



TAYSIDE RECORDERS' BULLETIN April 2013

Welcome to the Sixth Tayside Recorders' Day

Perth Museum and Art Gallery hosted this event in both 2008 and 2011 and is welcoming us back in 2013; at other times the Forum has visited both Dundee and Forfar.

Last year we welcomed nearly 50 participants to the McManus Galleries in Dundee and heard from Robin Payne (SNH) about the changes to legislation regarding non-native species and the importance of biological recording, from Dr Alison Blackwell on Scottish midges, and David Pryce about the Perth Museum invertebrate surveys. The Small Blue Butterfly & Kidney Vetch Survey was officially launched on the day, and two members of the East of Scotland branch of Butterfly Conservation gave a talk about the Small Blue in Angus.

Louis Kitchen spoke about Riverfly recording and the Anglers' Monitoring Initiative and Jonathan Willet from BRISC introduced 'The National Dragonfly Survey: The Final Push'. Emma Rawling outlined the Scottish Wildlife Trust's monitoring work throughout the region, and NESBREc updated us on what was happening in their patch of the world. As ever, the event was very well received and brought people together from not just Tayside, but much further afield.

This year's Recorders' Day will, we hope, again bring people together to discuss local interests and to keep in touch with one another. This year's event will include updates on the Ash Dieback issues now affecting Scotland (including Tayside), the juniper survey, and the RSPB's Farmland Waders' survey. News of the Corn Bunting survey will also be included, as will an update on what is happening at Butterfly Conservation Scotland. We welcome Alexa Tweddle from Fife Nature who will outline how important long-term dataset monitoring is to actual site management.

The Amphibians in Drains Project drew much attention at this year's UK Herpetological Workers'



Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) © Wikimedia

Conference in Edinburgh and Daniele Muir will be updating us on her project in Perth & Kinross and taking the opportunity to officially launch the new Tayside Amphibian and Reptile Group (TayARG) to take forward gully pot surveys and other work.

There are a lot of new initiatives coming online, so we will cover these by way of an update on where things stand at the moment with the Scottish Biodiversity Information Forum and learn more about the Carse of Gowrie Mapping Project which although focussing on 'climate ready communities' will also give us an opportunity to map specific species.



Recorders' Forum Website

The Tayside Recorders' Forum continues to have a section on the Partnership's website: www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk and the list of Recorders and associated organisations is very well used. A student intern from Dundee University will be updating the data this summer, so please check if your details, or your organisation's details, are correct (or worse, if we have inadvertently omitted you!), and please let us know as soon as possible via caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

The Partnership's Facebook page publicises as many biological recording events and training days as possible, so if you have any news, let us know and we will pass it on through this media - it is becoming a useful 'selling tool' to highlight events, not just in Tayside, but right across Scotland. Please click "like" on "Tayside Biodiversity" to join. Also new is a specific Facebook page on Tayside Swifts.

Tayside Geodiversity

This small group is going from strength to strength. Focussing on preparing local geodiversity leaflets and completing Site Designation forms, it is now also a member of the Scottish Geodiversity Forum.

The Strathardle geodiversity leaflet has been published on the web www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/Geodiversity/ and funding is being found to print paper copies. There are still plenty of copies of the ever-popular Angus coast leaflet. The Corsiehill Quarry (Perth) leaflet needs to be reprinted and the Dundee Law leaflet remains to be published.

There will soon be a new section on the geodiversity website - a "Who's Who of Famous Local Geologists". This is currently being prepared by a Dundee University intern. If anyone would like further details of the Group, or would like to join, please contact carol_pudsey@btinternet.com.

Year of Natural Scotland

Scottish Biodiversity Week has been renamed Scotland's Nature Festival and will this year take place from 18th May until 26th May. Events from across Scotland are being handled by Event Scotland - there is a list on www.eventscotland.org/scotland-the-perfect-stage/scotlands-years-of-focus/natural-scotland/. Further details about the Year overall can be downloaded from www.snh.gov.uk/enjoying-the-outdoors/year-of-natural-scotland-2013/.



