



BRISC

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cover the deeper faces and ledges. In contrast to the spectacular cliffs are the sea lochs that provide a safe haven for the delicate sea loch anemone, *Protanthea simplex*, and the stunning fireworks anemone (*Pachycerianthus multiplicatus*) that appear like lighthouses out of the gloom. Further offshore lie the Darwin Mounds, home to beautiful and diverse deep water coral reefs that have been granted special protection by the European Union.



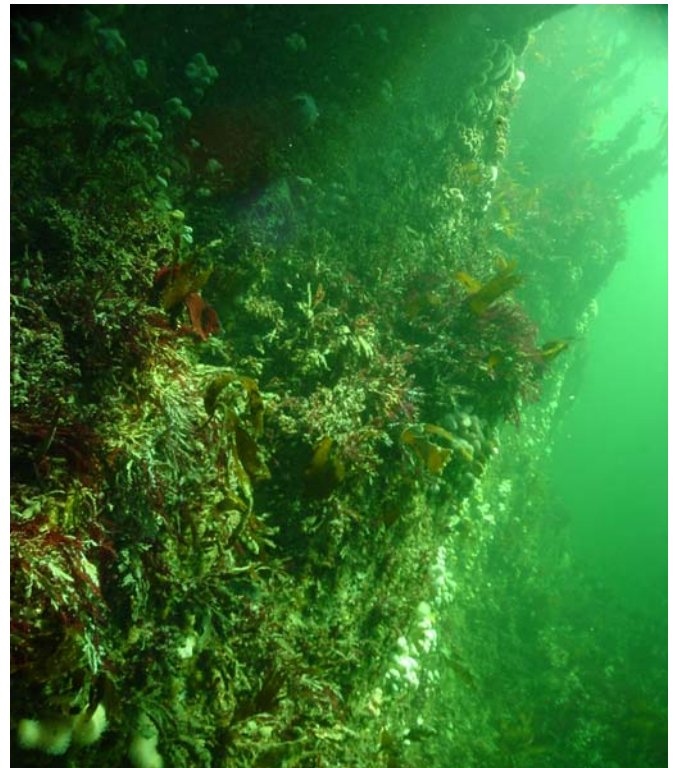
Northern sea fan *Swiftia pallida*

Scotland's Changing Marine Biodiversity

By Fiona Crouch

Scotland's coastline measures 10,000km, one of the largest in Europe. Over half surrounds the 800 islands that pepper the west coast and stretch out to St. Kilda and Rockall in the west and the Shetlands to the north. The seas adjacent to this remarkable coastline have a unique and diverse marine life.

The geology of Scotland is varied, providing spectacular scenery on land that extends below the water to dramatic submarine walls and gently sloping rocky reefs. At St. Abbs on the east coast, walls are covered with soft corals, such as the gruesomely named dead men's fingers (*Alcyonium digitatum*), and the beautiful plumose anemones (*Metridium senile*). On the west coast the cliffs near the surface are covered with dense kelp forest, while sponges, sea squirts and the northern sea fan (*Swiftia pallida*)



Marine wall covered with algae and soft corals, St. Abbs © the author

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Chairman's Column

We try and hold up to four Committee Meetings each year, and the last one was held at the beginning of December in Perth. This seemed to be a particularly full meeting with some major topics discussed and taken forward. These included:-

1. A discussion on updating the web site. We are all aware that the present site is showing its age and our webmaster, Andy Wakelin, is in the process of updating both its appearance and its content. One particular aspect discussed concerned the area of the site reserved for 'members only' where, to gain access, there is a somewhat insecure password. There was a very strong feeling that 'a member only' area served no useful purpose, and accordingly we plan to remove that aspect. Unsurprisingly, there was a strong desire for the site to be easy and friendly to navigate around and not to have distractions appearing, such as pop-ups. We will look into ways to incorporate an updated electronic version of the *Source Book* and the *Directory to the Scottish Natural History Societies*, and to provide electronic links where possible to identified societies and organisations. Subject to Andy's other commitments we hope that this may be completed in the early part of 2009. If you have views, please let Andy or myself know.
2. As all of you were aware, I hope, the e-petition to the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish integrated local and national structures for collecting, analysing and sharing biological data to inform decision making processes to benefit biodiversity is now up and running and, as I write this on 17 December, I see that there have been 597 signatures of support plus a number of very pertinent comments. We wait to see if there is any follow up after the petition closes on 9 January 2009.
3. An update on our Data Scoping Project was provided. This project involves the employment of an officer to scope how many substantial biological datasets exist in museums and universities, which are still to be fully electronically mobilised and generally made more available. The initial work is being undertaken by Rob Scott at Dundee Museum and Dundee University, and the outcome will provide an estimate of the time and costs involved in drawing up similar metadata for all biological datasets held by Scottish Universities and Museums. The costs of the pilot project are being shared between BRISC and SNH.
4. Gill Calder, who has been working with Louisa Hancock, provided an update on the AGM and Conference to be held at Chatelherault, Lanark, on 25 April. If details are not included with this Newsletter they will be out to you very shortly.
5. Sara Hawkswell had provided a report on the inaugural meeting of ALERC (Association of Local Environmental Record Centres). Over 80 representatives had attended, although Sara was the only one from Scotland. BRISC hopes the Association will thrive in Scotland and sends it our best wishes.
6. Finally we approved the accounts, which are in a healthy state. Anne-Marie Smout has been writing articles for *The Scotsman* newspaper and suggested that the fees for this could perhaps be used to provide one or two bursaries each year to attend appropriate courses at Kindrogan. The Committee was in favour of this and fuller details will be provided in due course.

