



# From Summit to Sand



Newsletter Issue 02

## ACTION FOR TAYSIDE'S BIODIVERSITY

**T**he SITA Trust Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund was launched in September 2005 to deliver local biodiversity conservation in line with the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. Since the Fund's launch £297,268 has been allocated to 39 practical "on the ground" projects throughout Tayside. The total leverage of these projects is nearly £685,000. Third party contributions have been given by the three local authorities (Angus, Dundee City, and Perth & Kinross Councils) and Forestry Commission Scotland.

With the news that the SITA Trust has awarded the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership £100,000 a year for a further three years, the time is right to highlight some of the sterling work going on throughout Tayside. The projects highlighted here are a small proportion of what has been achieved so far. A list can be downloaded from the funding section of [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk). The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership is also focusing on just over 50 of its own projects. This Newsletter begins to highlight a few of them.

### Partnership working safeguards Dundee's Red Squirrels

A project focusing on Dundee's Red squirrel population - thought to be the last population in urban Britain - was first identified by the Community Planning process and Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan in 2002. A working group made up from a number of partners was quickly established.

The involvement and commitment from a diverse range of organisations and individuals has been a major strength of the project. Overseen by Sustain Dundee, an environmental charity, the Red Squirrel Project has attracted £45,000, including a grant from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund (TBAF). A Biodiversity Action Grant from the Scottish Executive enabled a seasonal project officer to be employed, whilst the TBAF grant has supported on-the-ground management and ensured an active volunteer group of local people. A Breathing Places grant made a publicity and public information campaign possible. Other organisations have given generous in-kind support, especially Dundee City Council.

The project has been successfully 'getting the message across' about the threat of Grey squirrels to Red squirrel populations. The project is now reaping the rewards, with city sightings of Red squirrels in areas where they have long been absent.

Information on the Tayside Red Squirrel Project is available from [redsquirrel.project@dundee.gov.uk](mailto:redsquirrel.project@dundee.gov.uk); Tel. 01382 431848. The project is bringing together the work and enthusiasm of the three groups in the area. These voluntary groups are helping to survey squirrel numbers, protecting their habitat and supporting conservation bodies to raise public awareness. If you would like to take part in the Tayside Red Squirrel survey, please go on to [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk), or check [www.dundeedredsquirrels.co.uk](http://www.dundeedredsquirrels.co.uk).



© Jimmie Reid

### Small Cow-wheat Species Recovery Project

Small cow-wheat (*Melampyrum sylvaticum*) is a UKBAP Priority Species, a priority for Scotland and for Tayside. It is an annual plant of broadleaved, humid woodlands where it is a partial parasite on a wide range of plants. Once widespread in the UK, it is now restricted to only twenty sites, nearly all of which are in Scotland. As Perthshire was once a strong hold for the species, it was particularly relevant to focus the Species Recovery Project in Tayside.

The project, which received monies from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund, is working towards the UKBAP target of increasing the number of sites with Small Cow-wheat in Scotland. It will also add to our knowledge of rare species introductions, in particular the importance of seed provenance and founder population size. It is a collaboration between local landowners, Forest Research and the National UKBAP Steering Group for Small Cow-wheat.

Seed collected from three natural populations was sown at six suitable sites in Tayside. Germination, plant survival and flowering were

assessed throughout 2006 and 2007. Germination success was promising with a 20% germination rate recorded - germination rates appeared to be slightly higher for seeds collected from the Perthshire native populations. Survival of plants, however, varied: 60% survived to maturity at one site in 2006, but all plants were lost from two of the sites in 2005. However good growth and flowering has been observed and it is possible that plants established in 2007 have resulted from crossing between different seed provenances, perhaps resulting in enhanced survival characteristics. The trials have also revealed that Small Cow-wheat seed can remain viable in the soil for longer than expected suggesting that an accumulation of a seed bank may be possible.



© A Broome

## Supporting Tayside's Tree Sparrows

Tree sparrows are smaller than House sparrows and both males and females are similar in appearance. They both have a warm chestnut-brown crown with a black spot on white cheek patches. Juveniles also have the warm red-brown cap.

