



# GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2008

David Palmar  
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline  
22 March 2008

GNHS is a Registered Scottish  
Charity Web-site:  
<http://www.gnhs.org.uk/>

## Forthcoming Meetings and AGM

Mary Child

### Tuesday 12th February

6.30pm - Tutorial on Wildlife Digital Photography - David Palmar

7.15pm - The fauna, Flora and Geology of Spitsbergen - Professor John Knowler

### Tuesday 26th February

7.15pm AGM - Please can anyone who has nominations for the AGM contact the secretary, Mary Child.

The AGM will be followed by "Blooming Sepulchres: the history of garden cemeteries in and around Glasgow" Christopher Dingwall

### Tuesday 11th March

6.15pm - Tutorial on Bumblebees - Jeanne Robinson

7.15pm - Members' Photographic Night. Please contact David Palmar to offer a talk.

## Glasgow West End Wildlife Walk, 11th September 2007

Roger Downie

To coincide with the autumn international conference of the British Ecological Society in Glasgow, GNHS organised a wildlife walk through the West End. Around 20 people participated including half a dozen GNHS members. Because of BES rules, we had to submit a risk assessment in advance: something to think about for other Society excursions?

We were fortunate in having a beautiful early autumn afternoon for the walk, which visited:

- Glasgow University's wildlife garden
- The Botanic Gardens and Arboretum
- The Kelvin Walkway, as far as Kelvindale
- Bingham's Pond, then a bus back to the West End, followed by
- Kelvingrove Park

Since Conference attendees had limited time, we did not linger at any location: the objective was mainly to show the visitors that the West End of the city has an abundance of green areas and good wildlife sites. The high point for the birders on the walk was seeing a kingfisher on the Kelvin. BES members were very appreciative of this opportunity to see the city and would have liked to spend more time at several of the locations.

## **Christmas Dinner**

The Christmas Dinner was well attended and everyone enjoyed another year in the Museum. There was a very friendly atmosphere, and to our delight Joyce Alexander was able to join us with her son. Grooms earned our praise with a lovely three course meal. Our guest speaker was June MacKay who entertained us with wonderful slide show of the Antarctic, taken on a trip which she and Kate Aird had recently done. She has marvellous slides of penguins and polar landscape, and gave us an insight into the difficult terrain they had to encounter to get some of these shots.

**From the Reviews Editor**

**Bob Gray**

## **Book received in exchange for reviews in *The Glasgow Naturalist***

***Scotland's Beginnings***

**National Museums Scotland**

**MA Taylor & A Kitchener  
2007  
Softback £8.99**

The authors were leading curators of the National Museum of Scotland exhibition that gave rise to this book, which tracks the movement of Scotland over hundreds of millions of years from its location near the South Pole northwards to its present position. At the same time it traces the history of the country's landscape and wildlife recorded by the evidence in rocks, peat bogs, lake muds and sea floor deposits. It summarise the fluctuating nature of the climate, flora and fauna over vast periods of time up to the present.

Much material is packed into the book's 96 pages, which are lavishly supplied with colour photographs.

***The World of Lakes***

**The Freshwater Biological Association**

**MJ Burgis & P Morris  
2007  
Softback £25.00**

Much of this current book appeared as 'The Natural History of Lakes' published some 20 years ago by Cambridge University Press. The text and reading list have been updated where possible and many stunning photographs have been included. This book explains lake formation, seasonal patterns and describes communities of plants and animals supported by lakes. The variety of the world's lakes is described and the question of conservation is discussed. This edition is published as their Special Publication No. 15 by the Freshwater Biological Association from whom copies may be obtained. It is a book of interest to all natural historians.

***Built by Animals***

**Oxford University Press**

**Mike Hansell  
2007  
Hardback £16.99**

The author, who has published various books and research papers on aspects of animal architecture, is Emeritus Professor of Animal Architecture here at Glasgow University. This comprehensive text links the studies of animal behaviour, evolutionary biology and ecology and highlights current research in this field. Using a wide range of examples of animal builders, the author explores the question of how small-brained creatures build structures of such amazing

complexity and beauty. He then considers what this tells us about the evolution of animal intelligence and our own perception of beauty.