As 2008 draws to its end I hope that the financial turbulence of the past months is not going to be casting a dark cloud over any of you and, if it is, you will still be able to celebrate Christmas and that we can all look forward to the climate, in financial and environmental senses, improving in 2009.

With Best Wishes for the New Year -

Patrick Milne Home



Editorial

A Strategy for Scottish Invertebrate Conservation will be launched on 20 January in Edinburgh by Michael Russell, the Scottish minister for the environment. Serious conservation of invertebrates is long overdue, and everyone involved in the Initiative for Scottish Invertebrates (ISI) is hugely to be congratulated for getting it so far. Now we just need action! For more information contact Craig Macadam at Buglife Scotland Tel 01786 446508 or email craig.macadam@buglife.org.uk

This year the annual conference is not till April 25, so the programme and booking form will be posted out later, together with the annual report and other papers for the AGM. Also, look out for one of the new grid reference readers which will be included in that mailing.

Readers will be aware of the editor's involvement in the Wildlife Watch surveys, run by *The Scotsman* and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Now in its third year, people are beginning to notice all kinds of groups other than birds, including strange things they find on the beach. I am indebted to the staff of the Marine Biological Association for providing the identification of a number of 'mystery' photographs. This prompted me to ask for the article published here, promptly supplied together with some wonderful photos. The MBA's Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) provides detailed species information for seashore and underwater life, including distribution maps. The website at www.marlin.ac.uk/ is well worth a visit.

The article also mentions the recently arrived wireweed *Sargassum muticum*, a non-native seaweed, which forms dense choking stands offshore. SNH is looking to monitor its spread, which since it was first noted in Scotland in the Solway in 2004 has been phenomenal and it has now been observed off Skye. For up-to-date information and how to help monitor the spread of this new invasive, check out www.snh.org.uk/wireweed

How many of us were not dismayed by the decision of the Scottish Parliament to grant planning permission to the massive golf development on the Menie Estate north of Aberdeen? Roger Crofts, former CEO of SNH, has give us his view on the impact this decision will have on the biodiversity as well as on future planning decisions.

On a happier note, Richard Weddle presents a snapshot of what is special about Glasgow. In spite of the fact that this is Scotland's largest city, not to mention one of the largest in the UK, there is surprisingly enough biodiversity here to fill volumes.

BTCV is looking for some new candidates for their natural talents project, so if you are interested or know anyone who might be, do pass it to them, and finally, as we go to press, a total of 718 signatures have been achieved for our e-petition. Well done everyone. BRISC has now been asked to give evidence to the Public Petitions Committee on 27 January and readers will be kept informed about progress.

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People are probably more familiar with Scotland's fish species and mega fauna. For years Scotland has had a thriving fishing industry accounting for over 60% of the total UK catch. Although fishing is still an important part of the Scottish economy, marine wildlife tourism is a growing industry. The Moray Firth has a resident bottlenose dolphin population, basking sharks can be seen cruising round the west coast scooping up mouthfuls of plankton, and whales such as minke are frequent visitors to Scottish waters.



Fireworks anemone open and retracting its tentacles, Loch Nevis
© the author



Marine wall – St Abbs © the author

The geographical position of Scotland is a contributing factor to the country's marine biodiversity. The warm waters of the North Atlantic Drift (Gulf Stream) sweep past the west coast, whilst the Northern Isles experience the colder sub-Arctic waters. Northern species such as the wolf fish (*Anarhichas lupus*) are frequently encountered on the east coast. They often

lurk at depths of 100 to 200metre, but at St. Abbs they can be found in as little as 10m depth. In contrast, species that like the water a bit warmer include the Devonshire cup coral (*Caryophyllia smithii*), abundant on the west coast but not so common on the east, and the John Dory (*Zeus faber*).



Wolf fish, St Abbs © Jim Greenfield

Our increasing knowledge of Scotland's unique marine environment is due in no small part to the records provided by volunteer recorders. Recording schemes such as MarLIN's Sealife Survey (www.sealifesurvey.org) provide a portal for the public, amateur naturalists and divers, to have their records verified and then made available to the wider community via the National Biodiversity Network (www.nbn.org.uk). With so much coastline to monitor, sightings are really important for filling gaps in scientific knowledge.

Some examples from the MarLIN sightings programme in the last three years include extensions to the known distribution of the common spider crab *Maja squinado* (now *Maja brachydactyla*) after they were recorded in creels in the Lynn of Lorne. A number of unusual reports have also been sent from the St Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve, including the first known records of crawfish or spiny lobster (*Palinurus elephas*), and cuckoo wrasse (*Labrus mixtus*) in this location.



Crawfish – St. Abbs © Fiona Greenfield

Reports of species from even further afield are also becoming more common. The triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*) is more commonly associated with warm waters. In the last 20 years there has been an increase in the number of specimens sighted, although there is still no evidence of breeding in UK waters. There have been an increasing number of sightings, particularly in the last three years, of stranded triggerfish around Scotland including North Uist, the Isle of Harris, Lock Etive, Caithness and Ardslnighish. One specimen was partially eaten by an otter.

