



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

February 2014

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
22 March 2014

GNHS is a Registered
Scottish Charity
www.gnhs.org.uk

2014 MEETINGS – In the GU Boyd Orr Building unless otherwise stated

February

Tuesday 11th

7.15pm Photographic Night: members' slides or digital slide shows, plus photographic competition results

Thursday 27th

6.00pm Graham Kerr Building, Lecture Theatre 1. Glasgow University Expeditions Report Back. Jointly with GU Exploration Society (most expeditions are supported by the BLB Bequest)

March

Thursday 6th

7.30pm Paisley Museum (High Street, Paisley). Plight of the bumblebee Anthony McCluskey (jointly with Paisley NHS and Hamilton NHS)

Tuesday 11th

6.30pm AGM followed by

Lecture: A second chance to conserve the biodiversity and conservation value of regenerating rainforest; Andrew Whitworth

April

Tuesday 8th

6.30pm Tutorial: A year on the edge (of Loch Lomond); Paula Baker

7.30pm Lecture: The ancient pinewoods of Scotland; Clifton Bain

May

Tuesday 13th

6.30pm Tutorial: Claypits, Hamiltonhill – beyond the jagged fence; Shiona MacPhail

7.30pm Lecture: Avian migration – timing matters. Barbara Helm

June

Tuesday 10th

Summer Social: see April Newsletter or website nearer the time for details.

Photography Course

David is leading a one-day photography walk at Mugdock Country Park on Sunday 13th April (not a GNHS event). More information under the Further Information menu on www.photoscot.co.uk, and bookings through Mugdock Country Park.

David Palmar

Summer Excursion Programme

Morag Mackinnon

The summer excursion programme will be ready in a month or so and thanks to all of you who have offered suggestions and - even better - offered to lead an excursion.

If you have any further suggestions to make for this coming season please contact one of the excursion committee as soon as possible.
Morag Mackinnon, Alison Moss or George Paterson

What is your particular interest?

What kind of outings do you like?

Do you prefer evenings or weekends for outings?

How far are you prepared to travel?

If you tell us what you like then we can do our best to suit as many as possible.

Biodiversity on GNHS website

Richard Weddle

Those who have their finger on the pulse may have spotted a recent addition to the main menu on the Society's web pages - Biodiversity. This is a start on something which I have long felt was a rather glaring omission, seeing that biodiversity is so central to our interests. So at long last - and in a spirit of new year's resolution - I've made a start by adding a couple of topics, Glasgow Necropolis and Bingham's Pond.

The plan is that these will complement the information in the recently-published *Wildlife Around Glasgow* by adding further detail, such as species lists and links to other relevant websites, to the information about locations mentioned there; and to supplement the book by giving information about locations which were not included. In addition I envisage there'll be notes on individual species or species groups.

If anyone would like to make suggestions for other material that could be covered, or to contribute a draft species account (for example), that would be most welcome - please contact me. Please consider first, though, whether a 'Short Note' in *The Glasgow Naturalist* might be more appropriate for what you want to say; please contact Dominic.McCafferty@glasgow.ac.uk (the Editor) or myself to discuss if you're not sure - and remember that Short Notes are published on the website too.

The embryonic Biodiversity pages can be accessed at www.gnhs.org.uk/biodiversity.html

2014 Subscriptions

Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fell due on 1st January 2014 (except for those who have joined in the past few weeks). Unless our records show that you pay your subscription by Standing Order, a subscription renewal form is enclosed; email recipients have already received a reminder by email. We would be grateful if you could pay your subscription as soon as possible, to save us having to send further reminders.

Excursion Report

Maxwell Park, 27th June 2013

Bob Gray

Poor weather meant that only four dedicated people attended this visit to the small, 21 acre Maxwell Park in the heart of Pollokshields.



A Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) was planted in 1990 near the north entrance beside an engraved stone that marks the centenary of the opening of the park gifted to the people of Pollokshields by Sir John Stirling Maxwell in 1888. In fact a sizeable number of Norway maples may be found here, particularly alongside the southern boundary path and also towards the north and west. The large size of many of these specimens

suggests they were planted about the time of the park's opening. (see background tree in above photo.) What is currently thought to be the second biggest in girth in Glasgow is found here (the biggest is in King's Park).

Considerable numbers of large silver birches (*Betula pendula*) are also present, forming one or two fine avenues.

The perimeter of the park consists entirely of common limes (*Tilia x europaea*). This kind of perimeter planting of common lime is popular in Glasgow parks as the lime trees form an effective barrier between the peace of the park and the surrounding bustle. Two interesting silver pendent limes (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris') occur, both planted close to each other towards the southeast. One is a very fine specimen, apparently second in height and girth only to one in Rosshall Park. (These relative sizes of course are subject to change, both as a result of growth and new discoveries.)



Silver birches with tumbling white roses



The other is a near windthrown specimen that is still very much alive and played on by children.

Tilia 'Petiolaris'

A sizeable ash tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*) grows close to Pollokshields Burgh Hall which is located in the southeast corner of the park.

This building contains a window that incorporates the Maxwell family motto

"Do Good While the Holly is Green", which explains the large number of hollies (*Ilex* spp.) planted in the park as well as, apparently, the local area. The most interesting of these hollies is arguably one that grows close to the memorial stone mentioned above.

Ilex aquifolium 'Scotica', a female clone with purple stems and near spineless leaves.



The most distinctive feature of the park is perhaps the George Forrest Commemorative Bed. This ornamental bed located towards the northeast entrance was planted in 2004 to celebrate the centenary of the great plant hunter's first expedition to China. An interpretation board beside the bed indicates those of his introduced species that are planted within the bed, the white fruited Forrest's whitebeam (*Sorbus forrestii*) being

the most conspicuous.

Other plants include *Iris forrestii*, *Pieris forrestii* and *Primula viallii*. Forrest was sponsored by many, including Sir John Stirling Maxwell of Pollok, and rhododendrons were probably the most significant of his introductions. The Rhododendron Society, of which Sir John was a founding member, paid Forrest for

each rhododendron found. Many of these were planted at Pollok and also on Sir John's estate at Corrour, by Loch Ossian. They form two wonderful collections today.

The pond, naturalised in 1998, is another distinctive feature of the park. It contains an artificial island with mature willows (*Salix* spp.), a few sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and an ash tree growing on it. The shallow perimeter has been planted with many marshland plants, especially tall sedges (*Carex* spp.), and great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). It is home to several species of water fowl, including a resident heron, mute swans, moorhens, coots and mallard.

This small park is quite a gem.

The March of the Harlequin Ladybird – our ladybirds need you! Katie Murray

The harlequin ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*) has become renowned as an invader. It has so far managed to establish itself in North and South America, Canada, South Africa and much of Europe, including the UK where it arrived approximately 10 years ago. The harlequin ladybird is native to Asia and was introduced to North America and Europe as a biological control measure for crop pests. This ladybird's ability to reproduce in high numbers, disperse long distances and to defend itself with spines and chemicals has led to an invasion speed of approximately 200 km per year across Europe.

The gardeners amongst you may be thinking 'what's the problem with another aphid predator in the garden?' Unfortunately this invasive ladybird is causing declines of UK ladybirds. Species like the two-spot ladybird (*Adalia bipunctata*), which until recently were considered common, are now plummeting. Although we are currently unsure of the main factors responsible for these declines, the harlequin's ability to compete for resources and prey items, its habit of preying on other ladybirds, combined with toxic chemicals and diseases present in its blood are all likely to be working in combination against native species.

Natural enemies of ladybirds may also play a part in the invasion success of the harlequin ladybird. It is commonly suggested that one of the reasons invasive species are so successful is that they lack natural enemies such as parasites and predators when they arrive in a new area, as it is likely they did not bring them with them. Natural enemies of native UK ladybirds, for example the wasp *Dinocampus coccinellae* (pictured), may begin to use the harlequin as a host, perhaps providing a control for harlequin ladybird numbers.

