprifformis* on someone's lawn, just as last year. There was

also a yellow *Hygrocybe* and further on, the green *Russula aeruginea* and cocnut-scented *Lactartius glyciosmus*, growing correctly under their birch tree.

This year has been great for jelly babies (*Leotia lubrica*) which were soon found when we reached the Gowk Stane path. A heathy, boggy area with birch, rowan and pine produced fine specimens of *Leccinum versipelle* with *L. scabrum*, three *Amanita* spp. *A. fulva*, *A. rubescens* and *A. crocea*.

Heading south through mostly spruce woods our senses were treated to the aromas of meal from the miller (*Clitopilus prunulus*), aniseed (*Clitocybe fragrans*) and boiled cabbage by crushing the small caps of *Gymnopus perforans*, while a hot, peppery taste was gained from *Calciporus piperatus*, growing near its companion species *Amanita muscaria*. The cep (*Boletus edulis*) was also present.

In a damp, mossy spruce wood where good things have been found before, we found stinkhorn *Phallus impudicus*, three *Lactarius* spp. *L. tabidus*, *L.turpis* and *L. britannicus* and two *Cortinarius* spp. *C. evernius* and the deadly *C. speciosissimus* (*rubellus*). The attractive purple-red *Russula queletii* was a visual treat.

Onward to the first of some massive beech trees planted in a circle and just some of many scattered throughout this large wooded area. We were lucky to have our tree expert Bob Gray with us who estimated a possible age of 250 years for these beautiful trees. Earlier in the year these had the colourful *Boletus calopus* under them, but they fruit early and had gone. Time was pressing due to the numerous finds slowing us down, but we decided to spend 10-15 minutes going around the ring of trees. This estimate turned into the best part of an hour as we found more species. These included the attractive, red-speckled *Cortinarius bolaris*, the soapy-scented *Tricholoma saponaceum* and the grey *T. scioides*. We saw *Boletus ferrugineus* and *B. luridiformis*, the bright red colours of which were compensation for not seeing *B. calopus*. It has been a fantastic year for *Bulgaria inquinans*, the black discs of which have been exceptionally dense on fallen trees and was covering fallen beech boughs along with its paler jelly companion *Neobulgaria pura*. There were attractive tufts of the scurfy coated *Inocybe Hystrix*, but the stars of these beeches were *Russula ionochlora* and *R. grisea* along with the commoner *R. nobilis*.

We had not continued much further when glances at our watches showed it was getting late with still much of the proposed route to do. The Strathblane area is too good and large a site to do in one go, so reluctantly we headed back through a woodland path. As we emerged from the trees, at last the sun finally shone to dry us out as we walked back across Dumbrock Moor.

Fungus Foray Garscadden Wood, 30th Sept 2012 **Robin Jones**

Fifteen forayers - including three students, apparently doing a study of mycologists (?) - turned out at Garscadden Wood on a day in which the early morning rain ceased and the sun came out just in time for the start of the foray. The group ascended the slope from the road into the wood and took the top path west through the wood. The first species found was the pale form of *Tremella foliacea* on a twig. During the course of the foray, all three deceiver species were encountered, *Laccaria laccata* and *L. proxima* plus the amethyst deceiver *L. amethystina*.

Deceivers turn pale when dry, but after the rain the amethyst deceivers were showing their full attractive deep violet colour. There were numerous common earthballs *Scleroderma citrina* and later we found the less frequent *S. verrucosum*. Jelly babies (*leotia lubrica*) seem common this year so it was not long before these were found in reasonable numbers. Small *Mycena* species can be difficult to identify if they are not one of those with some distinguishing feature. Fortunately, the stem of one snapped notably when stretched, indicating *M. vitillis*.

There were many hazel trees in the wood so it was not surprising that we found one of its associate fungi, *Lactarius pyrogallus*. It is well named as the milk gets very hot on the tongue! Similarly the oak associated *Lactarious quietus* with its sweet, oily aroma was also seen as was *L. tabidus*, identified by the milk turning slowly yellow on a white cotton handkerchief.