Sightings of introduced species are also important; *Sargassum muticum*, an invasive algae, was first identified in the UK in 1973 and reached Scotland in 2004. The first reports were from Loch Ryan, and it has since been found in other locations including Loch Fyne and the Isle of Cumbrae¹. The spread of these non-native species is anticipated and reporting sightings can help scientists to monitor their spread and the impact they have.



Plumose anemones, Loch Nevis, and sea loch anemones, Loch Hourne
© the author

Sightings data are really useful for highlighting areas of concern, but to gain a better understanding of changes in marine biodiversity a more systematic approach is required. The Shore Thing project (www.marlin.ac.uk/shore_thing) uses effort-based surveys, in which a 20 minute timed species search is used to record the distribution and abundance of 22 climate change indicators. Scientists predict that by 2050 the sea surface temperature could rise by 2°C. The potential impact is the movement poleward of cold water species like the tortoiseshell limpet (*osilinus lineatus*), possibly disappearing from Scottish shores. Highers students and voluntary groups are surveying sites in Scotland, but we need more survey locations. Further details can be found on the project website along with the Project Officers contact details. Please get in touch if you would like to be involved.

Fiona Crouch
Shore Thing Project Officer
Biological Records Officer, MarLIN
www.marlin.ac.uk/shore_thing

References

¹ Harries, D.B., Harrow, S., Wilson, J.R., Mair, J.M & Donnan, D.W. "The establishment of the invasive alga *Sargassum muticum* on the west coast of Scotland: a preliminary assessment of community effects." *J. Mar. Biol. Ass. U.K.* (2007), 87, 1057–1067

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT GLASGOW

By Richard Weddle

A typical account of wildlife in Glasgow will start by saying that it is the largest city in Scotland, that it grew to be so through industrial development in the 19th century, but it has now transformed itself into a place where wildlife thrives. It is true that the green spaces of Glasgow and the wildlife which they support are becoming more widely known, but most of the green spaces have always been there and greatly valued by Glaswegians, though some of them were originally private estates, and the evidence suggests that they have always supported a rich biodiversity. However, it is also true that many significant habitat enhancements have been implemented in recent years, partly owing to the introduction of Biodiversity Action Plans. (For a map of Glasgow see separate file).

For want of a better place to start, a few facts and figures may help to set the scene; I will then focus in on several topics that illustrate some aspects of the specialness of Glasgow.

Greenspace in and around Glasgow

Greenspace within Glasgow amounts to one fifth of the total area; within the city are 6 Local Nature Reserves and 2 more proposed, 5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (3 of these are geological, but no less special for that), 36 Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (including the major parks) and 39 Local SINCs; the city is traversed by rivers, canals, railways and motorways, which create wildlife corridors, some of which are also important landscape features; and finally, Kelvingrove Park, The Botanic Gardens, Pollok Park, Victoria Park, and the Necropolis are listed on Historic Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.



Hogganfield LNR © Glasgow Museums

But the greenspace does not stop at the city boundary; the extensive wetland in the north-east includes Hogganfield and Frankfield Lochs, Bishop Loch (and associated LNR), Gartloch Pool, and Commonhead Moss, which extends into North Lanarkshire and connects via Johnstone Loch to Drumpellier Country Park, one of the largest lowland wetland complexes in central Scotland. To the north is Mugdock Country Park with its ancient woodland SSSI, the western end of Flanders Moss, and to the west, Loch Lomond National Park; while to the south-east are Calderglen and Chatelherault Country Parks, to the south-west are the extensive Gleniffer Braes Country Park in

Renfrewshire, and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park in Inverclyde. All these are within 30 minutes of the city centre by road or, in most cases, by rail (which is another thing that's special about Glasgow). Also, of course, the River Clyde to the west of Glasgow (the Clyde estuary) is designated a Special Protection Area on account of the wetland birds, and upstream of the city, the Clyde valley is a valuable woodland corridor, which includes the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Falls of Clyde Reserve.

These places have been happy hunting grounds for naturalists for over 160 years, many of whom left their records, and often their collections, to posterity. As a result, Glasgow Museums hold the largest natural history collection of any local authority in Scotland – some 585,000 specimens, of which over a third are insects, though not all of local origin. Other local naturalists are represented in the collections at the Hunterian Museum, which also holds specimens and collections of international interest, though again not necessarily from the local area. There is also an extensive natural history collection at Paisley Museum.

Brownfield areas

These days it is not only the greenspaces which are important for wildlife; the former industrial areas can be just as rich in biodiversity. One such area, alongside the Clyde at Dalmarnock, is one of the few areas within the city where the grayling butterfly can regularly be seen, though much of the area is shortly to be redeveloped for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the M74 extension.

The abandoned pit bings around the periphery of the city are now quite well naturalised, and six orchid species, including Young's helleborine, have been found there.



