

Dundee Naturalists' Society

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 1986 A.G.M. starts my last year as President. The past two years have been for me personally, both enjoyable and rewarding.

It is easy to accept that each year a full programme is organised, a Spring weekend researched and booked, and a Winter programme of lectures arranged for our enjoyment. This year I am sure you will join me in thanking the army of council members, past and present, who give so freely of their time and energy.

On another note it is encouraging to see both at the University and on our Summer meets so many young and new members. I ask that you continue to make them all welcome. Finally I look forward to meeting you all during the coming season.

Brian Allan
President

A Fife Bird Club has been formed to promote interest in birds in the district. The logo it has adopted is a Little Gull with the Fife coastline. Hides will be built at Fife Ness and at the Eden estuary, in collaboration with the Scottish Wildlife Trust, who have created a nature reserve at Fife Ness. More information can be had from Bob McCurley, a committee member (phone Dundee 812028).

The Newtonmore week-end (leaving on May 23) is fully booked, and a waiting list has been formed. A leaflet with details of the proposed activities will be issued shortly.

ALF ROBERTSON RETIRES

No one is better known to the Naturalists than Alf Robertson, who retired in August from his post as conservation officer at Camperdown Wildlife Centre. His lifetime among animals and trees gave him an invaluable background which he used to the full in introducing children and members of many organisations over a wide area to the joys of nature. Always ready to talk to the Naturalists and guide them around his "patch", Alf had a fund of experiences to relate, and his slide shows were keenly anticipated. Now he has moved with his wife Betty to Belmont Cottage, Monkia, with his bees, cockerels, bantams, ducks and his golden eagle, which made history not long ago by rearing a chick in captivity.

But if Alf has hopes of living a quiet life in retirement, we have news for him - we won't let him. His wealth of knowledge and instructional ability is too valuable and cannot easily be replaced. We hope to call on his services as guide and lecturer, not to say friend and adviser, for many years to come.

Our sympathy is extended to Mr. Matthew Morrison, a valued member of the society council, in his long illness. Matt is presently a patient in Balcarres, Broughty Ferry.

THE YEAR'S TOLL

The society suffered the loss of several members during the year. Mrs. Nancy Kennedy, 10 Tay Terrace, Newport, who died in September, 1985, had been a member since 1975. Mrs. Frances Millar, 8 Glamis Drive, Dundee, who died in December, 1985, had also been a member since 1975. Miss Sheila Dow, 7 Blake Street, Broughty Ferry, a member since 1978, died in December.

A sad feature of Miss Dow's death was that she took ill on the eve of her retiral. She had given devoted service for many years as infants mistress at Rockwell School.

Lieut. Col. John Anderson, of Wester Balruddery, near Longforgan, who died in April, was well-known as a traveller and rock plant specialist. With his wife Brenda he studied plants in South America and Morocco and brought many species back to their Carse of Gowrie garden. Col. Anderson is survived by his wife and son and daughter.

BRISC - BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND CAMPAIGN

Yes, its almost time to get out into the countryside again to take part in the 1986 12-species survey. This year all the species chosen may be found associated with freshwater, although we do hope that the "watery" theme will refer only to the habitat chosen and not to the weather encountered when recording!

These are the "species":

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mink | Moorhen | Orange tip Butterfly | Purple Loosestrife |
| Water Vole | Coot | (Anthocharis cardamines) | (Lythrum salicaria) |
| Bat spp. | Newt spp. | Golden Ringed Dragonfly | Policeman's Helmet |
| | | (Cordulegaster boltonii) | (Impatiens glandulifera) |
| | | Water Scorpion | Water Lobelia |
| | | (Nepa cinerea) | (Lobelia dortmanna) |

Most should be found in our area although while some may be common and conspicuous, others will need hunting for. Remember to keep your eyes open on all the Society's excursions. Holidays too could provide useful records from less well known parts of Scotland.

Further details about the survey can be found in the free BRISC recording leaflet. If every member contributes to the effort being put in throughout Scotland we should be able to accumulate a really impressive amount of data to assist in Scottish Wildlife conservation.

If you have any problems concerning identification, or the tricky job of putting grid references to your observations, Richard Brinklow and Adam Garside at Barrack Street Museum (Tel Dundee 23141 Ext 152 or 153), your local contacts for the scheme, will be delighted to assist.

Ladybirds

Most people like ladybirds and think of them as beneficial and indeed they are an important group of insects worldwide. But, did you know that there are forty-seven different species in the British Isles? So far eleven species have been found locally, but up to fourteen more may be still awaiting discovery.

