



GLASGOW NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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GNHS is a Registered Scottish
Charity Web-site:
www.gnhs.org.uk

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Talks Programme November to December 2022 and on into 2023 Roger Downie

After two years of pandemic-affected arrangements, we have returned to in-person meetings for the autumn talks programme. We have not been able to organise these in 'hybrid' format. If any members feel excluded by this please get in touch. So far attendance has been good and the talks interesting, so we hope to welcome more of you back as the session progresses.

As usual, talks are on the second Tuesday of each month, starting at 7pm (The exceptions are the BLB lecture, which returns after a pandemic-hiatus: see details below; and the joint meeting with Glasgow Treelovers and the Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens). Locations for all Tuesday evening lectures are University of Glasgow Boyd Orr Building Lecture Theatre A on level 4. The BLB lecture will be in the Graham Kerr building LT1. Talk summaries will be emailed nearer the time.

We also plan to return to our practice of inviting members to bring specimens, photographs or recordings of their natural history observations for presentation at the start of each meeting. We ask that these be brief (no more than 5 minutes) and that you inform us of these in advance by emailing Roger Downie.

Talks 2022

Wednesday 2nd November: Kevin Laland on 'Evolvability and the function of inheritance'.

Kevin Laland is an evolutionary biologist at St Andrews University. He is a leading proponent of the need for new thinking over aspects of the theory of evolution, known as the 'extended evolutionary synthesis'.

NB This is the BLB lecture, and will be delivered at **5pm in Lecture Theatre 1, the Graham Kerr Building**, to a joint audience of GNHS members, and staff and students of the University. It will be followed by a reception in the Zoology Museum.

Until recently, for biologists the term 'inheritance' has been almost completely synonymous with genetic transmission. However, the last decades have witnessed an explosion of interest in epigenetics, where the transmission of epigenetic marks across generations has quite literally ripped up the rule books as to what is biologically possible. Supplementing that already replete and challenging literature is an avalanche of investigations into other disparate aspects of extra-genetic inheritance, including inherited symbiotic bacteria and animal cultures.

This literature has generated considerable excitement and debate, but precious little consensus. Biologists know there is more to inheritance than genes, but how much more, and how important other forms of inheritance are to evolutionary adaptation, remains a matter of dispute. In truth, extra-genetic inheritance has been shrouded in a murky unintelligibility for over a century. Its abstruseness results from a combination of nightmarish complexity and mechanistic diversity which, compared to Mendelian genetics, can leave it looking chaotic, transient and idiosyncratic.

Here I suggest that extra-genetic inheritance does have an important job in evolution, but that job is, in the main, distinct from that of genetic inheritance. Understanding this role requires thinking differently about the processes of adaptation and the capacity to evolve, moving away from a gene-centric perspective. Drawing on examples of cultural inheritance in animals, epigenetic inheritance in animals and plants, and the inherited microbiome, I will illustrate how extra-genetic inheritance is best regarded as essential tools for short-term, rapid-response adaptation.

Inheritance is not a single discrete package of genes and other cytoplasmic resources, but a time-distributed developmental process that primarily functions to match descendants to anticipated conditions. Like-begets-like parent-offspring correspondences are nothing more than a side effect of this adaptive reconstruction: the ultimate function of heredity is not stable transmission but accurate prediction.

Tuesday 8th November: Jaime Toney on 'The GALLANT project'.

Jaime Toney is a geographer at the University of Glasgow and principal investigator on the GALLANT project, which aims to study Glasgow as a 'living laboratory' for the interactions between people and nature.

Prof. Toney is the Director of the [Centre for Sustainable Solutions](#) and a Professor of Environmental and Climate Science. She leads the BECS research group that is focused on developing an understanding of organic molecules in modern organisms and environments that can be applied to analysing and interpreting past environments and climates. She is the Principal Investigator of the NERC Strategic Programme: GALLANT: Glasgow as a Living Lab Accelerating Novel Transformation. She has worked at the University of Glasgow since 2011.