Darnley Mill wildflower meadow © Glasgow Museums

The new Dams to Darnley Country Park, situated in the south-west of the city and extending into East Renfrewshire, largely comprises former mining and industrial areas, though it also includes some disused reservoirs and a geological SSSI, Waulkmill Glen. The reservoirs are important ornithologically, with 30 wetland bird species recorded there over the years with some regularly breeding. Waulkmill Glen is surrounded by mixed semi-natural woodland which maintains a rich diversity of birds, herbs, fungi and invertebrates, and within the glen itself are plants and ferns that thrive in damp habitats. In former years there was an even wider variety of ferns, but these were reportedly eradicated by collectors; the glen is also the only site within the city where herb Paris has been recorded, but it seems to have met the same fate.

The proposed Country Park includes some ponds and wetland areas, which support invertebrates, including dragonflies. A meadow area seeded with wildflowers was quickly colonised by 6-spot burnets and butterflies, and the greater butterfly orchid can be found in abundance in another unimproved grassland area.



6-spot Burnet at Nitshill © Glasgow Museums

GNHS & prominent naturalists

In 1851, local naturalists formed the Natural History Society of Glasgow, which was the first such society in Glasgow and among the first in Scotland. Through the years the society has amalgamated with other local societies to form the present Glasgow Natural History Society, which has probably the largest membership and seems to be the most active such society in Scotland in terms of number and breadth of activities. Since 1907 GNHS has published *The Glasgow Naturalist*, a peer-reviewed journal, which reaches a wide audience through libraries and other societies, with whom we have a journal exchange agreement.



Darnley Mill Pond © Glasgow Museums

As mentioned earlier, the ‘greening’ of Glasgow is no new phenomenon; as early as the 1820s, Thomas Hopkirk was pointing out neglected and waste areas as ‘lost opportunities of common good’. Hopkirk was the author of “Flora Glottiana”, the first catalogue of the plants of the Clyde area, and was also instrumental in setting up the first Botanic Garden in Glasgow, and in establishing the Necropolis as one of the first great garden cemeteries in Britain. His Flora was followed by those of Roger Hennedy, John Lee, the recent *Changing Flora of Glasgow* by Jim Dickson, Peter Macpherson & Keith Watson, and will be joined by forthcoming Floras of the vice-counties of Renfrew, Lanark, and Dunbarton respectively.

In 1876 and in 1901, the British Association for the Advancement of Science met in Glasgow, and on both occasions local naturalists compiled local species lists, which are still an invaluable resource, and a challenge to the naturalists of today, as many of the taxonomic groups are under-recorded in recent years. More prominent naturalists than can be listed here took part in these projects, but in addition to the botanists already mentioned, I should highlight the coleopterists Anderson Fergusson and Morris Young, Robert Henderson and John Malloch (Diptera), Kenneth Morton (Trichoptera), and James King (Lepidoptera and Neuroptera - though he would apparently collect and mount any insect that came his way), Alexander Patience (Crustacea), John Robertson (marine animals of the Firth of Clyde), and James Stirton (mosses).



Mike Rutherford at Commonhead © Glasgow Museums

I have already mentioned some of the currently active botanists in the area. Further recent naturalists of note include Roy Crowson (Coleoptera). Geoff Hancock is Curator of Entomology at the Hunterian Museum and has a special interest in the Tipulidae; Richard Sutcliffe, the Natural History Research Manager at Glasgow Museums, is also Secretary of the SW Scotland branch of Butterfly Conservation. The current natural history curators at Glasgow Museums are Jeanne Robinson (Entomology) and Mike Rutherford (other invertebrates, but with an interest also in vertebrates); and a former curator, Fred Woodward, is an experienced Conchologist.



Jeanne Robinson (in the foreground) in action © the author

Glasgow Museums Biological Record Centre

The 19th century lists from the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) publications and other sources, such as the Transactions of the Natural History Society and of the Andersonian Naturalists, have been augmented by later initiatives, notably the ‘Clyde Card Catalogue’ dating from the 1920s, and surveys carried out in the middle years of the 20th century in connection with the designation of SSSIs and establishment of wildlife reserves, together with many other surveys and excursions undertaken by local and visiting naturalists, such as the surveys for the *Changing Flora of Glasgow*, and a GNHS project to survey the wildlife in the Botanic Gardens.

This information now forms a major part of the Glasgow Museums Biological Records Centre database, which is based at the Glasgow Museums Resource Centre in Nitshill. A recent draft audit of the number of species in the database, which have been recorded within the city boundary, alone amounted to some 5,400. Many of these have not been recorded for 50 to 100 years, the main reason apparently being because no one has looked for them; it is unlikely that many of them are no longer here, and over the past year several species – including the oak-tree pug and *Ypsolopha sequella* (a micro-moths), the mining bee *Lasioglossum calceatum* and the girdled snail, *Hygromia cinctella* - have been recorded for the first time in Glasgow (and in some cases, Scotland). There is also a significant body of information yet to be digitised, such as the majority of the records of Roy Crowson, an eminent local coleopterist, who recorded in the latter half of the 20th century. Thus the beetle

records of Crowson and Fergusson together cover a more or less continuous period of over 100 years.

In a recent overview of the BRC data we found that, perhaps predictably, most of the records were for higher plants and birds, with butterflies and the larger fungi close behind in the rankings. Records for other taxon groups, such as lower plants and non-Lepidopteran invertebrates, tended to be very sparse. Consequently the BRC, in conjunction with the Museum curators, GNHS and the Hunterian Museum, have begun a series of courses and field surveys aimed at encouraging local naturalists to help redress the imbalance.