You probably think of them as beetles that are red with black spots, but in fact they display a range of colour patterns including black with red spots, yellow with black spots, black with yellow and brown with cream spots. Some species are very variable and can even be completely black. These colour schemes are all examples of warning colouration that tell predators that they are unpalatable. Ladybirds also discharge a bitter yellow fluid when disturbed.

Both adults and larvae (which are black with red or yellow spots) feed on greenfly, blackfly, scale insects and other pests. They will turn to other sources of food when the normal diet is scarce, for example, pollen, nectar and caterpillars. There are also two vegetarian species.

Ladybirds pass the winter hibernating as adults and may be found individually or clustered together in dry, sheltered places such as bark crevices.

Many species can be found in a wide range of habitats including gardens. The commonest are probably the 7-spot, 10-spot, and 2-spot, but three others; 11-spot, 14-spot and 16-spot may also occur in gardens. Several ladybirds for example, the Eyed Ladybird, are thought to be associated with pine trees, and others may be found in deciduous woodland, marshes and on heather moorland.

Ladybirds have economic value as biological control agents. An Australian species, Rodolia cardinalis has been used to control the scale insect Icerya purchasi, a pest of citrus fruit in California and many European countries use ladybirds to control greenhouse crop pests.

Although ladybirds are such familiar creatures we still know embarrassingly little about them. Currently there is a nationwide project to study ladybirds being co-ordinated by Cambridge University.

Barrack Street Museum will be organising a simple survey of our local ladybirds starting in April to complement and assist the national survey.

This is a fascinating group of insects so if you are interested please do not hesitate to contact us at the museum.

Adam Garside and Richard Brinklow

LOOKING AHEAD

Get your boots oiled ready for a full summer's exciting programme. First comes Glen Esk on April 26, with geology the main subject. A ramble in the Ochils is the programme for May 10. On May 31 it's south to the Butterfly Farm at Dalkeith, with time for a visit to the Duddingston nature reserve in Edinburgh. June 14 sees us exploring upper Glenalmond. It's off to the Isle of May on June 30. July 12 brings a visit to the Falls of Clyde and its woodland walks. On the 26th Millden is the venue. We join Perth Naturalists on August 9 for a visit to Campsie Linn. On 23rd August it's the seaside, at Lunan Bay. A walk through Alyth Den is promised for September 6. The Catterthuns, plus Restenneth, is arranged for September 20 and September 27 closes the season with a walk from Crail to Fife Ness.

Several evening trips are also on the list. On June 10 Kinnordy bird reserve is the venue, and on June 17 Kinshaldy, on Tentsmuir. July 1 we will gather at Craigmall Den on the hunt for ladybirds!

STONEHAVEN/DUNNOTTAR 27TH APRIL

On a cool April morning a group of icicle-covered Nats., gathered on the communal sledge for adventure in the frozen wastelands of Aberdeenshire. With the huskies duly watered we set off North into the driving blizzard, but were we daunted - yes we were! On reaching Stonehaven however the snow had largely died down and we were only left with a slight breeze which took the temperature down close to -30°C., thanks to the wind chill factor. After lunch on the bus a select few finally ventured out of the bus (rather reluctantly) while others decided to stay and read the papers or just go into Stonehaven. Down on the shore however the conditions were lovely where we were sheltered from the wind, and the leader wished he had brought his shorts for a spot of sunbathing. Clever planning was then brought into play as a game of follow the leader ensued, with the Dundee University Geologists being just a few steps ahead, until it was time to return to the bus via a short scramble up the cliffs near the Highland Boundary Fault (which in itself provided some reasonable amusement).

A short drive away was Dunnottar Castle (in a moderately exposed position) where the final lecture of the day was given in the shelter of the conglomerate cliff beneath the castle, to a somewhat reduced audience (enthusiasm obviously waning). A few brave people ventured into the castle itself, being roped together and sticking ice-axes into the ground every few feet to maintain their foothold against the exhilarating breeze. Timing was however perfect as usual, with the weather deteriorating into a blizzard again as we headed home to warmer climes.

Hamish Petrie

MAY WEEKEND

Alltshellach House, near Onich, proved an extremely successful choice for the 1985 Long Weekend, affording mountain, woodland and marine interests. The lochside situation was ideal for a spot of pre-breakfast bird watching.