International Day for Biodiversity

Last year's International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) theme was "Marine Biodiversity" so we launched the MarineLife Angus website (in the most glorious weather, overlooking St Cyrus beach!). If you have any cetacean sightings for Angus, please let Kelly Ann Dempsey know on dempseyk@angus.gov.uk or check further details on www.marinelifeangus.co.uk.



The theme for IDB 2013 is “Water and Biodiversity”, especially chosen to coincide with the United Nations designation of 2013 as the International Year of Water Co-operation. If you would like to publicise your event on 22nd May internationally send details to secretariat@cbd.int.

2013 Perth Museum News

The latest natural history themed temporary exhibition opens on 27th April. It’s called *Alien Invasion*. It is about invasive non-native animals and plants that have the ability to spread, causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live. They got here with our help - Grey squirrels introduced from America damage trees and are a threat to native red squirrels; Rhododendron brought to Britain in the mid-1700s has spread into woodlands forming dense thickets that stop native plants from growing. In this new exhibition you can find out about the invasive species that are currently causing concern in Scotland and the solutions that are planned to tackle them. Species covered include American mink, Harlequin ladybird, Signal crayfish, Muskrat, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Giant hogweed.

The exhibition is part of Perth Museum’s contribution to the Year of Natural Scotland. The programme of art exhibitions includes *Picture Perthshire* (open until 18th August), landscape paintings of Perth & Kinross and *A Sense of Place* (18th May -28th July), works by the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours and *Weaver of Grass* (10 August-9 October), art made by Angus McPhee weaving natural vegetation and grasses.

Our final natural history exhibition will be Big Tree Roots - celebrating 130 years since the publication of the book by Thomas Hunter: “Woods, Forests and Estates of Perthshire”. The exhibition, in partnership with Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust, is a celebration of the region’s trees and wood products. It opens on the 10th August.

The hemiptera cataloguing project was completed in May and David Pryce, the project officer, continued to help out at the museum as a volunteer until January 2013. He has now left to start a new job as Invertebrate Conservation Officer on St Helena in the south Atlantic. Adam Garside has been employed on a short contract with funding from Museums Galleries Scotland Recognition Fund to catalogue and recurate the coleoptera collection. The work is nearly complete and Adam will be continuing his involvement with Perth Museum as a volunteer.

Museum volunteer, Mike Sedakat completed the conservation and rehydration of the historic spider collection. The specimens are now in good condition and have since been identified by spider specialist, Mike Davidson. Mike Sedakat also completed an MA in Museum Studies by distance learning during the year and is now living overseas whilst looking for museum employment.

Mark Simmons, Principal Officer Natural History
Perth Museum & Art Gallery
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Dundee Museums and Art Galleries 2013 update

Last year we instituted an Annual Spring Clean event in the McManus to clean the galleries top to bottom. This activity also gives us an opportunity to examine objects on open display and talk to visitors.



The Strathmore meteorite fragment obtained in 2011 is now on display in a special exhibition at the Mills Observatory. Our events programme continues with lunchtime gallery talks, behind the scenes tours of our Collections Unit, and themed weekend events, talks, workshops and study days.

Last year we took part in the Dundee Bioblitz at Riverside Park. We also took part in the Dundee Science Festival, running activities on natural dyes and meteorites.

We are continuing to work through the backlog of mammals and birds in our freezers by having them made into study skins and mounts. We have just finished a major respiriting exercise on the spirit preserved collection and have transferred collections into new chemical storage cupboards.

The Collections Unit in Barrack Street houses the natural science collections: interested parties are welcome to view or study the collections by appointment. In addition to running regular behind the scenes tours, we can arrange tours for special interest groups. The Natural Science Laboratory is in constant use for a number of projects.

At the end of 2012, Julie Campbell left the museum service, so we are currently recruiting another Natural History Curator.

Biological records

There are approximately 160,000 records dating between 1830 and 2002, collected mostly from Dundee and Angus. We continue to provide record searches of the historical 'Naturebase' dataset held by the museum which covers Dundee and Angus. Additions to this dataset will be made where the data available reflects or complements the museum's natural science collections.

