



Aliens at Montrose

Targeting South Esk invasives for second year



Kelly Ann Dempsey, Project Officer for Environmental Strategy/River South Esk Catchment Partnership tells us about a South Esk catchment-wide eradication project.

Undertaking a catchment-wide invasive weed eradication project has been no small feat for the River South Esk catchment Partnership, but progress in 2010 was very successful. Large swathes of the catchment have been treated using Round-up Bioactive and by late October in excess of 180,000 sq m of Giant Hogweed had been sprayed, beginning in the middle of the catchment. In addition, over 14,500 sq m of Japanese Knotweed was sprayed in the three main areas of infestation. The project led by the Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust will begin again in March/April.

Seed banks and re-growth will contribute to new plants in future years, hence the need for continued spraying over several consecutive years and continued treatment will allow greater access to areas of the catchment as well as being of great benefit to native species. The knock on effect of treating the catchment upstream of Montrose Basin will hopefully be visible on the reserve in the near future.

Wildlife crime training at Montrose

Andy Turner, Wildlife Crime Education Officer for Grampian Police visited Montrose during January to lead a short course for staff and volunteers on wildlife crime in Scotland.

After a very interesting talk in which Andy explained what constitutes a wildlife crime, how to recognise a potential crime and what to do if you see a wildlife crime being committed, the group ventured outside to see some of the horrific contraptions used to illegally trap, kill and maim wildlife.

Everyone who attended thought the course was extremely useful and informative, many thanks to Andy and also to Dave MacKinnon, Grampian Police Wildlife Crime Officer for the photograph of Andy with a recent victim of deer poaching at St .Cyrus, Aberdeenshire.



Surveys & Monitoring

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

Unfortunately, the weather meant it was unsafe to carry out the WeBS count in December, the first time a count has been missed on the Basin in a long time.

Thankfully the country had thawed out by the middle of January and the first count of 2011 took place as planned on Sunday 16th.

The highest counts (excluding geese) are below:

Wigeon	2,031	Curlew	439
Knot	1,133	Mallard	412
Eider	842	Teal	384
Redshank	839	Mute swan	218
Shelduck	817	Bar-tailed godwit	132
Oystercatcher	808	Whooper swan	103
Golden plover	500	Pintail	72

Dates for 2011 WeBS at Montrose:

16 th January	17 th July
20 th February	14 th August
20 th March	11 th September
17 th April	9 th October
15 th May	27 th November
12 th June	11 th December

For more info. on WeBS, visit <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs>



Moths at Montrose



Seventy-seven new moth species were added to the reserve list by volunteer surveyor Paul Brooks during 2010, including Herald moth (pictured here). This is a great result and illustrates the dedication and hard work put in by Paul, it can't be easy staying up all night or getting up at 3.30am to come down to the reserve to close up a moth trap!

Staff and volunteer quiz night 2011

Well, the long, cold winter is almost over and to celebrate the start of the new summer (yes, summer!) season and the Visitor Centre returning to full-time opening, the annual staff and volunteers' quiz night will once again be held at Montrose Basin Visitor Centre.

Starting at **7.30pm** on **Thursday 3rd March**, come along and test your skills and general knowledge against quiz master for the evening, Andy Wakelin.

There will be tea, coffee and nibbles provided upstairs and everyone is more than welcome to come along for what is sure to be a fun-filled evening of great craic (can you tell who put that bit in?!). We look forward to seeing you all there.

It's a bugs life!

To encourage visitors and especially children to enjoy the world of insects, our "bug mansion" at the front of the Visitor Centre has been enhanced by a new interpretation panel funded by Angus Council. The "bug mansion" was constructed by local school children along with help from Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteers and Teacher Naturalists and it is a fantastic way of encouraging insects into your own garden. Have a look at the construction yourself and see how easy it is to make a simple habitat which will provide a haven for insects.