The official programme started on the Saturday, at the National Trust village in Glencoe, where we met the Ranger who was to lead us through from Glencoe to Glen Etive. Although he had spent years in the glens, about all he pointed out was the local buzzard, and a more unusual sighting - a stage set for Sean Connery's latest sci-fi film. From a boggy start, the trail included a river crossing, some marvellous views, as well as many varieties of grasses, moss and fern. On the descent from our picnic spot at the pass, we noted many of our more familiar alpine flora, but unfortunately the weather deteriorated on the lower slopes. Some of the party managed a side excursion to the Signal Rock (at Glencoe Village) to see the black spleenwort.

On Sunday, the coach took us to a rather windswept Cull Bay, for some bird watching, and along the shore we saw sea sandwort and the flag iris so typical of the West Coast.

In the woodlands at Glasdrum, wood sorrel, sweet woodruff liverwort, wood sage, water avens featured amongst the additions to the list.

The Sea Life Centre at Barcaldine alone would have made the trip worthwhile. This purpose-built complex houses an amazing variety of fish and marine life, imaginatively "tanked" and displayed to full advantage from tiny rock pools to a tank of livin', breathin' manta rays!

Tastes were variously catered for with a restaurant, an oyster bar and a clever display of the life cycle of the salmon. The highlight must surely have been to catch feeding time with the seals, before resuming our journey home.

Our thanks once again go to Miss Kidney for the excellent arrangements and to Joan for arranging the programme, and coping so well with her handicap.

J.F.

EXCURSION TO DUNDEE UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDEN

There was a "full house" for this visit to the Botanic Garden on 4th June, as the size of the party was limited to 30. The garden was at its best when the Curator, Mr. Leslie Bisset, showed the party round on a fine summer evening. Since the Society's last visit to the garden, soon after it opened in 1976, it has seen much growth, both vertically and horizontally.

The obvious vertical growth is that of the trees, many of which have a mature appearance which belies the fact that none were planted before 1971, when the garden was established. An increasing amount of herbaceous material is now being introduced into shelter of the trees and other woody plants. Many of the garden's recent acquisitions are of wild origin, making them scientifically valuable, and in some cases assisting in the preservation of species which are endangered in the wild.

Another example of the garden's vertical growth is the Visitor Centre, a highly-acclaimed building containing displays which introduce and explain aspects of plant biology and ecology and the plant collection. The Visitor Centre makes an ideal location for an introductory talk about the garden before moving outdoors, and although it had opened just over a year before our visit, many members were seeing it for the first time. Some members were relieved to find that toilets were built with the Visitor Centre, as these were lacking on our last visit.

The garden's horizontal growth takes the form of extensive new plantings. At the eastern end of the garden, a collection of Sino-Himalayan plants is being developed, including many Rhododendrons, some of which were in flower. As many of these were only recently planted, they were not yet at their best, but the collection of Australasian and other southern hemisphere plants nearby, which is only a little older, shows how quickly the plants become established in the Botanic Garden. With the skilled attention of the garden staff, even quite large semi-mature trees can be transplanted with a high success rate. In other parts of the garden, specimen trees, mostly raised from seed collected in the wild, are being planted on the lawns.

Being naturalists, our members were particularly interested in the native plant communities area, which represents the range of plant associations from montane to coastal habitats, all condensed into a distance of less than 200 metres. Although this part of the garden requires further work and of course time to complete it, in places it already resembles the pine/birch forest, oak and ash woodland and other habitats which it represents.

It is notable that increasing numbers of birds are now colonising the garden, and that some of these, such as woodcock, are the species which would occur in the natural habitats represented by the plant collections. The garden has quite an impressive species-list of birds, and is well worth a visit by ornithologists as well as botanists. Mammals, too are present in the garden, although some, such as voles, are pests, others are beneficial, and it was interesting to see numerous hedgehog droppings on the lawns.

Mr. Bisset explained that the garden has a non-intensive management policy, relying on natural processes for many aspects of maintenance. For example, there is no unnecessary pruning of trees and shrubs or clearing-up of leaves and other natural debris. Herbicides are essential to the maintenance of the garden, but only non-persistent types are used. Insecticides are used only in the glass-houses, while wormkillers are neither necessary nor desirable in any part of the garden. All this reduces the amount of labour required and contributes to the garden's natural structure and appearance. For this reason the garden, especially the plant communities area, has been proving of interest to some progressive local authorities, planners and landscape architects who wish to improve both the wildlife and amenity value of our cities while minimising costs.

The tour ended with a visit to the glasshouses, where one of the garden's terrapins (introduced to control the snail population) studied the naturalists from between the Victoria water lily leaves which covered the tropical pool, and finally to the herb-garden, which it is hoped will soon be considerably extended in view of the increasing interest in herbs for both culinary and medicinal purposes.