Listed as a UK Priority Species, the rapidly declining population is now largely localized with birds wintering in woodland and farmland, and seen in small flocks or mixing in with larger groups of farmland bird such as Yellowhammer and Chaffinch. They are reported from less than one in twenty Garden BirdWatch gardens, confirming their predominantly rural existence. Changes in agriculture are thought to have been one of the main causes of the reduced population of Tree Sparrows across Britain. Selective herbicides make the weed seeds they used to feed on much harder to find and the change to a higher percentage of winter cropping means less stubble fields are available for them to feed in over the winter.

Now in Tayside, at least, a little help is at hand. Thirty sites throughout Angus, Perthshire and Kinross-shire have been targeted by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group's Conservation Advisers as part of the Tayside Tree Sparrows Project, funded by the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund.

Through local FWAG or bird ringers' knowledge, and liaison with the RSPB's Volunteer Farmer Alliance Project Officer, areas have been identified as already having Tree sparrows present. The project is focusing on these areas to help secure existing populations and prevent further decline of the species. The new project will see 12 tree sparrow boxes erected in suitable habitat on each of the farms involved. A report and a map highlighting areas of the farm important for Tree Sparrows will be provided to each farmer,

together with ideas about what can be done to make further improvements to the habitat. The nestboxes for the project have been made by a local business and all 360 boxes have now been erected. The boxes will be monitored this summer to see if any of them are used; if they are the chicks will have leg rings fitted so they can be identified if ever caught as part of another project.

To widen the project, the FWAG Adviser in Angus secured additional funding from the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Grant to take the project into upland Angus. 'Targeting Tree Sparrows' will deliver a similar project to 16 sites where there are known to be Tree Sparrows present. One of these sites is on the edge of the Community Woodland at Westmuir, near Kirriemuir. Angus FWAG is leading a spring-time walk at the woodland, to which local people and FWAG members have been invited.

The boxes for this part of the project have been sourced from a company which has made many of the Barn Owl nestboxes for other FWAG projects in Tayside.



© Carol Littlewood

## FLOW - Following the Life of Water

The idea for this project emerged from the Broughty Ferry Environmental Group working with a variety of individuals and organisations, mainly in Broughty Ferry, Dundee. The first year of the three part project involved the creation of three hibernacula for amphibians. The first was built alongside a proposed pond in a Local Nature Reserve and involved twelve local people working alongside a skilled drystone dyker to create a functional and visually attractive feature.

The second location for a hibernaculum was the gardens of the McKinnon Centre, a skills training centre for adults requiring additional support. Volunteers who gained skills from the first project practiced their skills on the second project. An amazing pond was also created in the McKinnon Centre which was followed by improving the pond in the library grounds at Broughty Ferry. A new pond is now being established in the Local Nature Reserve.

In the meantime, a third hibernacula was built in the local Barnhill Rock Gardens. This time a group of local children, the Nature Nutters, learned some drystone dyking skills.

Local people have been keen to point out that a significantly higher number of amphibians have been seen around the features...perhaps a reflection of the wet summer, but hopefully because of the improved habitat.



© Ann Lolley

## Artificial Sand Martin wall, Crombie Country Park.

The Sand Martin, (*Riparia riparia*) is a notoriously difficult species to monitor as active and inactive nest holes are difficult to distinguish, and because whole colonies may shift to new locations as suitable sand cliffs are created and destroyed.

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Waterway Bird Survey (WBS) nest counts suggest a stable or shallowly increasing population from 1974 to 1995, but with a steep decrease in subsequent years. The main threat to this species is winter rainfall in the birds' trans-Saharan wintering grounds, and loss of habitat in the UK as modern sand quarrying is by removal of topsoil, extraction of sand and replacement of topsoil, thus removing any long term breeding sites. Additionally, Health & Safety legislation requires quarry and pit owners to leave exposed slopes at a safe angle, which is no use to sand martins, as burrows would collapse.

Funded by the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund, an artificial wall nest site has been constructed at Crombie Country Park in Angus to help the breeding population. Once established as a colony the population will be monitored during the breeding season by weekly counts of nest hole usage and by ringing of the young birds (pulli).

Special construction of the wall has provided access to a passageway at the back of the nest chambers. Each chamber has a wooden flap at the rear which allows qualified ringers access to the nest to

monitor egg laying rates and survival - this will be part of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Nest Record Scheme. Tay Ringing Group members will also be able to ring the pulli.

The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's Education and Urban sub-group members have enjoyed site visits to the wall to see the construction at close hand. The new wall contributes to targets set in the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan.

