

Dundee Naturalists' Society

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1977-78

No 2

DUNDEE NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Annual Bulletin 1977-78

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EDITORIAL

Bulletin number two spans yet another successful year for the society. As you will see from the following reports and items, a host of exciting and new places were visited and wonderfully illustrated lectures enjoyed during the winter session.

Last year's bulletin seems to have been a success, but as was said then, this is your medium for comments and news, so please let me have any such information for inclusion in next year's bulletin.

Some interesting reports have been sent to me this year and a precis of these is given below.

Badgers were seen regularly within 12 miles of Dundee.

Red Deer were seen and heard rutting in Glen Esk during October.

Deadly Nightshade Atropa bella-donna was recorded near the City Centre this year. This is the only known station for this plant in Angus.

Other plant rarities of our area were re-visited by members during the summer months, these include, Twinflower Linnaea borealis, Yellow Bird's Nest Monotropa hypopitys, Alpine Snow-Thistle Cicerbita alpina, Pyrenean Columbine Aquilegia pyrenaica, Birdsnest Orchid Neottia nidus-avis, Herb Paris Paris quadrifolia, to name but a few.

Details of unusual bird sightings are covered in an article towards the end of the bulletin.

SUMMER OUTINGS

23 April — College Mill Trout and Heath Farms

Under the leadership of Jay Andrew, thirtysix members joined in the first outing of the season, when we visited the Trout Farm in the village of Almondbank.

Mr Brien jun showed us how trout are raised commercially for stocking the rivers and lochs of Scotland.

From there we went on to the Heath Farm managed by Mr Brien Snr where we were instructed in hybridising of heaths which have been collected from all over Europe.

After a scenic journey through the Sma' Glen, we visited Balnaguard Glen Reserve, then called at Loch of Lowes for a brief visit before returning home. Altogether a most interesting and enjoyable outing to start our 1977 summer season.

7 May — Lomond Walk

A rather cool and blustery day did not deter the large number of naturalists who set out, led by Miss Dryburgh and Mrs McClure, to climb both the east and west Lomonds.

The gale force winds at the top caused many moments of hilarity as various members battled, on their hands and knees, with the elements. However the magnificent views over Fife and the

Firth of Forth, more than compensated for any such minor discomforts. An excellent tea was then enjoyed in the comfort and warmth of the Lomond Hotel at Freuchie.

A large plant and bird list was amassed during the walk including many spring flowering plants and a Lesser Redpoll.

10 May — Branklin Gardens Perth

This, our first evening excursion of the summer, attracted a large turnout. The gardens, which although known by most of the members but hitherto unvisited, proved a real eyeopener both in their size and the variety of plants to be seen. Miss Halley was on hand to put names to many of the rock plants which originated from countries as far afield as Nepal and New Zealand. A large selection of our native and more familiar plants were also to be seen.

17 May — Earth-house, Dovecot and Stone Circle, Tealing

Tealing was the venue for this year's archaeological outing when Liz Thoms was again our guide. Liz, as always, had a way of making all three sites visited 'come to life' with her vast knowledge and her obvious enthusiasm for her subject.

At the stone circle north of Tealing the large number of Naturalists present were supplemented by a herd of curious cows who, alas, appeared to be more interested in us than in Miss Thoms' explanation as to the stones' possible origins.

20 - 22 May — Weekend to Kingussie

Kingussie was the 1977 venue for the now annual spring weekend. A 5 00pm start from Dundee enabled us to arrive at the hotel in time for a supper which was followed by an introductory talk with slides, by Mr Douglas Weir who was to prove to be an excellent guide throughout the weekend.

On Saturday morning we visited The Pass of Ryvoan, near Glen More Lodge, which is a new reserve containing some native Scots Pine and Willow woodland. During the afternoon we had a chance to see the Loch Gorton Ospreys and also to walk through a part of the old Caledonian Pine Forest adjoining Loch Mallachie.

Sunday saw some of the more energetic members of the party up at 4 00am to view the Blackcock lecking on the nearby golf course. After breakfast we were all taken to see a Peregrine Falcon eyrie near Aviemore, and were delighted to get a view of both male and female birds. The rest of the day was taken up by a walk in the spring sunshine through part of the huge Rothiemurchus Forest ending at Loch an Eilein, where, as you will have no doubt heard, the naturalists played a major part in putting out a forest fire, which, had we not been there, would have undoubtedly spread over a large area. A letter concerning this event was received from the land owner expressing his thanks, and this was read out to members at 'Members Night'.

