

Action for Key Species



Northern Brown Argus © Iain Cowe

Butterflies and Moths

Tayside holds significant populations of some butterflies and moths which are the highest priority for conservation in Scotland. Butterfly Conservation's Regional Action Plan outlines the main actions for survey and conservation work - <http://eastscotland-butterflies.org.uk/actionplans.html>. On the Angus coast, the Small Blue is the current focus for activity, including the planting of its food plant, Kidney Vetch. The Northern Brown Argus and its food plant, Common Rock-Rose, needs a focus too as there are small isolated colonies in the Sidlaws and Glen Garry.

The hills around Loch Rannoch are home to some of our most threatened upland moth species including the Kentish Glory, Northern Dart and Small Dark Yellow Underwing; in some areas there are no post-2000 records so further surveys are urgently needed.

Bearded Tits

The Tay Reedbeds cover 410 hectares and are home to a variety of specialised wildlife. Amongst them is one of our most charismatic birds which can be seen in only a few scattered locations throughout the country.

The Bearded Tit first colonised the Tay Reedbeds in the 1990s; they now hold c50% of the UK population. The Tay Ringing Group has revealed much about this species' requirements and movements. In 2014 an amazing 723 birds were ringed at the reedbeds some of which dispersed far and wide throughout Scotland. Sympathetic habitat management is critical to the species' long-term future. Work carried out by the RSPB and Tay Ringing Group (www.tayringinggroup.org) is ensuring this colourful and engaging bird continues to thrive.

Bearded Tits © Vicky Turnbull





Formica Aquilonia © Craig Macadam

Wood Ants

Tayside hosts both the Hairy wood ant and the Scottish wood ant. Both are Priority Species that are limited in their distribution and currently experiencing a population decline.

Wood ants play an essential part in the ecosystem, dispersing seeds, stimulating the roots and shoots of trees, distributing nutrients around the woodland and as a food source for birds and Badgers. Nest Quest is a Buglife citizen science project encouraging us to search for Wood ant nests - these resemble large piles of pine needles next to a tree or a tussock of grass and are found in coniferous, mixed and broadleaved forests. Wood ants need the sun to keep their nest warm so will choose somewhere not too shaded. Take part via <https://www.buglife.org.uk/nest-quest>.

Amphibians and Reptiles

The Tayside Amphibian & Reptile Group (TayARG) is raising awareness of our herpetofauna to a wide audience: from roads engineers and planners to local communities and species specialists. The area hosts Smooth, Palmate and Great Crested Newts, together with Common Lizard, Adder and Slow-worm: all Priority Species.

The Amphibian in Drains project is helping to safeguard our declining numbers of Common Frog and Common Toad, also listed as Priority Species. Sustainable Drainage in both urban and rural areas is the next key focus, as is the rolling out of the Tayside Pond Doctor projects. Further information is available from <http://www.arguk.org/local-groups> and there is a lively Facebook page which keeps everyone in touch with volunteer events and training workshops.



Smooth newt © D Muir



Bottlenose dolphin © WDC/Charlie Philips

Marine Life

The Angus coastline is a wildlife watching secret - home to a wide range of coastal and marine habitats and species. The Marine Life Angus website introduces some of these sites and species and offers an opportunity to report cetacean sightings at www.marinelifeangus.co.uk.

The information is used to help understand and conserve our maritime habitats and species. Tayside Priority Species include Bottlenose dolphin, Harbour porpoise and Minke whale and there are occasional visits from other species too. By collecting presence, behavioural and sightings frequency data along our coast we can build a picture of how these mammals use our coastal waters and suggest protective measures where needed.

Scottish Wildcat

The Angus Glens is one of the best areas in Scotland for wildcat and maintaining a strong population is key to halting and then reversing the decline of this unique mammal. Scottish Wildcat Action <http://www.scottishwildcataction.org/> is a five year collaborative project involving more than 20 partners. Its monitoring of the wildcat population will inform conservation approaches, promote land management actions beneficial to Scottish wildcats (e.g. wildcat-friendly predator control), and will promote responsible cat ownership within the local community.

Whilst the Action Plan has been developed within the Scottish Environmental policy context, volunteer engagement is vital for collecting valuable data on this iconic species.

Scottish Wildcat © Scottish Wildcat Action





Smolts © Atlantic Salmon Trust

Atlantic Salmon

In the economic, social, environmental and cultural context of Tayside the wild Atlantic salmon is a vitally important species. The east coast is a stronghold for it, despite the decline in overall numbers. Our rivers continue to generate large numbers of young salmon (smolts) which migrate to ocean feeding grounds where they feed for between one and four years.

EU Special Areas of Conservation on Tayside salmon rivers are targeted at the management of wild Atlantic salmon and the endangered Freshwater pearl mussel. The Scottish Government's ending of the practice of mixed stocks coastal netting ensures more salmon gain access to the Tay and the South Esk, both of which continue to have sustainable runs of salmon. Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland – www.rafts.org.uk.

Fungi

Local Fungus Recording Groups are run by enthusiasts keen to share their knowledge and help improve identification skills - <http://www.britmycolsoc.org.uk/>. The Tayside & Fife Fungal Group has a very large area to cover, especially as it has not been intensively surveyed and many species no doubt remain undiscovered. Habitat is all important: old meadows, unsprayed and unfertilised, host Waxcaps (the *Hygrocybe* species), whereas the coastal areas include specialised species such as Dune Stinkhorn. Old woodlands with plenty of dead wood host Boletus, Chanterelle and the rare Golden Cap (*Phaeolepiota aurea*), the latter often associated with nettles. The uplands have not been investigated in any great detail but they could hold a number of very interesting fungi.



Amanita Muscaria © Jim Cook