

# GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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22 July 2021

GNHS is a Registered  
Scottish Charity

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Newsletter Editor  
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## GNHS and COVID-19 - a potentially changing outlook

Chris McInerny

Despite the development and rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine the outlook for GNHS activities during 2021 remain uncertain.

We have therefore decided to take a precautionary approach with both the summer excursions and the autumn/winter talks programme.

The exciting and varied excursion programme, organised by Alison Moss, is published with this newsletter. Alison has indicated for each event that decisions about whether they go ahead or not will be taken nearer the date of each excursion.

Similarly, Roger Downie describes the excellent talks programme with it likely that we have at a minimum several Zoom presentations. But we hope that some talks may be possible in person at the University of Glasgow.

The mailing of the next issue of *The Glasgow Naturalist* remains delayed due to COVID-19. The hard copies have been printed but are still in cardboard boxes in the Graham Kerr Building. As soon as access is allowed, this issue will be mailed to members. Electronic versions of all the papers in this volume are already present on the GNHS website.

For both the excursions and talks, GNHS members will be contacted with the updated situation nearer their date. Announcements will be emailed, as well as being posted on the society website and Facebook page.

## Talks Programme

Roger Downie

Last year at this time, with the Covid-19 lockdown newly in force, we cancelled our talks programme for the foreseeable future. A year later, we are still living in restricted circumstances, but at least we now know how to present and attend talks on-line. So, our April and May talks (see below) will be via Zoom. It is still unclear when in-person talks can resume, so the programme for 2021-22 is being prepared with the expectation that we will continue using Zoom at least until the end of the year, with the first talk scheduled for 14th September. This will be given by the well-known naturalist Hugh Warwick and will focus on hedgehogs.

One advantage of Zoom is that our attendances at talks have been higher than usual, no doubt partly because not everyone wishes to venture out on cold dark winter nights, so attending from home is more attractive. However, not everyone has good enough technology to see/hear the talks at their best, and the big downside is the lack of face-to-face meetings by members and the chance to chat informally afterwards. Given that there are some advantages to on-line talks, we will look into the possibilities of hybrid presentations once in-person meetings are possible again.

Although the organisation of next session's programme is well advanced, I am always on the look-out for good speakers, so please send suggestions to me at [roger.downie@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:roger.downie@glasgow.ac.uk)

### **April 13th, 7pm Conserving Scotland's pollinators - from high-rise to hay meadows: Apithanny Bourne**

Do green roofs in urban habitats provide beneficial foraging habitat for a city's pollinators? And what about the wider landscape? What are the comparative benefits to pollinators of species-rich grasslands and the flower-rich margins of agricultural fields?

Apithanny Bourne began as an environmental chemist, but diverted to follow her passion for insects and plants by taking a Masters degree, followed by a year working for SNH as a botanist. She has now embarked on a PhD on butterflies and species-rich grasslands. She is a Trustee of Butterfly Conservation and chairs their East of Scotland branch. She is about to complete her first book.

### **May 11th, 7pm Brownfields and Biodiversity: Scott Shanks**

A look at the importance of post-industrial brownfield sites as refugia for wildlife. These post-industrial sites are often regarded negatively as reminders of long-gone industries and abandoned communities. Despite this, many brownfield sites are treasure troves of biodiversity. The best sites support a complex mosaic of habitats such as pools, bare ground, grassland, scrub, woodland and 'caves' in the form of old abandoned buildings, all in close proximity. This complex mosaic of habitats and niches supports many species, and, as a result, brownfield sites may have as many rare invertebrates as ancient woodland!

Scott Shanks began his scientific career as a geneticist/microbiologist at the University of Aberdeen, proceeding to a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Glasgow, working on yeasts. He then became Buglife Scotland's Conservation Officer, and has recently moved to a similar position with RSPB Scotland. In his spare time (!), Scott is chair of Butterfly Conservation's Glasgow and West of Scotland branch, and is butterfly records co-ordinator for that area.

NB This meeting is jointly with Paisley and Hamilton Natural History Societies.

