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ALASTAIR BENNET - AN APPRECIATION

The Society was saddened at the untimely death of Dr. Alastair Bennet on 6th May 1983.

Alastair, haematologist working at Ninewells Hospital, was attracted to the Society by a lecture on fungi, given by an old friend, Dr. Roy Watling from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. After attending his talk to the Society in early 1977, he joined the "Nats." Thereafter, he became an enthusiastic regular attender of both the indoor meetings and summer excursions, usually accompanied by his wife Jean and one of his sons Neil. He was elected a Council Member in 1981 and served until he died.

He showed a keen interest in all branches of natural history but had a particular passion for mosses and liverworts. He gladly imparted his specialist knowledge of this difficult group of plants to members of the Society on excursions and also, because of the interest created, he ran a series of informal laboratory sessions at Ninewells to aid identification.

His interest in sub-aqua diving, connected with his profession as a blood physiologist, opened up another dimension for natural history pursuits - marine biology. As well as showing to members photographs taken of underwater wildlife, he organised local sub-aqua divers along to sea-shore excursions to "fish up" specimens of marine-life that would otherwise have not been seen.

We shall all of us miss him but will retain fond memories of his quiet, genial manner and his infectious enthusiasm for natural history.

Adam B Ritchie
President

MR. A. NEIL MILNE

A sad loss to the Society was the death on December 19 of Mr. A. Neil Milne. A retired Dundee headmaster, Mr. Milne was 81, but continued his great interest in the Society until his illness.

In 1975 he carried out a vegetation survey of Barry Links for the Nature Conservancy Council, a task which entailed many weeks of observations over the miles of dunes and bents. He took part in many botanical surveys, particularly in the Glenesk region, and assisted in the Society's recent surveys of roadside verges and lichens. His friendship and helpfulness will be greatly missed.

Mr. Milne is survived by his wife Jessie and his son Adrian, head teacher of Clepington School. His other son Nigel was killed in a climbing accident in 1960.

ACTIVITIES GROUP

The natural history survey group has been very active in the past year. At least one person from the group was busy every week and at some meetings up to 15 stalwarts turned out.

The programme was divided into two main sections:

- A. Those long running surveys which are continued from year to year, and
- B. Short-term projects that could be finished within one season.

In category A. are:

The church-yard survey
The wildlife sites survey
The *Allium paradoxum* survey

and in B. :

Camperdown Park Project
Motor Cycles in the Countryside Assessment
Bat watch
Moth trapping

As reported in the bulletin last year, the active group spent a considerable amount of time, money and effort surveying the church-yards and cemeteries of Angus as part of a national BSBI effort. The purpose was to assess their actual or potential value for wildlife. In fact, most are very well kept and provide little wildlife interest. The most interesting group of church-yards, however, are the ones along the coastline which contain, even if closely mown, an almost relict sand dune pasture flora. Several other church or grave yards of wildlife value were also identified.

The activities this year consisted largely of attempting to complete the survey, as far as physically possible. The main activities focussed on sites in Glen Esk and in the north-eastern area of vice-county 90. No more church-yards of special interest were identified.

The wildlife sites survey is likely to continue almost for ever. Over 200 sites of varying sizes and degrees of wildlife interest or value have been recorded so far. Small areas of interest are still being found and a few are being lost. Each site should be visited a number of times, at all seasons of the year, and fully recorded. Areas visited were Glen Esk, Glen Prosen, Finavon Hill, Boddin Point to Scurdyness, the Sidlaws and several areas around Dundee. Unfortunately the very wet spring affected early recording. A late (and last) visit was made to Invergowrie Loan, one of the most varied and interesting botanical sites around Dundee. It is now excavated prior to being covered by the new main road to Perth.

The few-flowered Leek (*Allium paradoxum*) fieldwork has been carried out in an attempt to discover the abundance of the species and if it is increasing its distribution. The plant is localised in the coastal strip between Arbirlot (just south-west of Arbroath) and Monifieth to east of Dundee. Only a few small clumps are known elsewhere, and none north of Arbroath or in any of the main river valleys.