Heading towards the western end of the wood we encountered some of the 'usual suspects' sulphur tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare)*, brown roll-rim (*Paxillus involutus*), candlesnuff (*Xylaria hypoxylon*) and a common bracket fungus *Trametes versicolor*. The ascomycete *Bulgaria inquinans* was much in evidence and also on wood, crumble cap (*Psathyrella hydrophila*). A brownish *Russula* proved at first puzzling until smelt when the distinct aroma of crab/seafood gave away its identity as *R. graveolens*. It is always handy to have children on a foray as they usually see things adults miss, and so it was that one little girl Judy found the minute, white *Marasmius epiphyllus*. At the end of the wood we dropped down towards the road and on the way was found *Polyporus varius*, now named *P. leptocephalus*. A convenient wall near the road and in the sun formed the perfect site to have lunch.

Once fed and watered, the group headed for the east end of the wood where the tree diversity was aided by the presence of some mature pines. Here several of those species already found in the west were refound including that tiny *Marasmius epiphyllus*. However some different species were added. These included *Russula ochroleuca*, the jelly fungi *Auricularia auricula-judae* and *Ascocoryne sarcoides*, the fruity smelling *Gymnopilus penetrans* growing on conifer wood, the yellow 'tongues' of *Calocera cornea*, apparently emerging from sycamore wood, rather than its more usual beech, and, as we neared the eastern end of the wood, the large blackish caps of *Russula nigricans* served as a grand finale to what had been a most enjoyable woodland walk.

Bats and the Disused Kelvinside Railway Tunnel **Keith Cohen**

While cycling the Forth and Clyde Canal towpath to work and back I noticed that there is an old railway tunnel just west of the River Kelvin. This immediately raised my batty curiosity.

A quick walk through showed it to be quite short and open at both ends. The brick lining is largely intact, though damp has created some flakes which offer crevices with potential for bats to roost, and alcoves in the side walls could offer some shelter. The presence of some hibernating Herald moths in the alcoves suggests suitable conditions for hibernating bats.

Glover and Altringham studied the use of caves in the Yorkshire dales for hibernation and autumn swarming, a behaviour apparently related to mating in

certain bat species[1]. Swarming bats chase each other inside and outside underground sites; chases lead to copulation. Other cave-like structures are also used for hibernation and swarming, though perhaps only 60% of cave-like sites are used. Swarming bats may converge from very large areas and activity may achieve 1000s of bat passes per night.

Swarming occurs between August and November, with peak activity between mid-August and mid-September, but activity varies greatly between nights and weeks.

Former railway tunnels are important bat hibernation and autumn swarming sites in some parts of the UK. In Wiltshire, the Marlborough Tunnel exceeds SSSI criteria, comprising a nationally important hibernation site for *Myotis nattereri* and also *M. daubentonii, M. mystacinus, Plecotus auritus* and *Barbastella barbastellus*, and in autumn it attracts many swarming bats - probably from much of central Wiltshire if not beyond. I've been lucky enough to join in the monitoring of these bats with Steve Lawrence of Wiltshire Bat Group, both in winter and in autumn, when many hundreds of bats have been caught with harp traps and mist nets. The disused Greywell Tunnel (an SSSI) on the Basingstoke Canal in Hampshire has had over 500 individual bats of 5 different species recorded over-wintering within it; similarly, the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels on the former Midhurst railway line in West Sussex are an SAC, supporting the south east's most important hibernating site for Barbastelle and Buckstein's bats.

