



From Summit to Sand



Newsletter Issue 03

ACTION FOR TAYSIDE'S BIODIVERSITY

The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership continues to be indebted to the SITA Trust for funding the Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund (TBAF). Third party contributions have also been given by the three local authorities (Angus, Dundee City, and Perth & Kinross Councils) and Forestry Commission Scotland. The Fund was launched in September 2005 to deliver local biodiversity conservation in line with the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. Since then £469,200 has been allocated to 74 practical "on the ground" projects throughout Tayside. The total leverage of these projects is nearly £886,000.

The second issue of the Newsletter outlined some of the projects achieved so far. That was a year ago and since then the projects have been entered onto the UK Biodiversity Action Recording Scheme. BARS is a web-based information system www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk

that supports the planning, monitoring and reporting of national and local Biodiversity Action Plans. Currently there are nearly 4,400 registered BARS users from a total of over 1,200 organisations. The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's 50+ projects are also included. Thus local projects, including the SITA TBAF ones, can have their progress reported and contribute significantly to targets within both the national and local Biodiversity Action Plans.

In this third Newsletter there is a mixture of reports on existing and new TBAF projects, plus a handful of other projects being taken forward by Partners; it is only a snapshot of what has been achieved so far. Many of the projects are highlighted on www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.

Perth-ectly Batty!!

In a unique venture, The Bat Conservation Trust, Perth and Kinross Council Ranger Service, and the Perth Bat Group have joined forces to try and make Perth the first 'city' in the UK to have a complete Bat Survey undertaken on it.

Supported by the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund, this exciting project will bring people together in caring for the environment and finding out more about where they live. It offers a variety of ways for people to get involved in bat conservation in Perth (from arm-chair to active).

The bat garden project will involve local nursery school children working with the Scottish Bat Officer and local Parks Department to learn about bats and help plant the garden. The activities around European Bat Weekend (bat box building, bat talk, walk, arts & crafts) will appeal to all ages and back grounds.

At its simplest the projects recording aspect can be achieved by looking out of the window at dusk; those wanting more of a challenge can train to use bat detectors and take part in a walking survey. Everyone can make a contribution no matter their level of fitness. Bat detectors can be adapted for use by the visually impaired and people with impaired hearing can feel the vibrations of the detector. Surveyors are encouraged to work with a "buddy", a friend or someone they meet through the project.

Anyone can join in, from simply filling in a form on the website to telling us if there are bats seen in the garden, or whilst walking in

the evening around Perth, to getting a bit more active and joining some evening surveys of 1km square areas of Perth. Free training and information workshops will be held for interested individuals, and bat detectors and all the equipment needed will be available to borrow.

Do you want to know more about Perth's bats? Do you live in or near Perth? Would you feel all right about being out as late as 11pm to undertake some survey work?

Then visit www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside or contact Niall Lobley on Tel. 01738 475393 or emailnaflobley@pkc.gov.uk.

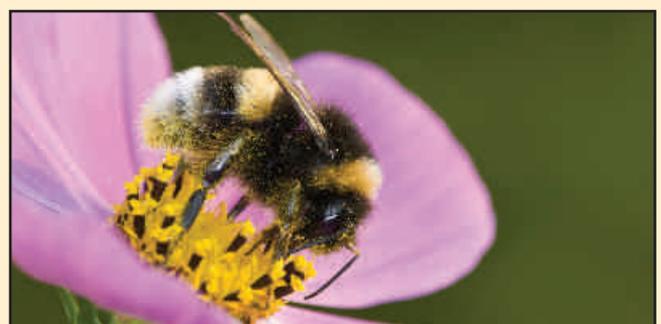
Feedback from a similar project in Dundee showed that volunteers gained confidence, learnt new skills, enjoyed being out of doors and meeting others with an interest in bats. Hearing bats with a bat detector was described as "very special". The data collected will be shared with the local authority and may be used to inform planning decisions and land management.



ZOOM In2

Based on an idea used very successfully by the Broughty Ferry Environment Project, recyclable cameras will be made available for people (of all ages) to choose a favourite place and take a snapshot of it once a month over a year.