On the positive side, the UK has a great ladybird recording scheme coordinated by Dr Helen Roy (CEH, Wallingford) and others. With over 30,000 records sent in by volunteers across the country before and during the invasion of the harlequin ladybird, this recording scheme has been invaluable in monitoring the distributions of both harlequin and UK ladybirds. Scotland, however, has a relatively poor number of records, and some species are only known from records which date back over 25 years. We have seen how valuable the records sent in by volunteers have been in monitoring ladybird populations in England and in order to do the same we need more records from Scotland. An increased recording effort now will

ensure that the inevitable arrival of the harlequin will be well documented. Records of common species are just as important as rarer ones and any records of parasites found (for example the *Dinocampus coccinellae* cocoon pictured) will help monitoring of their populations and ecology.



Seven-spot ladybird with a cocoon of the ladybird parasite *Dinocampus coccinellae*. This cocoon remains visible after the wasp has left making this a great parasite to record. Photograph by Richard Comont

In this age of modern technology, it has never been easier to send in records of ladybird sightings. The UK ladybird survey runs a website where you can find a wealth of information about ladybirds, as well as fact sheets to help with the identification of some of the UK ladybirds. The survey website also allows you to send a record in via the form on their website.

Another option is the iRecord website which allows the user to

submit records of any organism, including ladybirds and their parasites. A more recent option that has become available is the ladybird survey smart phone app. As well as containing a key to help you find which ladybird you are looking at, the app will take your GPS position using your smart phone's GPS system. As with the other methods of sending a record, the app will also allow you to upload a photograph, record the habitat and add any extra notes to the record that you like. Another good option to send records in is to send them into Richard Weddle who will then be able to have a note of them for the society, before sending them on to the UK ladybird survey.

So as the spring begins to appear, keep your eyes open for the gardener's friend, in its many forms.

Below are various ways to send ladybird records and get information.

- <http://www.ladybird-survey.org>
- <http://www.harlequin-survey.org>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/ladybird-parasites/>
- <http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/home>
- Smartphone app – iPhone and Android phones.

GNHS/BRISC bursaries

As in previous years, GNHS & BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) are offering bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field

studies skills. The bursaries will be for £200 or 75% of the cost of the course, whichever is lower. This year there will be seven bursaries available; the closing date for applications is 31 January 2014; for full details, and an application form, see www.gnhs.org.uk/bursaries.html

Report from Bursary Recipient

Claire Foot

My name is Claire Foot. Conservation and natural history are both my passion and my occupation. I work as an Assistant Warden for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) up in the Flow Country, in Caithness and Sutherland. This is the world's largest expanse of blanket bog and therefore a prime location for sphagnum spotting and study.

I have always had a passion for natural history; however, my academic background is not in ecology or botany. The vegetation ID skills that I had prior to 2013 were mainly learnt through previous roles on varying habitats or developed through personal study. I was therefore overjoyed when I was successful in gaining one of the BRISC and GNHS bursaries for improving my natural history skills.



A carpet of sphagnum

I chose to use my bursary to fund the sphagnum moss ID course that was run by FSC at Kindrogan. Sphagnum covers large areas of the peat up here in the flow country in a fantastic multi-coloured, multi textured carpet all year round. So this opportunity to learn more about the individual species, their characteristics and the varying habitats that they occupy was too good to pass up.



The Perthshire Hills

The course did not disappoint. We visited a variety of habitats in highland Perthshire, a band of enthusiasts, led by a knowledgeable and approachable expert Nick Hodgetts. The evenings gave us a chance to build on our developing field ID skills, by undertaking microscopy work, enabling us to view these amazing plants in even greater detail.

My role as Assistant Warden, sees me line managing a group of residential and local volunteers. Many of them are pursuing a career in conservation; others are looking to try something different or are on a working holiday.



Fellow course attendees ID in the field

Since attending the sphagnum moss course at Kindrogan, I am able to share more knowledge and information about the bog and its plants with the volunteers, helping to build on their enthusiasm and interest.