Eileen's Christmas Day bird count

Volunteer Eileen Bickerstaff once again gave up her Christmas Day to carry out a sponsored bird count around the Montrose area in aid of the reserve.

Although temperatures were at a chilly -7°C , the first birds were recorded from the comfort and warmth of Eileen's own house over a cup of coffee! After de-icing the car, the first stop was the Wildlife Centre for a couple of hours where the bird count rose quickly, before heading on to Montreathmont forest. Unfortunately the snow plough had blocked the gate, making access to the hide impossible. The easiest birds were fieldfare in the car park at the Wildlife Centre and pink-footed geese flying overhead. Eileen's 'bogy bird' turned out to be coal tit, not even a cheep!

Eventually it became so cold and hazardous the decision was made to return home, happy with 55 species. Thank you to everyone who sponsored Eileen, and of course to Eileen for all her hard work and dedicated birdwatching!

Geese at Montrose Basin 2010-2011

Goose numbers on the Basin have fluctuated greatly throughout the winter due to the harsh weather conditions we experienced during December.

After breaking the record for the highest number of pink-footed geese on the Basin with over 65,000 at the start of October, numbers slowly declined as birds dispersed throughout Scotland and as far south as Norfolk.

The latest count carried out on 16th January indicated there were 19,350 pink-footed geese, 2519 greylag geese and 6 brent geese on the reserve.



Photograph shows geese leaving the Basin at dawn during January.

Discounts for SWT members

Did you know that you get 10% discount on bird seed and optical equipment if you are a member of the Scottish Wildlife Trust? Just present your membership card to the staff on duty to claim your discount. Use your discount to purchase your bird seed and at the same time help support the Wildlife Trusts by buying Vinehouse Farm bird seed from our Visitor Centre. Update your binoculars or telescope from our range of optical equipment on sale within the Centre or pop along to our next Optical Fair on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd May.

Caught on camera: Roe deer

Ranger, Adam McClure, recently purchased an infra-red camera trap in an effort to try and get some photographs of the nocturnal activity on the reserve. It is triggered by movement and has the ability to either take still images or short videos, although unfortunately not both at the same time.

The camera was placed out on the reserve where we had seen evidence of roe deer. It was only left in position for two nights, but here are a couple of the images it managed to capture.

It is still on the reserve, so hopefully we will be able to bring you some new photos soon.



'Montrose' greenshank makes an amazing journey



As part of study into movements of migrating birds, the Grampian and Tay Ringing Groups have been colour-ringing greenshank at Montrose Basin since 2006. Each bird is given a numbered metal ring, as well as a unique combination of colours in the hope that it will be spotted by birdwatchers who will report it to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). An example of a colour-ringed greenshank is shown here.

Recently there have been reports from Cumbria in England, Fingal in Ireland and on the Basin itself. One bird, however, was spotted in much sunnier climes than our shores. An adult greenshank which was caught and ringed at on the reserve at in August 2009 was given the colour combination of black over blue on the right leg and red over black on the left leg. There were no further sightings of this particular bird until 20th October 2010 when it was re-sighted on Porto Santo which is an island of the Madeira archipelago off north-west Africa – that's a huge movement of 2837 kilometres!

If you spot a colour-ringed greenshank, please make sure and report it to the BTO or the Ranger at Montrose as these sightings are providing vital information about movements of this fascinating wader.



Events at Montrose Basin LNR

Full events leaflets will be available from the Visitor Centre from March.