Anyone who was unable to attend the excursion is welcome to visit the Botanic Garden during its normal public opening hours. It is open Mondays to Saturdays 10.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. March to October, and 10.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. November - February. Access is from the western end of Riverside Drive near it's junction with Perth Road, and car and cycle parking are provided.

Anyone who would like to help support and promote the garden can become a member of the Friends of Dundee University Botanic Garden, and should contact the Secretary of the Friends, c/o the University.

Colin McLeod

JOHN MUIR COUNTRY PARK, TYNINGHAME ESTUARY - 13TH JULY

The joint excursion lead by Mrs. Gill from the Edinburgh Natural History Society was considered to be a rewarding day - due, in no small measure, to the Ranger, Alastair Clunas. Without him we would not have found the rarities or seen as much as we did. The fine weather was certainly a bonus, adding to the enjoyment of the day - specially in the wet summer of 1985.

To some of us, the visit to John Muir Country Park was a novel experience. Such a wealth of flora in the comparatively small area we traversed. The park, approved as recently as 1976, extends for 1,667 acres, comprising a variety of habitats : cliffs, dunes, saltmarsh, scrub, heath, wood and grassland.

Our first find was wild mignonette (*reseda lutea*) and growing close by we discovered Weld (*reseda luteola*). Walking through an area burgeoning with life - common blues, meadow browns, squirrels, solitary mining bees and a lone roe deer were spotted.

A trio of Nats from a seashore vantage point watched the spectacular diving gannets, while walking among the shore we found crabs, banded wedge shells, cowries, rayed artemis and the shells of sea urchins on the sand.

The Ranger drew our attention to a flowering sea bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*) found here in 1982, the most northerly spot on the east coast. Another rarity, the adder's tongue fern on the heath/cliff habitat, was well photographed.

To those who have not visited the Park named after the Dunbar-born Scot, who gave his name to American parks, a lake, mountain and a glacier - I recommend a journey to the Tynninghame estuary to search for the 120 flowering plants identified that day.

J.P.

WATER OF LEITH

Were there any sunny Saturdays in soggy '85? Thinking back over the Society's summer outings it's surprising to remember quite a few, and one of these fell on 10th August when the venue was the Water of Leith. Starting our walk from Balerno and following the old branch railway line, disused since 1968, gave us an opportunity for a leisurely search for what turned out to be quite a substantial total of plants and bushes - over 70 species, ranging from the dainty field forgetmenot to that spectacular giant, new to many of the party, Japanese knotweed.

The afternoon was spent in the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, providing the contrast between a natural and a cultivated environment. Here our bus load scattered in all directions, to the hot-houses, the pools, the rock garden - and, let it be whispered, the tearoom was very popular too! But even in the Botanics we were still with the Water of Leith as part of the walk-way is nearby.

The river must have been the scene of much industrial activity over a long period. In fact during the latter half of the 18th century there were no less than ten paper mills strung along the Water of Leith; but sadly these days are past. Though hopefully not to be forgotten, for there is a plan for green areas and some of these historically interesting buildings to be included in a designated footpath along the whole length of the river. So perhaps the last word may yet be with McGonagall -

"Therefore all lovers of the picturesque be advised by me
And the beautiful scenery of the River of Leith go and see,
And I am sure you will get a very great treat,
Because the River of Leith scenery cannot be beat".

F.T.

BARBECUE & MOTHS

It didn't surprise anybody, with this year's weather, that it rained at Crombie Country Park on 13th August. Ten minutes before the barbecue was due to begin the heavens opened and the sky poured buckets. Fortunately the fire was well alight and didn't go out. Naturalists' luck held; the shower went off and we began cooking and eating! The marquee close to the barbecue fire was a godsend. Being able to get under shelter and watch your sausages being washed over the glowing charcoal was a novel experience! For a small, but hungry group, the number of sausages, hamburgers and kebabs put away was amazing.

Eventually the sky cleared and we were blessed by a late fine evening. Two bats were reported, but proved impossible to identify. One member nearly tripped over a hedgehog, oh horrors! Adam Garside's moth traps didn't catch much early in the evening but attracted a fine haul around 11.0'clock. His most interesting specimen was a green emerald.

J.C.

EASTHAVEN AT 4.45 A.M.