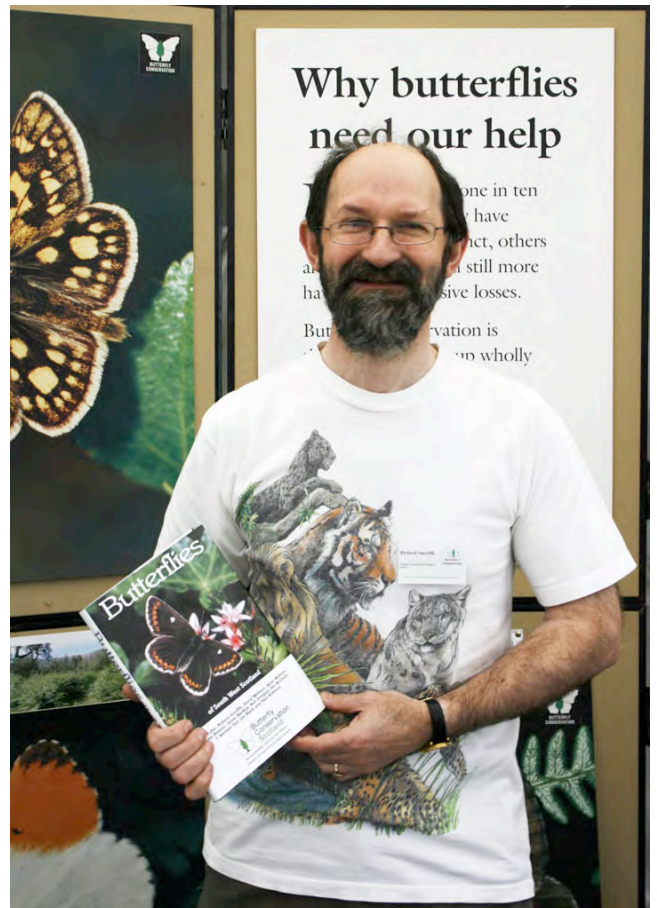
I also help with public events on the reserve, such as our 4x4 safaris, which enable the public to see more and gain a greater understanding of peatlands and the flow country. The course has enabled me to expand the knowledge that I have to share with them.

Finally, the course has been great as it has enabled me to identify specific elements of the environment that I am walking across while walking in my free time, or working on the reserve. I will, in the future, be undertaking vegetation surveys on the peatland where this course and the information and knowledge it provided will be invaluable. Thank you.

Richard Sutcliffe

Richard Sutcliffe has been honoured by Butterfly Conservation with a 'Lifetime Service Award' (at his tender age!). Richard Sutcliffe received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his over 28 years of dedication to the conservation of butterflies and moths in Scotland.

Richard was one of the original Committee members who helped establish the Glasgow & South West Scotland Branch of Butterfly Conservation in 1985, and he has remained an active member through to the present day. He has held a number of roles within the branch, including Chair from 1987 to 1999, Newsletter Editor from 1985 to 1999 and Butterfly Recorder from 1985 to 2010. During his time as Butterfly Recorder he submitted, transcribed and verified over 116,500 records from all over Scotland! As Scottish Coordinator for the Butterfly Millennium Atlas Project, Richard was instrumental in collecting data and putting together a detailed butterfly atlas.



Richard has now stood down as Chairman but continues his dedicated work for butterfly conservation by giving talks, leading field trips and workshops and representing Butterfly Conservation at various meetings.

**Letter from the Goldenland 6
The Woodlands of Haute-Saône**

Jim Dickson and Geneviève Lécrivain

For the Scottish naturalist one of the joys of this part of France is that the woodland cover is one of the greatest in the whole French nation. It is 45%. Think of that, nearly half the land is covered by trees. That's about three times the woodland cover of Scotland, a mere 15% or so. Almost anywhere you may be in this department only a short walk away is a large woodland. Go thoughtlessly into one of the bigger ones on a dull day and you might easily lose your bearings. They harbour many wild boar (sanglier) and roe deer (chevreuil) which are hunted not just for sport but because both are delicious eating. Sometimes the wild boars leave the woodlands and turn over the pastures zigzaggedly like drunken ploughmen.