The taxon group breakdown of the dataset is as follows: Higher plants - 30% / Birds - 26% / Insects - 26% / Other - 18%. Although the data is outdated there is evidence that this information is still all that exists for some sites. Requests for information indicate there is a requirement for biological data within the region.

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Website: <http://www.mcmanus.co.uk/>

Angus Museums

The opening hours of several Angus museums have changed for the first time since the 1980s. Monday closures will be the norm at the Signal Tower Museum in Arbroath, Brechin Town House Museum, the Meffan Institute in Forfar, Kirriemuir Gateway to the Glens Museum and Montrose Museum. This is in line with opening patterns for other UK and European museums, but of course it also delivers budget savings. A pattern of five-day consecutive opening from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm, with no lunchtime closure is now in place. The Signal Tower Museum will, however, continue to open on Sunday afternoons in July and August. Visit www.angus.gov.uk/services for details of all museums in Angus.



Angus Museums' Cultural Services runs seven museums within the county: Arbroath, Brechin, Forfar, Kirriemuir and Montrose. Each has a unique flavour, reflecting the different characters of the burgh towns of Angus.

Kirriemuir Gateway to the Glens Museum offers exhibitions on the wildlife, geology, history and archaeology of Glen Prosen, Glen Isla, Glen Clova and Glen Doll. A diorama brings visitors face to face with some of the wildlife of the Glens. In addition, the recently refurbished Tourist Information area (in partnership with the Cairngorms National Park) provides a wide range of free publications.

The Montrose Natural History Collection reflects the natural history of Montrose and of Angus and this is shown in the large and extensive natural history collection displayed in the museum. Almost all of the creatures which live around Angus are displayed here in several displays each of which reflects a habitat from the coastal rocky and sandy shores, through arable and woodland habitats to the very different highland areas. Along with many examples of invertebrates and plants the natural history collection displays many fine specimens of birds and mammals including the Skylark, Grey Partridge, Stoat, Weasel, Kestrel, Brown Hare, Rook, and the Carrion Crow. The museum also features the fossil fish *Mesacanthus mitchelli*, named after the Revd. Hugh Mitchell who found examples of it at various locations in Angus.

Small Blue Butterfly and Kidney Vetch Survey

Britain's smallest butterfly, the charismatic Small Blue, remains the focus of a project started last year in Angus. This UK priority species has suffered a significant contraction in range over recent decades and is now only present in a few sites, primarily on the east coast of Scotland. Check the maps at http://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/PageFlip/Get_Involved_Project_SmallBlue2.html.

Working with the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership is the Butterfly Conservation East Scotland branch, Angus Council Ranger Service and Scottish Wildlife Trust. The project was launched at last year's Recorders' Forum Day and a survey postcard was distributed far and wide.

We could not have chosen a worse year as far as surveying was concerned - too cold, too wet, insufficient sun even on the good days. However, a new site was found at Glamis and the old records were brought together and maps/further details put on the website.

In 2013, the survey will continue, but will widen to encompass N E Scotland so that the St Cyrus Rangers can contribute their records too. We need as much help as possible, so if you are willing to survey for either the food plant, kidney vetch, or the butterfly itself, please check the website details and join the Small Blue Interest Group. Another training day will be held during the early summer. Contact Barry Prater: barry@prater.myzen.co.uk.



© Iain Cowe



The Tayside Amphibian and Reptile Group (TayARG)

The success of the Amphibians in Drains project, and the widening interest in undertaking projects to safeguard amphibians and reptiles right across Tayside, has led to the setting up of a new group. Further details will be available at the Recorders' Day. If you are interested in helping with survey work or just being part of the group, please contact either Daniele Muir - Dmuir@yahoo.co.uk or Catherine Lloyd - cagllloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Update

The Partnership's new Forum first met in March 2012 and again last month. It held a very successful seminar at Battleby on 1st December 2012, attended by over 90 people. The subject "Putting the Buzz into Biodiversity" looked at how local communities can get involved in biodiversity. The Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan will be reviewed during 2013 once the revised Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is published mid-year. This will help us consider new local targets which will take into consideration national targets.