There are two favoured habitats: damp woodlands, especially beside streams and along roadside verges. In suitable damp woodlands it is very abundant, particularly in the Carnoustie area, and can be found beside almost every small stream in the coastal strip mentioned. It appears to be spreading along roadside verges and many isolated clumps can be found along verges in the area. The principal means of dispersal of the bulbils appear to be water, possibly small animals, and human agency - particularly motor vehicles and maybe even roadside grass-cutters.

Any information on the distribution of this plant would be most welcome.

The Camperdown Park Project was to survey the area and make proposals for a suitable nature trail or trails. A total of 7 visits were made during the year and 3 trails proposed. The main trail is to follow the current gravelled track (with some improvements) in the north-west corner, a long trail is to follow the path right round the whole southern half of the park and the third, overlapping, trail is to concentrate on the woodland area in the southwest corner.

An urgent project this past year was to monitor the activities of cross-country motor cycle riders in areas of wildlife interest. This work was carried out on behalf of the Scientific Sub-Committee of the Dundee and Angus branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Three sites were visited: Carlingheuch, Petterden and Elliott Links. The latter two were surveyed in detail. Petterden, formerly a quiet spot with nesting birds and a moderate flora, has been much churned up and some parts have been obliterated. However, the concensus of opinion seems to be that it is better to restrict motor-cycle activity to selected sites and, if necessary, sacrifice a few low-grade ones. Elliott links, on the other hand, is of very considerable wildlife value and also is sensitive and easily damaged. However, measures taken to discourage bike riding there have been fairly successful and the damage hasn't got much worse since last winter.

Stimulated by the 12-species record card, a few members looked at a number of sites around Dundee - and were successful in a few. These include Carnoustie, some parts of Dundee, Monikie, Crombie and Barry-Buddon.

Mr. A. Garside of Dundee Museum was out on a number of occasions with his light-traps for moths. A small band of hardy enthusiasts accompanied him to such sites as Barry-Buddon, Crombie and Tullybaccart. The better weather of our (glorious!) summer certainly helped.

Unfortunately, with the delays brought on by the poor weather in the spring and with problems with the recording format the trial woodland survey did not take place. However, the organisers hope to have the problems sorted out for Spring '84 and, weather permitting, the survey will be run then.

I would like to thank all the dedicated surveyors and "activists" who took part in the field work programme. Without them the work would be impossible. I am most grateful.

J.K. Cook

SITUATION VACANT

WANTED: A person to take over organisation of Wednesday afternoon excursions. Several such buses have been run, to such places as Alyth Den, Kinnordy bird reserve, Caddam Woods, and the Fife coast path. Members and friends who are unable to join in our Saturday outings have been able to enjoy these Wednesday explorations. Any volunteers for the job of organiser?

WATCH THESE FOOTPATHS!

On our Naturalists' walk from Glen Fincastle to Blair Atholl on 16th July members found that they had to clamber over a barbed wire fence before crossing the new A9, then climb another fence before reaching the Garry footbridge. I wrote the Rights-of-Way Society, of which I am a member, and was told that this route should not have been obstructed. The road authority's explanation was that no objection had been raised in Blair Atholl. The Rights-of-Way Society pursued the matter further and have now told me that the route has been asserted as a right-of-way, with the agreement of the landowners and the Nature Conservancy Council (the path passes through a site of special scientific interest). Footpath direction signs are to be erected and pedestrian crossing facilities provided over the bypass at Garrybank

The Rights-of-Way Society is investigating other hill roads from Blair Atholl and Old Struan to Tressait via Loch Bhac, and appeals to members of Dundee Naturalists' Society, who may be able to give a statement in that connection.