Thursday 10th November: Joint meeting with Glasgow Treelovers and Friends of Glasgow Botanic Gardens. Time: 7.30pm; location: Boyd Orr Lecture Theatre C (NOT A)

William Hinchliffe (Arboricultural Consultant, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh) on 'Tree management at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh'.

Says William:

"For the past 8 years I have worked as part of the team developing, conserving and maintaining the RBGE's living collection. This includes one of the finest temperate tree collections in the world. I also contribute to the education programme and have been developing RBGE's overseas Arboricultural consultancy services. I have delivered consultancy work in 11 different countries and have participated in conservation field work in Japan (2013) and Nepal (2017) . I am a passionate advocate for Tree Conservation, both the conservation of individual trees and species conservation."

Tuesday 13th December: Oskar Brattstrom on 'Mycalesina butterflies as a model system for evolutionary biology'.

Oskar Brattstrom began his academic career in Lund, and has since worked at Leiden and Cambridge, before recently joining the University of Glasgow. Much of his research is on West African butterflies, but since moving to Glasgow, he has also become interested in freshwater invertebrates.

Talks 2023

Tuesday 10th January: Landry Green on the effects of urbanisation on the welfare of bats.

Nicole Digruber on Holmhills Wood and Fernbrae Local Nature Reserve.

Tuesday 14th February: Photographic Night, led by Andy Wilson

Tuesday 14th March: David Palmar on the Falls of Clyde, followed by the Society's AGM.

GNHS & BRISC Bursaries

Richard Weddle

Since 2009, BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland) and GNHS have been offering bursaries towards attending a training course in natural history field studies.

These bursaries are open to anyone living in Scotland who wants to improve their skills and contribute to biological recording.

From 2023 we are pleased to be able to offer bursaries of up to £400, up to £100 of which can go towards transport costs, to make it easier to attend courses, particularly those outwith Scotland.

The closing date for applications is January 31st 2023.

An application form, and full details of the bursaries on offer can be found at www.bris.org.uk/bursaries.

The bursaries are not restricted to GNHS members, so please feel free to forward this information to anyone you think may be interested.

Christmas Social

Pat Thomson

Tuesday 6th December, 6.30 for 7.00, The Botany, 795 Maryhill Road, G20 7TL

As we enjoyed our last Christmas meal so much at The Botany that we have decided to book there again for this Christmas. The menu looks lovely and I hope that this will encourage lots of you to join us.

The Botany Christmas Menu 2022

Lightly spiced Parsnip Soup
Brie & Cranberry Tart
Smooth parfait of chicken livers with red onion chutney
Gravadlax of salmon with dill mustard sauce

Pan fried Hake on crushed minted potatoes with tarragon cream
Roast Norfolk Turkey with roast potatoes and traditional trimmings
Breast of chicken with Stornoway black pudding mash
Spinach, red pepper and pine nut gnocchi

Christmas pudding with brandy butter
Vanilla Crème Brulée with biscotti
Warm soft chocolate Cake with ice cream and chocolate sauce
Vanilla ice cream with raspberry sauce

The cost is £30.00 per person.

If you would like to attend, please email Pat Thomson to book; it would be helpful if members could indicate in the email a menu choice for each course.

Please can you pay at the same time as you book and either send a cheque for £30 payable to GNHS to Richard Weddle at 89 Novar Drive (1/2), Glasgow G12 9SS or pay online.

2023 Subscriptions

Richard Weddle

Subscriptions fall due on January 1st 2023 (except for those who have joined since June 2022). 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.

Participation at Events

Roger Downie

GNHS is often asked to participate in events organised by other groups and organisations. Such participation allows us to reach out to sometimes large numbers of people of all ages to show what we are about, and may help us recruit new members.

To help with this, we have an attractive roller banner, display materials for mounting on boards, some 'mystery' specimens aimed at children, and information/recruitment leaflets. Sometimes the events link several organisations to provide information/education on biodiversity (such as the annual 'Kelvin at the Kibble' event). Other events include a 'bioblitz' where attendees are encouraged to record as many species as possible. Others are aimed at schools.

