



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2011

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

**Next Newsletter Deadline
22 March 2011**

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2011 Subscriptions

Richard Weddle

Subscriptions for 2011 fall due on **January 1st**. Subscription renewal forms are enclosed with this Newsletter – but **ONLY** for those who haven't already paid, or who don't pay by standing order (according to my records).

Want to Study Wildlife?

Richard Weddle

BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and Glasgow Natural History Society are together offering 4 Bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field studies skills. The bursaries are for up to £200 or 75% of the cost of the course, whatever is the lower. Courses must be chosen from the Field Studies Council's taxonomic courses listed under FSC's Professional Development Programmes, or similar professional development courses run by universities.

For full details, conditions, and the application form, see

www.bris.org.uk/bursaries or www.gnhs.org.uk/bursaries.html

Applications should be submitted by Friday 11 February 2011 at the latest.

2011 Meetings

February

Thursday 3rd 7.30pm Lecture: Wildlife of Arran - National Trust Ranger Service. Venue: Paisley Museum, 60 High Street, Paisley, PA1 2BA. (According to Google Street View, there appears to be a limited amount of on-street parking in the High Street just west of the museum.)

Note time, day and venue. Joint meeting with Paisley NHS

Tuesday 8th 6.30pm Tutorial: Crayfish; Zara Gladman

7.30pm Lecture: Flora of Renfrewshire; Keith Watson.

Tuesday 22nd 6.30pm AGM: followed at 7.30pm by Lecture by Richard Tipping- Moments of crisis: past climatic changes and their impacts in Scotland

March

Tuesday 8th 6.30pm Lecture: Biodiversity and Management of Aspen - Tom Prescott

7.30pm Members photographic night - Your slides or digital slide shows (guideline time 15 minutes please). Please consider making a contribution to the evening, and contact David Palmar with the title of your talk.

Mapping Orchards across Central Scotland: Can you help? **Crispin W Hayes, Mapping Orchards project leader**

An ambitious new project is attempting to map orchards across central Scotland, perhaps for the first time in living memory. Many people interested in natural history are aware of the renewed interest in orchards in Scotland over the last few years.

But it has been a long time since a comprehensive attempt has been made to find out the distribution of orchards across the whole of central Scotland. Perhaps even as far back as 1813 – for it was in that year that Patrick Neill compiled his eight volume '*On Scottish Gardens and Orchards*' on behalf of the Board of Agriculture.

So why is the project being attempted? Traditional orchards are now recognised as an important resource for many reasons - for example heritage, culture, biodiversity and local food. Basic information on where orchards are located helps to create a foundation for initiatives aimed at regenerating orchards. Many of these initiatives are organised by the growing number of grassroots organisations interested in orchards – such as heritage and historical societies, gardening clubs and orchard groups.

The project is supported by Central Scotland Green Network, together with NGOs such as Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. Please contact us at fruitymap@eco-consultancy.co.uk if you would like your group to become a supporter.

What counts as an orchard? As a minimum, at least six fruit trees are needed to be considered as an orchard. Orchards are of interest if they are young or old, urban or rural, private or community spaces.

How can you help? Please tell other people about the project – asking them to visit www.mappingorchards.org.uk and download an orchard form.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd March 2011 please.

Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names. Please use **Verdana** font and size **12 points**. If sending photos, please submit only a few, and make them small if you know how to do that. (Please ask for advice if you want to know how to make them under 100Kb each for emailing) and always as **separate jpg files**, definitely **not** as part of a Word document.

Unexpected visitors

Richard Sutcliffe

The heavy snow and freezing temperatures in December 2010 didn't just affect people. The severe conditions also caused major problems for the local wildlife. This meant that species not normally seen in our garden in Bearsden made some unexpected appearances.

Stuck at home on 7th December, with a good six inches of snow and temperatures down to -13°C, I was delighted to look out of our kitchen window and see a roe deer buck walking down the garden path. He soon started feeding on our roses and the Euonymus growing up our garage. My wife Alison, daughter Christine and I all watched him through the window for about 20 minutes. He was obviously aware we were there, but was unperturbed by our presence just a few metres away on the other side of the glass. He was so close we could clearly hear the 'crunch' as he chewed the leaves!

Imagine our delight the following day, when he came back again – this time with a doe and two juveniles! Once again, we got fabulous views of all four deer for about 20 minutes. The Euonymus got another good pruning, as did the ivy and some Lonicera. The buck and two juveniles came again on Boxing Day, but didn't stay so long.