Want to know more? Then come and see us at a biodiversity event near you, check www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk or contact the biodiversity office on Tel. 01382 433042.



ZOOM Bumblebee Project

Bee health is rising up the political agenda. Over £1 million of extra Government funding has been identified for investigating the causes of the decline of our bee populations. This is because we depend on them so much as pollinators of our crops.

The Partnership's ZOOM project aimed to raise awareness of the 'plight of the bumblebee' in Tayside and further afield by encouraging local people to identify six common species of bumblebee in their gardens and greenspaces.

Potential participants sent freepost postcards, which were distributed at events, back to the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership. In return, participants received a ZOOM pack to help them get started. This included ID and survey sheets, plus information. Everyone also received a number of free gifts including a Bumblebee book, wildflower seeds and lip balm.

As well as the postcards, ZOOM was advertised widely at events and featured prominently in the local paper, the Courier. Nearly 1,000 packs were distributed. Participants were encouraged to submit surveys and kept informed of how the project was progressing. A number of partners were involved in the project including

Scottish Natural Heritage, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Countryside Ranger Services in Tayside. An artist, Nick Owens, kindly provided all the illustrations of the bees.

The project has been extremely successful, not only in raising awareness in bumblebees, but has also encouraged local people to get involved in surveying the natural world around them. The Survey continues into 2009.



Biodiversity - What on Earth is it?

This year, Sensation, Dundee Science Centre (DSC), has hosted the 'Biodiversity: What on Earth is it?' BBSRC and NERC-funded exhibition. The interactive display has enabled DSC visitors to discover what biodiversity means, why it matters, how it can be measured, and what biodiversity issues we currently face.

The exhibition has stimulated significant public interest in its accompanying biodiversity-themed show 'From Global Species to Backyard Beasties', together with hands-on activities developed and delivered by DSC especially for the Easter break. The stimulating show introduced visitors to the fascinating variety of life on earth and what to do to safeguard it from present threats such as climate change and habitat loss. The 'Backyard Beasties' activities focused on the biodiversity found in our backyards, highlighting the amazing array of life just outside our back doors. Visitors discovered how to make butterfly/bird feeders, insect catchers, wormeries or pond viewers with every day household items such as plastic cups, cotton wool and string. The craft activities involved making items found in

the garden and either taking them home or adding them to DSC's garden collage.

DSC has been a key partner in helping the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership launch its Biodiversity Festival, hosting the reception on 1st May and a public Biodiversity Showcase at the beginning of the Festival. The showcase incorporated the official launch of the Partnership's 'Zoom In2' camera project with David Boag, the international wildlife photographer and author, and local scientists currently studying biodiversity. The collated results of the year-long project will be available from mid-2010 onwards on both the TBP and DSC websites www.sensation.org.uk.

Overall, the biodiversity exhibition and related activities have provided unique, fun and engaging opportunities to increase public awareness of this fascinating scientific area.

Tayside's first Biodiversity Festival brings together film, books, art and science to highlight "the little things that matter". The Festival could not have gone ahead without the generous contribution of all those organisations and individuals willing to stage events. The sixty events spread over ten days of celebration (1st to 10th May) included children's activities, the DCA's "Bio-Discovery" films, Perth Museum's "Return of the Natives" exhibition and open door events at the McManus Collections Unit, D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum and Kindrogan Field Centre.

Then there were the guided walks, talks and practical events on wildlife gardening and understanding pollination; a special wildlife photographic thread running through the programme, book promotions and opportunities to find out more about specific local species: reptiles, bumblebees, swifts, bats and aspen.



Angus' Sheltered Housing Biodiversity Project

Back in the autumn of 2003, with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage, the Angus Council Ranger Service piloted the first Sheltered Housing Project. Little did staff realise then that by 2009 23 sheltered housing complexes in Angus have become involved and over 1,000 residents and staff have benefited from the initial idea.