During the pandemic, invitations to attend such events largely dried up, but we are beginning to receive invitations for next year and want to be able to participate as much as possible. This is where members can help. We would like to re-establish a group of contacts: members willing to help with such events on occasion. No-one would be expected to be available every time, so the larger the group of the willing, the better. If you feel you can help, please contact Richard Weddle.

We should add that participation in these events can be very enjoyable, meeting people willing to be enthused and interacting with other participant groups, and that visitors often pass on useful sightings/observations/records that we would otherwise miss.

BLB grant news

Alison Park

This year BLB grant awards have supported four community-based initiatives in addition to a "normal pre-Covid" number of research projects and student expeditions. While we still have surplus funds, arising from previous restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we intend to continue accepting applications from community groups looking to achieve biodiversity benefits within their localities. Please bring this funding opportunity to the attention of any appropriate groups as it may not be available for much longer.

In April's Newsletter I reported on the first two successful applicants; £2000 for Grow 73 to create rich habitats and £1327 for Friends of Holmhills Park to support Citizen Science activities. Subsequently £2000 was awarded to the Ranger at Cashel Forest Trust, and £180 to Hamiltonhill Claypits LNR Management Group, to equip and train volunteers and visitors to record wildlife in both East Loch Lomond and North Glasgow respectively.

We believe all four projects have potential to enrich biodiversity, generate valuable wildlife data, encourage people from various backgrounds to appreciate nature and inspire some of them to become future citizen scientists. It seems that temporarily diverting some BLB funds from conventional research projects to community-led wildlife exploration has been a worthwhile solution to deal with an unexpected cash surplus. We look forward to learning about the achievements of these and future community projects in forthcoming newsletters.

Books Received for review by GNHS

Anthony Payne

One book has been received for review since the last Newsletter.

Much Ado About Mothing by James Lowen (2021) Bloomsbury Wildlife Press 384pp £18.99 HB. Subtitled "a year intoxicated by Britain's rare and remarkable moths", this is a seasonal diary of moth-trapping throughout one year by the author and his young daughter. It involves trapping in their garden, interspersed with "twitching" for rarities and determined treks to see local specialities from Cornwall to the Cairngorms. It is hoped that a detailed review will appear in *The Glasgow Naturalist* in the future.



Excursion Reports

Cochno Estate - 2nd July 2022

Alison Moss

Not everything goes according to plan! In this case, the weather turned quite awful. Cochno Estate and the associated reservoirs are a few hundred feet above sea level. Down below us it was really quite nice, but up in the hills by 2 o'clock it turned very wet indeed.

The site is interesting and has a long history from prehistoric times (Cochno stone), generations of the Hamilton Family and in 1954, 220 acres and associated buildings purchased by Glasgow University. Agricultural and husbandry teaching and research is carried out from the Farm by the Vet School and other University Departments.

A small band of us set out in damp conditions from Cochno House and Farm. We visited a pond just above the farm, some old field-edge woodland and then followed the path with hedgerows to where it met with the path up to Jaw Reservoir. Gill Smart very kindly offered to do all the recording. Invertebrate activity was affected by the damp conditions, but as we headed up the path to the Reservoir, shelter was afforded by plantations of native trees, still immature, but enough to allow some meadow brown and ringlet butterflies to enjoy the wild flowers. We had lunch on the banks of the Reservoir, but were not visited by the Exmoor ponies. I guess they had the sense to shelter in the neighbouring conifer plantation. We had a good look at a lovely Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*)-filled bog beside the Reservoir, but by then the weather closed in and headed down over damp meadows.

However, it was surprising what we did find. To summarise Gill's records, 10 fungi, 10 insects, and 148 plants. There were some highlights. Gill found the Bird Cherry Tongue (called pocket plums), *Taphrina padi*, a fungus which creates a

gall structure (see photo). This was something we hadn't seen before, although alder tongue, *Taphrina alni* is not uncommon.