Bumblebee training with Dave Goulson of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust © Glasgow Museums

‘Wild About Glasgow’ is a Glasgow Museums project, which encourages members of the public to report wildlife sightings, particularly of the 32 easy-to-recognise species for which city-wide species-distribution maps can be requested via a touch-screen display in Kelvingrove Museum. The plan is to update the maps from time to time with the new information.

A further initiative is the two-year BIG Project (Biodiversity in Glasgow), jointly run by British Trust for Ornithology and Butterfly Conservation, in which volunteers record the breeding birds and butterflies found within Glasgow’s green spaces along with their associated habitats.



Ringlet - Craighue Wedge © Glasgow Museums

As one example of an ‘interesting’ location in Glasgow I have selected Possil Marsh, which is situated beside the Forth and Clyde Canal in the north of Glasgow. The Loch with its surrounding marshy areas is an SSSI and forms the major part of an SWT Reserve. This area has been visited by naturalists for at least 200 years, though at some period earlier than the 19th century it was apparently ironstone workings, and not partially flooded as it is now. The area is mentioned by Hopkirk (1813) as the site of the stonewort *Nitella flexilis*, but in subsequent years it was best known – and is still known – for its diversity of wetland birds.



Possil Marsh © Glasgow Museums

The pages of *The Glasgow Naturalist* contain many accounts and updates of the birds seen here, which over the years have included over 150 species, including long-eared owl, whooper swan, corncrake and curlew. Reed warblers, one of Glasgow’s LBAP species, are found here, as in all the other wetland sites around Glasgow. Also at Possil are over 270 flowering plants and some 300 (so far) insect species, including the sawflies *Dolerus possilensis* and *Nematus cadderensis*, both of which were recorded in the late 19th century by Peter Cameron, the latter species taking its name from the nearby Cadder Wilderness SSSI.

The total number of species for Possil Marsh held in the BRC database is 813 – more than for any other site in Glasgow, and this does not include some as yet unidentified specimens taken during a 2008 visit by museum curators, as well as members of GNHS and SWT.

The Rivers

The Clyde, the Kelvin and the White Cart are also important contributors to what is special about Glasgow. Though at one time they were heavily polluted, now otters and kingfishers attest to the abundance of life in their waters. Seals fishing for salmon have been seen at the weir in the city centre, other fish include sea trout, brown trout, eels, roach, brook lamprey, sea lamprey, minnows and sticklebacks; the waters teem with invertebrate life: insect larvae, annelids, and aquatic molluscs; all of these attract a wide variety of water-birds, most notably on the muddy shores of the Clyde estuary west of Glasgow, which is a designated SPA on this account.



Kelvin at Kelvingrove © Glasgow Museums

Interesting Species

I have already mentioned a number of ‘interesting species’ found in Glasgow. Some others worthy mentioning are: *Nephanes titan*, the UK’s smallest beetle – less than half a millimetre in length – which has been recorded in Pollok Park; peregrines have been seen hunting in George Square and from the tower of the University; the Carabid beetle *Agonum sahlbergi* was discovered by J. G. Bishop on the Clyde saltings near Bowling in the mid 19th century, the only UK site for this species, but it has not been seen since about 1914 and is thought to be extinct.

Many of the burns support healthy populations of water voles. The tree sparrow is actively ‘cultivated’ at Waulkmill Glen in the south-west and alongside the River Kelvin in the NW, and toothwort grows alongside the White Cart Water, notably at Pollok Park and Linn Park.



Path at Pollok Park © Glasgow Museums

I feel I should also mention broad-leaved helleborine, which is notable by virtue of its apparent ubiquity, not only on woodland edges, where it might be expected, but also as a frequent ‘weed’ in gardens and urban greenspaces – I can think of at least six locations within a couple of minutes walk from my front door, and recently in the same area a twayblade has been reported.

Further Information

This short account of the richness of biodiversity in the Glasgow and the surrounding area, hardly does the subject justice. Most of the sites and many of the people mentioned would need an article to themselves.

- Further information about sites or species can be obtained – or contributed – via biological.records@csglasgow.org.
- Information about Glasgow Museums natural history collections can be found at www.glasgowmuseums.com/about.cfm?secID=30&iteMid=34
- Information for the Hunterian Museum at www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk/collections/zoology/zoology_index.shtml (the botanical collections formerly at the Hunterian are held by Glasgow Museums).
- Information about Biodiversity in Glasgow, including links to the LBAP species and habitat plans, and related projects and news can be found at www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/Parks_Outdoors/Ecology/
- Glasgow Natural History Society website www.gnhs.org.uk contains details of the current activities of the Society, and we plan to add information about local wildlife.

THE TRUMP RESORT DEVELOPMENT: Forgetting the Environment

By Roger Crofts

An application for outline planning permission for a golf resort might seem innocuous. But one comprising two 18-hole courses, a clubhouse and ancillary facilities, a 450-room hotel with conference centre and spa, 950 holiday apartments in 4 blocks, 36 ‘golf villas’, 500 houses for sale, accommodation for 400 staff, road access and parking intruding into an SSSI is a major scheme on any count. It is claimed to create 4,694 net full-time equivalent jobs at the Scottish level in the construction phase, and 1,237 net full time equivalent permanent jobs at the Scotland level and to be of national, regional and local economic significance. The recommendation of the three Inquiry Reporters of the Scottish Government Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals is clear. The economic benefits, seen in the context of the Scottish Government’s overriding priority to achieve sustainable economic development, justify setting aside the planning policies for the area, the protected status of part of the area, and ignoring the wider environmental implications of the project over its life time.