In spring there are extensive white patches of Wood Anemone (Anemone) and other plants familiar to us in Scotland but how many of our woods harbour Lily of the Valley (Muguet)? There are none that I know of, certainly not any in which it is indigenous. It is commonplace here and on the first of May each year the local people go out in large numbers to pick it.

Le Bois des Rompeux, which covers about 3 km², is a walk of only a few minutes away on foot from Jenny's house in Chemilly. Mostly these woodlands are Beech (Hêtre), Oak (Chêne) and Hornbeam (Charme). There are also Norway Spruce (Épicéa), Silver Fir (Sapin Pectiné) and Scots Pine (Pin Sylvestre). Most definitely these forests are not untouched descendants of the wildwood.



Photo 1. Inside Bois des Rompeux in springtime.

I cherish an original map Jenny gave me showing the Haute-Saône of the mid 18th Century when all the woods were in private hands. The Bois des Rompeux is not there. It simply did not exist. The extent of the forests before the Revolution when all the land was privately owned was nowhere near 45%, perhaps a

mere 10%, certainly not much more. The

local authorities organise sustainable management of the woodlands which are divided into plots cut cyclically not just for timber but other wood products too including firewood. See photo 1.



Consequently, first in the woods and then outside many houses, you can see everywhere neat piles of logs, some many metres long and sometimes stacked up for years undisturbed.

Photo 2. A large supply of firewood beside a farmhouse at Recologne-lès-Rioz.

On a cold winter's evening it's great to enjoy the results of this repeatable cropping of the woodlands. See Photo 3. Notice that the top of the cast iron backplate states 1708. So Jenny's house is more than 300 years old. The extensive roof is supported not just by oaken beams but by oaken pillars. It was farmhouse and a semi-detached one at that. Yes, you read correctly. Such twin farmhouses are commonplace here. The neighbouring farmhouses, only a few metres away are just the same. Few of these dwellings are farmhouses now. In Jenny's case not since the early 1920s when her grandmother could not keep going after being widowed in the Great War, as tragically so many French women were (and , of course, women of many other nationalities too). The two pillars seem standard on many of these backplates. The pelican (or phoenix?) on top of each pillar feeding three chicks is a Christian symbol. The word *charitas* is above each pillar.

So the woodlands of Haute-Saône are not just beautiful especially so in both spring and autumn but productive as well. They have much natural history interest. However, what these woods lack almost totally is the Bluebell (or Wild Hyacinth if you wish to be pompous) and so you can never see the glorious purple blue haze in spring as in the oak woodlands at Mugdock or Inchcailloch. In Haute-Saône Jenny and I have seen only a very few miserable Bluebells in one place near Port- sur-Saône.



Photo 3. The backplate with a cheery fire at Jenny's house in Chemilly.

Members' Photographic Night and Photography Competition Results **David Palmar**

On Tuesday 11th February in the Boyd Orr Building we will again have members' own digital presentations. I have received offers of a number of presentations, but there may still be time for one or two more. Please let me know in advance if you would like to present a slide show, and what the subject is, to enable me to organise the evening more effectively. Even just a few slides brought along can be interesting for members – sophisticated presentations are nice, but unnecessary!

This will be followed by the results of the Photographic Competition which is now in its 3rd year, and is run jointly by GNHS and the Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine.

This year there have been 33 entries, most of them of high quality. Anyone who submitted an entry is invited and encouraged to attend.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd March 2014 please.

Thank you very much to all the contributors who have made the Newsletters so interesting and worthwhile publishing. Please send contributions by email, preferably as .rtf, .doc or .docx (Word 2007) format. If you have time, please italicise taxonomic names, and use Verdana font, size 12 points.

If sending photos, please submit only a few as separate jpg files (not as part of a Word document), and make them under 100Kb each for emailing).