### **Excursion Program 2021**

**Alison Moss**

The 2021 excursion programme is of course provisional. Please check the details for each event which will be sent out by email nearer the time. Booking may be required. Details will be clarified as soon as possible for each excursion.

All Meetings or Excursions attended by Society members or their guests are entirely at their own risk. Participants should follow any safety advice given by the leader.

Also, if you have transport problems, make this known to the leader and it may be possible to arrange help once car sharing is allowed. There is no obligation to attend the whole excursion so long as the leader is kept informed for your own safety and the group's integrity.

Please wear appropriate clothing/footwear. Please notify leader in advance of your intended attendance, and of any cancellation. For reasons of personal safety, would all members and friends attending excursions supply the leader with their mobile

phone number and have their phone with them on excursions. Any problem with this, please inform the leader before or on the day as appropriate.

There is no charge for most excursions. However, if appropriate, the full amount of any costs will be payable in advance. If you have to cancel, the cost will only be refundable if a replacement is found.

## **May**

**Sun 16th**, 11am, Garnock East, mixed interest, but mostly lesser whitethroat. Joint excursion with Paisley Natural History Society. Meet at lay-by near Bartonholm Recycling Centre on Sandy Road Irvine, KA12 8SP, NS306413. No footpaths; exploring unsurfaced trails which could be muddy and a bit overgrown so sturdy footwear essential. Bring packed lunch. Joint leaders and contacts, Gill Smart and Tom Byars.

**Thu 20th**, 7pm, Maryhill Park, mainly trees. Meet at NS 561697, parking just to the south of Maryhill Road, in Dalsholm Road. Parkland paths. Leader and contact, Bob Gray.

**Sun 23rd**, 11am, Inverkip, focus on plants and insects on low lying terrain. Meet at Inverkip village Main Street NS 206720, just off A78 between Gourock and Wemyss Bay. Stout footwear best. Bring packed lunch. Contact James Milner-White.

**Sun 30th**, 11am, Darnconner, near Auchinleck, Ayrshire, insects and plants, especially dingy skipper and narrow-bordered bee hawk moth. Meet at NS 572236, parking slightly south at roadside at NS 570234. 2nd site at Lugar (NS 610211) may also be visited. Boots best and bring packed lunch. Leader and contact Scott Shanks, 07793 052501, [scott.shanks@rspb.org.uk](mailto:scott.shanks@rspb.org.uk).

## **June**

**Tue 8th** Summer Social. Details will follow when the Covid restrictions are known.

**Sun 13th**, time to be confirmed, Possil Marsh, Scottish Wildlife Trust site. This is mainly a recording meeting. Recording skills welcome, but numbers must be confirmed in advance and only Members of GNHS are invited. Waterproof boots essential. Some details of this event need confirmation including parking which is limited. At present, contact Alison Moss, 07802 952817, [dralisonmoss@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dralisonmoss@yahoo.co.uk).

**Fri 18-20th**, Tree weekend. 2 nights at 'The Burn' mansion house in Edzell. Early booking by members wishing to attend is essential. Whether or not the weekend proceeds will depend upon Covid restrictions. Likely sites- path along river N Esk, wooded grounds on "The Burn". NO 60107019, Drumtochty Glen Forest, NO 697798, towards Auchenblae, Edzell Castle, Sandy flat area of St Cyrus beach NO 742643 and RSPB cliff site NO 879798. For all details and booking contact Bob Gray, (or James Milner White).

## **July**

**Sat 3rd**, 11am, Havoc Meadow, West of Havoc Road, mixed interest, mainly grassland and shoreline, with some woodland, plants and insects. Meet at car park by Clyde at end of Havoc Road, NS 378753. From Glasgow, take A841 through

Dumbarton. After bridge over Leven, go through three sets of lights, take left turn on to Havoc Road about 1km after Dalreoch Station just before modern Church. Follow to road end at Clyde. Sturdy footwear, bring packed lunch. Contact Pam Murdoch.