The decision by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth in November 2008 to approve outline planning permission raises many fundamental questions about the decision making process and the relative priority to be given to different elements of the Scottish Government’s programme. These are the focus of attention in this short article.

It is clear from all of the expert witnesses that the national scientific interest of the site will be lost, with no possibilities of

mitigation. The mobile sand sheets and the sand dome at the southern end of the Foveran Links Site of Special Scientific Interest are part of the UK's largest dune system stretching from the mouth of the River Don to Hackley Head. These will be stabilised and the natural dynamism of the system lost by the insistence of the developers that the northern 9 holes of the course have to be located on the mobile dunes.

The clear implication of the decision is that economic development claimed to be of national importance can override proven nationally important nature conservation designations. This is a serious matter, given the duties on biodiversity placed on authorities by recent legislation, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, the revised status of conservation designations, especially SSSIs under the same Act, and the target given to Scottish Natural Heritage by the Scottish Government to achieve favourable condition on 95% of the SSSIs in Scotland by 2010.

It also means that the importance of maintaining natural processes at the coast is ignored. This is symptomatic of the many projects to build hard sea defences, and along rivers, rather than mimicking nature.

The decision also exposes many deficiencies in the planning system. The system is only able to consider an individual application. The developer's proposals were tested in public with the help of expert witnesses. However, objectivity is lost when the developer, Donald Trump, states categorically that if he is asked to move that part of the course from the mobile dunes protected by SSSI status he will withdraw his application. This is a classic case of brinkmanship, which is well known to those of us, like me, who have worked in government economic development departments for many years. There is a public perception that this approach amounts to bullying and that the planning process has no ability to deal with it, and that environmental considerations are second best to economic ones. Surely alternative proposals should be considered. SNH made the case for the development of the course on adjacent land, where the effects on natural processes and on habitats would be very significantly less. But the system, irrespective of the developers' view, does not allow this to happen. This is a fundamental weakness and means that the 'black and white' adversarial nature of planning is maintained.

The development also raises fundamental questions about the strategic plans and the process for their revision. The Structure and Local Plans for this area of Aberdeenshire do not contain any reference to permitting large scale new development in the Menie Links locality. What is being proposed is a new settlement, given the scale of housing and accommodation for staff. Basically, it must account for a population well above the size of many villages in Aberdeenshire, with over 3,000 people living there when fully occupied. No one doubts the demand for additional housing and the importance of making provision for affordable, and especially socially rented, housing. But this development is not for local people but for short term visitors. Plans do become out of date but what is the point of a statutory planning system which can, through an administrative decision, set aside a land-use planning framework to guide decision making, because a developer has decided he wants an immediate decision on his proposal? We are facing the same

issues with onshore wind farms. And we faced the same with oil developments and fish farms decades ago. Always the system is behind the game nationally and locally, and any national strategy has tended to be a rationalisation of what has happened rather than guiding what should be permitted. The new proposed National Planning Framework seeks to overcome this deficiency, but does not take sufficient account of environmental resources and their long term stewardship. And this framework will take a long time to translate locally into meaningful plans acceptable to communities and addressing fundamental environmental management issues.

The wider environmental questions of the footprint of the development have not been addressed. The development is targeted at international markets and most of the users are expected to come from overseas. It is essential, at a time when the Scottish Government has set testing targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions and for dealing with global climate change, that these important policies are reflected in all decisions by the Scottish Government, not just the ones on which they choose to apply them.

In short, this golf resort development raises fundamental questions about the desire of the Scottish Government to achieve genuinely sustainable development which benefits the economy and society, and uses natural resources in a truly sustainable manner, i.e. within their carrying and regeneration capacity. It raises questions about the efficacy of the decision making system to cope with complex issues where the only compromise is refusal or conditions placed on the developers proposals, rather than considering alternatives. And, it raises much wider and fundamental questions about the environmental footprint, which are counter to many of the Scottish Government's policies on sustainability, and on the reduction of greenhouse gases. However sophisticated the strategies, policies and the decision support systems, it seems that a belligerent developer apparently with lots of cash can overturn policy and cause key elements of the Scottish Government's strategy with respect to the environment to be ignored. Fundamentally, the planning system has become a development enabling system and has lost the balance with national and international environmental needs and requirements.

LETTER PAGE

To the Editor,

Sir,

While Clive McKay may think "jizz" is a second world war term (*BRISC Recorder News* XXXX) this idea was disposed of in *British Birds* (78: 251-2) in 1985. It was introduced to ornithologists in a chapter of T.A Coward's fine book *Bird Haunts and Nature Memories* (Frederick Warne, London, p. 141-4) in 1922. He attributed it to a west coast Irishman who applied it to all natural phenomena, and Dr Charles Nelson reports that it is also used by botanists. While it might have originated during World War 1, surely someone would have remarked on this - can anyone say whether it comes from Gaelic?