The worst part was dragging oneself out of bed at 4.45 a.m. to go down to Easthaven for 6.0 a.m. and finding Frazer Kiddie and colleagues all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. At that hour! A small consolation: he's used to it. Frazer, for those members not in the know, is a leading light with the Tayside Ringing Group. He's often out very early with his nets.

They were well organised, the mist nets, being carefully set up before sunrise. The naturalists' early birds left them to it; being more of a hindrance than a help. Luck was with us. The weather was good.

For the next 4 hours a steady trickle of birds - thrushes, blackbirds, some willow warblers, goldfinch, sparrows and, best of all, a spotted fly catcher, caught themselves. The mist nets are set up between tall stakes among the shrubs. Each consists of 4 taut horizontal strings with the fine net hanging in loose folds or 'bags' below them. A bird flying into a net falls into one of the folds and is trapped unharmed.

The bird ringers demonstrated the processing technique. Each individual is weighed, has its vital statistics recorded and then is ringed with a unique ring around the leg. It was released unharmed afterwards.

J.C.

FASKALLY WOODS

A full bus-load of members enjoyed an unexpectedly dry and sunny day for this outing on 24th August. Unfortunately it had not been possible to arrange the hoped-for visit to the Freshwater Fisheries Laboratory, but members found plenty to interest them on the numerous woodland paths in the area. A few went as far as the Soldier's Leap at Killiecrankie, or walked right round Loch Faskally. Others found that the wet summer had produced an early show of fungi in the woods, and spent the day studying these, while the less adventurous explored the shops and cafes of Pitlochry. The Pitlochry Hydro-Electric dam with its fish-ladder was another attraction.

On the homeward journey there was time for a short stop at the Hermitage at Dunkeld, and it was generally agreed that the waterfall was more spectacular than anyone could remember.

Colin McLeod

EARLY BIRDS

6.0 a.m.! the syllabus exclaimed, and sure enough a few early-risers gathered in the dawn light on September 7th at Easthaven. Mr. F. Kiddie, assisted by some of the younger members of the Tayside Bird Ringing Group, had already set-up their mist nets. After gently extricating their capture, they showed us how they record, type of catch, sex, weight and wing span. The details are colated in Edinburgh, and Mr. Kiddie revealed that, from data already collected this autumn, the robin migration from Scandinavia had, rather ominously, started a month earlier than usual.

Among the species trapped that morning were robin, blue tit, great tit, goldfinch, reed bunting, willow warbler, blackbird and song-thrush. Despite this being one of their most popular ringing sites, it took the sharp eyes of one of our own group to spot an albino swallow flying from a nearby barn.

The group is always pleased to welcome new recruits , who have to follow a training path within the hobby.

A welcome move came around 8.30 when our Cook opened his car boot to reveal the wherewithal to fortify the party with really hot-dogs!

A later move to the verges of Panmure Golf Course, continued the Sea Pea count, which revealed a slight increase in the number of plants on this site.

L.F.

FUNGI FORAY

This year's foray to the Tayport end of Tentsmuir Forest (14.9.85) yielded a list of 44 identified fungi under good hunting conditions. As usual some of the more interesting identifications were not made on site but only after close examination afterwards (into the small hours of the night of the foray). Nevertheless, several interesting specimens brought together in the boot of a car at the end of the foray were recognised. The black Helvella lacunosa (an ascomycete) was probably the most curious. Magnificent specimens of Coltrichia perennis, 2½" in diameter, were found on the sandy soil, as well as large earth fans Thelephora terrestris. Chroogomphus rutilans, which associates with pines, was of diminutive interest but most of the group were more delighted to see attractive specimens of the amethyst deceiver, Laccaria amethystea and the handsome grey/lilac Tricholoma virgatum. Although we did find a few false chanterelles (Hygrophoropsis aurantiacum) they were not at all common in 1985, contrary to findings in previous years. Cantharellus cibarius, the genuine chanterelle, was even more common than usual - but not many were to be seen at Tentsmuir which is noted for its early morning collectors. The wood woolly foot Collybia peronata seemed to be one of the most common this year - to be found in every wood I visited.

Too bad the Liebschers couldn't join us on this foray on their 'home ground'. However, they were kind enough to take me on a reconnaissance trip the previous weekend. They were also able to show me earth stars (Geastrum ?coronatum) at the bottom of their garden. That's even more exciting than fairies...

M.G. Duncan

EDEN AND CAMERON LOCH

A poor summer saved up its finest day for our outing to the Eden estuary on October 12. At Guardbridge, the ranger, Ian Strachan, was waiting to explain the ecology of an estuary and showed us the teeming life of the tidal flats while we slowly sank over the feet. It was his last task as ranger there and we wish him well in his new H.Q. with the Nature Conservancy at Cupar.