The project is taking a lead in the Tayside Biodiversity "Hospitals, Sheltered Housing and Residential Complexes Action Plan". The recipients enjoy a particular "theme" to the activities, such as "habitats for garden birds" which includes the making and siting of bird tables, feeders and nestboxes, as well as learning more about birds, how to identify them and how to help them with plantings of appropriate berried or seeded plants (including sunflowers, fruit trees, roses, etc.).

Ranger visits include an illustrated talk and practical sessions. This can involve planting sensory plants in pots, installing willow climbers or helping to improve the residents' garden. The rangers show the residents/carers how to use binoculars and identification sheets; they explain the importance of keeping the bird feeders filled as the birds come to rely on the food source.

The rangers have extended the project to more areas in Angus and already have two new groups interested for next winter. Countryside Rangers Lesley Wood, Lisa King, Ben Herschell and Duncan Gordon, all based at Crombie Country Park, liaise with wardens from local sheltered housing complexes to work with the groups over the winter period. The project now takes the form of:

- Pre-visit – a Risk Assessment meeting with the Tenant Support Officer
- A slide show about the Angus Council Ranger Service and local wildlife
- A practical visit, such as construction of bird table or bird feeders – with advice on how to feed the birds;
- Visit to Crombie Country Park – residents are collected and have the opportunity to enjoy an afternoon trip to Crombie Park;
- Follow up visits are planned for later in the year.

If anyone is interested in taking part in the Angus project please contact the Rangers on Tel. 01241 860360.



Action for Tayside's Rare Plants

The Small Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum sylvaticum*) Species Recovery Project was started in 2005 in response to targets set within the UKBAP, with funding from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund. The project attempted to establish six new populations of this annual woodland plant in its historical stronghold of Tayside.

Small cow-wheat is now one of the 22 species identified for active conservation management in the Scottish Government's Species Action Framework (SAF) programme. A SAF plan has been written which focuses on population size expansion. The recovery sites in Tayside meet one of the three objectives of the plan and experience gained from the project is helping to deliver other SAF plan objectives for this species.

The SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund is also providing support for a suite of management trials designed to encourage the natural regeneration of juniper. At two sites in Tayside, Forest Research is testing the effects of summer cattle grazing to improve conditions for regeneration. There are results to hand from three years of management.

Juniper is one of the six species identified for targeted action in the Forestry Commission Scotland's Biodiversity Programme, published in 2008. The natural regeneration of juniper is a key action identified for the conservation of juniper populations across its range in Scotland. A Species Action Note for juniper will follow and this will be aimed at promoting conservation work on the national forest estate and encouraging private landowners to manage for juniper. Knowledge gained from the juniper trials will be important in developing guidance to support any juniper conservation work that results.



Burrelton Schoolchildren Help Local Swifts

Classes one to five from Burrelton Primary School were recently involved in making nest boxes with the Perth & Kinross Council Countryside Rangers to help the local swift population. The school is lucky enough to have a natural swift nest site at the north end of the school building and it is hoped that other pairs will be attracted to the nest boxes which will be erected close by. Some of the pupils will also take part in the Tayside Swift Survey over the summer.

Swifts are amazing birds that visit Scotland briefly during the summer, flying all the way from Central and Southern Africa. They arrive in early May and have just three months to raise their chicks before returning south in early August. Swifts are sooty-brown in colour and have distinctive sickle-shaped wings. They live their entire life on the wing - feeding, mating and even sleeping in flight. In fact the only time they land is when raising their chicks. On summer evenings if the weather is fair, swifts gather in "screaming" parties chasing around the buildings where they nest.

Figures from the British Trust for Ornithology show that between 1994 and 2003 there was a huge decline in the population of Scottish swifts. It is thought that a major contribution to this decline is the loss of nesting and feeding sites. In the past swifts nested exclusively in caves, tree-holes and cliffs. However, as human activity has reshaped the countryside, most swifts now nest in buildings. Nests can be found under tiles, under eaves, or in small holes in walls - swifts don't damage buildings and make very little mess.