Once the site has become a strong colony, events will be held at Crombie so that visitors will see ringing demonstrations and hear about the migration and lives of this fascinating bird.

As the wall can be viewed from the Grebe Hide on the opposite bank of the reservoir, visitors will be asked to take part in valuable survey work. Displays will be set up within the Grebe Hide and the hole positions of the sand martin wall replicated so that visitors can mark off which of the holes are being used.



© C A G Lloyd

## RSPB Tay Reedbeds Biodiversity Enhancement Project

The SITA TBAF's largest grant to date of £26,000 was made to RSPB Scotland to help manage its new reserve at the Tay Reedbeds. With in-kind costs by way of staff and volunteer time, the total project cost was £57,000.

Alan Leitch, the RSPB Site Manager (Tayside Reserves) said: "Funding from SITA TBAF has contributed greatly to the sustainable management of the Tay Reedbeds and enabled us to gain a better understanding of populations of key reedbed species. This knowledge will allow us to fine tune future management so that we can maximise the biodiversity potential of the reedbeds and surrounding area. This is particularly relevant for the UKBAP and Tayside LBAP species that favour reedbeds and which are currently under threat of disappearing from Tayside. The birds in question are Reed bunting, Bearded tit, Water rail, Sedge warbler and Marsh harrier."

Funding has enabled estimates to be made of key species populations. The list makes impressive reading:

Species	Sources	Population Estimate (Year)
Water Rail	TRG/RSPB	156prs (2005)
Marsh Harrier	TRG/RSPB	5prs (2006)
Bearded Tit	TRG/RSPB	55prs (2006)
Sedge Warbler	RSPB	300-375 males (2006)
Reed Warbler	RSPB	8 males (2006)
Grasshopper Warbler	RSPB	10 males (2006)
Reed Bunting	RSPB	325-400 males (2006)

As part of the reedbed management there is an annual cutting regime which avoids the important breeding and nesting periods. It is aimed at maximising the wildlife value of the habitat through rotation and increased reed edge exposure. Pools and scrapes have been added to encourage natural feeding sites for wildlife. So far 90ha have been successfully managed out of the 175ha reserve. The RSPB's Management Plan for the Tay Reserve, scheduled for completion this year, will review the findings from the monitoring and management work completed over the initial three years of RSPB involvement on the Tay.

© RSPB



Aerial view of RSPB reedbed management in at Tay Reedbeds © RSPB

## One good tern deserves another...

Terns are summer visitors to the UK, and Angus is home to four species of them (Arctic, Common, Sandwich and Little tern), with a fifth having also been recorded (Roseate). They tend to arrive as early as March and head off in September feeding on small fish, which they catch by plunge diving. Terns are normally found nesting on shingle shores but in Montrose Arctic and Common terns for the past few years have taken up residence on gravelled surfaces found within factories where they are known to dive-bomb workers and are considered a health and safety hazard.

Beach-goers to Montrose may not realise either that they are sharing the sand with the nationally rare Little tern. The Little tern is not actually listed as a UKBAP priority species, which is likely due to lack of data and the rigorous criteria used. It is listed as a European Species of Conservation Concern. The Seabird 2000 census reports that an average of only 331 pairs of Little terns were recorded breeding in Scotland between 1998 and 2002. Highly susceptible to disturbance (a reason for its decline in Scotland), only one of 15 Little tern chicks that hatched in 2006 survived. However, last year, the Angus and Tayside Conservation Group were awarded £15.5k of funding from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund to carry out 24-hour



© J Massie

wardening of the Little terns – success speaks for itself, 16 Little tern chicks fledged! This wouldn't have happened without the dedication and enthusiasm of a mixture of paid and unpaid wardens, which included Angus College students, who put in long hours of work in a variety of conditions.

The public response to the project has been very encouraging with many local people showing a genuine interest in the work and also a willingness to accept the necessary restrictions during the vital nesting period – a temporary fence around the colony. Wardens have been happy to answer the many and varied queries regarding the project from passers by. The group have also produced a Tern 'Code of Practice' and information leaflet to hand out to the public to raise awareness of terns across Tayside. This is available on the Partnership's website.