Robert McLeod

TELEPHONE LINK

The Dundee group of Friends of the Earth (Scotland) has compiled a list of contacts in most of the conservation, amenity and wildlife organisations in Dundee and Angus, in the hope of pooling knowledge and enthusiasm, particularly where a rapid response to environmentally damaging developments is required. Copies are being distributed to all those included and to other interested parties, but the success of any such project depends on use being made of it, and individual members of the Naturalists' Society and the other organisations can play an important role in reporting and monitoring changes. At least one threatened wildlife habitat near Dundee was saved initially by a few telephone calls, so please let the Secretary or other Council members know if you see or hear of any developments affecting our environment.

THAT'S LIFE!

Have you ever had difficulty photographing a wildlife subject? Do you think it is a hit-and-miss affair? Well, other people have had their troubles too. Distilled from years of experience, these rules of wildlife photography may help you!

The Wildlife Photographer's Law:-

"Just after photographing the best available specimen an even better one will be found."

Jim's Addition:-

"The best specimen of all will be found immediately all the film is finished."

Jenny's Corollary:-

"When admiring the last available flower before photographing it, all the petals will drop off."

Bob's Problem:-

"It's impossible to stick the petals back on once they have fallen off."

Brian's Paradox:-

"The best orchid is always in the most difficult spot to photograph."

Joan's Rule:-

"The best shots are on the film that wasn't wound on."

Margaret's Law:-

"As soon as a good specimen is found the sun will be hidden by a cloud."

Pat's Rule:-

"The best-looking specimens always have the most unpronounceable names."

Adam's Axiom:-

"The best bird to photograph is the one that's just flown off."

J.K.C.

BODDIN-FERRYDEN

Members who attended this outing (4 June 1983) saw wildlife even before the bus reached its destination: a pair of Brown hares ran along the road, and two Roe deer were seen in a wooded den near Boddin.

Walking down to Boddin itself, the rich flora of the road verge, which shows that this site escaped herbicide treatment in the 1960's, kept the party interested for some time. The late Spring had meant that Spring flowers and early Summer flowers could be seen together, and interesting plants seen flowering at Boddin included Geranium phaeum (Dusky crane's-bill), Primula x tommasini (False oxlip), and Silene nutans (Nottingham catchfly). Descending to Boddin Point, Dr. Robertson introduced the local geology, with those members who braved the slippery rocks seeing the most interesting features! The freshwater limestone of upper Old Red Sandstone age is one of the few limestone exposures in Angus, and the impressive limekilns built last century to exploit this finite resource provided timely shelter from the showers. Sea slaters (Ligia oceanica) were found under the stones.

The rain brought out slugs and snails, the Large black slug Arion ater being abundant all along the coast. It was noticed that the snail Arianta arbustorum occurred in two forms: the normal brown-banded type, and unbanded yellow individuals, which seemed to be most common around the old graveyard. On the old walls here were also found the Common garden snail Helix aspersa and the small snail Clausilia bidentata, one of only a few species with a left-handed coiling to its shell, together with other species which find the rather calcareous andesite rocks valuable for building their shells. The base-rich soils are botanically interesting too, plants seen flowering between Boddin and Usan including Ranunculus bulbosus (Bulbous buttercup), Saxifraga granulata (Meadow saxifrage), Orchis mascula (Early-purple orchid), Cochlearia officinalis (Common scurvygrass), Salsola kali (Prickly saltwort), Blysmus rufus (Saltmarsh flatsedge), and various species of Plantago (Plantains). The varied coastline is excellent for finding both cliff-dwelling and shoreline plants.

The neglected cliff-top graveyard near Boddin is famed for a headstone with the date of death given pre-dating that of birth by many years.

After passing the deserted Fishtown of Usan, once a thriving fishing village with a huge ice-house for storing the catch, the weather brightened, and many green-veined white butterflies were seen near Mains of Usan.

At Scurdy ness some members investigated the deep rock-pools, but the lighthouse-keeper was unfortunately already too exhausted from taking visitors up to show any of our party the view from the top!

At Ferryden the party rejoined the bus and those members who had opted to go shopping in Montrose instead of following the coast path.