In order to gain a better understanding of where swifts have been nesting, we are asking anyone who sees swifts in their screaming

parties or knows where they are nesting to get in touch with the local Countryside Ranger (details below). Any information you have will be gratefully received and will help us understand why our swift population is in decline.

CAN YOU SPARE ONE HOUR IN THE SUMMER TO LOOK FOR SWIFTS?

If you can become a volunteer surveyor, please contact your nearest Swift Survey Co-ordinator:

Perth & Kinross: Daniele Muir - DMuir@pkc.gov.uk or Tel. 01250 874661 / Charlie Macpherson - cemacpherson@suparnet.com;

Angus: Craig Borland - forfarloch@angus.gov.uk or Tel. 01307 461118

Dundee - Tayside Biodiversity Partnership - Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net or Tel. 01382 433042.

Or just fill in details on-line at http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Biodiversity_Survey_Swift.asp



Ssshhh.... Listen! Look out for Aspen

The SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund is supporting Scottish Native Woods in developing their 2020 Vision for aspen in Scotland. The project aims to restore aspen to its rightful place as a significant and valued component of Scotland's native woods, using river corridors to connect the Highlands to the lowlands with appropriate stands of an iconic species which should be more common in both.

Tayside is potentially a hotspot for aspen, with a good deal of management expertise available in this area. Tayside Biodiversity Partnership support will allow Scottish Native Woods to develop this vision within Tayside and this will complement other work taking place at the national level. There has been a significant increase in interest in the species in recent years, and new techniques are being developed that will vastly increase the efficiency of nursery production by both vegetative and artificial seeding of the species.

An effective campaign focused on this one iconic barometer species must, by necessity, develop appropriate management of a range of native woodland types throughout the country - from the pinewoods in the mountains and birchwoods in our straths and glens to the more fertile broadleaved woodlands on our floodplains and beyond. A national database will be developed to consolidate information about current stands of aspen which will hopefully improve availability of local origin planting stock. This, in turn, will lead to planning connectivity between aspen stands through strategic location of new plantings and the potential to expand key existing stands by encouraging appropriate management of the surrounding woodland.

The interactive mapping database will be available in the summer, requiring a period to extensively trial first among forestry

professionals. If you have records of aspen on Tayside, please e-mail victor.clements@scottishnativewoods.org.uk. Over 150 new aspen clones have been collected so far from throughout Scotland. These will be planted out from next winter onwards, so please register your interest if you would like some planting stock. It is likely to be a number of years before demand can be fully met and we fully expect that enhanced supply will develop demand even further!

Raising awareness of aspen is equally important - we need to improve our knowledge of aspen-dependent species (including some very rare moths and fungi). Ongoing awareness-raising events will coincide with autumn colour and potential spring flowering periods. We should, perhaps, also consider - is aspen an appropriate candidate for Scotland's National Tree, linking as it does the Highlands with the Lowlands?



A 2020 VISION FOR ASPEN IN SCOTLAND
"By the year 2020, you will never be more than one mile from an Aspen stand along any of Scotland's lochs, rivers and major tributaries."

Fruitful Tayside

There's something really exciting about seeing fruit trees in blossom – first the pear, then the cherry, apple and plum: either just one or two trees or the view across a landscape dotted with orchards. There's also something equally exciting about seeing trees laden with fruit from late summer onwards.

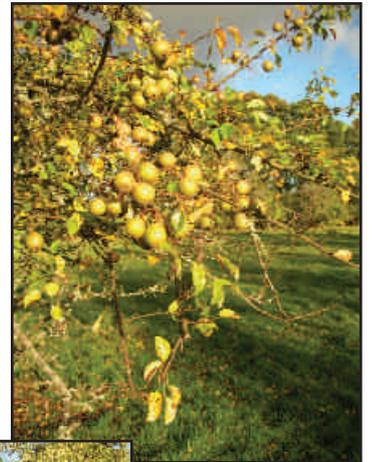
There is a rich history of fruit growing in Scotland – walled orchards and traditional orchards are known from Caithness to the Borders. Like the rest of the UK, there are local varieties such as the Lass o' Gowrie apple from Perthshire and the *Lindorseii* pear from Fife. Plums grow exceptionally well in Eastern Scotland too. In Tayside, there were for many years large orchards in Angus, Highland Perthshire and the Carse of Gowrie. The Carse has been known for its apple, pear and plum orchards since the monasteries owned and farmed the grange lands in the 12th century. The 2007 survey of the Carse, however, showed that out of 51 documented orchards, 28 no longer exist and only 9 of the remaining orchards are of any particular value.