The wardens have been supported by the newly formed Tayside Tern Working Group comprising representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust, both Angus and Dundee City Council Rangers Services, RSPB Scotland, the Tay Ringing Group, and the Angus and Dundee Bird Club. Tayside Police and the Cats Protection League have also been supportive when a feral cat threatened to decimate the fledged chicks. The wider aims of this group are to encourage the Little terns to nest at a safer location at Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve which is jointly managed by SWT and Angus Council. Last year we tried attracting them there with decoy terns and tape playing of tern calls to no avail. We'll see what happens this year!

The next phase of the project is to focus on gaining funds for nesting platforms to attract the Arctic and Common terns nesting on the gravelled surfaces within factories to the sanctuary of the Basin. This will help to diffuse the conflict they come into at their current nesting location. We hope to do this by working with the factory owners and by attracting additional private funding.

## Highland Perthshire Calcareous Grassland Project

A Partnership project, led by the Scottish Agricultural College, has secured funding from the SITA TBAF, the Cairngorms Biodiversity Grant Scheme and SNH. During the summer several potential demonstration sites were visited, with four finally being selected. Each of the sites illustrates an aspect of calcareous or species-rich grassland restoration or management - including grazing regime modification to encourage species-richness, scrub and bracken control, weed infestations, and seeding into previously improved, reverting grassland. For the last project, a vacuum seed harvester has been purchased and volunteers have been busy collecting seed from local sites.

Calcareous grasslands are rich in biodiversity; the project links well with UK and Local Biodiversity Priority Species. Several of the sites host the very rare Mason Bee (*Osmia inermis*) and

Northern Brown Argus butterfly. The project will directly contribute to the UK targets set for these, together with targets for Calcareous Grassland.

In 2008 a series of Open Days will be held on the demonstration sites to raise awareness of Best Management Practice. They will give everyone a chance to see some of the restoration and management techniques that have been implemented.



Volunteer collecting yellow rattle seed © Christine Hall

## Perthshire Barn Owl Project

The Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) has been working with Perthshire FWAG to raise awareness of farmers about what they can do to help barn owls.

Barn owls are not common in Perthshire, but in the last decade they have made something of a comeback in certain areas. SAC and FWAG started the project in 2004 with funding from SNH, having identified a core population of barn owls along the River Tay corridor. With funding from SITA TBAF and the Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme (BAGS), the core area was extended to include the River Isla corridor. Farms have been surveyed and farmers visited to discuss barn owl habitat requirements. Many barn owls are using old steadings for roosting and nesting, but at present there is great pressure on these buildings for conversion to housing or replacement by modern farm sheds. Numerous barn owl nest boxes have been erected to provide alternative

sites in readiness for the loss of the old steadings. The project is helping to meet the objectives of the Tayside LBAP Farm Buildings Habitat Action Plan. The habitat work undertaken by farmers encourages many UK Priority Species such as Brown Hare and Grey Partridge.

There are worrying times ahead with the cessation of set-aside in 2008, and many agri-environment schemes coming to a close in the next few years – the barn owl's habitat could be compromised. It is hoped funding will ensure the continuation of the project as there has been much enthusiasm shown by local farmers keen to safeguard these beautiful birds.



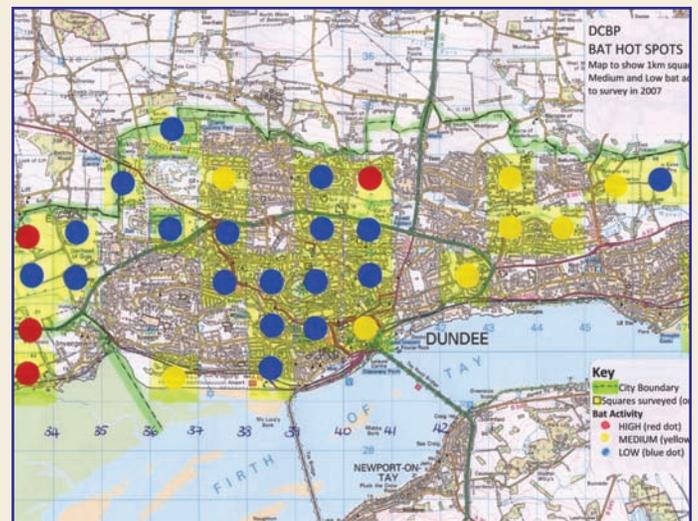
© Karl Munday 2000

## The Dundee City Bat Project 2007

Funded by the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund, the project involved 27 Dundee volunteers undertaking over 200 hours of bat survey work during the summer of 2007. Free training was given; bat detectors and other equipment provided. The survey method was simple, interesting and enjoyable - most volunteers were completely new to bats and bat surveys. In all, forty six of the 57 x 1km squares were surveyed on foot; thirty eight x 1km squares were surveyed by car.