Colin McLeod

SQUARE BASHING

Only a small part of 10-kilometer square No. 15 occurs within the area encompassed by the flora (Vice-county 90 - "Forfar"). The area has not been recorded separately. At the Committee meeting to decide the summer outings the strong opinion was that we could contribute to the flora recording in Angus.

Accordingly on June 18 a full bus-load of eager naturalists was disgorged onto the hill, with the permission of the farmer (of course). The weather couldn't have been better. The day was clear, bright and sunny; warm but hot. Considering the bad Spring weather, it was most welcome. Between us the area of several square miles was thoroughly explored. In a case like this the large numbers were a distinct advantage as the party split into 5 groups, each headed by a competent leader.

Some kept to the low ground, others covered the higher sections and a few intrepid souls even went over Mount Blair as an encore. Considerable lists of the flora were collected but, since the area is fairly uniform moorland, no great surprises occurred. Lesser twayblade in several localities is probably the most interesting record.

KINGSBARNES TO CRAIL

This was the joint meeting on 10th September with the Edinburgh Naturalists. We waited in our bus in the Kingsbarns shore car-park until they appeared walking down the road. The weather was most unpromising, with a stiff chill breeze and rain in the offing. Dark clouds hung menacingly upwind. Would our luck hold? The wildlife beckoned and off we went. As usual the athletes in the Society soon left most others far behind. A large group decided to start by spending half-an-hour searching the rock pools at Kingsbarns. Brittle stars, star fish, Beadlet sea anemones, Nereis worms, tube worms, Spirorbis, small fish, shrimps, Green short crabs, a small porcelain crab, whelks, dogwhelks, a number of winkles and a host of sea weeds were found. The seashore flora, was varied and interesting. In patches were stands of Hemlock, a common seashore umbellifer. A variety of autumnal composites were identified. Several large clumps of sea spleenwort were found growing on a small cliff. A good selection of saltwater marsh plants were located in the bay just north-east of Fifeness. On the seashore itself some other interesting plants were found. These were roots, but not just any old roots. They were Stigmara, the fossilised roots of Carboniferous age trees, of the types that formed the coal seams.

J.K. Cook

ST. MONANS TO PITTENWEEM

A busload of Naturalists descended on St. Monans on this sunny Wednesday afternoon (6 July 1983) for a relaxing amble along the shore path to Pittenweem. The sunshine coupled with a gentle breeze encouraged people to walk slow enough to admire the plants on view, which included ramping fumitory Fumaria capreolata, hemlock Conium maculatum, sea wormwood Artemisia maritima, and kidney vetch Anthyllis vulneraria (prolific near Pittenweem).

Those not interested in taking things easy however, opted for a scramble over the rocks, where they were rewarded for their efforts by finding several Limestone layers. Many different fossils were seen in these layers, such as crinoids, spiriferid and productid brachiopods as well as a ribbed rhynchonellid Pleuropugnoides pleurodon, corals such as Lithostrotion junceum, and a trace fossil called Zoophycus caudagalli (fossil marks left by the tentacles of a soft bodied animal which has not been preserved itself).

There were some, of course, who could not be enticed by these wonders, but instead either remained on the bus to be driven quickly to Pittenweem, or walked at a faster pace, to discover the delights of Pittenweem itself, in the form of cafes and the historic St. Fillans Cave which gave the village its name (Pittenweem meaning "The Place of the Cave" in the Pictish tongue).

This variety of things to do and see ensured that a happy band of Naturalists boarded the bus for the return home.

Hamish Petrie

KINNORDY AND KIRRIE

The first of last year's two Wednesday excursions on May 25th drove to Kinnordy Bird Reserve, where some time was spent in the two hides bird-spotting. In an overwhelming population of Blackheaded gulls, the number of species was rather less than hoped, and it was perhaps too early to see many young birds out of the nest. The bus circled the loch and drove through the wooded landscape to the north side of Caddam Woods. We then wound a circuitous route through this fine example of well spaced pinewoods, with a rich undergrowth of ferns and blaeberrries. Areas of beech show a wealth of self-sown saplings. A squirrel was seen but bird life was not very abundant.