Plant, bird and insect lists are, as usual, available for anyone interested.

11 June — Ben Vrackie

Wind and rain were our companions as we arrived at Moulin to start our climb up Ben Vrackie. The fifty or so members present however were all well clad to face the elements.

This was our first joint outing with the Perthshire Naturalists and many friendships and contacts were established.

By lunchtime the weather had cheered up considerably and the many plant specialities of the area were soon spotted. These included Purple Mountain Milk-vetch Oxytropis halleri and Alpine Milk-vetch Astragalus alpinus. The rare Brown Bog-rush Schoenus ferrugineus was also seen by many of the party before they returned to Pitlochry for tea.

14 June — Tullybaccart — Lundie Craggs

This outing was originally planned to enable us to see the many orchids which are to be found near Tullybaccart. Unfortunately due to cold winter the flowering time for these plants was held back resulting in a poor show of flowers.

Instead we went on a walk round Lairds Loch which proved an excellent substitute on such a pleasant evening.

Among the many plants seen were Common Wintergreen, Pyrola minor, Bogbean Menyanthes trifoliata, and Chickweed Wintergreen Trientalis europaea which is surprisingly neither a Chickweed nor a Wintergreen, but is in fact a member of the Primrose family.

The walk round the loch was then followed by a short walk towards the Lundie Craggs.

18 June — May Isle and Fisheries Museum, Anstruther

The forenoon of the 18 June saw over seventy members visiting the Scottish Fisheries Museum at Anstruther and finding much to interest them. The children enjoyed the low-level aquarium where they could almost touch the crabs, anemones, blennies, etc. The adults spent a lot of time in the Net Loft and Fisher Family Room where all manner of interesting bygonies were effectively displayed.

After lunch in the sun warmed courtyard we set sail for the Isle of May in a fleet of three boats and once ashore members quickly dispersed to make full use of the time available. The sea cliffs were the greatest attraction with superb views of guillemots, razorbills, puffins, kittiwakes, and fulmars. Amongst the grassy tussocks the patient could sit and watch baby herring gulls and black-headed gulls struggle from their eggs. Eider ducks sat close by on their nests surrounded by gardens of pink thrift and white sea campion.

Before re-embarkation we had time to examine the collection of star fish, anemones, sea urchins and sea weeds brought up from deeper water by the aqua lung divers in the party.

25 June — Glen Esk

The walk started at Invermark Castle and our route followed the shores of Loch Lee before we stopped for lunch at the foot of the Falls of Unich. The party then split up, with some members returning the way they had come, while the others climbed up the Falls of Unich and the Falls of Damff to return to the loch side by way of the Shank of Inchgrundle.

The Falls of Unich have for long been a favoured haunt for botanists as the soil is of a type most suited to alpine type flora. Aply led by Joan Thomson many such alpines were seen, including Moss Campion Silene acaulis, Roseroot Sedum rosea, Alpine Meadow-rue Thalictrum alpinum, and many more.

The Angus orchid survey also received a boost when new sites for four species were recorded, these being Heath Spotted Orchid Dactylorhiza maculata spp. ericetorum, Fragrant or Scented Orchid Gymnadenia conopsea, Early Purple Orchid Orchis mascula and Lesser Twayblade Listera cordata.

The day was then nicely rounded off by a grand high tea at the Central Hotel at Edzell.

9 July — Balgavies Loch and Lunan Bay

This was the first visit, by the society, to the newly acquired Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve, Balgavies Loch, east of Forfar.

We were treated to a glorious summer day and did a circuit of the loch under the expert leadership of Mr Adam Ritchie.

Many birds and plants were recorded during the day, and included, on the bird side, Heron, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck and Redpoll plus many more. Among the many plants identified

the more unusual included Giant Bellflower Campanula latifolia, Tufted Loosestrife Lysimachia thysiflora, and Monks Rhubarb Rumex alpinus, the latter being an introduced plant; the large leaves were used in earlier times to wrap the freshly churned butter at the farmhouse dairy.

The other half of the day was used to study the plants of the raised dune habitat at Lunan Bay. The children of the party taking full advantage of sea and sand on such a sunny summer's day.

20 August — Kingsbarns to Fife Ness

Fife Ness was the first of two visits to the Fife coast we were to enjoy this year. The weather again was in our favour, as after a wet few days, the Saturday dawned fair and the sun was to shine for us later in the day.