The garden backs on to the Craighdu Wedge (designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) – the strip of land between Bearsden and Milngavie which follows the Craighdu Burn. Although we've seen roe deer behind the house before and had them in the garden itself briefly in 1995, these were without doubt the best views we've ever had!

The cold weather also brought some uncommon birds (for us) into the garden. A male brambling turned up in a mixed flock with some chaffinches and goldfinches on 18 December. A male and female were in the garden on 26th December and single birds were seen almost daily during the first week in January. A great



spotted woodpecker made a brief appearance on 20th December and a fieldfare (the first ever record for our garden) turned up the following day. The first siskins of the winter arrived on 26th December. There were good numbers of several other species in the garden, mainly attracted to the various feeders we have in the garden.

I'm now wondering what the next heavy snow and low temperatures will bring!

As we prepared documents for our annual report to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR), late in 2009, we recognised that there were some deficiencies in the Society's Constitution. At the 2010 AGM, I announced that we would undertake a review of the Constitution, with the aim of proposing a revised version to the Society in session 2010-11. Several members of the Society made useful contributions to the review by commenting on a draft circulated in autumn 2010. A revised version of the draft was presented to a meeting of the Society on Tuesday 9th November 2010, attended by over 30 members.

The aims of the review were:

- To tidy up terminology of office-bearers and meetings.
- To insert clauses required by OSCR, especially relating to any winding up of the Society.
- To add details previously missing such as the definition of a quorum.

No major change of aims or procedures was involved. I noted one late alteration, at the suggestion of Peter Macpherson i.e. that the Minutes of the previous AGM need only be presented at an AGM, not read out.

The revised Constitution was unanimously accepted by the members present, and will be circulated with this Newsletter; it can also be viewed on the Society's website www.gnhs.org.uk/documents/gnhs_constitution_nov10.pdf My thanks to all who contributed.

Flower Photography Holiday In Menorca - May 2010

Rae Paul

David Hawker, botanist and conservationist, gave a talk about the flowers of Menorca after the GNHS Christmas dinner in December. I was fortunate enough to be on this holiday/course in Menorca last May and found it enjoyable and informative.

Menorca is a beautiful island which has been designated a world Biosphere Reserve. There is a rich and varied plant life and there are plants in Menorca which grow nowhere else in the world. We were taken by a minibus to explore a different part of the island each day, with a picnic lunch. One day, after visiting the S'Albufera des Grau Natural Park, we had lunch in a small fishing village, eating freshly caught and cooked fish, sitting in the sun outside the taverna.

David Hawker was skilled in helping us identify the plant species and provided a general catalogue of plants. The recommended reference book is *Flowers of Menorca* by Miguel Gao Barredo, ISBN 84921579-1-7.

Philip Dunn who, with his wife Noreen, organises the holiday, is a professional photographer and accompanies all the trips. The hotel is on the seafront and the accommodation was excellent and the staff friendly. The holiday is being offered again this year, May 6-13, 2011.

For More Information: www.inspiration-holidays.com/botany-holidays

Philip Dunn, Treesbank, Tongland Road, Kirkcudbright, DG6 4UU 01557 331343

EXCURSION REPORTS

Queen's Park, 27th May 2010

Bob Gray

This park is named after Mary, Queen of Scots who famously lost the Battle of Langside in 1568 to the army of the Regent Moray. Sir Joseph Paxton, who also designed Kelvingrove, laid out this park which was opened in 1862. The estate of Camphill House was bought by Glasgow Corporation in 1893 and added to the park. The beech avenue of the house became the present carriageway along the north side. The fine glasshouses were opened in 1905. The Rose Gardens, designed in the form of a thistle, were constructed to celebrate the hosting by Glasgow of the World Rose Convention in 2003.

Nine of us, including members of Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society, met at the Queen's Drive gate on a sunlit evening. Selecting a route around the 60 ha (148 acre) park to include most of the "must see" trees was not easy as the park contains so many of them. We followed an anti-clockwise route that enabled us to start by viewing some of the most significant of these, namely, just west of the gate: **1**) a couple of rather rare, leaning oak-leaved hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Incisa') of reasonable size. The only other one known (to the writer) in Glasgow is located in Kelvingrove Park. This pair ought to have surrounding trees cut back and to be supported as well. **2**) a large Cappadocian maple (*Acer cappadocicum*) with a few suckers growing from its roots and **3**) not far away, near the church gate, are three Caucasian wingnuts (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*), one producing abundant suckers as is common with this species. Most unusually we came across a seedling of this species growing right beside the base of a nearby Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) that had a 1 m tall Norway maple (*A. platanoides*) sapling growing out of a fork some 2 m above ground level. No seedlings of Caucasian wingnut are known this far north in Britain. The Royal Horticultural Society recommends collecting and germinating its seed in order to test for viability.