The Working Groups will be meeting to discuss the best way forward for the Review in due course; if you would like to be involved in any way, please contact the Co-ordinator direct at cagllloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

The Working Groups, themselves, are taking forward c70 projects across Tayside. They meet regularly across Tayside and new members are very welcome. If you would like more information, or would like to be added as a member ('consultee' members are welcome too, if you are unable to attend meetings), please contact the Working Group Leader direct:

Working Groups	Leader	Contact:
Coast and Estuaries	Kelly Ann Dempsey	DempseyK@angus.gov.uk
Farmland and Upland (including Barn Owl Interest Group)	Carol Littlewood	carol@littlewoodlandcare.co.uk
Urban and Built Environment	Esther Roger Nicolls and Craig Borland	EMRogersNicoll@pkc.gov.uk or BorlandC@angus.gov.uk
Woodland	Mike Strachan	Mike.strachan@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Water and Wetland	Ian Lorimer	ian.Lorimer@sepa.org.uk
People & Communications	Martyn Jamieson	Martyn.jamieson.kd@field-studies-council.org
Species Interest Groups	Leader	Contact:
Tayside Swifts	Daniele Muir and Craig Borland	dmuir2@yahoo.co.uk or BorlandC@angus.gov.uk
Sand Martin	Ian Ford	ianford0705@btinternet.com
Small Blue Butterfly	Barry Prater	barry@prater.myzen.co.uk
Tayside Amphibian & Reptile Group (TayARG)	Daniele Muir and Catherine Lloyd	dmuir@yahoo.co.uk or cagllloyd@pkc.gov.uk



Project Funding in Tayside

In 2015, the Landfill Tax Communities Fund will be subsumed into the Scottish Government budget. We hope some of the funding will still be available for environmental work; the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership contributed to the Government consultation that took place last winter.

Since 2005 local communities and organisations across Tayside have been exceptionally fortunate in benefitting from the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Action Fund. Over the past seven years £700,000 has been distributed. Unfortunately the SITA Trust has decided to focus on giving funds to England and Wales and the funding to Tayside has now stopped.

Thankfully the Angus Environment Trust will continue to accept funding applications for the next year or two (contact MaddenR@angus.gov.uk), and anyone within 8 miles of the Binn Farm landfill site at Glenfarg (Perthshire) can apply direct to the SITA Trust: www.sitatrust.org.uk. If you are looking for funds within Perth & Kinross, the website you need is www.open4community.info/perth/ and for Angus, check www.angus.gov.uk/externalfunding/communitygrant/.

Tayside Teachers' Biodiversity Guide

Having gained permission from the East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership to use their Guide as a template, a post-graduate from Dundee University has been researching and compiling a greatly enlarged Tayside version. This is currently standing at 36 pages and has now got to the editing stage. If any teachers or lecturers would like to help by checking the draft Guide, please contact caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk. The Partnership hopes to officially launch the publication later in the year and to roll out Green Teaching events to raise awareness of not just the Guide, but also the 'education hub' that will be set up on the Tayside Biodiversity website.

New ZoomIn2 Project

Such was the success of the previous ZOOM In2 time lapse photography project, the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership will be launching an updated version later this year. Instead of using recyclable cameras as before, we will be asking anyone in Tayside to choose a space which is special to them. Anything that is natural goes: from a tree in your local park or a school pond, to a view along the glen or your favourite beach. It doesn't have to be in the countryside - it could be a street tree or a river near where you live - something that will show the changing seasons. It could be in your back garden, at work, in a community orchard, a corner of an allotment or a school wildlife garden.

From the same position every time, once a month take your photograph and then continue every month for a year or more. We are aiming to get a collection of 12 pictures, but it doesn't matter if you miss one or two months. Look out for the new website where you can upload your photographs - www.zoomin2.co.uk; this should be live in a couple of months.