**Thu 8th**, 7pm, Pollok Park, mainly trees. Meet at NS 547618, Pollok House car park. Contact Bob Gray.

**Sun 11th**, 11am, Dumbrook Loch Meadows SSSI, mixed interest, especially plants and insects. Meet at Craighend visitor centre, Mugdock Country Park, G62 8EL, NS 546779. Entrance to site just on opposite car park entrance. Stout footwear best as paths are rough and searching off pathways likely. Bring packed lunch. Facilities at Mugdock Country Park. Contact Alison Moss.

**Sun 18th**, 11am, Helensburgh, Craighendoran. Mixed interest, glens and woodland along the John Muir way. Meet at on-street parking, Waverley Avenue, just north of the A814 in Craighendoran. NS 314814. Stout footwear essential, paths can be muddy, bring packed lunch. Contact James Milner-White.

## **August**

**Sat 14th**, 10.30, Holmhills Wood Community Park, mixed interest, especially dragonflies and yellow birds-nest. Meet at Park entrance on Holmhills Grove, G72 8AP, NS 639595. By car, follow Holmhills Drive to end. Easily accessed by train with Kirkhill Station just 10 minutes away and Cambuslang Station also close by. Sturdy footwear advised as main interest areas, ponds and grassland are off pathways. 2-3 hours likely, but bring packed lunch or snack. Contact Alison Park. (or Andy Wilson).

**Sat 21st**, 11am, Greenhead Moss, mixed interest, invertebrates and plants. Stout footwear, bring snack or packed lunch. Meet at Creamery Road, Wishaw, ML2 8AY, at the car park at NS 805544. Contact Alison Moss.

## **September**

**Sun 12th**, 11am, Woodroad Park and Broom Braes, Cumnock. Mixed interest. Ancient oak woodland and riparian woodland in Gorge of Lugar Water. Galls, leaf mines and fungi. Meet at Park's main car park NS 57012055. Easiest route from Glasgow M77/A77 then A76, A70 into Cumnock, left at mini roundabout, left at traffic lights (B7083 Auchinleck), then almost immediately left between bridge and church into narrow access road, and follow to end (beware speed bumps). Good paths, not much mud. Bring packed lunch. Contact Paul Cobb.

As usual, we will have at least 2 joint excursions in the autumn with the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group. These will be notified with details nearer the time.

## 2021 Subscriptions

**Richard Weddle**

Subscriptions fell due on January 1st 2021 (except for those who have joined since June 2020). Members who pay by standing order need take no action; others will receive a subscription renewal form either as an email attachment or in the envelope containing this newsletter.

If you do receive a reminder, and will be paying by cheque, please send it to my home address: 89 Novar Drive (1/2), Glasgow G12 9SS, as we are currently unable to retrieve correspondence from the Graham Kerr Building. This information will be given in the reminder, but I thought it worth repeating.

## PhotoSCENE Prize-winners 2020-21

**David Palmar**

The PhotoSCENE competition, sponsored by GNHS and Glasgow University Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine, aims to promote interest in Natural History and the work of SCENE (Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Natural Environment, the University's field station at Rowardennan), promote linkage between the Institute and the Society and provide pictures for publicity.

All entrants are thanked for making the effort to enter the competition. Prizes totalling £800 per year have been awarded at the Society's photographic nights. Since the first competition in 2011, and together with talks from members, the competition has provided us with an interesting photographic evening each February.

This year there were 76 entries from 17 people. Here are the seven first prize-winners:

Overall Winner - Love is in the Air, by Norman Still



This shows a pair of Longhorn Beetles (*Pachytodes cerambyciformis*) mating on a Burnet Rose.



