



TAYSIDE RECORDERS' BULLETIN

March 2010

Welcome to the Third Tayside Recorders' Day

The first Recorders' Day was hosted by Perth Museum in 2008 and last year's event was hosted by Dundee City Council. Steve Hewitt from Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, gave us a very interesting talk about the Virtual Fauna of Lakeland (the Cumbrian Biological Data Network), followed by an update by the North East Biological Records Centre (NESBReC). Closer to home we heard from Ken Neil, the East of Scotland Red Squirrel Officer on Red Squirrel recording in Perthshire, and Ken Slater on Angus Bird Recording. Duncan Davidson of Butterfly Conservation Scotland updated us on Butterfly Recording in the East of Scotland. Martin Robinson rounded off the day with a BSBI update for East Perthshire.

This year the Angus Ranger Service is hosting the day and we are very pleased to welcome Annie Robinson to hear about recent developments at NESBReC, Liz Holden on Fungi Recording, and David Lampard on National Moth Counts. Mandy Cook and Norman Elkins will talk about the national BTO surveys relevant to Tayside, as well as giving an update on the Kinross Bird Atlas. Craig Macadam of Buglife will give a presentation on recording invertebrates and Barbara Hogarth will finish the day with an update on plant recording throughout the year in Angus.

The annual Recorders' Day will, we hope, again bring people together to discuss local interests and to keep in touch with one another. The one achievement for the Forum since last year's gathering is the special area provided on the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's website. Working with Mark Simmons, Perth Museum, and David Lampard, McManus Galleries, Dundee, plus Skye Bancroft a student placement from Dundee University, a list of Tayside Recorders and associated organisations is now available via www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk. Like all lists it will get out of date very quickly, so please check if (a) your details are currently correct, or (b) if we have inadvertently omitted you. Please let us know via iain.campbell@dundeecity.gov.uk. Iain will update the details at the end of April, so please contact him before then.

TAYSIDE BIODIVERSITY FESTIVAL 1st to 31st May 2010

We hope to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity in style so we are pushing the boat out with over 100 events planned throughout Tayside for the month of May.

In Perthshire, the Provost will officially launch the Festival at the Tulloch Net 800 Eco Exhibition. This will be part of a day's events along the Perth Lade, including a walk to one of the first Orchard 800 tree plantings. David Boag, the international wildlife photographer, will be in Tayside



for ten days, starting at Pitlochry Festival Theatre on 18th May. He will give talks and workshops throughout the region. There will be guided walks on heritage trees, bluebells, bats and swifts. Workshops will include a pollination day, a tour of a traditional orchard and bumblebee identification. Kinross' Loch Leven Discovery Day on 23rd May will include a showing of the Perth Youth Theatre's outdoor play "The Tree". This short family-orientated play will be touring some of Perth & Kinross Council's parks, as well as celebrating International Biodiversity Day with a performance at the Birnam Oak.

In Angus, there will be the opportunity to join in the biggest spring bird survey or find out about bird ringing. Trevor Rose will run his Reptile Walks again at Loch Lee in Glen Esk. On 5th May there will be a guided walk along Seaton Cliffs to look at the rich geodiversity of the coast. The Angus Ranger Service are offering a huge selection of family-friendly events, as well as undertaking Backyard Biodiversity School events.

Dundee's part in the Festival will include an After School Workshop and an After Work Wander at the Botanic Gardens, with the Balgay Biodiversity Bonanza also taking place on 23rd May. During the same weekend three biodiversity films will be screened at the DCA (Dundee Contemporary Arts). The Dundee Mini BioBlitz is being planned for Sunday, 30th May and we hope as many species specialists as possible will be able to give their time to make this BBC Breathing Places event the grand finale to the Festival. If you can help, please contact David Lampard or Catherine Lloyd.

There is still just time to be part of the Festival, if you have not yet signed up. If you can offer an event during May (walk, talk, survey training, open day, seminar, etc.) please let Rachael Adams know as soon as possible: Rachael.v.adams@hotmail.com. Rachael is on student placement from the University of Dundee; she is compiling the programme which will be going to print soon.

If you plan to launch a project or publicise a survey during May, please let Catherine know so that details can be publicised during the Festival - Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net.

The programme will be featured on www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk with copies available for distribution from April. If you can take a small supply, please contact Iain on Tel. 01382 433042.





This year's programme does not give sufficient time for the local authority museum curators to give an update on their work this, so we have taken to paper and this Bulletin will give the updates in this format instead.