Asked what volunteers thought was the best bit about taking part they said: "being outside, exploring new areas", "finding out about the wildlife on your home patch", "seeing another volunteer's face when he heard his first bat call!". Someone's bonus was "seeing a harvest moon rise over Caird Park".

By the end of the summer, three potential roost sites had been identified and a new bat group had been set up in Dundee. All records were forwarded to the Local Records Centre in McManus Galleries.



Dundee Bat Hotspots – shows areas of High, med and low bat activity (2007) © Anne Youngman

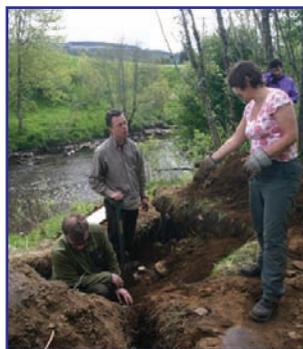
### More Information

Find out more about the project, and bats in general, on the Bat Conservation Trust website: [www.bat.conservations.trust.org.uk](http://www.bat.conservations.trust.org.uk). To find out more about bat surveys see the "Help Us Count Bats" section on the BCT website.

To join the Dundee City bat group see: [www.dundee-bats.com](http://www.dundee-bats.com)

## Kindrogan Otter Project

Wirral Countryside Volunteers, a BTCV affiliated group from Merseyside, spent a weekend constructing a "chamber and pipe" otter holt at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre, Perthshire. Kindrogan, the National Centre for Excellence in Field Studies and Biodiversity Training, received SITA TBAF funding to enable improvements to the Centre's surrounding river and woodland habitats.



© Martyn Jamison, Kindrogan Field Studies Centre

## Orchardbank Swift and Bats Project

As part of the Tayside Swift Project, Swift and bat boxes were provided on William Wallace House, Orchardbank, Forfar (for the Angus Council Housing Dept.). To take part in the ongoing swift survey, contact the Biodiversity Office for a form, or log on to the species section of [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk).



© Craig Borland

## Trottick Ponds and Den o' Mains Ponds Restoration Project



© John Whyman, DCC

Two Dundee ponds have been extensively renovated in a project made possible by the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund. The results are plain to see for anyone visiting the ponds and wildlife is already returning to the ponds.

John Whyman, of Dundee City Council's Countryside Ranger Service, started looking after Trottick Ponds in 1992, and even then it was clear that a large amount of silt had built up and was reducing the value of the ponds for water wildlife. The silt had come down the Dighty Burn especially in times of spate at snow melt. In 2000, after Trottick Ponds was declared a Local Nature Reserve, John started to apply to funders to get a restoration project underway. He was not successful.

The Den o' Mains Ponds are classed as "on stream" ponds and are fed directly from the Gelly Burn. They too have suffered from silt building up and reducing the amount of water in them. In the past the ponds were visited regularly by Kingfishers, but they need open water to fish in and they were no longer seen in the area.

John put together an application to the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund and was successful in gaining over £9,000 for the project. He was particularly impressed with the ease of the application system and the emphasis on funding being available for biodiversity rather than community or education work.

Dundee City Council's Parks and Outdoor Leisure section of the Leisure and Communities Department supported the project by providing staff with tractors and trailers to remove the silt from each site. A host of volunteers, including the Dundee Conservation Volunteers, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Dundee Naturalist Society provided additional help digging ditches,

removing rubbish, undertaking surveys, replacing signs and building an artificial Otter holt. Inland Revenue staff and local volunteers joined in.

The digger - a 13 tonne JCB JS130 - started the excavation at Trottick Ponds, with Leisure and Communities Department tractor drivers moving the silt to the field to the north where it has since been spread. The field is being planted with trees and the silt will make an ideal soil improver. The excavation works finished at Den o' Mains ponds last October.