In addition to the overall winner there were 6 other First Prizes:



Bee Orchid - Chris McInerny



Red Deer - Kirsty Kennedy-Wylie



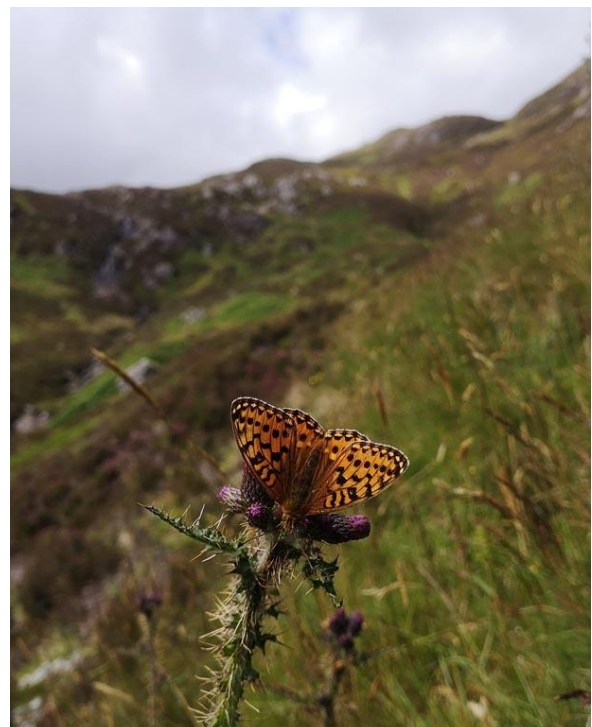
Ermine Moth caterpillars - Sarah Longrigg



Lamprey - Jonathan Archer



Leaf veins -  
Andy Wilson



Dark Green Fritillary -  
Robyn Haggard

I just wanted to get in touch with you all to ask if you are able to get involved with the City Nature Challenge and encourage others to get involved. We are hoping to encourage more people to take part safely this year. Please feel free to share with anyone you think would enjoy being involved. We will take part as 'Greater Glasgow' and 'Greater Edinburgh' and hopefully by taking in lots of council areas we can increase participation across the central belt as much as possible. This will help make the boundary size more like those of other cities globally. We can also have a little friendly rivalry between the two cities to see who gets more records!

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2021-greater-glasgow>

**In 2020**, 10 city regions across the UK formed a community of almost 5,000 wildlife recorders during City Nature Challenge. Recorders contributed an incredible 71,500 wildlife records to local and national databases, where they are used to inform conservation, management and research. Last year we were delighted to have 106 participants recording 2086 observations from across Greater Glasgow, including experienced naturalists and many first-time recorders. With the increased numbers of observers, we recorded 589 species.

Some rare sightings found were a hoverfly *Eumeris funeralis* (Lesser Bulb-fly) at Old Station Park (Hyndland) by Richard Weddle. This is a new species for the site and only the third time it has been recorded in Glasgow. Another very exciting and rare find (still being verified by experts) was a Small Amber Snail (*Succinella oblonga*) only known from a few sites in Scotland. It was found on a brownfield site by the Clyde by Scott Shanks who was our top recorder with over 515 observations. It was also interesting to see Ravens (*Corvus corax*) making the most of the lockdown quiet at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

### **What is City Nature Challenge?**

Glasgow and Edinburgh are working with over 400 cities worldwide, and 14 in the UK, to find and record the wildlife across the city in a four-day period from the 30 April to the 3rd May. There is also an identification window from 4 to 9 May to verify the records and add sightings. This can be any wild creature or plant, so not a dog, cat or garden plants, but birds, insects, mammals and wildflowers for example. Like all the other cities involved in the project in the UK and internationally we are using the platform iNaturalist.

### **How do you use iNaturalist?**

iNaturalist is a handy app and website which is used to gather 'observations' of wildlife; it asks you to upload a photograph, record what you saw, when you saw it and where you saw it. This information is then collated and stored centrally to give us a better idea of what wildlife is found in an area. It is quite a user friendly app which is therefore a good entry point for people new to biological recording.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/getting+started>

## **Why is the City Nature Challenge important?**

During the ecological and climate crisis, it is important to understand the environment around us, so that we know how species and habitats are responding and how to help them. As we become increasingly urbanised, it is important that we understand how different species are adapting to these habitats, to find ways to make homes for them. Cities are not owned by one person. They are a patchwork of tiny fragmented habitats that are all individually owned. It is therefore impossible to understand what's going on in cities without engaging a large variety of people who live, work and play in these habitats. However, to wildlife, they are one big habitat where they can go from park to garden to get what they need to survive. We need to ensure that we know what exists now in the city especially brownfield sites and also round the edges of the city in the suburbs and the surrounding countryside as these are some of the areas more vulnerable to development. If it is known what is there, then it's more likely to be protected.