This finding mirrors the situation elsewhere in Scotland and the UK – some counties have lost 95% of their orchards since the 1970s – mostly due to changes in agriculture, development pressures and benign neglect. Once a common sight, the traditional orchard habitat is now under serious threat: the reason the UK Biodiversity Action Plan now includes Traditional Orchards in its list of priority habitats.

Our desire to lower food miles and enjoy locally-sourced produce is now turning the tide of disinterest and community orchards, school orchards and fruit trees planted in housing association gardens are beginning to flourish. Many schools in both Angus and Perth & Kinross are planting orchards; there is an Orchard Trail planned in

Dundee. Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust are bringing together a circular 'orchard' route from Errol, passing an avenue of 35 fruit trees recently planted by the local community along the village's Gas Brae. The orchard owners in the Carse of Gowrie have formed the Historic Orchards Forum to safeguard what they have left and are working with local producers in providing fruit for juice, cider, and preserves.

As orchards can be vital 'biodiversity hotspots', the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership has just published a booklet on orchard wildlife and management. Suitable for managers of a new community or school orchard, for someone with two or three fruit trees in their garden, or for an orchard owner, free copies are available from Tel. 01382 433042 or can be downloaded from www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.



Auchterarder Golf Course Wildlife

Being a mixed parkland and heathland course with diverse habitats which require active management, biodiversity is a core part of Auchterarder Golf Club's Environmental Management Plan. In 2008 the Club was awarded SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund monies towards three projects.

Red Squirrel Project

Joining the Perth & Kinross Red Squirrel Group in 2007 prompted the Club into successful supplementary feeding of red squirrels. The funding has enabled around 800 native trees and shrubs to be planted to expand and enhance the red squirrel woodland habitat on the course. Golfers, greenstaff and local people report that no greys have been seen on the course since early 2008, whilst Reds appear to be more evident and numerous.

Five additional feeding stations have been installed. These are being well used and have resulted in the construction of two new dreys near one feeder. Three artificial nesting boxes are to be installed near new feeders at the centre of the course to encourage squirrels further away from the road. The Club hopes to install a rope bridge at an adjacent key crossing point on Orchil Road where red squirrels are often killed by cars.

Pond Project

The Club's pond was the subject of an article in Issue 2 of "From Summit to Sand". Excessive growth has required some vegetation removal which was carried out recently by the Stirling BTCV Midweek Group. Greenstaff have constructed a second pond which has been stocked with transplants from the first pond. SITA funding is also being used to establish a wildflower buffer with seed

of Scottish provenance.

Lowland Heathland Mosaic Enhancement Project

Unmanaged heather and acid grasslands around the course have been deteriorating and regeneration is now a key objective. SITA funding has helped the Club instigate a rolling programme of heather and grassland management. A compartment-based Heathland and Grassland Management Plan has been developed to plan and record progress.

Work has started on three degenerate heather stands plus four grassland areas involving gorse, bracken and invasive tree removal, cutting and lifting, scarifying, verti-draining and some over-sowing of wildflowers in the grassland areas. Funding has also helped the Club buy a second-hand scarifier-lifter which will be a vital tool in the future.

A wet, cold 2008 challenged and delayed operations. Some heather and blaeberry response was noted in one area. Future seasons will hopefully increase visible recovery. Tormentil regenerated well in heather areas, helping offset the severe visual impact of treatment. Where natural regeneration is poor, heather seed or plugs may be introduced to boost recovery rates.

