



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

August 2016

David Palmar
(Newsletter Editor)

Next Newsletter Deadline
22 October 2016

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

Winter Meetings Programme 2016-17

Roger Downie

Meetings in the **Boyd Orr Building**, Glasgow University, unless stated otherwise.

2016

September

Tuesday 20th 7.30pm **Bower (Botany) Building - Book launch** 'The Flora of Lanarkshire' introduced by Elspeth Lindsay and Keith Watson, then refreshments.

October

Tuesday 11th 6.30pm **Lecture:** Curious curator - curating the entomology collections at National Museums Scotland; Ashleigh Whiffin.

7.30pm **Lecture:** Biodiversity offsets- a case study from Senegal; Suzanne Livingstone.

Wednesday 26th 5.00pm **Graham Kerr Building** Lecture Theatre 1

Blodwen Lloyd Binns Lecture:

The modern natural history of naked snakes; Mark Wilkinson, then refreshments.

November

Tuesday 8th 6.30pm **Book Launch:** *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland* introduced by Pete Minting and Chris McInerny.

7.30pm **Lecture:** Citizen science in communities; Amanda Malcolm.

Thursday 24th 7.30pm **Bower (Botany) Building, Lecture:** Dendrochronology in Scotland; Anne Crone (Jointly with Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens and Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society).

December

Tuesday 13th Christmas buffet dinner - see later Newsletter for details and booking form; includes **Lecture:** A review of Glasgow's local nature reserves; Jim Coyle.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary: Mary Child

Flora of Lanarkshire

Richard Weddle

Many of you will be aware that the *Flora of Lanarkshire* by the late Peter Macpherson will be published later this year. The attached flier gives more information, including the special pre-publication price of £27.50 plus £4.00 P&P.

However, for members who can undertake to collect their copy at a GNHS meeting, GNHS will put in a bulk order, thereby saving you the £4.00 P&P. We are sorry that this offer wasn't mentioned at the last meeting – it has only just been arranged with the publisher.

If you wish to take advantage of this arrangement, please send the order form with a cheque for £27.50 payable to GNHS to: GNHS, c/o Zoology Museum, University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ before August 25th (i.e. a week before the publisher's deadline).

We plan to hold a launch meeting for the Flora on 20th September, so watch out for further details and confirmation.

Of course you may, if you prefer, order the book direct from the publisher and pay the P&P. But if you wish to take advantage of our offer, you will need to collect the book personally at a GNHS meeting, your order must be received by us by August 25th, and the cheque must be payable to GNHS.

Summer/Autumn Excursion Programme 2016

Alison Moss

August

Sun 21st 11.00am, Baron's Haugh, Dalzell Estate, RSPB reserve: plants, otters. Meet at Baron's Haugh Reserve car park, NS 756553, ML1 2TZ. Leader: Alison Moss

September

Sun 4th 11.00am, Neilston area. Mixed interest – plants, insects, spiders. Meet at Leisure Centre/Library car park in centre of Neilston. James Milner-White

Sun 18th 9.00-11.00am, reptiles at east Loch Lomond. Led by Chris McInerny. Meet at Cashel Reserve car park, NS399940. Contact: George Paterson

Joint excursions with the Clyde and Argyll Fungus Group -

Sat 8th October, 11am, Glasgow Botanic Gardens.

Sat 22nd October, 11am, Robroyston Park.

Sun 6th November, 11am, Erskine Hospital.

The fungus excursion dates are provisional. Meeting place and leader will be emailed close to the time. Those without email should contact Alison Moss or Gill Smart.

PhotoSCENE 2016-17 Natural History Photographic Competition

David Palmar

Win your share of £800 worth of prizes!

This competition is sponsored by Glasgow Natural History Society and the University of Glasgow Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine. Its aims are to promote interest in Natural History and the work of SCENE

(Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Natural Environment) at Rowardennan, linkage between the Institute and the Society, and providing pictures for publicity.

During the last 5 years, participation in the competition has increased, and last year there were 65 entries to the competition, with 8 of the 17 entrants winning a prize.