## **Responding to COVID-19**

We continue to emphasise that people should comply with Government advice and social distancing measures and the Stay At Home messaging. It is therefore not appropriate to hold a mass event and encourage people to congregate in parks and green spaces. However, we have noticed since being a year of spending all our time at home, that nature is becoming increasingly important to people. People are spending time in their gardens if they have them or noticing birds they may never have seen before out the window.

The focus of this event is to take place in people's gardens, balconies and through the window. We hope that as well as getting more people involved it helps increase their knowledge of the wildlife on their doorstep. By increasing connections to nature and peoples' excitement about wildlife, we hope to raise their spirits and feelings of community despite the challenging situation we find ourselves in.

If you are outside the boundaries of this project you can also take part in the collaborative UK project for city nature challenge. That will enable anyone to get involved wherever they are in the UK.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-international-weekend-2021-uk>

## **How can partners and experienced naturalists get involved?**

We would love it if you could set up moth traps, camera traps, nest cameras, bird ringing apparatus, bird feeders and anything you have to hand. You will get some fantastic results that will be really valuable information for our city.

As iNaturalist is an American app it is still learning about UK species ID. We can use this as an opportunity to add lots of quality data by experienced people adding and verifying records.

We will be using our main RSPB Scotland website and social media channels to promote this event and adding "how to" videos and blogs. If you are able to share and interact with these through organisations of which you are part, we would be grateful. This is a great opportunity to get new people into biological recording. As this event is now not restricted to Greater Glasgow please share details and involve other biological recorders across the UK.



## **How the public can get involved at home?**

We would love the public to get involved in city nature challenge in their own gardens. You don't have to live in a nature reserve to give valuable information. As the State of Nature report shows, over 40% of our native species have decreased in population since 1970. Garden birds such as house sparrows and starlings which were once common have declined, as have other wildlife such as bumblebees.

Taking part is simple! Take pictures of the wildlife you find and upload them to the iNaturalist app or website. The app will help you to identify what you have seen, which is great if you don't feel confident identifying animals and plants. If you have any wildlife books at home, you can use these to help you too. You might learn more about the animals and get ideas of how to make your garden, balcony or window boxes better suited to them. Also, remember to use the map feature to check if it's a species we get in the UK. You could encourage birds into your garden by putting up bird feeders, especially if they are close to bushes or hedges. You can even look for birds from a window. Look for insects in flowers or under rocks.

### **Ways to engage children**

Children are fantastic at finding wildlife and it is good for their mental and physical wellbeing to be connected to nature. Below are a few ideas but there are lots more as part of the RSPB Wild Challenge Awards.

If you have a lawn, you could do some worm charming.

You can hold a Minibeast Hunt; under stones or rocks in the flowers and collect anything you find briefly in a jam jar or small pot with a lid to get a closer look. Children can design and make bird feeders using recycled bottles and tubs, to hang near hedges or on balconies to attract garden birds.

It would be fantastic if you are able to let me know if you, or any groups you work with are able to take part in the challenge. If you need any more information please let me know.

I hope you enjoy being involved.

Sarah-Jayne Forster

Project Manager- Giving Nature a Home (Maternity Cover)

I am currently working from home and can be contacted by e-mail:

[sarah-jayne.forster@rspb.org.uk](mailto:sarah-jayne.forster@rspb.org.uk)

### **Comment from Richard Weddle**

All of the data submitted via iNaturalist for the City Nature Challenge can be downloaded by Sarah-Jayne Forster (RSPB), who set up the pages, and will be distributed to local record centres and recording schemes for proper verification.

I visited Auchincruive Arboretum near Ayr for the first time last autumn, on 7th October. With my interests in galls and leafmines I wanted to see which if any of the non-native trees had been colonised by native invertebrates.