Developments at Dundee Museums

The major news at Dundee is that the McManus: Dundee's Art gallery and Museum opened on 28th February. There is some snagging still to be done. The new museum website - <http://www.themcmanus-dundee.gov.uk> - also went live in February with the museum's opening. We have realised what a major task putting our collections database online will be so this is being rolled out in stages.

The focus is to get back to "normal" museum work. We will be working on the collections unit in Barrack Street to make it ready for public use. Julie Campbell is on maternity leave but she will be back in May/June, when we will start planning more detailed developments.

We are now gearing up to provide a full identification and information service.

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Perth Museum News

Last year Perth Museum had a bumper year for visitors with an estimated 52,000 visitors to the special exhibition "The Return of the Natives". This look at ospreys, sea eagles, polecats and other returned wildlife to our region has now closed but a popular feature; the live web cam from the osprey nest at Loch of the Lowes will remain thanks to the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Last year an osprey was sadly killed when it was electrocuted on wires near Comrie. This specimen will become the star exhibit in a newly refurbished osprey display for 2010.

Linked to "The Return of the Natives" and the Tayside Biodiversity Festival, the museum ran a special family event "Show Nature" on 2nd May 2009. With 1,400 participants it was one of the busiest afternoons ever experienced at Perth Museum. A smaller family event is planned for this year called "Bees, Butterflies and Birds" on Saturday 29th May.

Work has continued on documenting the natural history collections. Museum volunteer, Bertie Robinson has been continuing to check and update the bird collection data. Another volunteer, Mike Sedakat has finished collating squirrel sightings received over the past three years. Nick Dadds has returned to continue cataloguing the Balfour herbarium with over 9,000 specimens now listed.

The museum has been awarded £56,000 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for the cataloguing of the Francis Buchanan White Hemiptera (insect) collection. An entomologist will be recruited shortly for this 18 month project.

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Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Update

Supporting Tayside's Tree Sparrows Phase II

SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Funding for phase II of the Targeting Tree Sparrows Project has allowed further work to help the Tree Sparrow population to be carried out in Angus. This work has been carried out by Carol Littlewood of Littlewood Land Care, who was previously awarded the project funding when Farm Conservation Adviser for Angus FWAG. Luckily despite the demise of FWAG Carol was able to take the project forward herself.

Phase I of the project was the erection of nestboxes at 30 sites, 10 each in Angus, Perthshire and Kinross, on farms where local knowledge and existing survey data indicated there were existing populations of Tree Sparrows. This initial part of the project had the aim of securing the existing populations on these farms and uptake of the boxes in the first year was considered very successful as thirteen of the 30 sites had boxes confirmed as being used for nesting by Tree Sparrows. In total 42 of the boxes erected had Tree Sparrows using them and only 16 of the 360 boxes put up were not used at all. The boxes not used by Tree Sparrows were used mainly by tits, some had signs of small birds using them as a roost and others contained wasp bykes. One box had been used as an acorn store by a mouse. A few boxes had signs of damage by woodpeckers.

Monitoring results from these boxes for a second year have not been collated yet indications are very positive - the best site in Angus in the first year had 10 boxes used by Tree Sparrows, on inspection just after Christmas this year it was found that all 12 boxes were now being used by tree Sparrows and at another site where no boxes had been used by Tree Sparrows in the first season the second year survey showed 2 boxes had seen successful Tree Sparrow nests and some of the other were being used by Tree Sparrows as winter roosts, so it is assumed they have now adopted the site.

Phase II of the project, as well as allowing a second year of monitoring, also funded expansion of the project in Angus. Ten new sites were identified and twelve boxes have been erected at each. These sites were on neighbouring farms with suitable habitat to the ten phase I sites and the aim of this is to encourage the expansion of the populations that phase I has hopefully secured. Phase II also involved Woodlands School in Carnoustie. Woodlands Primary does a large amount of countryside based project work and were interested in a tree Sparrow Project. Carol went along to the school with nestboxes in kit form, supplied by Woodlark Products from Bankfoot. She helped one of the P5 classes make up the boxes and then followed up with a site visit to Craigmill Den, by kind permission of the landowner Mr Ian Steven, when she put the boxes up with help from the children in identifying suitable sites from what they had been learning about Tree Sparrows in class. Members of the local bird group also attended this visit and talked to the children about the birds they could hear and see at the site and it was hoped this would lead to further links between the group and school where the children could be shown ringing etc.