It is hoped that GNHS members, and the staff and students of the Institute will again support the competition. The deadline for submitting entries is the end of October 2016. GNHS members and students and staff of the University of Glasgow Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health and Comparative Medicine are eligible to enter. Entries should be submitted to Lorna.Kennedy@glasgow.ac.uk.

Prizewinners will be announced at the GNHS photographic night on Tuesday 14th February 2017. Full details are on the GNHS website at <http://www.gnhs.org.uk/photoscene.html>

Eric Curtis

Lyn Dunachie

A well-attended commemoration for the life of Eric Curtis was held in Glasgow University Chapel on 11th May conducted by Andrew Smithsimmons, a Humanist officiate. In addition to Neil Curtis, on behalf of the family, speakers were Ewen Donaldson, manager of Glasgow Botanic Gardens, Brian Atkinson, chair of Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens, Mike Blatt, chair of the McIntyre Begonia Trust, Ann Laird, convenor of Friends of Glasgow West, and Roger Downie for GNHS, all demonstrating the breadth of Eric's interests and activities. Roger spoke about Eric's seven years as Editor of *The Glasgow Naturalist*, and of the several articles Eric wrote for the *Naturalist* on the links between GNHS and the Gardens, on historically important Glasgow botanists and on Blodwen Lloyd Binns. The event was enlivened by music played by the Telemann Ensemble.

Professor Keith Vickerman FRS (1933-2016)

Roger Downie

Keith Vickerman, one of the city's most eminent biologists, died of pancreatic cancer in July, aged 83. Keith was a long-time member of GNHS and, though not a frequent attendee, contributed to *The Glasgow Naturalist* and gave the 1997 Goodfellow lecture ('Tales of intimacy and exploitation': on parasites). As well as being Regius Professor of Zoology (1984-98) and an active Honorary Keeper of the Hunterian Zoology Museum, Keith had strong interests in plants, especially in horticulture, and was founder President of the Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens, and an active campaigner for allotments. A commemoration of Keith's life and work is planned for the autumn.

Kelvin at the Kibble

Lyn Dunachie

An exhibition celebrating the biodiversity of the River Kelvin took place in the Kibble Palace, Botanic Gardens from 27th May to 12th June. The event was organised by the Kelvin Biodiversity Network, which includes GNHS, to showcase the work of local and national charities which have an interest in the conservation and biodiversity of the River as it passes through the city. At the opening event on 27th May, Lyn Dunachie (GNHS and Friends of the River Kelvin) introduced the displays and representatives of several of the exhibiting groups, and Lucy Reynolds provided a musical backdrop. FORK ran a Family Day on 1st June.

***The Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland* by Chris McInerny and Pete Minting** is now available for download of a PDF file (135Mb) at www.glasgownaturalhistory.org.uk/books.html

You can either a) click on the word 'here' (highlighted in green) and, once the file is displayed, save it to a local folder; or b) right-click on the same word and select 'Save target as', which will save the file without first opening it. The book is published by GNHS and is part-funded by a grant from the Blodwen Lloyd Binns bequest.

Excursion Reports

Cambusnethan Woodlands LNR, 15th May 2016

Alison Moss

Nine of us were treated to the most spectacular display of native bluebells in lovely sunshine. The woods are mostly ancient and semi-native with a small area of more recent planting where *Rhododendron ponticum* was removed. We gained access to the site via tracks lined with flower-rich hedgerows with old orchards in full blossom on one side and views over farmland and the River Clyde on the other. We noted 128 spp. of flowering plants and ferns (many grasses etc. still too young to add). Of most interest were *Hypericum hirsutum* (hairy St John's Wort), *Adox moschatellina* (Moschatel) and *Ranunculus auricomus* (Goldilocks) – and a roe deer. The old orchards were particularly rich in bird life. 23 spp. were noted including Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Sedge and Willow warblers and Great spotted woodpecker. 3 species of butterfly were seen - Small tortoiseshell, Green veined white and Orange tip.

Lunch was had by the impressive ruins of Cambusnethan House/ the Priory. The present building was completed in 1820 for the Lockharts of Castlehill. Designed by James Gillespie Graham, it is considered his best Gothic-style manor house. Its last use was as a hotel and medieval banquets.