W.R.P. Bourne



Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

The Association of Local Environmental Records Centre (ALERC) held its inaugural conference in Bristol on 28th November 2009. The conference was attended by over 80 staff and volunteers from Records Centre throughout the UK, gathered together for the first time as an independent, professional group.



Simon Pickles (NEYDC) talks about their experience in developing on-line access to data

Membership of the association will be open to all LRCs in the UK, including those in the development stage. Membership fees vary according to LRC size and stage in development. Membership will not be open to other partner organisations although ALERC will launch a subscriber service to enable partners to subscribe to some of the information services on the web site.

The conference looked at the priorities for the Association including developing LRC accreditation, training and communications. Communications for the Association will primarily be electronic and a website has already been established – although there is still much development to be done. There is a discussion forum specifically for LRCs (which is likely to be limited to members only in the future). A proposal was put forward to develop a “training credits scheme” whereby members of the association would be able to buy training and support (both through formal training programmes, mentoring and other means) from others using an ALERC training credits scheme, encouraging LRCs to exchange skills.

The need for LRC Accreditation was identified as a priority (and is being heavily pushed by Natural England) and is likely to be an early project.

For more information, news and updates use the ALERC website www.alerc.gov.uk.

Sara Hawkswell
LWIC Centre Manager



Darwyn Sumner leads a discussion on ALERC communications

The conference gave people a chance to look at the experience of other Records Centres particularly in relation to management and development of web-services for users. The conference did however spend considerable time looking at the role of ALERC and its constitution. The Steering Group who have worked to establish ALERC were given a mandate by the conference to establish ALERC as a Community Interest Company and elect a group of Directors to run the company on their behalf – in future years the members will vote on the Directors at the AGM.

BOOK REVIEW

Galbraith, C.A. & Baxter, J.M. (eds) 2008. *Energy and the Natural Heritage*. TSO Scotland, Edinburgh. 302 pp. ISBN 978-010-497341-4 Hbk £25.00

This book is the latest in Scottish Natural Heritage’s series of proceedings volumes arising from their themed national conferences. With only a few exceptions, it is an illustrious series which includes some fine and much cited volumes. Unfortunately, in one crucial regard, this is one of the exceptions, but this is entirely due to circumstances beyond SNH’s control. The conference from which this volume emerged took place in Pitlochry in the autumn of 2004. It was an enjoyable and stimulating event with an excellent range of papers. The proceedings therefore had the potential to be a unique, state-of-the-art *tour d’horizon*, and, as such, to contribute very usefully to the increasingly fraught debates concerning energy and the Scottish environment, but given the speed with which such debates have been evolving, the book needed to be published rapidly if that potential was to be realised.

Sadly, however, political machinations intervened. This was the moment when the Scottish Government gave SNH its marching orders and told it to move its HQ from Edinburgh to Inverness. In the upheaval of the move, many non-essential projects suffered long delays, and this proceedings volume was one of the casualties. (Indeed, for a time it looked as if it would never

appear at all, but thankfully the editors succeeded in driving it through.) As a result, it consists of work which is at least four or five years old. In some fields, this might not matter too much, but in the contemporary energy arena it really does. The world has changed substantially in the intervening years; the science, the policy context, the socio-economics and the public debates have all moved on. The result is that many chapters already feel remarkably dated.

That said, this collection is of more than just historical interest, and some contributions, of course, have a much longer 'sell by date' than others. Anyone concerned with the important interactions between energy and the natural heritage will find much of interest here. The volume consists of five sections:

1. Scottish energy use.
2. Legacy of the past.
3. Present and future options - other than renewable energy.
4. Present and future options - renewable energy.
5. Conclusions.

The first two sections helpfully set out the broader context of the energy debate, describing not only the climate change imperative and the environmental impacts of energy use but also the historical dimensions - how we have got to where we are - touching on coal mining, oil and gas, hydroelectricity and nuclear power. Part Three is a useful reminder that technologies other than renewables will probably need to be part of the transition to a sustainable energy future, and that energy conservation as well as energy generation must be given serious attention. Accordingly, this section includes discussions of energy-efficient buildings, carbon capture and storage, the impacts of a possible hydrogen economy, and a chapter which asks how clean and green nuclear power could be. There is also a discussion of liquid biofuels here, which would seem to belong more properly in the next section.

This then brings us to the largest single section of the book, eleven chapters which address some of the main technologies for generating renewable power and heat, and the debates surrounding them. The prospects for the further development of hydropower, the potential of marine renewables, and the contribution of woodfuel to rural development in the Highlands are all covered. A commentary on the Swedish experience of bioenergy shows how much can be done and (as always, it seems) how far behind the Scandinavians we are. As might be expected, wind power features heavily, with discussions of its landscape impacts, the effects of upland windfarms on birds, and the factors shaping public perceptions. The chapters demonstrate both the enormous potential of renewable energy in Scotland but they also highlight the significant technical, environmental and social barriers, which stand in the way of harnessing it. The final section endeavours to peer into the future a short way and to chart a way ahead. The challenges are, indeed, daunting, but the urgency of the need to overcome them has only increased since these chapters were written. This volume is a valuable snapshot of knowledge, thinking and perspectives as they were in 2004, and it offers some perceptive and thought-provoking insights. It is very nicely produced and full of useful facts and figures. However, as a participant in the original conference, I have to say that my primary reaction to it is a feeling of disappointed

frustration. It could have been such a timely, constructive contribution to these important debates, but it missed the boat.