World Wetlands Day Guided Walk	Wednesday 2nd February	10.30am - 2.00pm	Old Mill Car Park
Celebrate World Wetlands Day by joining Rangers on a guided walk where we will visit two of the hides over looking the Basin to see some of the wonderful wildlife which can be found on the reserve.			
Meet the Ranger	Saturday 19th February	1.00pm - 3.00pm	Visitor Centre
An afternoon of Ranger-led birdwatching from the Visitor Centre. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to show you how to use telescopes and binoculars, point out the wildlife of the Basin and answer any questions you may have.			
Bye-bye Pink-feet	Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th March	10.30am - 4.00pm	Visitor Centre
Make sure you come along to Montrose Basin Visitor Centre to see the pink-footed geese before they make the long, arduous journey back to their breeding grounds in Iceland.			
Meet the Ranger	Saturday 19th March	12.00pm - 2.00pm	Visitor Centre
Mud glorious mud!	Wednesday 6th April	10.30am - 12.30pm	Visitor Centre
Children's activity - Discover and examine the many "muddy" creatures living in the Basin – Wear Wellies.			
Art in the outdoors	Wednesday 13th April	10.30am - 12.30pm	Visitor Centre
Children's activity - Enjoy a different and fun way to look at nature.			
Meet the Ranger	Saturday 16th April	11.45am - 1.45pm	Visitor Centre

HD arrives at Montrose Basin

Andy Wakelin



This season visitors to Montrose Basin will be able to enjoy high definition footage of common terns nesting on the raft thanks to funding secured from Angus Environmental Trust, LEADER funding, Dundee and Angus and North Angus Member Centres. The new camera project totalling around £60,000 will see the addition of three new cameras on the reserve. One will be a saltmarsh camera overlooking the Salt Pans from the Bank of Scotland hide, a new Visitor Centre camera and a high definition camera based on the tern raft. These latest additions will allow visitors to enjoy year round footage from our webcams which can be accessed via the Scottish Wildlife Trust website, all from the comfort of their own homes! New technology will also

allow staff to record wildlife behaviour on the reserve which can then be passed to the media to promote the Basin to a wider audience. Look out for news of the webcam release on our website.

Do you ever see ringed birds?

While out birdwatching do you ever see birds with rings?

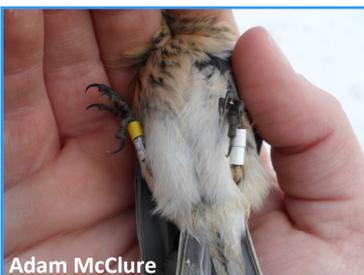
On the Basin you might see greenshank, twite (see below), starlings, redshank or godwits with a combination of coloured rings on their legs, or swans or cormorants with leg rings (see right) or geese with neck rings which will have a combination of letters and / or numbers.

If so, make sure you report them to the British Trust for Ornithology

(BTO) via their website (www.bto.org), or alternatively, please report them to the Ranger, Adam McClure, who will pass the details on and will report back to you with any information (amcclure@swt.org.uk).



Richard Blackburn



Adam McClure

The data gained from ringing helps organisations like the BTO monitor important information such as bird movements and population trends, vital to global conservation efforts.

The correct way to read the rings is the top ring (i.e. closest to the top of the bird's leg) on the left leg then the bottom ring, followed by the top ring on the right leg, then the bottom. So for the example shown here it would be white over white / metal over yellow and the greenshank on the previous page would be lime over red / yellow over blue - easy!

Sssssshhhh! Silent auction in aid of Montrose Basin

We need your help!

We plan to hold a "silent auction" this year to raise much needed funds for the Visitor Centre and Reserve. We rely heavily on local fundraising to help us purchase every day items like bird seed for the feeding stations, reserve tools and interactive displays for the children to enjoy in the Centre. Our latest initiative is to hold the silent auction sometime around April but before hand we need to collect items to sell – this is where you can help! We require donations of items such as good quality books, ornaments etc.

It's easy, just have a look around your house; you may have an unopened gift that you will never use. Just drop the item into the Visitor Centre and we will turn it into funds to help the Centre and Reserve here at Montrose.

Record temperature set at Montrose Basin VC

With the harsh weather during December, metrological records were being set right across the UK. Here at Montrose Basin we set our very own record when overnight on 1st - 2nd December temperatures dipped to a chilly minus 12°C (c.10.5°F).



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