Partnership Surveys

Training opportunities are listed on both the home page of www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk and the Partnership's Facebook page. If your organisation would like details of local events or specific training opportunities publicised, please forward information to caglloyd@pkc.gov.uk.

Tree Sparrow Project Tayside

Our local Tree Sparrows don't seem to have been affected by the weather and there has been great news from the Supporting Tayside's Tree Sparrows Project. All 480 boxes have been monitored over the winter and 200 of the 480 (42%) are being used by Tree Sparrows. There are Tree Sparrows at all 10 main sites and breaking down the figures to the 40 sub-sites, 33 (83%) have Tree Sparrows using them. There is only 1 main site, near Auchterhouse, which has been really unsuccessful, with only 1 box at 1 of the sub-sites being used, but there are definitely Tree Sparrows in the area.



The best site, near Arbroath, has 38 of the 50 boxes being used (76%) and the farmers are seeing an increased number of Tree Sparrows coming to feed in their gardens. This site has a couple of extra boxes because a tree came down at one of the other sites and knocked the one off the tree next to it. As this was a site where there were no Tree Sparrows using the boxes it was decided to move them to one of the very successful sites.

Carol Littlewood, Littlewood Landcare

Barn Owls in Tayside

Carol Littlewood continues to collect and collate Barn Owl sightings for Tayside and maintains the map showing the range of Barn Owls in the area.

As with Barn owls elsewhere in the UK, Tayside Barn Owl numbers will have suffered owing to the last couple of winters. Several regularly used and successful nest boxes failed last year, either through the birds not nesting (although the birds are still around) or birds laying and abandoning for some reason. One chick ringed in a box near Kirriemuir was found dead just after Christmas near Aylth. This bird was in its second winter and was the third largest in a brood of five. There have been several bird deaths reported and quite a few of these have been young birds, so at least we know there are birds breeding, even if we are not sure where they are. Recent press coverage has suggested the vole population is on the rise again so let's hope for a better year for the Barn Owls this year.

Supplies of the "Have you Seen a Barn Owl?" postcard are available from the biodiversity office: these would be useful to leave in rural libraries, post offices, pubs or local shops. If you can help distribute these, please contact Carol direct at carol@littlewoodlandcare.co.uk. There is an online survey form at www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.



Swift Survey and new Carse of Gowrie Project

We urgently need Local Survey Co-ordinators to encourage others to join in the swift survey. This can be just the simple task of putting up posters and distributing survey forms in your local community, or to host an evening swift walk (we can even supply an expert if you prefer!).

All the swift survey information is added to the local authority planning departments' GIS - the "dots on map" idea is now proving to be helpful in knowing where to focus surveys: we still need to find if the gaps on the map are due to a lack of survey work or a lack of swifts. Please contact the Tayside Swifts leaders if you can help - Craig Borland: BorladC@angus.gov.uk / Forfarloch@angus.gov.uk or Daniele Muir: taysideswifts@yahoo.co.uk. Sightings can be added to the online survey at www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.

The 2013 focus is going to be within the Carse of Gowrie. Working with the Carse of Gowrie Sustainability Group, Tayside Swifts will be working with the local community to find where the swifts are, as well as liaising with the local authority's Buildings Conservation department on where best to place nestboxes. If you can help in this area, please let us know as soon as possible.

We also need help in distributing the new Swift Newsletter - if you can suggest venues or organisations that can take a few copies, please let us know via taysideswifts@yahoo.co.uk.

Sand Martin Survey

Smaller scale than the swift survey, we would still appreciate knowing where you first see sand martins or their nesting sites. Again, there is an online survey form to complete on www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk.

Catherine Lloyd
Tayside Biodiversity Co-ordinator
Tayside Biodiversity Partnership
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www.tayside.biodiversity.co.uk

Useful websites:

www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk - includes details about the Biodiversity Duty for Public Bodies (Nature Conservation Scotland Act 2004) and the Scottish Biodiversity List

www.cbd.int/2011-2020 - United Nations Decade on Biodiversity

www.brisc.org.uk - Biological Recording in Scotland

www.scottishgeology.com - Scottish Geology Forum