A spot of lunch in the sun and we were off to Cameron Loch where Cdr. Spragge was waiting to welcome us. An enjoyable tramp round the shores, bird spotting, culminated as the sun was descending, with the clamour of myriads of geese circling in front of a glorious skyscape. "The World About Us" could not have bettered the spectacle.

R.T. McLeod

SCIENCE OR SEANCE?

1985 being the year of the long-awaited return of Halley's Comet it seemed appropriate to arrange a visit to the Mills Observatory on Balgay Hill. It was a pity that numbers had to be limited to 30 and even more unfortunate that the night of 17th December turned out to be heavily overcast and wet. Nevertheless, the full complement of members turned up and we enjoyed the full attention of Dr. Fiona Vincent and her assistant.

A brief historical account of the building was followed by a visit to the heart of the observatory which houses the 10-inch refracting telescope. By means of an arrangement of gears this instrument can be 'locked on' to the astronomical object to be studied, thus allowing uninterrupted viewing. We then enjoyed a video tape compiled by Dr. Vincent which explained the nature of a comet and illustrated the discovery and past history of Halley's Comet.

Splitting the party allowed each group to take part in a seance. Well, it seemed rather like that sitting in a close circle in a darkened confined space. However, the object of our close attention was a copper ball which had been pierced allowing the ever-changing pattern of the stars and planets seen from our latitude to be projected on the hemisphere above our heads.

This ingenious device illustrated the movement of the constellations throughout the year. Everyone found this fascinating and felt the evening had been very worthwhile despite the non-appearance of the well-advertised heavenly body.

Joan L. Thomson

NEW YEAR REVELS

At 9.0 a.m. on January 2 a lonely figure stood huddled under steely shafts of rain falling from a pitiless sky. It was Jim Cook bravely tending the barbecue fire in Templeton Woods. Come 10.0 a.m. and a number of cars loomed out of the mists. Loyal, the Naturalists had turned out - fully a score of them in long johns and up to three pairs of socks. Incredible to relate, the clouds rolled back and teams set off in sunshine and good spirits. The test had a vague connection with natural history, then it was coffee, soup and bangers and a laugh round the glowing barbecue. Despite suspicions of sharp practice, the president's team was said to be the winners.

R.T. McLeod

ON THE CULBIN SANDS

A day trip to Culbin Sands! The attraction was Winter Greens, but what we would find or even where to look was just a guess. One Sunday in July 1984 two mad Nats. set off on a flower hunt. After several probes into the forest we found a car park complete with picnic tables and a friendly red squirrel, so we voted an early lunch to fortify us on our quest. Before planting by the Forestry Commission in the 1920's the Culbin dunes were the most extensive in Britain, and today the varying habitats of forest, salt marsh and sand dunes offer much to the naturalist. There are well established trees and new plantations, both pine and spruce, some closely planted but much openly spaced, giving good undergrowth. High, dry dunes, low wet places, heath, lichens, grass and ferns and promising junipers. Every bend in the path showed a new picture. The common Wintergreen (Pyrola minor) and the Toothed Wintergreen (Orthilia secunda) were found in quantity. But the prize of the day was the One-flowered Wintergreen (Moneses uniflora) - a small circle of dainty white waxen flowers, their heads drooping shyly. We paid a second visit in July, 1985 to explore other parts of the forest. There has been some new planting of broad-leaved trees, mainly to enhance the paths, but also a few groups through the forest which will add interest.

M.D.T.

RHUM, MUCK, AND EIGG

Some years ago I was given an oil painting of Rhum, Muck and Eigg viewed from Ardnamurchan. Since then the desire to visit these islands lay dormant until last June, when, with a friend I joined a tour of the Small Isles organized as part of the S.W.T. 21st anniversary celebrations.

Embarkation point was Mallaig, we sailed to Rhum across the Cuillin Sound and into Loch Scresort. At the head of the loch the imposing Kinloch Castle is situated with a back drop of mist-covered hills. A mountainous island roughly circular and of great geological interest, approximately seven miles in diameter, reaching a height of 2,659 feet at the summit of Askival.

The Castle was built, at the turn of the century, by a wealthy industrialist, who employed first class craftsmen to build this amazing home. It remains substantially unspoilt - the main part is retained as a museum of the Edwardian period and open to visitors. The other section (servants quarters) are used for visiting parties, such as ourselves.