Despite the weather, 2 mating Bumblebee Hoverflies (*Volucella bombylans*) were spotted by Deirdre. A scatter of butterflies was enjoyed by all.

In one of the cultivated fields we were puzzled by what seemed to be supersized clover. I

knew that tests were being carried out to assess the value of mixing clovers with grass and have since been told that both red and white clovers were sown with the grass. These are special cultivated varieties, 1 of white and 3 of red. This is just one of several projects, including proposed zones of mixed tree planting in some grazing areas.

Gill's detailed records are available if wished and we all knew there was much more to be found in more clement weather. Indeed, on a repeat visit I made later in July, 15 ponies plus 2 foals came to meet us and an Osprey catching a fish in Jaw Reservoir was viewed. More butterflies were about too, including fritillaries. By this token, I have a notion to suggest a follow up visit next year particularly to the high reservoirs area and ONLY in suitable weather. Thank you to all who participated without serious grumbling.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that Gill's records are stored in the GMRC database.

Greenhead Moss, 20th August 2022

Alison Moss

This was a repeat visit after a soaking last year. Up to 11 o'clock, it looked as if the same could happen again! However, 9 of us enjoyed lovely weather, even enough sunshine to bring out a few Red Admiral and Peacock butterflies. A Green-veined White crossed our path too and a damselfly.

Greenhead Moss is a very interesting site. We were ably shown a comprehensive route and informed by site Ranger, Derek Cowan. Peat cutting has gone on for a long time and a substantial area is still a raised peat bog. In 1932, during peat cutting, a body was found in the peat. He has been named "The Unknown Soldier", dating from Covenanting times and now has an onsite Memorial dedicated to him.



Bird Cherry Tongue *Taphrina padi* by Gill Smart

There are scars from deep mining and from opencast mining and quarrying. Indeed, the 1910 map of the area shows a network of tramways, railway, quarries and mine shafts. Transformation has occurred thanks to successive native tree planting and meadow encouragement. The Perchy Pond is a real feature with habitat for plants and home for birds and other wildlife, amphibians and invertebrates. Deer and badgers also enjoy the mix of woodland and more open spaces.

The late summer meadows were dominated by Devil's Bit Scabious, Knapweed and Yarrow. Escaped garden Golden Rod and Rosebay Willow Herb added to the scent in the air and fuel for insects. I was rewarded for checking out alder trees, finally finding one with the gall inducing alder tongue, (*Taphrina alni*), a fungal pathogen which induces a gall in the female alder catkins. This was a new record for the site last year, and for the hectad NS85.

This whole site shows what wonders can be done with expert and community involvement. A real treasure for local people and wildlife to enjoy.



Alder Tongue (*Taphrina alni*)
by Alison Moss

Contributions from GNHS Members and Friends

Conservation Expedition to South Africa

Nicole Digruber

When my university offered the opportunity to join them on a two-week conservation expedition in June 2022 to a game reserve in South Africa, I knew I wanted to go. This was a once in a lifetime chance to be involved with hands on conservation tasks, wildlife monitoring and on-site lectures. Top that with the chance of seeing the big 5 in their natural environment, which has been a childhood dream of mine ever since I watched my first nature documentaries, and the decision to go was easy.

I was wondering though if this trip would be useful when working towards a conservation career that would be based in Scotland. Would the experience from the other side of the world be beneficial for issues that we are facing here?



Landscape panorama view of Shamwari

When we first arrived in South Africa, we were immediately taken aback by the beautiful landscape and coastlines and the hospitality of everyone that we met. Our destination was [Shamwari Game Reserve](#), which is situated in the Eastern Cape on the edge of the famous Garden Route, which is well travelled by tourists.

Shamwari, which celebrated its 30th birthday earlier this year, used to be farmland before it was purchased in 1990. This makes it a great case study of rewilding former agricultural land and restoring natural ecosystems. Over the years Shamwari has continued to expand into neighbouring areas and now spans an area of around 7000 hectares. Large herbivores as well as carnivores were re-introduced into the area, but they have also focused on endangered plant communities. Over the years they have achieved Protected Environment status due to all their conservation efforts.