Jim Cook was on hand to show us yet another facet of his ability by showing his great knowledge of marine biology when we were all to learn much about seaweeds, shells, and marine animals of all kinds.

This sort of outing particularly interested the children of the party, who were in their element, near water and sand.

The walk to Crail which followed, yielded many interesting plants including Scots Lovage Ligusticum scoticum and Goatsbeard Tragopogon pratensis to name but two.

27 August — Kincaig Cliffs - Shell Bay

This year's combined outing with Edinburgh Natural History Society was from Kincaig Cliffs to Shell Bay and once again we were favoured with beautiful weather.

The choice of area proved to be one that catered for all interests, being rich in bird life and plant species. Of the latter the one which created the greatest excitement, was the Duke of Argyll's tea plant.

Our leader, Lt Cdr Spragge, provided us with some fascinating details of the geology of the area. As an added bonus, many fine views over the Firth of Forth to the Bass Rock, Berwick Law etc. were enjoyed by all.

10 September — Craig a Barns, Dunkeld

Craig a Barns is an area of wooded hills just north from Dunkeld with the occasional loch to add to beauty of this part of highland Scotland.

Adam Ritchie led us firstly to the 'rocking stone' which, much to the disappointment of our younger members, unfortunately didn't rock. We then continued, after lunch, on our round trip via Rotmell Loch and Mill Dam spotting on the way, Fallow Deer, Capercaillie and numerous late flowering plants and fungi.

This part of the country is a maze of tracks and paths which lends itself to many future walks in this area.

15 October — Tentsmuir Fungus Foray

How good it is to have an expert with the party when looking at fungi. Dr Old surely falls into this category, for as soon as we had arrived at the Tentsmuir car park, he was kept busy identifying all shapes and sizes of mushrooms and toadstools. In fact it was a good 45mins until we were out of sight of the bus, such was the enthusiasm of the forty or so members present.

As a follow-up to this outing Jim Cook has prepared a sheet which gives simple points to look for to enable the main genera of fungi to be identified.

This sheet is, as usual, available at any of the outings or meetings.

WINTER PROGRAMME 1977-78

11 October — The Heyday of the Scottish Herring Fleet, Miss Mary Murray

The opening talk of the winter programme was given by Miss Mary Murray who spoke on the Scottish Herring Fleet.

In a wide ranging talk, she covered the history and the customs of the fisher folk. She also spoke of the fish and their habits and the great shoals they would make, as big as Dundee itself. Sadly for the present, over fishing has changed this.

25 October — Members' Night

Members' night lived up to its reputation of giving an excellent far travelled night's viewing. Scotland which included Isle of May, Ben Vrackie and Isle of Sandy began the evening. We continued with visits to Corfu, Switzerland, Denmark and down to the Antarctic. Slides of lighter moments on the summer outings as well as the members fighting the forest fire at Røthiemurchus were also shown. Mr Brian Allan compered the meeting.

8 November — Over the Atlas Mountains, Mr Richard Brinklow

Mr Brinklow, one of our council members and a member of the museum staff, delighted us with an illustrated talk on a recent holiday he and his wife enjoyed in Morocco.

The most striking revelation from the talk was that Morocco is such a land of contrast. The myth that it is a land of endless, dry, flat desert was quickly scotched when Richard described moving from one camping site in such a desert to another camp above the snowline of the Atlas Mountain Range.

The diverse flora to be found in the changing landscape was ably described and illustrated and among many excellent slides shown, the ones that spring to mind as being exceptional are, *Ophrys speculum*, *Ranunculus calandrinoides* and the rare *Cynomorium coccineum*.

12 November — Vane Farm, RSPB Reserve, Loch Leven

Such is the enthusiasm of members, that the 1977 programme of outings extended into November with a well attended visit to the RSPB Reserve at Vane Farm, Loch Leven. In spite of a very chilly wind the bright sunshine tempted most people to stroll along the shore of the loch observing the many species of wild fowl as they went. Back at the Reserve Centre, the ducks and geese could be studied at close quarters through the high-powered binoculars provided in the observation room, and even the novices amongst us were soon identifying the different species with the help of the various identification aids which abound at the Centre.

Another attraction at the Reserve is the well planned nature trail which winds around Vane Hill, and what a wealth of interesting things were still to be seen in November - trees, grasses, fungi, lichens, ferns, mosses and liverworts.