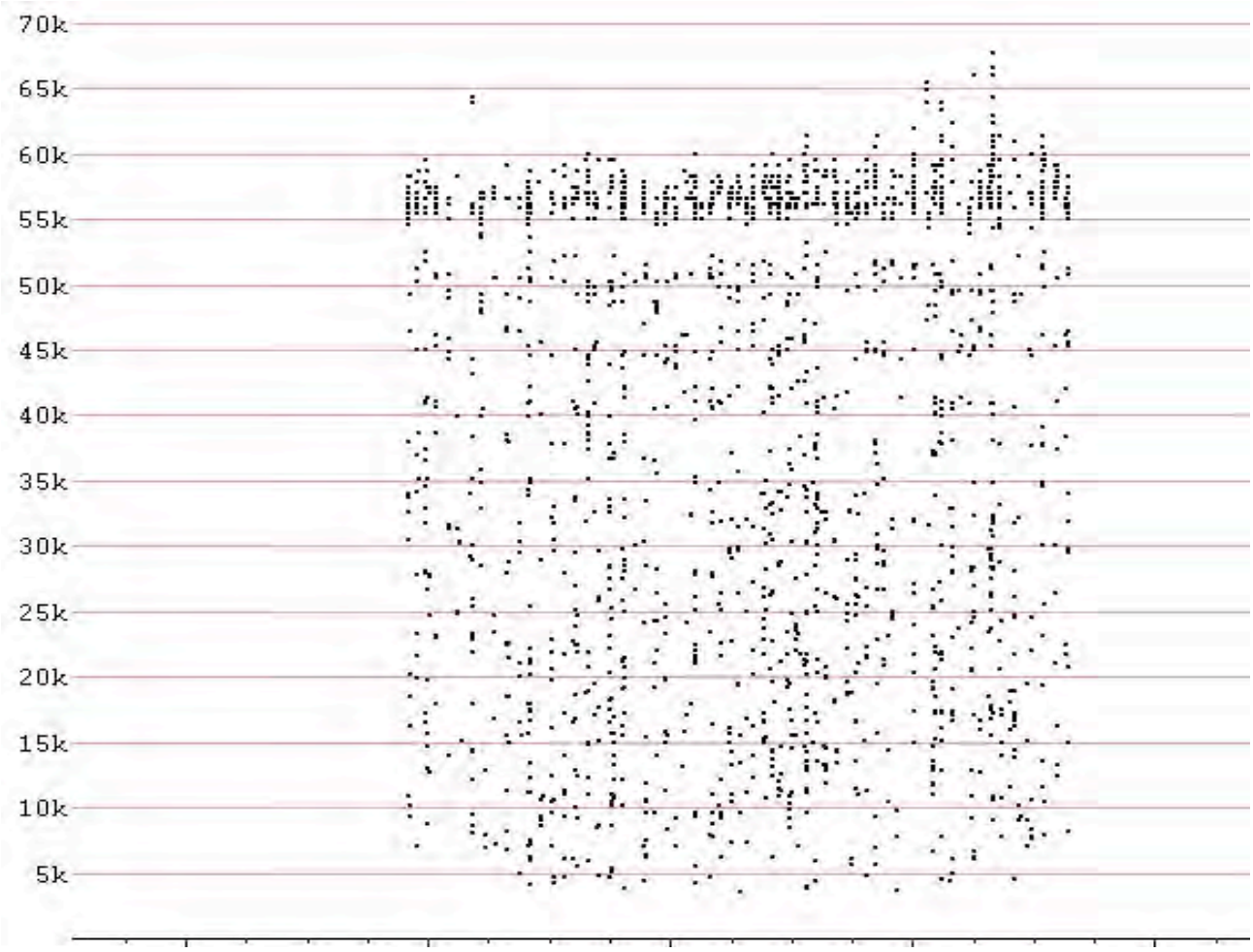
Eastern end of tunnel, showing area sampled by Anabat (photo K Cohen)

So I placed an automated bat detector (a Titley Electronics Anabat SD-1) at one end of the tunnel and set it to record for around a fortnight during the swarming season, from 18th September - 3rd October 2012. The results showed no swarming activity at all, but recorded a great deal of foraging activity by both soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bats. The calls recorded were quite faint, which makes me thing these bats were not down at the tunnel mouth or in the tunnel, but were flying along the footpath above, running south from the canal.

There are now perhaps only more questions: How many other potentially suitable swarming sites exist in the Glasgow area, and are any of them used for swarming

[1] All *Myotis* species, plus the brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

or hibernation? What result would I have had in the optimum period? Where do the swarming species that summer around Glasgow go for a wee dance and a bit of pash?