Fynbos vegetation



Fynbos vegetation

One of the main biomes in the Cape of Africa is the Fynbos biome, characterised by Mediterranean-style, fine-leaved plants, heather-like trees and shrubs. These plants thrive on nutrient-poor soils and are a biodiversity hotspot as they are 2-3 times more biodiverse than rainforests. This biome contains over 9000+ plant species, some of them found nowhere else in the world. The well-known redbush/rooibos tea is a member of this plant family. The smells from the Fynbos plants are very pleasant and will stay in my memory for a very long time.

Vast areas of this important habitat have been lost in the past due to the expansion of agriculture and forestry as well as the impact from non-native invasive species. We spent a few

mornings removing non-native pine trees from the reserve. These were first introduced into South Africa in the 17th century and are now commercially grown for their timber. They disperse easily and have no natural enemies, which causes a lot of problems in protected areas and nature reserves. Pines, alongside Eucalyptus, acacias and gum trees are very water hungry crops and are depleting the country of its already scarce water resources.

Due to the impacts of Climate Change, the Eastern and Western Cape have been suffering from a multi-year drought which started in 2015 and most rivers have run dry. This is having a huge impact on the environment and everyone living there. There are some signs of the situation improving - the area saw its first rain in years in June while we were there.



Pine removal

Sheep farming is very popular in South Africa and the game reserve is surrounded by many farms. Most farmers aren't very happy to hear that lions and elephants will be their new neighbours, so a lot of community engagement is required to ensure the continued support of surrounding communities. Conflicts do occasionally occur, especially if a leopard manages to escape and sheep are killed. There are compensation schemes in place to pay farmers for the lost sheep and the leopards are all fitted with radio collars so that they can be tracked and returned quickly.



Children in Paterson

Shamwari also runs community outreach programs and provides employment opportunities for the local villages. The surrounding communities of Paterson and Alicedale face issues of poverty and crime with few economic opportunities. We spent a day with a local church and orphanage as we had brought many donations with us, including clothes, shoes, and school supplies. We brought food and spent a few hours cooking for everyone. The children enjoyed showing off some of their songs and dances and were keen for a game of football.

Wildlife crime, especially poaching, is another major problem that South Africa is facing. We spent some time with the anti-poaching unit to learn more about their work and to train with the anti-poaching dogs. We also joined a night patrol of the reserve to ensure that both species of rhinoceros - Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) and White Rhino (*Carathotherium simum*) - which are present on Shamwari are kept as safe as



Anti poaching unit

possible. Attacks on reserves are unfortunately very common, so this can be a very dangerous job for everyone involved.

The animals most at risk from poaching are tracked and accounted for daily. We spent a lot of time out in the reserve tracking the various groups of elephants, rhinos, and the prides of lions. The daily sighting reports are collated to ensure that all individuals have been seen. If an animal hasn't been seen for 2 consecutive days, the Anti-Poaching unit is alerted to help track the missing animal.

Individual elephants can be identified based on natural tears in their ears, which they accumulate by trampling through the thicket of acacia trees. They also tend to stay together in their family groups, which helps with their identification. The rhinos have their ears marked on arrival at the reserve, so that individuals can be identified from a distance. Shamwari is also part of a breeding program for rhinos.



White rhino in transport



Black Rhinos with Oxpecker

While we were there a family of three rhinos had to be captured and relocated to another area of South Africa to mix up the genetics and to stop issues of inbreeding. We were extremely lucky to spend the afternoon with the resident wildlife Vet Dr. Johan Joubert, as the rhinos were darted and loaded ready for transport. These transports are made under the strictest security measures in a convoy of armed guards as poachers have been known

to target these animals in transport. There is a complete ban on posting images of rhinos to social media on the same day as they have been taken, to stop the poachers from being able to track their exact locations.