Thanks go to the Warden for his co-operation in making this outing a very successful conclusion to our 1977 season.

22 November — The History and Conservation of Wild Life in Angus, Dr H A P Ingram

Hugh Ingram is of course no stranger to the Dundee Naturalists' Society, and his talk was looked forward to by many members who had heard his previous lectures.

His talk this time concentrated on wildlife conservation and we were shown the development of the Angus area through the ice ages to the present day, with slides illustrating the few sites left which give us some idea of the tree covered terrain which once extended over Angus.

This transition is known to have taken place by the study of peat samples by Dr Ingram and others when the pollen from the trees living in these ancient times is found preserved in the peat and can be identified.

6 December — Kindrogan to St Kilda, Mr Brian S Brookes

Mr Brian Brookes fascinated his audience with a superb set of photographic slides during his talk on Kindrogan to St Kilda. Starting with a description of Kindrogan - his home base - and the surrounding scenery, he conducted us over Scotland to the Western Isles, at the same time stopping at points on his verbal route to expound on the geology and botany of the region.

He forcefully brought home to the society the destruction that can take place due to man's activities and the consequent importance of well thought-out conservation measures.

10 January — DNS Talk: Insh Marshes Nature Reserve, Russell Leavett, Warden

The Insh Marshes RSPB Reserve must be one of the most impressive stretches of wetland in Scotland, with its Loch and collection of smaller ponds, the River Spey, and the associated reed swamp, wet meadow and damp woodland. Mr Leavett, with the aid of some fine aerial colour slides, illustrated the variety and distribution of this habitat within the reserve.

In an age very conscious of the pressures on and threats to our dwindling wetland habitats, it is reassuring to know that conservation bodies like the RSPB have secured places like the Insh Marshes in which wildlife receives full protection. Mr Leavett explained how the Reserve was actively managed to maintain the widest variety, not only of bird life of course, but of vegetation types and other animal life on which the birds are dependant.

The exhibition consisted of a selection of bird study skins illustrating some of the species which breed in or visit the Insh Marshes.

24 January — Spring Flowers in Crete, Mrs Joan Thomson, Mr and Mrs Adam Ritchie, Mr and Mrs Trevor Woodford, Mr Jim Cook and Mr Brian Allan

A spectacular show on the spring flowers of Crete was presented by seven of our own members who were all plant hunting in Crete at the same time in the spring of 1977. Some, armed with fore knowledge, were scanning the island for endemic species, another concentrated on his special field of orchids, yet another was enchanted by the wayside flowers and the fields carpeted with tulips and gladioli before the ploughing. All were impressed by spiny adaptations for survival.

Our explorers combined to provide us with a broad and fascinating picture of the character of Crete through their slides, commentaries and display. Their success should encourage others to follow their methods of thorough preparation. By referring to the literature and consulting others who had been before they chose a date likely to be productive and sites worth searching. They took suitable reference books and continued their identification work after their return. They then rigorously selected from their slide collections to present us with a balanced and high quality programme. We hope for more in this style in future.

7 February — Plant Hunting in the Maritime Alps — Mr Henry Taylor

Mr Taylor showed a superb collection of colour slides taken on three camping holidays to the south western part of the Alps where Switzerland, Italy and France meet. The region is a marvellous area for plant hunting because it contains many different types of rock and because there are good roads leading high into the mountains, and you can see some very attractive flowers without having to stray far from the car. Nevertheless, Henry Taylor's pictures clearly showed that he and his family spent little time in their car.

In the Cottian Alps they traversed the Col de la Bonette, 9122ft, the highest pass in Europe and camped in the mountains near such rarities as Primula marginata a blue flowered form of primrose, with white margins to the leaves, found only in the Western Alps and Ranunculus glacialis which is found up to 14,000 ft, higher than any other flowering plant in Europe.

Mr Taylor concluded his talk by recommending everyone interested in plants to visit the Maritime Alps. I'm sure that his advice will be heeded.

21 February 'The Marine Biology of Orkney', Dr Alan Jones

Dr Jones first set the scene in geographical terms with the aid of some excellent aerial views and then went on to describe the unique environment of Scapa Flow, where the sheltered and stable conditions have enabled a great diversity of marine flora and fauna to develop. We were then introduced to a selection of the sometimes bizarre, but often beautiful plants and animals that thrive around these islands, including that fascinating little green sea slug Elysia viridis. This animal is able to extract, without damaging them, chloroplasts from the algae on which it feeds. The chloroplasts continue to photosynthesise for a period of time, thus providing a further source of food.