© John Whyman, DCC

The project aims to not only provide more open and deeper, clearer water, but also a greater amount of "pond edge". The digger spared some of the silt and reeds and left a sculptured 'wobbly' edge to the water. This will be where the greatest variety of pond life will be found - diving beetles, pond skaters, frogs, fresh water shrimp and even leeches. By providing more

habitat more wildlife should return over the next few months.

John is hoping to see more dragonflies and newts at Trottick in the summer (and for many years to come) and to see Kingfishers return to fish at Den o' Mains Ponds. Trottick Ponds will also be monitored for Otters - with a special floating raft that captures Otter footprints!

The project has been achieved through the combined efforts of Countryside Rangers, Parks and Outdoor Leisure, Landscape

Design Team and the contractor: RBS Muir. Thanks are due, in particular, to Jim and Fraser (Tractor Operators) and Raymond from RBS Muir who suffered a lot of mud to benefit these valuable wildlife and landscape sites.

© John Whyman, DCC



## The Highland Perthshire Water Vole Project

This new project will focus on Strathardle and be centred on the Kindrogan Field Studies Centre as signs of the increasingly rare Water vole are found here. The pilot project will involve staff and volunteers monitoring four sites to identify areas used by Water Vole. Upland watercourses are now vital refuges for this UK Priority Species. Habitat enhancement will include the safeguarding or creation of riparian strips, stock exclusion and control of non-native invasive species. The project is being run by the Scottish Agricultural College with funding from the SITA TBAF.



Photograph © Alan Ross

## Juniper Natural Regeneration Management Trials

Juniper (*Juniperus communis subsp. communis*) is a UKBAP Priority species and is listed in the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan as a local priority for conservation. Juniper woodland has a restricted distribution in Britain and the stands of juniper in Tayside are both of regional and national importance being the most extensive areas of juniper woodland in south East Scotland.

A suite of trials have been set-up across Scotland, in collaboration with Plantlife Scotland, to test the value of scarification and use of cattle in encouraging natural regeneration of juniper. The need for such information has been highlighted in the UKBAP for juniper.

Two sites were identified in Tayside where good stands of juniper occur and where the managers are keen to try summer cattle grazing to improve conditions for regeneration. At Fungarth, results after one year showed a significant impact of cattle on

reducing sward height and in controlling bracken growth which are likely to be beneficial. There was, however, also evidence of increased cattle browsing on the juniper bushes which may affect seed production in the future. A further site (Ballyoukan in Perthshire) has also been set-up for cattle grazing and a base-line survey undertaken.

This is a partnership project: site management has been facilitated by Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). Project costs have come from the SITA TBAF and Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme; site monitoring for the trial has been co-funded by Plantlife Scotland (as part of their 'Back from the Brink' programme) and Forest Research.



Cattle grazing the Juniper regeneration site © A Broome



Before: August 2002

## Pond Creation at Auchterarder Golf Course

The Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan was one of the first in Scotland to include a Golf Course Action Plan: there are 45 courses in the region. Like many golf courses, Auchterarder has always had wet areas which have not been conducive to play. However, as climate change has brought more intense downpours, these areas have become prone to permanent waterlogging and increasingly beyond the scope of conventional drainage and greenkeeping practices.

One such area was near the 10th fairway so it was decided a pond would provide a sustainable drainage solution, additional habitat, and landscape value at the same time.

Five years ago a pool was excavated, measuring 40m by 24m, with varying depths between 0.2m and 0.75m; inflow and outflow ditches linked with the existing drainage system. Sloping edges and an island were incorporated and the margins planted with species such as flag iris, purple loosestrife, water plantain, water mint, bogbean, marsh marigold and flowering rush. Emergent plants in more open water include white and yellow water lily, marsh cinquefoil and water soldier. Although an introduced species in Scotland, the latter has done extremely well and seems to have a strong appeal for dragonfly and damselfly. Submerged species also abound in the pond, including alternate water milfoil, small and broad leaved pond weed and rigid hornwort, a native rare in

Scotland. Unfortunately, Nuttall's waterweed and New Zealand pigmyweed have also found their way into the pond, but are being positively controlled and are not causing a major problem.