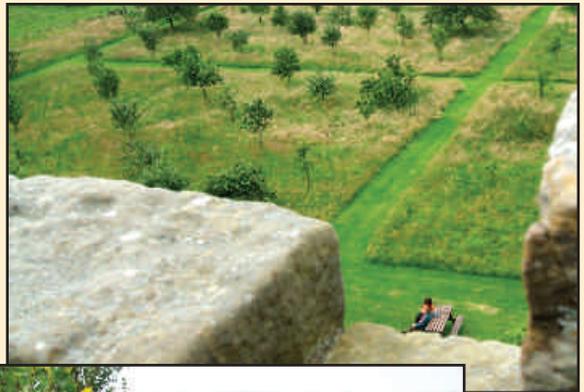
Additional heather and grassland compartments will be brought into management over time, with available resources dependent on the rate of progress and ongoing management requirements of the initial seven compartments.

Orchard Festival

The Carse of Gowrie Orchard Festival was first held in 2008 thanks to funding from LEADER and the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust. The Festival was the first of its kind in Eastern Scotland with ten main events held over 10 days. Ken and Jane Cox gamely hosted the Glendoick Apple Weekend which offered free identification of Scottish varieties by expert pomologists Willie Duncan and Will Stewart, a cookery demonstration by leading Scottish chef, Christopher Trotter, apple juice tasting by Cairn o'Mhor (using Carse apples), fruit trees for sale, a fruit-themed menu in the restaurant, a showcase of local produce and books, also on a fruit theme. Another first for Scotland was the small-scale cider-making courses held at Glendoick which proved to be a sell-out.

School Orchard Days with fruit tree planting and exploration of orchards were held by three primary schools in the Carse. A Family Fruit Tree Planting session was followed by a Village Apple Fair at Errol Community Hall.

The Family Fruit Weekend at Elcho Castle was the first such event held anywhere in Scotland by Historic Scotland. Their Ranger Service organised orchard bug hunts and tours of the orchard, encouraging families to pick a bag of fruit from the orchard to make an apple pie. The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and the Scottish Children's Orchard held eye-catching displays in the Great Hall.



Look out for local events taking place around Apple Day in October; these will be advertised on the biodiversity website.

The Partnership continues to offer training in pruning, grafting or managing new or veteran orchards.

Contact biodiversity.events@dundee.gov.uk or Tel. 01382 433042 for further information.

Made of 'Sterna' stuff

Montrose has been the recent focus for tern activity in Angus; last summer saw the launch of a new des res for Common and Arctic terns in Montrose Basin – a tern raft measuring 8m by 8m. Montrose beach was also the location for another year of 24 hour wardening to protect a colony of Little terns. A number of organisations and individuals have worked together under the umbrella of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's Tern Working Group to help make these projects a success – including Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), the Angus and Tayside Conservation Group, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Angus Council Ranger Service and GlaxoSmithKline.

During the past few years Common and Arctic terns have been causing problems for pharmaceuticals company GlaxoSmithKline which is located by the shore of the river South Esk estuary. Terns have been nesting within the compound and dive-bombing staff as the birds try to protect their young. In an effort to attract the terns away to a more suitable nesting location GlaxoSmithKline donated £10,000 for purchase of the nesting raft. "Maid of Sterna Stuff" (a play on the Arctic tern's Latin name *Sterna paradisaea*) was installed in front of the SWT visitor centre at Rossie Braes, Montrose last June.

With the breeding season already well underway when the raft was installed it was uncertain whether terns would use the raft immediately. However, within 24 hours of its launch terns of both species were observed behaving territorially around the raft and by the end of the season a total of 23 tern chicks fledged from approximately 16 'apparently occupied nests' – a resounding success given the late installation of the raft! The nesting birds all 'terned' out to be Common terns. There are high hopes that the Arctic terns will also nest on the raft during the 2009 season and for an increase in the number of pairs. SWT also hope to position a camera on the raft for close up viewing from the visitor centre.

Last year a team of dedicated volunteers from the local community spent a third summer of wardening a Little tern colony of about 12 pairs which have been nesting on Montrose Beach, near the estuary mouth. Landfill tax funding was gratefully received from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund towards the project. Being a public beach the colony are prone to disturbance from unsuspecting walkers and predation from feral cats; sometimes the nests themselves have been at risk of being swept away by high tides.