The talk concluded with Dr Jones masterfully unravelling some of the complex interactions between the islanders, the recent rapid development of oil related activities and the local marine environment.

7 March - A Wildlife Photographer's Year, Mr M Wilkes and Mr M D Fitzgerald

The now traditional joint meeting between the Society and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, attracted the largest turnout of the winter with the large gallery bursting at the seams with over 120 in the audience. The large crowd was not disappointed, as the slides Mr Wilkes showed were of exceptional quality and together with Mr Fitzgerald's humorous commentary, both combined to show the delights of the wildlife of the Shakespeare country.

Although the birds, mammals, and reptiles shown were in the main, common species, the excellence of the photography was such that even the humble starling was depicted in a completely new light.

MORE THAN JUST NAMES ON THE SYLLABUS

Our Society constitution has always laid down that our office bearers be headed by an Honorary President and two Honorary Vice Presidents. Perhaps some of our newer members may not be fully informed of the role fulfilled by these office bearers today.

As a Society, we are privileged indeed to have as our Honorary President Professor D Rutherford Dow. It is many years now since Professor Dow retired as Professor of Anatomy at Dundee, and Master of University College, Dundee. Now aged over ninety, he lives at Crail, and still takes an active interest in the affairs of the Dundee Naturalists' Society. He has generously donated to our funds, and was one of the first of our members to purchase our new badge. In a recent letter to our secretary he says - 'It is most gratifying that the attendances have been so good, and the talks interesting and informative.' We wish him continuing happiness in his retirement.

Mr J D Boyd, currently our only Honorary Vice-President, is too well known as Curator of the Dundee Museums and Art Galleries to require any biographical note here. His interest in, and support of, the Dundee Naturalists' represents a major contribution to the Society's well-being. Two of his staff are members of our council and others have addressed our meetings. Our winter meetings are of course held in the Art Gallery building and all facilities are provided for us, lighting, heating, even a public address system.

The name of Dr John Berry CBE, will again appear on the 1978 Summer Syllabus, against a date when Society members are once more invited to visit Tayfield, at Newport on Tay. Dr Berry is a former director of the Nature Conservancy in Scotland, and is currently President of the Fife and Kinross Branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. His estate at Tayfield contains a notable collection of wild fowl and fish species. Dr Berry's interests are wide ranging. He was at one time, for example, responsible for Nature Conservancy work on St Kilda. The Berry Family have had a long association with our Society, an association which is today being continued by Dr and Mrs Berry in that spirit of welcome and friendliness which we have come to know so well.

OUR SECRETARIES

Who gets things going in our society? Gets the programme printed, arranges winter speakers, have the coaches for our summer outings waiting for us at the right place at the right time? Well, of course, it's our Secretaries - Mrs Betty McLure our society secretary and Miss Dorothy Fyffe (assisted by Mrs Vi Stott) our excursion secretary. They do all that and a whole heap more. But despite all this work, they are always ready to help, with a cheerful smile and with the friendliest of manner. Long may they continue in office.

MR A R PHILIP

As you know, Bob Philip is due to step down after his three years as president. During these years, in office, he has scarcely missed an outing or meeting, a record to be proud of.

The great work done by Mrs Leitch prior to Bob's election, has not only been continued, but has been accelerated and consolidated. This has resulted in a strong, friendly, active group made up of all age groups, all sharing the same common interest, natural history.

I know you will all wish to join me in thanking Bob for the work he has done during the last three years and I feel sure that Bob will continue to work wholeheartedly for the advancement and benefit of the society.

MY FAVOURITE OUTING

by Veronica Liebscher (age 14)

We asked one of our younger members to write a short article about her favourite outing from the 1977 summer programme, and here is her reply. As you will see this is a most refreshing indication of the happy atmosphere to be found on all of our excursions.

"It's very hard to choose which of the Summer Excursions I enjoyed most this year. In fact I liked them all and looking back each one meant something to me.

For example, swimming, sending bottle messages and finding an oar at Lunan Bay, finding birds with rings on the Isle of May and freezing to death on Ben Vrackie.

But of them all I enjoyed Craig a Barns, Dunkeld most. My friends Rosemary, and her sister Patricia, were there. Apart from throwing Fir cones at Brian Allan we threw cones at each other, lost my parents, blew bubbles from soapy water and other silly things.