The arboretum has suffered a period of neglect in its recent history, and a lot of the labels are either missing or lost in the undergrowth, so some of the trees are anonymous. One such is a Birch that looks very much like our own Silver Birch, but has exceptionally large leaves that are extremely hairy on the underside. That had a larva of the sawfly *Hemichroa australis* in its characteristic J-shaped cut-out, a leafmine of the Agromyzid fly *Agromyza alnibetulae*, and 2 mines of the micromoth *Lyonetia clerkella*.

Another Birch, *Betula jacquemontii*, was the most colonised, with exceptional abundance of galls of the mite *Aceria lissonota*. Although not rare, it is not a gall you see very often, and certainly not in such numbers. Also on *B. jacquemontii* were 2 mines of the micromoth *Stigmella lapponica*.

Turkey Oaks *Quercus cerris* had *Phyllonorycter* moth-mines, one of which I was able to name, from pupal characters, as *P. messaniella*. Acorn galls of the agamic generation of the gall wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*, present in good numbers on our native Oaks, were no doubt helped by the presence of the Turkey Oaks, which is used by its sexual generation. The acorn gall is normally only on *Quercus robur*, but here there were also a few on *Q. petraea*, but they were small and sometimes atypical in shape.

A few Smooth Spangle galls of *Neuroterus albipes* were spilling over from native Oak onto an adjacent *Quercus frainetto*, and there were a few leafmines of the sawfly *Heterarthrus vagans* on Grey Alder *Alnus incana*, but otherwise the non-native trees were remarkably free of native colonisers, which emphasises the importance (outside of arboreta of course) of planting native trees, not foreigners.

**RSPB Wild Webinars****Sarah-Jayne Forster**

The RSPB team has put together a series of free webinars focusing on urban wildlife, brought to you by the RSPB's Giving Nature a Home Glasgow and Edinburgh team with contributions from partners. The last of the four webinars takes place on 7th April.

Webinar 4: Networking for Nature - Wednesday 7th April, 6-7.30pm

You do need to book a place in advance - the link below is for more information and to register for the event.

The organiser will contact you later with the Zoom links to access the event.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/136826789611>



Last year was my first sighting of Nuthatch in my garden. From autumn conspicuously a male and female were usually together at the bird feeder. They see off other birds, but last Sunday the male took a stab at, and saw off, a Grey Squirrel which was hanging on the feeder.

I have about 12 assorted bird boxes around the garden. These are often ignored and weird places nearby chosen to nest. I had to cover up a dark, glazed plant pot in the covered area. No matter where I put it, a Dunnock was fighting its reflection, pecking going round it. I also had an invasion of Wrens coming into the house from the attic. 13 invasions in total from Boxing Day till about a month ago, at most 2 at a time. 11 caught and released in garden, 2 found dead on carpet - starved I think.

A friend made me this bird box last year. It is on the mature Sycamore in my field. Great Tits nested in it successfully last year and had taken up residence again this year. However, yesterday the Nuthatches were pecking at the entrance and today I can confirm they have taken over. So far too fast for me to photograph!

The garden has a lot of habitats and holes in the old boundary wall. Hard to see who's nesting where. I do have a pair of Bullfinches, Chaffinches, Blackbirds, Song thrush, two Blue tits, Coal tits, Great tits, Goldcrest, Jackdaws, Magpies, Tree creepers, Long-tailed tits, Dunnock, two Robins, several Wrens, Carrion Crows at the top of the Redwoods. I no longer have cats! The birds are taking over. It's a busy place!

A couple of beautiful **photos contributed by Andy Wilson**, taken in Holmhill Park, Cambuslang.



## Summer Social 2021

This year's summer social **may** take place on Tuesday 8th June.  
Details to follow.

**Please wait for a confirmatory email** before completing the form below and return it to Mary Child before May 31st, or send her an email then.

.....  
I/We wish to attend the Summer Social on Tuesday 8th June 2021

NAME/S .....

.....

ADDRESS .....

.....

PHONE NO ..... EMAIL ADDRESS .....

Amount enclosed £.....(Cheques made out to Glasgow Natural History Society)

**Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd July 2021 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).