Two ponds, a nature pond and a boating pond, lie towards the northeast corner of the park. Between the two ponds grows a fine, big sugar maple (*A. saccharum*). Near the former pond grows a large pear tree (*Pyrus communis*), not in the best of health but the largest of several scattered in this area of the park, including, near Camphill House, a small one that last autumn bore abundant fruit. Another pear, just northeast of the house, had several seedlings growing beneath it. Between the pond and the house a beautiful single red Midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*, 'Punicea') was in full bloom, again one of several in the park which at this time of the year are very distinctive on account of their strong pink colour. Nearby is an example of the near thornless oriental thorn (*C. laciniata*), rare in Glasgow. Just south of the house grow a couple of young cut-leaved silver maples (*A. saccharinum* f. *laciniatum*) and nearby a very big Corsican pine (*Pinus nigra* ssp. *laricio*).

Farther south of the house are avenues of mature Irish yews (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata') beside the Scottish Poetry and Rose Garden in which all the rose varieties are propagated in Scotland and stone setts commemorate twelve famous Scottish poets. Near this garden are two large fern-leaved beeches (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia'). Between the rose garden and Langside Avenue we found

two gean (*Prunus avium*) infected with a galled outgrowth (*Taphrina wiesneri*), as well as sizeable manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) and crack willow (*Salix fragilis*). We then made for the south end of the park with its 'B' listed glasshouses, outside of which are a lovely avenue of pyramidal hornbeam (*C. betulus* 'Fastigiata') and a pair of weeping ash (*F. excelsior* 'Pendula'). Just east of the glasshouses are two dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) near two fine hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*). Then we passed an avenue of young Crimean lime (*Tilia x euchlora*) as we headed towards the flagpole viewpoint on Camphill where we enjoyed a spectacular view of the sun setting in the northwest over the Campsies, Dumgoyne and Ben Lomond. The intriguing nearby earthwork rampart is of no known origin nor purpose.

Moving rapidly owing to the fading light downhill towards our starting point we came across a large Norway maple (*A. platanoides*) carrying an epiphytic elder (*Sambucus nigra*). We encountered, interestingly, a few grey alders (*Alnus incana*) underneath which some seedlings were growing and also another Cappadocian maple with the typical mass of suckers growing beneath it.

The main trees we did not have time to view included two big silver pendent limes (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris') located outside an old house towards the southeast of the park, a very large Oregon maple (*A. macrophyllum*) across Langside Road, just outside the bowling club and two memorial trees near the main walkway - an oak tree planted by Belgian refugees after the First World War and a beech commemorating the 20th anniversary of the founding of the UN in 1945.

Without doubt this is one of the most rewarding of Glasgow's parks, from a tree point of view.

Acknowledgement: *Langside Heritage Trail* booklet, available at the glasshouses

Springburn Park, 24th June 2010

Bob Gray

12 members attended this combined meeting of GNHS and GTLS at this 31 ha (77 acres) park in the north of the city, the highest point of which rises to 364' a.s.l. on Balgray Hill. The land on which the park is located was acquired by the city in 1892. It is noteworthy not so much for the presence of unusual trees but rather for its substantial numbers of different taxa such as alders, hornbeams, limes and Turkey oaks and for natural regeneration (see below).

We set off from the main western entrance and entered the refurbished rockery, reputedly one of Scotland's most beautiful, created out of what had originally been a quarry. Near the rockery entrance were a table dogwood (*Cornus controversa*) about to burst into flower and an easily overlooked Cappadocian maple (*Acer cappadocicum*). Within the heart of the rockery, beside the pond overgrown with giant rhubarb (*Gunnera manicata*), was found a Katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) whilst towards the SE corner were a number of full flowering strawberry dogwoods (*C. kousa*), near which were growing a number of white asphodel (*Asphodelus albus*). The NW corner of the rockery contains a fine double stemmed western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) as well as a white willow (*Salix alba*). Meyer's creeping juniper (*Juniperus squamata* 'Meyeri') has been planted sporadically throughout the rockery.