There was a dead deer in the forest near where we ate our much needed lunch. Somebody had stuck a stick through it, however we don't know how it died.

On the way back we went by another path and left half the party behind. So Rosemary and I spent ten minutes standing on the top of a nearby hill yodelling in an attempt to find my parents. Meanwhile they were collecting edible toadstools by the ton.

When we got home we washed them and cut them up. We dried some and ate the rest straight away. They went all slimy when we cooked them and started to slide around the pan like jelly. Nevertheless, they were quite good and to everybody's surprise we are still alive ... we think."

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETIES IN DUNDEE

A paper entitled 'The Flora of the Dundee District', prepared by Professor R J D Graham for the Dundee meeting in 1939 of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, reveals some interesting facts about Natural History Society activity in Dundee. At one time or another since 1828 there have been 5 Natural History Societies. Of these 5, only our own Dundee Naturalists' Society (founded in 1874 and with a membership of 154 in 1889)

is still in existence. Those societies now defunct were:—

The Gleaners of Nature (1828-1835) which was founded by William Gardiner, the well-known author of 'The Flora of Forfarshire'

The Dundee Naturalists' Association (1847-1849)

The Dundee Naturalists' Field Club (1868-1884)

The Dundee Working Men's Field Club (1885-1910)

These early naturalists were very active in searching out, collecting and recording the local flora, as anyone who has seen the museum herbarium collection will know. The author of the above article speaks of 'the organised and devoted efforts of the Natural History Societies situated in the area. These workers laid the foundations of our knowledge of the flora, and it is very right and proper that tribute be paid to their excellent work and that the lasting debt be acknowledged.

The article also lists the most noteworthy plants to be found at various local sites, and it might be a worthwhile exercise to check, either from our existing lists of plants for specific sites or from a special visit, whether the same plants continue to flourish at the locations mentioned.

MY GARDEN

by Margaret Philip

A species list — what a good idea. There is a great sense of achievement in coming back from a Naturalists' outing, and realising how many flowering plants have been identified.

If only I could name them all myself. 'Use a key' say the experts, but I take so long. Practise at home would help, but I must obey that important rule to leave the flowers for others to enjoy.

There was a scarlet pimpernel in my own garden, it seemed too pretty to remove, so if I hunted around maybe I would find one or two more 'wild flowers'. At first I was ashamed as my list grew longer, but once past twenty and I detected a change. Now I was growing rather proud of my 'wild garden', and the discoveries I made as I 'keyed' them out. Willowherb had been a pest to be torn out as quickly as possible, but when looked at under a lens, there little differences were revealed, and I felt almost friendly to my three different species.

My list finally reached thirty five, but I must admit I couldn't regard them all with equal affection. The bitter-cress was making a strong bid to cover my flower beds, and the sticky willy and bindweed were chocking my climbing roses, but perhaps the bramble would produce some fruit if left. The fat hen and sow-thistle were not decorative, but the delicate leaves of the fumitory had a certain charm. It seemed unkind to stop the rampaging spread of the pretty spurge, when the lens had revealed its strange world of petalless flowers and glands. Did the tiny flowers of pearlwort and speedwell, not brighten the lawn?

So now my dilemma. Do I weed and stop listing - or do I allow my 'wild plants' to take over? Perhaps there is room for both in a naturalist's garden.

WILLIAM GARDINER

William Gardiner is probably the best known botanist ever to study the flora of our area. He was born on 13 July 1808 at the West Port, Dundee and from an early age he showed a great interest in natural history which was encouraged by his father and an uncle, themselves both enthusiastic botanists. He became an apprentice to an umbrella-maker and worked in the Overgate, botanising the hills and glens of Forfarshire during the summer months, until in 1844 he devoted his time entirely to the pursuit of wild plants.

He became more and more well known as a botanist at home and abroad and in 1838 the Botanical Society of Edinburgh elected him an Associate. After many small written works had been published his greatest work, 'the Flora of Forfarshire', was published in 1848. This was the result of many

years of field botany which he carried out with much vigour throughout Angus. (Forfarshire as it was then known.) In 1849 he was honoured by the Linnæan Society but a planned book on the Zoology of Forfarshire was never produced. On 21 June 1852 he died of typhus fever and was buried in the Howff graveyard, Dundee.