Bat recordings 18th September to 3rd October 2012

Glover, A.M. and Altringham, J.D. (2008) Cave selection and use by swarming bat species. *Biological Conservation* 141, 1493-1504

Rivers N.M., Butlin R.K., Altringham J.D. (2006) Autumn swarming behaviour of Natterers bats in the UK: Population size, catchment area and dispersal. *Biological Conservation* 127: 215-226.

Letter from the Goldenland 2 **Jim Dickson**
Mont D'Or (Golden Mount), August 2012

Mont D'Or is one of the summits of the central Jura Mountains. It's a popular spot because the car park is close to the top (1463 m, 4799 ft). This is well below the potential tree line and so there are extensive woodlands of Spruce (*Sapin*). The walk to the summit is little more than a short stroll. The rock is, of course, Jurassic limestone, there forming a totally precipitous, spectacular cliff (Photo 1). The views all round are distant and very attractive. To the east and southeast in the middle distance is Lac Léman (Lake of Geneva) between France and Switzerland, with the Bernese Oberland and the Mont Blanc range, the highest in the Alps, too.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Botanical Society of Franche-Comté there was an excursion to Mont D'Or on 30th June. The weather could not have been worse. Completely overcast, it rained all day, often heavily, with a strong wind. Merely standing while the members gathered was enough to soak us. That day the weather had been appalling all over the region. We have friends with a house near Gray.

The roof tiles had been cracked by hailstones the size of tennis balls and, consequently, the house flooded. On the 4th August the weather was congenial for our second visit to Mont D'Or and so this time it was pleasant to explore. There are many cows and so grazing is intense. These are the cattle which produce the milk for the famous Mont D'Or cheese, viscous internally. The cattle leave the Woolly Thistle (Cirse Laineux) well alone, just as they do the tall Yellow Gentian (Gentiane Jaune), abundant in the pastures lower down the hill. For me the most beautiful thistle is the Woolly Thistle. The leaves are strikingly large and strongly prickly, making a splendid rosette, and the heads look disproportionally big. The florets are a gorgeous deep purple which contrasts attractively with the woolly pale involucre (Photo 2).

However, it has never been a candidate for the Scottish Thistle. Of course, it is not a Scottish native but neither is Cotton Thistle (*Onoporde acanthe*), so often called Scotch Thistle; see Dickson and Walker The *Glasgow Naturalist* 20, 101-121, 1981.

From the car park to the summit there is a lack of habitat diversity with, for

instance, no running water and no shady places. We saw very few mosses. There is a good variety of colourful flowering plants in the pasture while the cliff, inaccessible from the top, may well support some unusual plants but, peering cautiously over the edge, we could see none of special note.

During the evening of 5th August there was another thunderstorm again with hail but not tennis ball size merely somewhat less than table tennis balls but scarily impressive nonetheless as we watched them bouncing off cars parked at our B&B.

Jim Dickson and Geneviève Lécrivain

GNHS Christmas Social, Tuesday 11th December 2012

This year Council has decided to hold the Christmas Social once again in the Museum in the Graham Kerr Building, with the talk in lecture theatre 2.
To keep costs down, instead of caterers, we are trying a "bring a dish" formula. Everyone brings enough savoury or sweet food for at least two servings (for example, couples can bring four servings of one dish.) The food is laid out, and everyone can have a taste of any dishes they choose. No good at cooking, or run out of time with all the arrangements for Christmas? – no problem, just buy cakes or cold meat!
As the kitchen facilities are limited, it would be best to choose dishes which can be served cold. Although there will be no charge for the evening, it is essential to let me know if you intend to come, so that we can set out the right number of tables and chairs. It would also be most helpful if you can let me know what type of dish you intend to bring, e.g. savoury, salad or sweet.

Please fill in the form overleaf and return it to me by the November 28th meeting,

GNHS Christmas Dinner – 7.00 for 7.30pm, Tue 11th Decembr 2012

Bookable *as soon as possible please* by sending the form below to Janet Palmar

Name(s) (please print) ……

Address……

……

Phone no……

Cheque enclosed for £……

I/we intend to bring (describe type of food - savoury, salad or sweet)

..... for ..... people