Barn Owls in Tayside

Carol Littlewood continues to collect and collate Barn Owl sightings for Tayside and from this will maintain the map that has been produced of likely range of Barn Owls in Tayside. No sightings received since the map was produced have expanded the known population range, but many have confirmed Barn Owls are still active in areas where they have now been seen for a number of years. The boxes Carol had spare from previous FWAG projects are now all spoken for, having been supplied to farms in Angus where either Carol or Christine Hall from SAC have found farmers have Barn Owls whilst out on other advisory work. Supplies of the "Have you Seen a Barn Owl?"



postcard are available from the biodiversity office: these would be useful to leave in rural libraries, post offices, pubs or local shops. If you can help distribute these, please contact Iain Campbell on Tel. 01382 433042; iain.campbell@dundeecity.gov.uk. They can be returned to Carol using the “FREEPOST, Tayside Biodiversity” address.

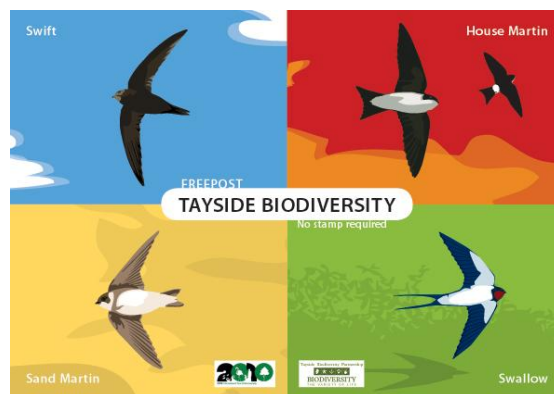
The Linnet Link Project

Another project Carol has taken forward is the Linnet Link project. This involved selection of sites for planting of shrub strips for habitat enhancement along the Arbroath to Dundee cycle track. The planting is being co-ordinated by Angus Council and is about to get underway.

Carol walked the track surveying for Linnets at different times of year and those seen were always associated with established linear habitats, such as woodland strips and hedges, running perpendicular to the cycleway. The enhancement planting has been planned to prioritise where it would make links between some of these linear habitats and so increase the movement of Linnets along this corridor. The planting will obviously also improve the habitat for many other species, those seen during the Linnet surveys included Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Blackbird.

Swift Survey - and First Sightings of Hirundine Species

After a slow year in 2009 of adding information to the Swift database, there are plans this year to obtain information on the “first sightings” in Tayside for swifts, house martins, swallows and sand martins. A freepost postcard will be available from the end of March and the same information will be on the Tayside Biodiversity website. Your input would be much appreciated!



The swift survey itself will continue as it is becoming increasingly urgent to locate actual swift nest sites and list them on the three local authority planning departments’ GIS. Tayside’s Manual for Planners and Developers includes a Biodiversity Advice Note on how to mitigate for swifts in building renovation projects (the Manual and Advice Notes can be downloaded from www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk). The “dots on map” idea is now proving to be helpful in knowing where to focus surveys: we still need to find if the gaps on the map are due to a lack of survey work or a lack of swifts.

So - if you can let us know where you first see sand martins, swifts, swallows and house martins - and then look to the skies at least once in the summer to count swifts, we would be very grateful. Both actions can be recorded online. If you can act as a Local Survey Co-ordinator to encourage



others to join in the swift survey, please let the Swift Interest Group leaders know - Craig Borland: BorlandC@angus.gov.uk or Daniele Muir: DMuir@pkc.gov.uk. Posters, survey forms and further information are available on request.

Sand Martin Survey

This survey has been very low-key so far, but all sightings of sand martins - and particularly knowledge of their nest sites - are welcome. The Partnership's Sand Martin Interest Group (led by Ian Ford) is focussing on finding new sites for sand martin walls and to study the existing ones. If you would like to be kept in touch with the work of the Group, please contact Ian direct on ianford0705@aol.com.

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Volunteers in Biological Recording - Questionnaire for Individual Recorders

This survey is being co-ordinated by Alastair Somerville of Biodiversity Solutions as research for Scottish Natural Heritage exploring the role and effectiveness of voluntary biological recording.

This survey is intended to gather views from individual recorders; if you also organise a recording scheme, group or project then you may also wish to complete a separate survey for organisers. If you would like to contribute comments go to www.smart-survey.co.uk/v.asp?i=18811ckeuo; or Email info@biodiversitysolutions.co.uk