The breeding of lions for "hunting", known as canned lion breeding, and to keep as pets is another widespread issue in the country, though keeping large cats as pets isn't only a South African issue. The Born Free Foundation, a British charity that aims to rescue captive cats from across the world, has been working in partnership with Shamwari for many years. Two of their sanctuaries are located within the grounds of the game reserve. We spent an afternoon in one of the sanctuaries and met some of the resident cats. Most of these animals were rescued from horrible situations in Europe and have been transported to South Africa to live out the rest of their lives in large enclosures. For some of the cats this would have been the first time that their big paws were able to touch grass and that they could feel the soil underneath their toes.

Horus was rescued from an apartment block in the suburbs of Paris, when he was only 2 months old. He was found sitting in a child's bed and was kept there as an illegal pet. After some rehabilitation time in France, he was moved to Shamwari in October 2019, where he has joined 11 other lions and 4 leopards, which were rescued from circuses and zoos or were kept illegally in poor conditions.



Horus the lion

Shamwari also has its own rehabilitation centre for injured or orphaned animals. The plan for all these rehab patients is to be able to release them back into the wild or on to Shamwari if that is not possible. We spent an afternoon with Lisa Horn, the supervisor of the rehab centre to learn about all the work they are doing. It was interesting to hear how long it takes for some of these animals to become sufficiently independent to be released.



baby elephant

In the case of elephants this process can take several years. Lisa told us a story about a couple of orphaned elephants that she was caring for. These calves form such a close bond with their carer that it can be impossible to leave them in the care of another person, even for a few days. On one occasion Lisa wanted to attend a wedding on the other side of the country but had to return to work early as the calves refused to eat and started to show signs of depression.

Our usual working day would be split into two parts, practical conservation tasks, like the removal of invasive species in the mornings, followed by animal tracking and bush skills in the afternoon. We worked all week and had the weekend off to visit some other sites around the Cape area.

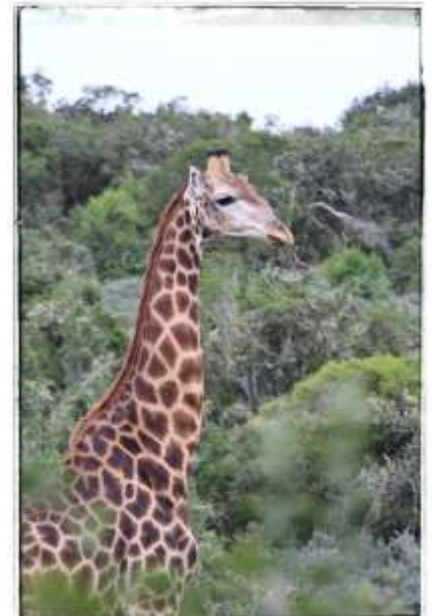


Cape Penguin

One of the most interesting visits for me was the SANCCOB Penguin Sanctuary. South Africa is home to the Cape Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), but their population has seen a dramatic decline over the last few decades, and it is now classed as endangered. 30 years ago, their population was around 42,500 breeding pairs, but this has declined by 50.6% to only around 21,000 pairs in 2021. The main reason for the decline appears to be the impact of commercial fishing on their preferred prey, which has reduced their abundance to such a degree that the penguins are forced to hunt for less optimal fish. The centre rescues and rehabilitates birds found along the coastlines and helps with

clean-up operations after oil spills, which occur far too often in the area due to the number of ship-to-ship oil transfers.

Most of the experiences from this trip were very emotional. We had amazing close encounters with wild animals, were fortunate to see stunning landscapes and beaches, watched beautiful herds of giraffe and zebra, saw wildebeest chasing along the plains and we anxiously watched the warthogs being stalked by a lioness.



giraffe



Cape Buffalo

However we also had to face the reality of conservation in a country with a difficult past and the plight of some of the animals most affected by poaching had us all in tears.