To raise awareness of the rarity of these Schedule I birds and their susceptibility to disturbance, a 'Tern Code of Practice' was developed and handed out to members of the public; wardens were also on hand to answer any questions. A copy of the Code can be downloaded from http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Project_Tern_COP.html. The 24 hour wardening saw the number of fledglings rise from 1 chick in 2006 to around 16 in both 2007 and 2008 – a fantastic boost for the Little tern colony and a great reward for the wardens' efforts.



Silver Medal for Forfar Biodiversity

The service users and volunteers at Lilybank Resource Centre in Forfar are not only looking back on a year of gardening and personal achievement but also looking forward to doing even more this year.

The biodiversity garden project at Lilybank was awarded SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Funding in 2006 and is providing realistic work experience for service users. It is also helping to develop positive attitudes in pre-school children toward people with learning disabilities. The Wendyhouse Children's Nursery regularly visit Lilybank to see the pond and hedgehog habitat, take part in bird and bat box making, and seed sowing and planting with the service users. And as well as taking part in the gardening projects the service users are also taking a course in horticulture under the supervision of an Angus College lecturer who visits Lilybank weekly.

Last summer Pierre Bernard led the team to win a Royal Caledonian

Horticultural Society Silver Medal for Lilybank's "Leave a Little" pallet garden in the Scottish Gardeners' Forum Challenge at Gardening Scotland. Lilybank also won the Angus Council Excellence Awards for Community Engagement in 2008 for the biodiversity project. Plans are now afoot to expand the project: the games field will be made wheelchair accessible and there is to be a Turf Labyrinth.

Not content with all of this activity, Lilybank has been handed what they describe as a "golden opportunity" in the form of developing the gardens of Beech Hill House. This residential home's gardens were extremely overgrown and work is now underway on their renovation. This has been a very rewarding task for both the Lilybank team and the Beech Hill residents. Bluebells and daffodils are being planted in the woodland area, and a lavender walk is to follow.

Contact Pierre at the Lilybank Resource Centre, Arbroath Road, Forfar, Bernardp@angus.gov.uk

Good News for Tree Sparrows

The Supporting Tayside Tree Sparrows Project, led by FWAG in Tayside, has been continuing despite the demise of FWAG Scotland. Carol Littlewood, who was Adviser with Angus FWAG, is taking the project forward under her new guise as an independent consultant, Littlewood Landcare.

Carol said, "It is important work continues in helping this declining UK priority species. Initial results from nestboxes put up in Tayside have shown good results so far. Of 30 sites taking part in Phase I of the project 13 have been confirmed as having boxes used for nesting by Tree Sparrows. In total 42 of the boxes erected had Tree Sparrows using them and in all only 16 of the 360 boxes put up were not used at all. This is an excellent success rate so soon after the boxes were erected."

Of the boxes not used by Tree Sparrows many were used by Great Tits and Blue Tits as successful nest sites and others have been used as winter roost sites by small birds. Other occupants included a number of delicately made wasp bykes and one box had been used as an acorn store by a mouse.

The aim of Phase I of the project was to secure the populations of Tree Sparrows at 30 sites. The projects second phase will help extend the populations at the 10 sites in Angus, providing more nest sites on farms adjacent to the Phase I sites.

Phase II is also being used as an educational tool. Pupils from Woodlands School in Carnoustie, with their teacher Mr Bramhall, spent a day making 20 nest boxes. The nest box kits, made by local company Woodlark Products (of Bankfoot), were the same boxes as used in Phase I, but supplied in kit form so the children had to work together and follow instructions to screw and nail the bits together.