Phase 1 and 2 Habitat Surveys undertaken in 2006 described the range of wetland plants present as excellent habitat for invertebrates and amphibians. Moreover, the surrounding buffer area, which was sown with native wildflower mix after the pond was constructed, boasts over 40 species. This has become a superb damp grassland habitat with a high biological interest: species include common and marsh birdsfoot trefoil, water avens, lady's bedstraw, devil's bit scabious, selfheal, cat's ear, water forget-me-not, black knapweed, meadow vetchling, tufted vetch, ribwort plantain, sweet vernal grass and yellow rattle.

The survey identified seven species of dragonfly and damselfly, including common hawkler, emerald damselfly and ruddy darter, the latter being rare in Scotland.

Overall, the pond at Auchterarder Golf Course has been highly successful, but as part of a much wider programme of environmental management and improvement works, it demonstrates that the Club has a long-term commitment to sustainable golf.

The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership is setting up a Tayside Ponds Project to publicise good practice and encourage a number of demonstration sites such as the pond at Auchterarder. If you would like to suggest a pond, please contact Catherine Lloyd at the Tayside Biodiversity office: [Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net](mailto:Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net).



The Auchterarder Pond, August 2006

## Business and Biodiversity – businesses improve their local environment

Taypack Potatoes, a Perthshire-based packing and distribution facility, is a SEPA National VIBES Award winner (a Scottish environmental award for businesses). The creation of their biodiversity plan complemented other environmental measures being undertaken as part of their overall environmental management system.

The Business and Biodiversity Initiative is run by the Business Environment Partnership (BEP) and supported by both Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Executive. Free advice is available to companies across Scotland. At Taypack Potatoes, BEP produced a Site Biodiversity Action Plan which identified projects that would raise awareness within the company's supply chain and amongst its 40 staff, as well as helping to deliver local biodiversity objectives. These included:

- Barn owl box project – company employees made five barn owl boxes to erect around the site where barn owls had been sighted
- Tree sparrow and Bat projects – clients and suppliers were asked to contribute towards 25 tree sparrow nestboxes and 20 bat boxes being put up around the site

The projects were developed between BEP's Helen Nyul, the Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Catherine Lloyd, FWAG, BTCV and the Scottish Executive.

Overall, the Initiative helps companies make practical improvements on their sites to support biodiversity, as well as providing a better working environment for staff, suppliers and visitors to enjoy. Links between the quality of the working environment and staff retention, productivity and well-being at work are well proven, so investing in the local environment makes good commercial sense.

Along with Site Biodiversity Action Plans, the potential to improve or make new habitats on site is explored. Support includes helping the company implement practical measures, training and employee awareness-raising. In Tayside Helen has worked closely with Catherine to help The Crannog Centre, Taypack Potatoes, Blair Castle Caravan Park and more recently Hillcrest Housing Association. Further information about the Initiative is available from Helen tel. 0845 129 4843; e-mail: [helen@thebep.org.uk](mailto:helen@thebep.org.uk).



© H Nyul

### Focus on Carse of Gowrie Orchards

Very few of the historical orchards along the Carse remain. In the 2007 survey by CW Hayes Associates Eco-Consultancy only 9 of the 51 known orchards are still extant and of these many are in poor condition. Last autumn, in partnership with the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust and Forestry Commission Scotland, the Partnership held a seminar. Eighty five delegates from across Central Scotland heard a variety of presentations and local people have since discussed the potential to set up a Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum. Further information about the proposed orchard projects and programme of events for the Carse can be found in the News section of [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk)



## ZOOM Bumblebee Project

This new project will be launched during 2008 and will ask householders throughout Tayside to record their bumblebee sightings. The findings will be shared with the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and the national Bumblebee Conservation Trust based in Stirling. The idea is based on a pilot run some time ago by the Broughty Ferry Environmental Project in Dundee. It is a Partnership project with funding being predominately from Scottish Natural Heritage.



© C A G Lloyd

A "bumblebee pack" will be available which will include a copy of SNH's Bumblebee Book and Garden for Life leaflet, badges and information sheets. The "working" part of the pack will be the identification and survey sheets. There will also be a surprise free gift.

Further information will be available from Rachael Higgins at the biodiversity office:

Tel. 01 382 433042; email. [Rachael.higgins@dundee.gov.uk](mailto:Rachael.higgins@dundee.gov.uk).

### FURTHER INFORMATION

SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund - an application form and guidance notes can be downloaded from [www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk](http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk), or paper copies can be requested from Tel. 0845 605 2000.

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