OVER TULACH HILL

On Saturday 16th of July the Dundee Naturalists went on an outing to Glen Fincastle. Most people on the outing walked through the glen over the Tulach hill and down into Blair Atholl while some members chose to go for a stroll along the banks of the River Garry or for a walk in Glén Tilt. Although a dull day which spoiled the view from the Tulach hill, the weather stayed dry.

The walk through Glen Fincastle proved interesting. An unfortunate adder was found squashed on the road. Water avens, valerian, ragged robin and orchids were seen growing at the road side.

On the lower half of Tulach hill clumps of yellow saxifrage were found and a fragrant orchid but the most interesting plants were to be seen near the top. Kidney and purple milk vetch were there along with round-leaved wintergreen. Also sundew, rock-rose and alpine bistort were seen. On the climb down to Blair Atholl small patches of bog were found which held some Scottish Asphodel. Growing along the banks of the Garry near Blair Atholl were hairy St. John's Wort, yellow pimpernel and yellow loosestrife. Other plants of interest on the day's list included the yellow form of bush vetch, dog's mercury, mountain everlasting and quaking grass.

The dull weather ensured virtually no butterflies were on the wing. However, some dozy common blues and small heaths were seen.

Few birds - only a snipe and a few wheatears - were seen on the walk over Tulach hill. Those who chose to walk along the side of the Garry had a far better list which included greater spotted and green woodpecker, common sandpiper, grey wagtail, goosander and buzzard. A warbler - probably a blackcap or perhaps a garden warbler - was heard singing from the trees above the river but did not show itself.

All in all the outing was a great success and a good variety of birds and plants were seen.

Colin Lamond

We wish all success to Colin who is now embarked on a career with British Aerospace in Stevenage and has already been out and about spotting pectoral sandpipers and red necked phalaropes.

LOCH OF THE LOWES

On the warm sunny morning of Saturday 13th August about seventy naturalists set out for the Loch of the Lowes and Birnam. From the hides at the lochside we saw a variety of species of duck but unfortunately no ospreys. We also had time to see round the SWT centre on the site. Inside there was an interesting display dealing with various aspects of wildlife on reserve. Next we were taken to Birnam from where we set out for the Hermitage. It was a lovely day for a walk and although it was late on in the season we saw quite a diversity of plants. One of the first plants we noted was a blue sow thistle Cicerbita macrophylla growing in the dry bed of a burn. As our walk took us through deciduous woodland, coniferous woodland, open hill farmland and through coniferous forest again so the plant types varied. The assortment of plants seen included Enchanter's nightshade Circaem lutetiana, Golden Rod Solidago canadensis, Valerian Valeriana officinalis Agg. Betony Betonica officinalis, we also caught sight of a young roe deer amongst some pines and numerous great tits and finches. It was a lovely day and it came to an end with a fine meal at the Birnam Hotel, Birnam and a scenic journey home, the low evening sun tinging the land in orange.

Gillian Law

FUNGUS FORAY

Fortune smiled on the Society once more for this afternoon outing to Templeton Wood on 24th September. A long dry spell had meant a shortage of fungal fruiting bodies in previous weeks but they proliferated on our day. This was fortunate as a rather more abundant harvest was brought in to the Visitor Centre for identification than the suggested two per group! Thirty genera and 47 species were identified. The group's enjoyment was greatly enhanced by Jim Cook's expertise and the Countryside Ranger's local knowledge. One species new to us all was Sparassis crispa (cauliflower fungus). Russula and boletus species were numerous, but the commonest of all was Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca (false chantarelle).

Templeton Wood is Dundee's most accessible mixed woodland and the number and variety of fungi seen on this short outing may be regarded as a measure of its value to wildlife.

I should be glad to add to that day's list any new species seen in Templeton by members on other occasions.