Abject poverty and children without food, shelter, or resources and afraid of crime have left us with deep-felt emotions, but I think most of

us left with a new sense of inspiration from the people we have met, who work hard every day and are trying their best to make a difference to their communities and the environment and who risk their lives to save iconic wildlife species.



sleeping lion



rainbow landscape

The lessons we learned and the issues we encountered may have been happening on the other side of the world, where the plants are different, the animal species not as familiar as our puffins, red squirrels, badgers, or missing lynx, but the reasons that they are in trouble are all very familiar indeed. Climate change, land use change, agricultural impacts, wildlife crime, overfishing, invasive species... it all comes back to the same question of how we can live sustainably while allowing nature to thrive. And the solutions are also very similar such as rewilding,

community engagement, wildlife rehabilitation and nature restoration so I do believe that we can learn a lot about these issues from people of all corners of the world.

Bird Flu

Rebecca Dickson

Following an increase in the number of positive cases of avian influenza (bird flu) the Chief Veterinary Officers have declared a UK wide Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (as of October 2022) to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading amongst poultry and captive birds. Therefore, it is important that this pathogen is considered at all levels, from biosecurity measures whilst out on walks to general hygiene measures for bird feeders in our gardens.

There are different strains of this virus, which are important to consider when trying to understand how to protect different species of birds. Low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) occurs naturally among wild shorebirds and waterfowl. Birds impacted by these less fatal strains are typically asymptomatic; however the virus can still be transmitted to other birds. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is particularly contagious and has severe symptoms which often cause fatalities.

Typically, the species most affected are wildfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and captive birds (poultry). If a dead raptor is found, it is important to not touch it with bare hands. Not only is this for the risk of avian influenza but the bird may have been poisoned which can be fatal to humans if contact is made with skin. The Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) should be contacted if you find dead wild birds under the following criteria:

- one or more dead raptors;
- 3 or more dead gulls or wildfowl;
- 5 or more dead birds of any species.

The virus has been recorded in passerines in low levels; however maintaining good feeder hygiene remains critical to prevent the spread of disease. Regularly cleaning feeders will reduce the impact of a multitude of diseases including trichomonosis, salmonella, avian pox, aspergillosis, and avian influenza. These measures are particularly important at this time of year since many passerines are migrating to/from the UK; therefore it is vital that we do everything we can to keep them in good health to protect winter roosts.

It is recommended that whilst walking on the shoreline or in an area that contains species of high risk, footwear should be disinfected and faecal material from wild birds is avoided. Feathers should not be collected or touched either as they may be contaminated. This is particularly important for the avian influenza hotspots (see link below). Many reserves (such as WWT Slimbridge) have boot washes at the entrance to the reserve as a biosecurity measure.



elephant portrait

Additional Resources:

The first link below is for the live Defra interactive map which shows avian influenza hotspots across the UK:

- <https://defra.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8cb1883eda5547c6b91b5d5e6aeba90d>

Secondly, there is an online mitigation strategy for this pathogen available on the UK Government website. Although this document is for England and Wales it can still be useful as it includes the following topics: The pathogen and disease, international disease monitoring, ornithological experts panel, clinical signs of avian influenza, avian influenza research and wild bird population monitoring.

- (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mitigation-strategy-for-avian-influenza-in-wild-birds-in-england-and-wales>).

Macrotyphula juncea

Paul Cobb

Macrotyphula juncea is a small, skinny and very inconspicuous fungus. I found it in my garden in Catrine (Ayrshire) on October 18th, but only because I happened to be bending down in just the right place to see it. It's about 2 inches tall and just a millimetre thick, and looks like hair growing out of the soil, or colourless grass seedlings. It's supposed to be in woodland growing on leaf litter, but mine is in the vegetable plot (which I dig a lot of leaves into). I don't know what its status is in these parts, but there are no Ayrshire dots on the NBN map, and I'm guessing it doesn't get noticed very often.