However, the last word must go to the Bluebells. A huge area of the old woodlands on the high and low ground was absolutely carpeted by bluebells at their very best. Our return path took us down through old woods where the sight and smell of these glorious flowers was quite overwhelming.

A most enjoyable day was rounded off with refreshments at the Garrion Bridges Garden Centre.

Cambusnethan insect list from Richard Weddle:

The insects spotted on the excursion were: Butterflies – Orange-tip, Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell; Moths - Nettle-tap, Flame Carpet, *Micropterix calthella*, *Stigmella aurella*; Beetles – Green Dock-beetle, *Amara ovata*, *Phyllobius glaucus* (a weevil), *Oedemera virescens*; Flies – St Mark's Fly, Dark-edged Bee-fly, *Rhingia campestris*, *Eristalis pertinax* (the latter two are hoverflies); Bumblebees – Common Carder Bee, White-tailed BB; Solitary bees – *Andrena haemorrhoa*, *Lasioglossum* sp., *Nomada ruficornis* (the only recent records of *ruficornis* previously known to Glasgow Museums BRC are from Milton Lockhart, a few km further south in the Clyde Valley in 2009).

Heavy rain ensured a poor turnout for this visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens where we were met by Will Ritchie, curator of the Gardens since November 2014. His primary aim was to show us the latest plantings that have been carried out especially in the arboretum and he kindly provided each us with a map of the arboretum together with a planting list.



Spanish or Moroccan fir ¹

part of the Conifer Conservation Project (CCP) organised by Martin Gardner of RBGE. An example was a group of Spanish or Moroccan fir (*Abies pinsapo* ssp. *marocana*)¹, an at risk species on the IUCN list and located near the grey poplar (*Populus canescens*)² infamously damaged some years ago by a recklessly driven stolen car.

The northwestern area of the main garden is being dedicated to North American trees utilising wild collected seed obtained from the University of Berkeley, California. This area includes such interesting trees as the rare golden alder (*Alnus incana* 'Aurea')³ [a cultivar of grey alder], tulip tree



Alnus incana 'Aurea' ³

As we made our way we noted firstly, outside the entrance to the glasshouses, a sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) one of 5 memorial trees planted in 2010 in memory of Geoffrey Jarvis, son of Lois, whose letter published in the Glasgow Herald in 1932 about plantings along the boulevard to Clydebank, led to the founding of the Glasgow Tree Lovers' Society in 1933. It was explained that the old Monocotyledon border has been turned over in preparation for the

planting of bee-friendly plants. Some of the latest plantings in the gardens are



Damaged Grey poplar ²

(*Liriodendron tulipifera*), the evergreen tanoak (*Lithocarpus densiflora*) and the rare cherry birch (*Betula lenta*).

Inside the Kirklee gate is a well displayed group of young "Arran whitebeams" obtained from Glen Catacol in northwest Arran: the parents, rock whitebeam (*Sorbus rupicola*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), the resulting first generation cross Arran whitebeam (*Sorbus arranensis*) and the backcross between this and rowan which is *Sorbus*

pseudofennica.



Coastal sequoia (*Sequoia sempervirens*)⁴

We headed into the arboretum proper at the foot of Ford Road. Southwest of the Kirklee Bridge is the Tertiary tree collection, planted to illustrate mainly, but not only, deciduous species that once flourished in Great Britain. They became extinct during the Ice Ages (Pleistocene period) from 2 million years ago and never returned during the current, warm interglacial. Will pointed out that many of the trees were planted here from 1977 onwards and into the 1980's. These include some fine specimens of the evergreen Giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), Coastal sequoia (*Sequoia sempervirens*)⁴, Japanese red cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*)⁵, the deciduous swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)⁶, Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*), Caucasian wingnut (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*) and yellow buckeye (*Aesculus flava*). The giant sequoia also possessed a QR label (a 2 dimensional

barcode)⁷ that enables a visitor provided with a phone app to follow an audio tour of the garden and obtain information about any of the trees provided with such a label.