Margaret G. Duncan

KINSHALDY KAPERS

The outdoor season was brought to a light-hearted climax on 2nd January, 1984, when a score of happy-up members of all ages gathered at Kinshaldy for a treasure hunt brain-mastered by Jim Cook. The rain held off and a merry prize-giving culminated in the distribution of hot sausages and soup (what's the Latin for soup, Jim?). Suitably modest prizes went to a mature team of four, but victory was due more to bonus points awarded for the wearing of long johns and many layers of clothing rather than to expertise in natural history.

There was just time for the party to call in at Morton Lochs to do some bird-spotting before the expected depression hit us.

FULL HOUSE

Extra chairs have had to be brought in repeatedly for the 83-84 lecture season. A dazzling opener was Dr. G. Rodway's slides of butterflies of southern counties and Scotland (October 11). We were in familiar territory with Dr. J.G. Burgess prowling round Angus in search of wild flowers (October 25). A more unusual subject was chosen by Mr. Chris Dingwall, of the Museum staff, with his well researched study of landscape gardening on Tayside (November 8). Dr. D. Burbidge, of the Royal Botanic Garden, covered several continents to photograph mountain flowers (November 22). Our own Jim Cook took over the projector on December 6 with an engrossing account of his visit to the Everglades. The New Year opened on January 9 with Mr. T. Heilbronn's stunning photographs of his experiences on South Georgia. Mr. Mick Pawley took us through the Canadian wilderness on a wintry night on January 24.

STRATHMORE OASIS

Lord Elphinstone gladly accepted an offer to survey his pond and area of scrubland, an oasis he has formed in the heart of closely farmed Strathmore. He shoots partridge and pheasant, and the pond provides duck-shooting in winter, but many forms of wildlife find a home here. A small group of Naturalists spent a pleasant afternoon on September 4 listing the many plants and birds seen, and offered Lord Elphinstone such advice as we could for the improvement of the site, an example of shooting and wildlife in relative harmony.

WHY NO DUNDEE BOOKS?

The past two years have seen the appearance of two new Scottish natural history books, each with a different approach to a similar topic. "A Guide to Edinburgh's Countryside" (£3.95), compiled by the Edinburgh Natural History Society, is subtitled "habitats and walks within the city boundaries." This aptly describes the contents; a simple introduction to the city's wildlife and still extensive habitats is followed by a selection of walks which the visitor to Edinburgh will find useful. Checklists of commoner plants and animals are also included.

Peter Marren's "A Natural History of Aberdeen" (£4.95), is more of a reference work, describing the historical development and destruction of various habitats in the district with special studies on aspects of present-day wildlife, and unfortunately it makes more depressing reading than the previous book.

Similar books to these have appeared for several English cities, and their popularity suggests that there could be scope for such a work covering Dundee. The urban area has large parks and woodlands, gardens, wasteground, and most important much of the Dighty Valley, all providing wildlife habitats. Dundee District as a whole has habitats ranging from mudflats and reedbeds to sand-dunes, farmland and old quarries, with a large section of the Sidlaw Hills: all enough to keep any naturalists occupied for a long time, as our more active members know!

LOOKING AHEAD

Your committee has put together another promising programme for the spring and summer. Off to the Fife coast on 21st April with Hamish Petrie to lead us from St. Andrews to Boarhill. West Perthshire is the destination on May 5, when it is Callander and Aberfoyle, skippered by Brian Allan. A week-end at Kindrogan starts on 18th May, then on 2nd June Miss Kidney escorts us to Deuchney, near Dunkeld. Treasurer Miss Towns is in charge at St. Cyrus on 30th June, and Mr. J. Fraser is leader to Bachnagairn, Glen Doll, on 14th July. Then follow three longer outings - on 28th July to Linn of Dee and Morrone Wood (Mrs. E. McClure) then on 11th August, Loch Lomond and Rowardennan (Mrs. M. Tennant) and on 25th August, the Pentlands (Brian Allan).

On 8th September comes a joint outing with the Edinburgh Naturalists to the Antonine Wall, and country park (Mr. R. Phillip). A fungus foray winds up the season, at Blackmuir of Liff (Mrs. M. Duncan).

Get your names in quickly ! !