Note from David Palmar:

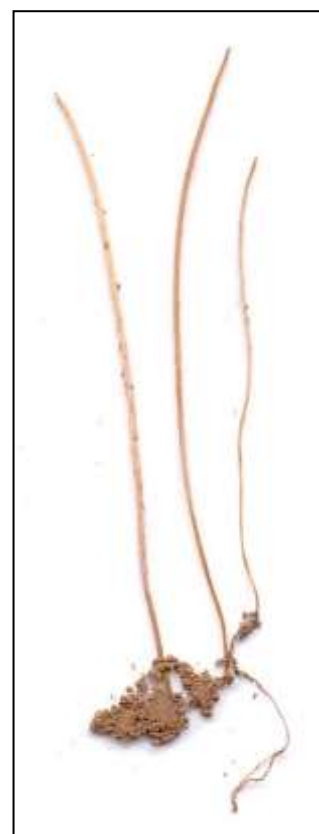
Recently I was sent the following amusing anecdote by John Murray, who worked with my father CE Palmar (a former GNHS vice-president) in the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.

The Day I Met the Duke

John Murray

Back in 1960 I became a member of The British Falconers Club, after having successfully trained my first falcons - a pair of Kestrels. This was done under the supervision of my great friend and much loved mentor, the late Walter Joynson of Kinlochard. I had now obtained the first Eagle of my life on a third hand transaction from Lady Susan Stirling, via Humphrey ap Evans and thirdly from Walter for the vast sum of £4.50. It was a male African Tawny Eagle and had been bought by Lady Susan Stirling of Keir from a pet shop in London. It was in a sorry state having had all its primaries shorn off. However it was an Eagle and I loved it.

I was at this time working as a trainee Taxidermist in the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow where my boss, the Curator of Natural History was Mr Charles Eric



Macrotyphula juncea

Palmar. He was an authority on Eagles having been the first person to film the home life of Golden Eagles back in the late 1940s. One day I took my Tawny into work to let the boss see it and make comparisons with Golden Eagles as they were both true Aquiline Eagles.

When the time came to stop work and go home I took the bird on my fist and went upstairs from the basement where I worked and into the great Main Hall. I was amazed to find the Museum was empty apart from a large group of people at the entrance doors. There were men in suits, civic dignitaries, including the Lord Provost of Glasgow and several policemen. They were all grouped round the tall imposing figure of none other than HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

I stopped dead and stared in amazement. Then the police moved forward but were stopped by the Duke, who came striding towards me with a really mischievous grin and he came to me and put out his hand to shake my ungloved right hand, saying "Well laddie, what's an African Tawny Eagle doing in the middle of Glasgow?" I told him the whole story of how I had obtained the bird and that I had brought it into work to let my boss see it, and that I had been unaware the museum had been closed to the public all afternoon, so that his visit could take place and I would be in deep trouble next day. I gave him my name and told him I lived in a small town 20 miles from Glasgow and as I had no car I brought the eagle in to the city by bus. He thought this was hilarious and said "Don't worry I will get you out of trouble!"

He put his hand on my shoulder and marched me towards the group saying "Excuse us - get out of the way and let John go home; he has a bus to catch and he lives twenty miles away" all this was said with a huge grin and a wicked twinkle in his eyes. He added "John and I have flown hawks together for years, in all parts of Scotland and shared a hip flask or two on many occasions" which of course was not at all true. We had never met before and certainly were not on first name terms.

Next morning I was summoned by the Director and stood on the mat in front of his huge desk. He demanded to know why I had still been in the building when it was closed and what was the bird doing here where all other birds were dead ones.

I said that as no-one had come down to the basement to tell me to go home as the Museum was being closed early, so that's why I appeared in the Hall as I did. He wanted to know how I knew the Duke or more correctly how did the Duke know me? I could only carry on with the Duke's great pretence, saying we had flown hawks together many times. The Director was as we say totally gobsmacked and I was dismissed without any further discussion or repercussions.

It was truly amazing to have had this involvement with royalty and has been a source of great amusement to me and my friends to whom I have told the story. Mr Palmar almost fell out his chair in his office laughing when I told him.

General Correspondence to the General Secretary Alison Park.

Next Newsletter - copy to David Palmar by 10th January 2023 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 200Kb each for emailing).