New technology enables the tree labels to be quickly and cheaply replaced in case of vandalism that used to be so prevalent.

Furthermore any young trees are ably protected by means of a plastic mesh and three stobs. The



Japanese red cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*)⁵



Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)⁶

big number of spreading root

suckers of the wingnut and the suckers of the Coastal redwood⁸, features of both species, having been destroyed by the application of weedkiller, are now recovering.

A splendid Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*), sweet gum (*Liquidambar*



QR code on Giant sequoia⁷

styraciflua) and fine maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), also

Tertiary trees, can be found elsewhere in the garden. In this area we also saw a catkin yew (*Amentotaxus argotaenia*) a southern Chinese member of the yew

family (*Taxaceae*) and also part of the CCP as it is listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN red data list.

Northeast of the Kirklee Bridge is the Alder collection, started in 1993 with the aim, not quite realised, of becoming a national alder collection. The earliest specimen, of Italian alder (*Alnus cordata*), had been planted in 1990 by Princess Alice. The original intention was partly to carry out research into nitrogen fixation on these alder trees. Most of these trees were grown from seed of known origin obtained through seed exchange with other botanical gardens. Amongst these many different alder species is one, *Alnus sieboldiana*, that possesses an unusual diploid number of chromosomes, 122, as opposed to the normal 48 found in the genus. The alders of course having an affinity for damp conditions are planted low down near the River Kelvin.

Pines are planted higher up where drainage is better. Amongst the newly planted species are the bishop pine (*Pinus muricata*) and Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*). The former, two-needled pine, is confined to seven Californian hilltops and islands. The latter is a three-needled pine found between S. Oregon and New Mexico. Seed of these species was obtained from California to enable them to be further studied in the interests of science and conservation. The intention is to wait for a few years to find out which species do better and then to plant more of that species and produce an even-aged canopy. We came across Morinda spruce (*Picea smithiana*), one of two weeping spruces, acquired originally from the University of British Columbia. It is native to the Western Himalayas and produced very distinctive long, pink cones⁹.

Suckers of the Coastal redwood destroyed by weedkiller⁸



Long pink cones of Morinda spruce (*Picea smithiana*)⁹

Between the pines and the alders is bed 216 which is the biggest in the arboretum and contains species of *Sorbus* and *Betula* as well as microspecies of *Sorbus*, including some British apomictics (trees whose seeds develop asexually and so produce offspring identical to their parents), such as *Sorbus devoniensis* and *Sorbus bristoliensis*. Hugh McAllister of Ness Botanic Garden is the acknowledged expert on the genus *Sorbus* and we were shown a rare birch, *Betula ashburneri*, named after his mentor, a co-author of a monograph on *Betula*. The species was found in 1997 in Eastern Tibet at high altitude near the tree line. There was a discussion on the genetics of the Himalayan birches and their betulin-containing barks varying from brown to white. A number of different birch species are growing well here and their taxonomy has been, and arguably still is, debatable.



New planting of Oregon maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)¹⁰

At the top of the Sorbus plantings is an established, sizeable specimen labelled *S. arranensis*. There is however some doubt about its provenance and identification as it is hard to distinguish from Swedish whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*). None of us could recall seeing an Arran whitebeam as big as this on Arran but it's difficult to be certain. Even genetically, apparently, they are difficult to separate from each other. Finally, as we headed back to the Kibble on the northwest side of the gardens, Will drew our attention to a few new plantings of Oregon maple (*Acer Macrophyllum*)¹⁰, the bigleaf maple, native to the Pacific Northwest. They are planted near some very big ones, the origin of which may be traced to seed sent back from Northwest America by David Douglas himself in 1826, only nine years after the instigation of the creation of the gardens by Thomas Hopkirk of Dalbeth. A visit to Glasgow Botanic Gardens and especially to the Arboretum is highly recommended to anyone with an interest in trees and their origins.