Charles Warren,
St Andrews, December 2008

Manley, Chris (2008). *British Moths and Butterflies: A photographic guide*. A&C Black. ISBN 978-0-7136-8636-4 Pbk £24.99

This is the latest in a number of new guides to British moths and butterflies. I cannot resist any books on moths, and as a regular user of the photographs available over internet for identification purposes, I was keen to see what different aspects this volume would offer.

Digital photography lends itself admirably to the collection of images of all sorts of wildlife, and the author had already published a photographic guide to the moths of Dorset. He then fell for the challenge to produce a photographic guide for the whole of the UK. The foreword states that initially the plan was to cover just the macro moths and butterflies, but happily so many photographs of micros and larvae were kindly offered to the author that he decided to include these, thus providing something neither in Skinner nor in Waring. Definitely a new aspect.

All the moths and butterflies in the publication have been given the log numbers as published in Bradley's checklist (2000), which is very helpful, and checking through these, as good as all the macro moths are illustrated (850 in all), as are the butterflies (74), as well as a section showing many of their caterpillars.

The micros are not nearly so well covered, with only 500 illustrated (out of ca 1400), but these include a large number of tortricidae, which is particularly helpful, because illustrations of this group are difficult to come by. E.g. they are still to be covered on of the projected 10 volumes of Emmet, *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (as are the geometridae), and the two volumes *British Tortricoid Moths* by Bradley, Trimewan & Smith are now out of print and second hand copies extremely expensive. Pisces Conservation re-issued the text and illustrations as an Adobe file on CD, but this and websites are not so easy to take with you into the field or on journeys.

The pyralidae are almost all illustrated, showing the actual posture of the living insect as opposed to the more traditional 'set' individuals in Goater's excellent book. The two would best be used together.

The photographs are almost all without exception brilliant, albeit that some moths, especially the macros, are so cryptic that they almost disappear against the background. On the whole, I tend to prefer guidebooks with drawings rather than photographs, because the illustrator can ensure that all the salient points for identification are presented and that the illustrations are to life size, which is not always the case here.

All in all, this is a delightful volume to browse through, it has some useful additional information, such as caterpillar food plants and lists of websites to visit, and it does fill certain gaps, especially if used in conjunction with other guides.

Anne-Marie Smout

Turn your passion into a profession

The 2009 Natural Talent Apprenticeships can now be revealed. BTCV have continued to develop and strengthen the excellent partnerships that are vital to the success of the project and in 2009 our apprenticeships will be based in some of the finest reserves and educational institutes in Europe. We are very fortunate to have the support of many leading experts and organisations who contribute to making Natural Talent an excellent experience for a few lucky individuals.

The 2009 Apprenticeships are as follows;

- **Lepidoptera (Micro and Macro Moths)**
based at the National Museum Scotland (Keith Bland) and RSPB Insh Marshes
- **Riverflies (Mayfly, Caddis and Stonefly)**
based at the Clyde River Foundation, SEPA and Buglife
- **Machair habitats,**
based with RSPB on the Uists and other RSPB reserves
- **Wetland Reserve management**
based with SNH in Stirling and in Wetland reserves throughout Scotland
- **Peatland Reserve management**
based at RSPB Forsinard in Sutherland



Just in case you hadn't heard about **Natural Talent**, it is BTCV Scotland's fantastic initiative that aims to train the next generation of naturalists through an innovative apprenticeship scheme. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Natural Talent offers paid apprenticeships in vital taxonomic and specialist conservation skills that are rapidly being lost from the environmental sector.

Working with environmental organisations and educational institutes throughout Scotland and Northern Ireland, apprentices gain on the job experience and develop skills needed to begin to specialise in their chosen field. BTCV Scotland has delivered 14 apprenticeships, from Lichens, Bryophytes and Fungi, to Hoverflies, Farmland Conservation and Hymenoptera. The next 5 apprenticeships will add to the expertise that is lacking in the conservation sector.

Anyone can apply for this post. You don't need qualifications to apply, there are no age restrictions either; all we ask is that you have a passion for conserving our Natural Heritage and the drive, commitment and determination to complete this apprenticeship to a very high standard. Given that we had almost 50 applicants for each apprenticeship last year, we expect a similar response to our 09 apprenticeships.



If you think you have what it takes to be a Natural Talent apprentice, why not check out our website. You'll need to be quick; closing dates for applications is 9th February 2009

<http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/naturaltalent>

Alternatively you can contact BTCV on 01789 479697 or e-mail Scotland@btcv.org.uk

BRISC ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

This will take place at Chatelherault Country Park on **Saturday 25 April** and will focus on the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Green Network Initiative. Full programme and booking form, as well as papers for the AGM, will be sent out separately in early February.

Deadline for the April issue of *BRISC Recorder News* is mid March.

Please send all material, preferably in electronic format, to the editor. Email Hanne-marie@smout.org or by post to BRISC, c/o Smout, Chesterhill, Shore Road, Anstruther KY10 3DZ