***A History of Ornithology, New Naturalist No. 104***  
**Collins 2007**

**Peter Bircham**  
**Softback £25**

Few of the previous 103 titles in this series have been devoted to naturalists themselves but this volume deals extensively with ornithologists and the development of their subject from Greek and Roman times to the present day. The book even includes records of fossils from the Pliocene period (15 million years ago) onwards. The development of both the amateur pursuit of bird watching and the science of ornithology are examined in an entertaining way through the lives of the colourful characters who inhabit the pages of this book from Aristotle and Pliny, through Willoughby and Ray to Tinbergen of more recent times. The author is a tutor in ornithology in Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education.

**Agnes Walker**

**Morag Mackinnon**

Agnes Walker's sister has sent the following news.  
Agnes has been in Kintyre Ward in Drumchapel for about 6 weeks.  
They say she is not able to respond to physiotherapy.  
She speaks well but sometimes what she says does not make real sense.  
She recognises friends and enjoys their visits.  
Her son has been asked to find a Home for her where she will be able to have full nursing care.  
The future for Agnes is not great and she will appreciate your friendship in the weeks, months, perhaps years ahead. Please keep in touch.

### **Winter Programme**

Please send suggestions for the 2008-9 winter programme (talks and tutorials) to Roger Downie as soon as possible.

**Squirrel Sink**

**Ian McCallum**

In my garden in Lenzie I feed the birds. Unfortunately, when the local grey squirrels realised there was a good supply of food available, they became regular attendees at my feeders. I decided that I was not going to watch them spending their time eating their way through my bird feed.

I borrowed a squirrel trap from a friend, caught the squirrel and deported it. When I returned home there were 2 squirrels in the garden and one actually peering through the window into my kitchen.

This exercise was repeated four times and there was always a new squirrel waiting to take over this desirable territory. I realised that I could be permanently employed in moving the grey squirrel population around Scotland. If you can't beat them...!

The next stage is to erect feeders on poles, greased, if necessary, to prevent them gaining access to the bird feed and hopefully enjoy more bird sightings.

### **Machair Conference, 8th December 2008**

**Morag Mackinnon**

The Great Yellow Bumble Bee Project, which was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Trust and which we have been administering for the RSPB, is now in its final year. To bring it to a conclusion we are organizing a conference on Machair - its Wildlife, Management and Conservation.

The date will be Monday the 8th December 2008 and speakers and delegates will be coming from the Highlands and the Islands. Delegates will be paying £30 for attending the conference - (our members will only be asked to pay £15) and this includes a sandwich lunch on a Hebridean theme.

For many of the delegates it will be a long and expensive journey which will necessarily involve staying over one or two nights. We thought it would be good if any member who felt they could offer hospitality at that time could give us his/her name, so if we get any calls for help we can attempt to provide it.

We are also hoping that members will offer to help with registration, tea and coffee at the start and at the intervals during the conference. This is just an advance notice so that you can put this date in your diaries. Richard Weddle is the Conference Secretary.

### ***The Birds of Scotland***

**David Palmar**

The new *The Birds of Scotland* book, newly published by the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, was launched on the 9th January in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. The Society had contributed a sum to aid the publication of this magnificent work, which comes in two volumes, each about 2½ inches thick, in a presentation case, and weighs about 8 kilos!

In the light of the Society's contribution, David and Janet Palmar were invited to represent the Society at the launch.

Mike Russell MSP, Environment Minister for Scotland, and several SOC members gave short talks and speeches, there were nibbles and drinks, and then the presentations began.

David was presented with a copy of the book on behalf of the GNHS. The suitably inscribed presentation copy of it now resides in the GNHS library, in the care of his other half!

**Next Newsletter deadline 22nd March please.**

David Palmar  
Newsletter Editor