In 1957 the N.C.C. bought the island, now a national nature reserve which is successfully run as an "open air laboratory" where research is carried out on red deer.

Eigg - a different type of terrain where the inhabitants rely on crofting and tourism. There the S.W.T. own three small reserves entrusted to the care of a young warden, whose enthusiasm was to our advantage.

Each island has a character of its own - Muck, amere 2½ by 1½ miles of very fertile land, is run as a mixed livestock farm. There we spent one day birding and botanising.

During the brief moments of clear sunny skies, the views were spectacular as we stravaiged the heath-type moors, from 900-foot coastal cliffs to sandy beaches. The breeding birds include golden eagle, buzzard, short and long eared Owls and red throated divers. Otters can be seen on the shore. The poor weather prevented us climbing, after dark, to the Manx sheerwaters' excavated colonial nesting burrows, when the parents change over en masse. On the plus side was the sighting of white tailed eagles.

The three islands all botanically rich, abound with orchids, fragrant, marsh, early spotted, lesser and greater butterfly. In the moist depths of a fissure in some rocks, we clambered up to see alpine and starry saxifrage growing along with roseroot.

The small isles have left indelible marks on us. On one of our sea trips a highlight was the fleeting glimpse of a diving Minke whale. The Warden from Eigg will, we hope, lecture to us next winter - an evening you should not miss and we can relive a memorable holiday.

"Sea Pea"

PLANT WATCH

Even when botanising, it is easy to miss some of our smalelr and more insignificant plant species. For example, the Adder's-tongue fern Ophioglossum vulgatum, previously known in Angus only at Barry-Buddon, was discovered in 1985 at Carsegowniemuir Quarry only after a detailed botanical survey. It may occur elsewhere in Angus, but have been overlooked.

Another plant which our local NCC Assistant Regional Officer would like plant-hunters to look out for is the Curved sedge Carex maritima, which is most likely to be found on coastal links. In Angus, it has been recorded from near Mains of Usan and from Barry-Buddon, where it was thought to no longer occur. However, in 1985 it was found to be abundant on certain fairways of the R & A Golf Course, St. Andrews, so it is possible that Curved sedge might still be found at Barry Links and elsewhere with careful searching. Perhaps this is something that golfers might find while looking for the ball.

BIRD RECORDINGS

The Society has kindly been sent complimentary, a set of three cassettes of bird songs and calls, "The Bird-Walker" by Jean C. Roche, published by a French wildlife sound recording organisation, l'Oiseau Musicien. A total of 352 species are included, with British and Scandinavian birds on the first two cassettes, and birds of southern Europe on the third. The recordings are arranged as a dictionary, and there is also an introductory booklet. Although they are intended to be used in the field with a personal stereo, they are excellent for familiarising oneself with bird-sounds in the home, and members who have used "The Bird-Walker" have been most impressed with it. Anyone who would like to borrow the cassettes, or who is considering buying a set for themselves (1985 price £15) can contact the President or Secretary.

THE OYSTER PLANT

The Orkney plane trundled its way northward and the coast of Caithness changed into the white topped waters of the Pentland Firth. Below appeared the first of the Orkney islands, South Ronaldsy, linked by the Churchill barriers to mainland Orkney.

We peered anxiously through the plane window to see on a beach a conspicuous blue grey patch of colour, easily seen from the air, a massive colony of that beautiful plant of sand and shingle - the oyster plant. Mertensia maritima flowers from June to August and is a rarity well worth looking for.

Later we hired a car to find the oyster plant at several places mainly where the Churchill barrier had built up sand and shingle against the concrete blocks and the now badly rusting blockships. It forms a prostrate mat of a hairless grey fleshy perennial with thick oval leaves tasting of oysters and setting off the clusters of attractive purplish blue flowers.

It is very rare elsewhere. I believe the shingly shores of Arran provide one of the southernmost British localities now known for this handsome plant which has retreated northwards during this century.

The huge sand dune complex of the Culbin Sands on the Moray Firth is now largely forested but unplanted areas still remain and there, among other northern species, the oyster plant can be found.

Orkney has other treasures too to offer. If the sand and shingle are worth a visit so too are the cliff tops. At Yesnaby you won't have to look hard to find, singly and in groups, the tiny but very attractive flowers of Primula Scotica.

N.R.

The winter programme covered a wide range of natural history subjects. The season opened on October 8 with Bill Ellis, from Hawick, wildlife conservator with Economic Forestry Ltd., who showed how ecology can preserve wildlife and improve timber production. The joint meeting with the Scottish Wildlife Trust on October 22 was also on the subject of forestry, when Dr. Hugh Ingram spoke about deciduous woodland.