He was a great sentimentalist, devoted to his wife Elizabeth and he would often write letters and poems to her while he was away plant collecting. His book 'The Flora of Forfarshire' is also filled with poems written while alone in the hills and glens.

A few of these poems are reproduced below and their words surely show a man of deep sincerity whose only loves in the world were his family and the plants that were to be his life's work.

From a letter to his wife Eliza:

This little mountain daisy
I enclose from off a sod
Where many a simple shepherd hath
Off with his true love trod.

I send it as an emblem
Of single-hearted love,
And trust, though, mute, its eloquence
Will kindred feelings move.

Dedicated to the 'bonny wild thyme' as Gardiner called it.

"There's not a heath, however rude,
But hath some little flower,
To brighten up its solitude,
And scent the evening hour.

There's not a heart, however cast,
By grief and sorrow down,
But hath some memory of the past,
To love and call its own."

The Maiden Pink Dianthus deltoides

Upon the Red-Heads dizzy brink
The Maiden Pink doth take her stand,
Like some fair nymph, whose ardent eye
Looks forth upon the ocean bland.

'Tis summer, and the gentle waves
Flow smoothly on towards the shore;
And that fair maiden looks and hopes,
And sighs, for him she doth adore.

BATS

by Iain Buik

'Bats ... oh how I hate them, they're horrible'

'A bat survey, you must be joking?'

These are some of the things that people have said to me recently. (Or words to that effect)

Don't worry, there is nothing hard to do, all the information I need is a very simple note saying where and when you have seen bats. (It does not matter if you know the species or not, as long as the site is noted.)

I am, in fact, going to produce a new information sheet next year, which will give a more detailed account of bat distribution in this area. It is also hoped to continue this work for many years to come. Over the past year I have been busy roaming the city and the surrounding countryside, looking for bats. I've had very good results so far but by recruiting people to send me reports of bats I hope to find more colonies, so if anyone has any such information, no matter how small it is, I'd be most grateful.

I hope to arrange a small outing to a bat colony in the near future but I have to know, in advance, how many people would be interested in coming, so that I could select a small colony which would not be too easily disturbed.

So in the meantime happy bat spotting and keep those records coming.

ROADSIDE VERGE SURVEY

The Dundee Naturalists' Society in conjunction with the Dundee and Angus branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, have undertaken to carry out a survey of the roadside verges in Dundee and Angus.

The survey will be split into two parts. Firstly a random survey will be completed which will give us a general baseline which can be used to classify a verge as being of unusual high quality or not. Secondly a survey will be carried out of areas of verges known to be of special interest or with a high plant species number.

The results of these surveys will enable us to perhaps persuade the Regional Council: to take better care of these areas of high quality and initiate a programme of verge management which will be in the best interests of all parties.

This survey work is being co-ordinated for the Society and the SWT by Brian Allan and should anyone be interested in helping with either survey or if you know of a verge of particular richness or a verge having an unusual species among its plant community, please contact Mr Allan at 18 Grangehill Drive, Monifieth telephone 3132.

TAR-SPOT DISEASE SURVEY

The lichen survey of air pollution levels in and around Dundee during the winter of 1976-77, suggested that other plants may be similarly affected by air pollution by noxious sulphur dioxide fumes. Accordingly, last autumn, about fifteen members of the society co-operated to survey the distribution of tar-spot disease on sycamore leaves. The fungus responsible causes shiny black tar-like spots to appear late in the season only on sycamore leaves. By surveying the distribution of infected or uninfected trees in the Dundee area we hoped to be able to draw a map to show that in the city, where the air pollution levels might be highest, the disease is inhibited but that it is still prevalent out in the country where sulphur dioxide air pollution is much less. The map that resulted showed this effect and resembled, in general pattern, the lichen survey map.

BIRD NEWS

by Brian Allan (Editor)

Of among the more unusual bird sightings recorded this year, the following are perhaps the most interesting.

Lapland Buntings at Carnoustie, Hawfinches at Ninewells and near Perth. Buff-breasted Sandpipers were spotted at Fife Ness and on May Isle a Bluethroat was seen just as a SOC party were boarding to leave the island. Two Great Grey Shrikes have also been spotted, one at Backwater on 13 November and another at Arbroath on 8 October. A Spotted Redshank was seen at Montrose Basin and a Ruff at Carnoustie.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the very many people who have contributed to this year's bulletin by reporting on the summer outings, the winter meetings and also supplying the many articles we have incorporated this year.