RSPB Loch Lomond, 29 May 2016

David Palmar

Around a dozen members were led around parts of the exciting new reserve at RSPB Loch Lomond by site manager Paula Baker, assisted by enthusiastic RSPB volunteer Pauline Gray on this varied and interesting site. First at the newly opened visitor hub (staffed at weekends), we were treated to the opening of a moth trap, which produced Poplar Hawk Moth (*Laothoe populi*), Clouded Bordered Brindle (*Apamea crenata*) and Pale Prominent (*Pterostoma palpina*) amongst



RSPB Loch Lomond visitor hub (Richard Sutcliffe)



Poplar Hawk Moth (David Palmar)

many others, and saw Siskins (*Carduelis spinus*) and Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) on the feeders. Invertebrates seen later included Flame Carpet (*Xanthorhoe designata*), Green Dock Beetle (*Gastrophysa viridula*), a Crane Fly, a Spider, a Leaf Beetle, a fresh-water snail and a Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*).

Amongst plants recorded were Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Tufted Loosestrife

(*Lysimachia thyrsiflora*), Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Bog Bean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Bog stitchwort (*Stellaria alsine*) Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), Germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Silverweed (*Argentina anserina*), Bird's



Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Heath Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) and a mutant Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), which had different coloured flowers on the same bush. Thanks to Paula and Pauline for a great day had by all.

Marsh Cinquefoil
(David Palmar)



Examining a specimen
(Richard Sutcliffe)

Overtoun House, 2nd July 2016

James Milner-White



Six of us met at Overtoun House above Dumbarton, always a pleasant spot for a walk in spite of the inauspicious entrance to it along the A82 at Milton. The cafe is open at lunchtime on Fridays and Saturdays. We walked 3 km up Overtoun Glen where the banding of the sedimentary Ballagan Bed rocks is visible along the Burn; these and associated rocks help make the area alkaline, as evidenced by the plants.

At the chosen site, a junction of two burns, many fragrant orchids were visible, as in Fig 1; each orchid was sweet smelling and clean looking, compared to the omnipresent common spotted orchid. Fairy flax, an indicator of botanically interesting sites, was abundant there, as was the equally small few-flowered sedge.

The interesting mushroom-headed liverwort *Preissia quadrata*, which is related to *Marchantia* and about the same size, but with no gemmae and different sex organs, was in evidence on wet rocks alongside the burn. So was lesser clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides*, which is of course not a moss at all. Finally, we came across a fine 6 cm green emperor moth caterpillar, seen in Fig 2. This site is easily accessible from Glasgow, but with a distinctive ecology of its own. Thanks to Judy and Su for the photos.



Award-winning string duo High Heels and Horse Hair recently carried out a series of workshops in Carntyne Primary School thanks to funding from GNHS. Violinist Alice Rickards and cellist Sonia Cromarty worked with the P5 and P6 classes to explore Scotland 's wild plants, lichen and fungi through art and music. They used live performance and creative response to teach the children about the appearance, function, habitat, historical use and folklore of different native species.

The children were encouraged to create their own plant-inspired music and to notate their works using graphic scores; Electrified Cat's Tail Moss, Lemon Disco Fungi, Old Man's Beard Lichen and Foxglove were just a few of the species to feature! The 5 week project culminated in a sharing concert where the pupils performed and conducted their pieces alongside the professional musicians.

Alice and Sonia were delighted by the creativity and engagement of everyone at Carntyne Primary and their enthusiastic response to the whole subject of plants and conservation. They would like to thank GNHS for making this venture possible. If you would like to read more about the project and listen to some of the music please visit their blog: <http://www.highheelsandhorsehair.com/#!/blog/c1b73>

Many thanks again for supporting our project- as Alice said we had a wonderful time and enjoyed it just as much as the children... their energy is infectious! It's wonderful that your funding makes this sort of project possible and helps to leave a legacy of young plant and nature lovers.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 22nd October 2015 please.

Contributions by members – long or short - are particularly welcomed. 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**.

Photos are welcome – Please send any to David for the Newsletter, especially if it illustrates an aspect of the work of GNHS, e.g. if it was taken on one of our excursions. **If sending photos, please send separate jpgs under 100Kb each (not embedded in a Word file please).**