Alf Robertson, now retired, had as usual a fund of stories about animals to tell on November 5. Mr. Ian Strachan, who had shown us around the Eden estuary recently, came to talk to us about his work. Mr. Norman Atkinson, of Montrose Museum, took as his subject on December 3 the life of George Don, "the plant hunter". Mr. Adam Ritchie, Dundee Museum Curator, opened the New Year on January 7 with his usual fine show of slides, this time from the Algarve. Members' night on January 21 brought out the usual mixed bag with slides of Rhodes, orchids, canoeing, Botanic Gardens, the Alps and Carsegowrie Quarry site included. Dr. R.W. Duck was the speaker on February 4 with his detailed facts on Scottish lochs.

INFORMATION PLEASE

It is now ten years since the Society began issuing Annual Bulletins to its members, but this series is not the first to have been published by the Society during its history. There is a large amount of early archival material relating to the Society held by Dundee Museum, the Wellgate Library, the City Archives & Records Centre, and Dundee University Archives Centre. These depositories have copies of annual reports published by the Society during the 1870's and 1880's. Later, the Society commenced publication of a much more substantial series of Proceedings and Transactions, but this coincided with the early years of World War I and only the first two parts were printed.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any copies of several of the early annual reports while investigating the Society's archives. The Museum has as complete a run as exists anywhere, but this only extends from the 4th Annual Report (1876-77) to the 10th (1882-83), plus the 12th (1884-85) and 16th (1888-89) Annual Reports. I do not know if any were printed after 1889, and it is possible that some of the missing numbers also were never printed. Even if they were, it is unlikely that more than a couple of hundred of each at most were issued, so it is quite possible that none have survived. However, if anyone does know the whereabouts of any of the "lost" Annual Reports, perhaps they could let me know, so that any historians investigating the Society will be able to find as much information as possible.

It is pleasing to see that the work of our forerunners in the Society many years ago is still proving to be of value. In a recent paper on the 'great rebuilding' of Glamis Estate during the 18th and 19th centuries (Scottish Geographical Magazine 101:3, December 1985), Dundee lecturer Bruce Walker refers to a paper on the Archaeology of Tentsmuir which appeared in the first Proceedings and Transactions of the Dundee Naturalists' Society in 1914. This paper described the dreadful living conditions of the rural poor a century or more ago, and so is of interest to present-day historians. One wonders if any of the articles in this Bulletin will prove to be useful references seventy years hence!

Colin McLeod

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 15TH FEBRUARY 1986

INCOME:

Brought Forward 15/2/85	£380.65
Members' Subscriptions	£310.50
Donations	£ 7.50
Badges	£ 5.00
War Stock Interest	£ 1.74
Bank Interest	£ 26.10

EXPENSES:

Stationery		£ 8.76
Printing		£159.33
Subscriptions		
a) Scottish Rights of Way Society	£ 2.00	
and Donation	£ 2.00	£ 4.00
b) Habitat		£ 5.00
c) S.W.T.		£ 6.00
Insurance		£ 25.00
University of Dundee		
a) Rental	£ 98.00	
b) Hire of Slide and Cine Projectors	£ 29.46	
	<u>£127.46</u>	
Less: Recovered from SWT and RSPB	£ 12.00	£115.46
Lecturers' Fees and Expenses		£ 74.00
Royal Metereological Society		
Postage on film	£ 4.20	
Donation in lieu of hire charge	£ 5.00	£ 9.20
Postage		£ 29.39
Office-bearers' telephone expenses		£ 7.67
Miscellaneous		£ 13.76
Balance in bank		
a) Service Account	£ 4.62	
b) Investment Account	£268.64	
c) Cheque Account	£ -.34	
	<u>£273.60</u>	
Cash in hand	£ -.32	<u>£273.92</u>
	<u>£731.49</u>	<u>£731.49</u>

SUMMER OUTINGS ACCOUNT

Total Income	£1287.95
Expenditure	<u>£1281.90</u>
	£ 6.05
Balance from February 1985	<u>£ -.20</u>
In TSB Monifieth 15/2/86	<u>£ 6.25</u>

SPRING WEEKEND (Glencoe)

Total Income	£1772.40
Expenditure	<u>£1732.55</u>
	£ 39.85
Balance from February 1985	<u>£ 42.58</u>
	£ 82.43
Bank Interest November 1985	<u>£ 3.97</u>
In TSB "Weekend" Account	<u>£ 86.40</u>