As we headed towards the south (Broomfield Road) entrance we passed the new rose garden as well as the sadly derelict grade 'A' listed Winter Gardens. Near

here was a lovely group of small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) with their distinctive upwardly spreading flowers coming into bloom.

Broad-leaved limes (*T. platyphyllos*) and common limes (*T. x europaea*) were encountered throughout the park. East of the Broomfield Road entrance we came across a fine, suckering Cappadocian maple (*A. cappadocicum*). Heading from here towards the highest point, which contains the well-camouflaged Cockmuir Reservoirs (containing some 1 million gallons of water supplying much of the north of Glasgow), we found a number of fine hornbeams (*Carpinus betulus*) amongst several beeches (*Fagus sylvatica*). Moira Cohen spotted a number of naturally regenerating hornbeam seedlings here.

Near the east end of the central pond grow a number of poplar species, including Lombardy (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'), hybrid black (*P. x canadensis*) and balsam spire (*Populus* 'Balsam Spire'). On the lawn a few common spotted orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) were growing. Also near here was a group of young, unusual conifers, probably Douglas fir 'Fretsii' (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Fretsii'), a semi-dwarf form with very short leaves. We then headed towards the NE side of the park which is a SINC (site of interest for nature conservation). On the way, near the park boundary, was a row of four big hornbeams. Passing the beech wood in the NE corner led us towards the entrance. Here we discovered of a large amount of natural regeneration, including seedlings and small saplings of Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), beech (*F. sylvatica*), sycamore (*A.pseudoplatanus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)...a precious area indeed. A short distance from here we found a bench, located beside a lovely small-leaved lime (*T. cordata*), an ash tree (*F. excelsior*) and an easily overlooked, non-flowering manna ash (*F. ornus*), this deserving of some care and attention as it is being crowded by other less valuable trees.

The Peace Garden in the NW of the park is dedicated to a former Lord Provost. It contains a 'Peace Pole' donated by Japanese atomic bomb survivors. A fine aspen (*P. tremula*) grows here as well as a group of Bhutan pine (*Pinus wallichiana*) and several dawn redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). Beside the Peace Garden is Mosesfield House that was previously a manse, in the yard of which the minister's son, James Thomson, built in 1895 the first motor car ever produced in Scotland. The house itself was given to the city by Hugh Reid of Belmont (just north of the Park) in 1904. From the house we crossed the path forming the main N/S axis of the park. A row of fine cut-leaved silver maples (*A. saccharinum* f. *laciniatum*) grows on the west side of this path and more of them grow alongside the nearby bowling green. These maples led us to the west end of the central pond where grow an eclectic mix of Scots pine (*P. sylvestris*), shore pine (*P. contorta* ssp. *contorta*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), various larches (*Larix* sp.) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). The statue of Sir James Reid, director of the famous Hyde Park Locomotive Works, is the focal point for many paths. One of these has of an avenue of alternating Swedish and river birches (*Betula pendula* 'Laciniata' and *B. nigra*) planted by local youngsters in 2006. Just west of here is the Balgray fountain made of Doulton pottery and topped by a unicorn. Nearby are a lovely blue Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') and a hybrid cockspur thorn (*C. x lavellei* 'Carrierei') in spectacular full flower.

As darkness approached we made our way back towards the west entrance, near which, just before sunset, we found a substantial manna ash (*F. ornus*) that had just passed flowering. A fitting end to a grand evening.

Saltcoats, 16th October 2010

Anne Orchardson

Five of us joined Fred Woodward at the North Ayrshire Museum, Saltcoats on a beautiful autumn morning. After an initial explanation setting the historical scene of how this area was foremost in the development of the study of marine biology in the 19th Century, we headed to the shore north of Ardrossan. We spent a fascinating three hours exploring the rocks and pools exposed by the low tide, gradually working our way down the shore towards the sea. Fred was full of interesting stories and information about the things we found.



A list of most of the species found is shown below, but one or two things stick out. The first excitement was to find a sea hare, which was new to most of us and which Fred kept for further examination. Much to his delight we found several chitons ("coat-of-mail shells") which have eight separate shell plates.