The class had already set up a supplementary feeding site earlier in the winter, using wheat donated by Angus FWAG farmer members, so the children were invited to return to the farm by landowner Mr Steven. They were met there by Carol Littlewood and local bird group members Mr McCurley and Mr Cook. During the walk to the site the bird group members and Carol talked to the children about birds they were hearing and seeing and Carol explained what Tree Sparrows needed and what decisions had to be made about suitable sites for boxes. The children helped identify sites for the boxes which they numbered and which were then erected whilst the children recorded the site of the boxes. The information will be shared with the local bird group and Tay Ringing Group member, Ben Herschell will involve the children again over the summer. This will include further visits to the site, including one to see bird ringing carried out.

Carol said "It is great that thanks to further SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund monies we can expand this project further."

Publications from the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership

Paper copies are available on request or can be downloaded from www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk. Multiple copies are available on request for events, exhibitions, etc – contact Tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net or Tel. 01382 433042.

- * Newsletters – Summit to Sand; Barn Owl; Red Squirrel; Swifts in Tayside
- * An Introduction to the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan
- * Biodiversity in Community Gardens, Orchards and Allotments – Making Way for Nature
- * Traditional Orchards in Tayside – a Guide to Wildlife and Management
- * Tayside Green Kirk & Graveyard Initiative
- * Species – Tayside Terns: Information and Code of Practice; Tayside's Farmland Priority Species Guide; ZOOM Bumblebee survey; Have you Seen a Barn Owl survey; Tayside Swift Survey
- * Planning for Biodiversity – Householders' Guide to Biodiversity; Biodiversity – a Developer's Guide; A Guide to Incorporating Biodiversity into Development (A Manual for Planners and Developers in Tayside); Biodiversity Advice Notes; Incorporating Biodiversity into Local Services

Make the Link with your Sink

Inspired by a project undertaken by the Argyll & Bute Biodiversity Partnership, many residents near Blairgowrie's Fingask and White Loch have received organic cotton Scottish-printed tea-towels reminding them to empty septic tanks every two years, use low-phosphorous washing and dishwasher products, and to prevent food waste from going down the sink.

The tea-towels are part of a much larger on-the-ground project focussing on a number of the lesser known lochs in Tayside. The Fingask and White Loch Catchment Biodiversity Project has worked with local farmers, the Blairgowrie Golf Club and the Blairgowrie & Rattray District Angling Association to tackle water quality problems. The lochs are of considerable conservation interest but have suffered a decline in water quality in recent years owing to an increase in nutrient loading from phosphates.

Funding from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund has enabled a diffuse pollution audit to be undertaken of the farms in the catchment, together with nutrient budgets and the potential for buffer strips around both lochs.

The tea-towel design features the rare UKBAP priority plant species, Slender naiad (*Najas flexilis*) found in the loch. Kindrogan Field Study Centre helped survey the loch for macrophytes and in addition to the Slender naiad, two more UKBAP Priority species - Pillwort (*Pilularia spp*) and Shetland pondweed (*Potamogeton rutilus*) - were found.

The Project's working group includes SEPA, the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and, originally, the Perth Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG).



Bees and Butterflies in Blairgowrie

The garden at Muirton House Care Home in Blairgowrie will be buzzing with bees this summer following help by local businesses James McIntyre & Sons at Moyness Nursery and florist shop Something Special. Together with SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Funding, a five-stage biodiversity project is being set up offering a welcome habitat to butterflies, bees and other species.

The idea started out as a sensory garden with specially selected plants chosen for their strong scent or tactile leaves. There will be an old fashioned orchard area with Scottish heritage varieties of fruit trees and a wild meadow area featuring plants such as campion,

scabious, cranesbill, poppy and cornflower. Apart from this being a feast for the eyes, these wild areas will be a feast for birds, bees and butterflies. Additionally, a small pond and feeding boxes will provide habitat for frogs and insects and help to feed the local Red squirrels. A compost area will offer a good environment for small animals and insects, with the compost later being used for future projects.

This project hopes to promote a holistic approach of harmony and wellbeing for residents, staff and visitors, with participation from across the local community. Daniele Muir of the Perth & Kinross Ranger Service will be involved. In the first instance, though, further details about the project can be obtained from Southern Cross Healthcare's Billie Jardine-Finlay at Muirton House: Tel. 01250 8721 13.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

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