Sea anemones and sea squirts (*Ascidia tunicates*) were also found in several pools, and Fred demonstrated why these latter are so aptly named! Breadcrumb sponges (*Halichondria panicea*) coated many of the larger stones in the water. It was near these sponges that we found a few sea slugs - one in particular was large (about 3"-4" across) - *Archidoris pseudoargus* also known as the Sea Lemon. Later, after it had been in a bowl of water for a while its antennae appeared, looking rather like eyes to the uninitiated like me and its "frilly" gills emerged. A beautiful purple-tipped sea urchin (*Psammechinus miliaris*) was also found near the sea and as we turned it over its Aristotle's Lantern was clearly visible.

Circular tar-black patches on rocks near the low water mark turned out to be the lichen *Verrucaria mucosa*. Its tolerance of salt water immersion is unusual amongst lichens, and even more amazing was the transformation from black to vivid green achieved by pouring water over it.

In addition to the large number of common shells (see below) we also found blue-rayed limpets (*Ansates pellucida*) - the first in laminarian holdfast, and top shells, which have mother-of-pearl under their top layer.



The lichen *Verrucaria mucosa*

And of course there were several hermit crabs inhabiting various shells as well as several shore crabs, both dead and alive! Thanks to Fred for a most enjoyable visit.

Here is a list of our findings:

Shells: whelks, dog-whelks, winkles, periwinkle, limpets, blue rayed limpets, top shells, mussels, bearded horse mussels, carpet shells, barnacles, cockle shells

Blue rayed limpet (*Ansates pellucida*)

Sea hare

Sea anemones

Marine isopod (*Dynamene bidentata*)

Breadcrumb sponges (*Halichondria panicea*)

Sea squirts (tunicates, *Ascidia* spp.)

Brittle star

Swimming crab, Shore crab

Hermit crab

Sea slug (*Archidoris pseudoargus*)

Chiton

Various annelids

Planarian flatworm

Blenny

Common starfish



The marine isopod *Dynamene bidentata*

Glasgow Museums Resource Centre Tour

David Palmar

On the afternoon of January 11th, a small group of GNHS members were given an excellent tour round the relatively new Glasgow Museums Resource Centre in Nitshill, by Laurence Simmen, Natural History Conservator, who had worked in the 1980s with my father in Kelvingrove as a taxidermist. Starting at the -20°C freezer, in which acquisitions are quarantined to kill off any unwanted organisms, we were then shown some of the many thousands of specimens in climate-controlled pods, and told about the challenges of mounting and conserving them, including seeing the many wrapped in plastic to combat an attack of moths. It was

amazing how many specimens are stored, but for lack of space unable to be publicly exhibited. Access is available by arrangement to people wanting to research the collections.



The GNHS in GMRS!





And finally a couple of magnificent specimens from the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre collections - on the left is a Golden Eagle mounted by my father, Charles Palmar, and on the right, of course a Peacock.



GNHS Excursion Programme 2011

Anne Orchardson

Last year our Excursion Programme covered a range of interests and we visited quite a variety of locations. I hope there was something for you in the Programme and that you were able to enjoy some of our outings.

Now we are planning the Excursion Programme for this coming summer - a good thought after the recent cold weather! My aim is to put together a Programme which enables us to learn more about the natural history of our city and its surrounding area by drawing on the expertise and local knowledge of our Conveners and Leaders.

However in order to provide as varied a Programme as possible, I am also interested in any suggestions you may have. If there is somewhere you think would be suitable, or an area of interest you would like covered by an excursion, please let me know. Perhaps there is something you would like to explore further after one of our winter talks, or somewhere we have visited in the past which might merit another visit.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

BLB Grants for 2011

Morag Mackinnon

At the meeting of the BLB executive in January various applications were considered and the following were approved and a total of £4,100 awarded. Two x £200 Bursaries for BRISC to award to applicants wanting to go on field training courses.

Gillian Simpson was awarded £400 for two persons to attend a Centipede, Millipede and Woodlouse Identification Course if they are accepted.

Richard Weddle was granted up to £400 to research particular Insect records in London.

Four Glasgow University Expeditions were granted £2,900 in total for the various projects they were studying in locations of Bolivia, South Sinai, Trinidad and Cyprus.

Blodwen's Inaugural Lecture

Richard Weddle

I recently found a copy of the lecture given by Blodwen Lloyd (as she was then) on the occasion of her inauguration as Professor of Botany at the University of Strathclyde. You can read it at

www.gnhs.org.uk/documents/bl_inaugural_lecture.pdf