

## SWT Aberdeen Newsletter Spring 2014

<http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/>

### **Chairman's News**

In November, SWT organised a very successful international conference in Edinburgh called the "World Forum on Natural Capital". It was aimed at persuading companies to think hard about their impact on the natural environment and to adopt business practices which protect and improve our natural resources and biodiversity. It's interesting how many big, international businesses, for example, Nestle and Puma, have already seen that this has to be the way to go if they are going to survive. The First Minister, Alex Salmond, announced the formation of a Scottish Natural Capital Forum at the conference, and encouraged Scottish businesses to join forces to ensure our natural resources are used wisely for the benefit of all of us. This is an ambitious plan – and it remains to be seen how Scottish companies respond but some have signed up already, and others are probably waiting to see how it goes, but SWT have raised the bar significantly here in persuading Scottish businesses that they depend on a healthy Scottish environment for their own future.

Now I have to make a strong plea for your help. Gavin and Maggie Forrest have provided many services for us for a number of years now but they have decided to retire from these activities from the April AGM. It has been a fantastic contribution from both of them and we really appreciate the huge efforts, over a long period of time, which they have made on our behalf. I am pleased to announce we already have a new Membership Secretary: Alistair Beely. We also urgently need a group of members to provide tea/coffee/cake after the winter talks and run the raffle. This is the only way in which we can raise money to support the Member Centre's activities (we do not receive any of the annual subscription which goes to the national SWT office). Perhaps we can organise a rota for this if we had a few volunteers. Please consider volunteering to help us. Please email me if you would like to volunteer: [roger@owen25.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:roger@owen25.fsnet.co.uk)

**Roger Owen – Chair Aberdeen Members Centre**

### **Delivery of the newsletter**

At the AGM in April 2013 we pointed out that we could no longer afford the cost of posting out the Aberdeen MC newsletter to all our members. It was agreed that we would instead email it out to all members except to those who specifically request a paper copy or to those who do not have an email address. It was not very successful as some members did not receive their copy of the Autumn 2013 newsletter. We can only apologise if you did not receive a newsletter. We have now decided to have the newsletter delivered with the national magazine twice a year, March and November. This way we can be sure that every member will receive a copy. A copy of all the newsletters are available online through [www.swtaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk). Remember to check our web pages once in a while for any updates or information which we think might be of interest. There is an update about the NESBReC mammal atlas and Pooling our Ponds.

The committee would also like to pass on it thanks to the band of volunteers who hand delivered newsletters in their local area, some of whom have been doing so twice a year for many years.

### **Update From Reserves Manager - December 2013**

#### **Red Moss of Netherley**

I have finally managed to get one of our neighbours to sign a management agreement with us. The other neighbours we are now negotiating with, to possibly buy land, as specific funding has become available for this. The team from Dundee have strimmed the path and almost completed work inserting further dams on SWT land. This is work funded by SRDP.

Nick and Rose, as always, are doing an excellent job as Convenors, and have produced a report covering the last 12 months. The Management Plan for the site has also been updated by myself, with help from Nick and Rose and SNH staff.

#### **Coulnacraig Meadow**

The meadow was cut and raked at the end of August by the team from Dundee

#### **Gight Wood**

Our contractor for the footpath maintenance has completed his work for this season, and, another contractor has felled some of the larger sycamores on the reserve. Mike Stevens has a contract to remove non-native regenerating

saplings from the wood along with a small amount of hazel coppice. I have already requested a similar sum of money for next year's budget to continue the footpath maintenance.

A recent graduate, Ealasaid Hidson, has responded to a request for Volunteer Rangers which the Trust advertised recently (for a whole range of reserves). Ealasaid will be visiting the site as often as she can and reporting back any issues or interesting sightings to myself. She has already met our Convenor Dr Mark Young,

### **Longhaven Cliffs**

Again our contractor has completed our footpath maintenance work for the year. At the members AGM in Montrose, back in early October, I was approached by a lady who advised me the northern end of the reserve footpath was badly overgrown. I am always very grateful for such reports, as I don't get out onto the reserves as often as I would like to. However, on this occasion I checked this for myself a few weeks later and could not find any overgrown sections of the footpath, and am wondering if there is confusion with regard to where this path starts/ends. SWT only maintain the footpath within the reserve boundary which ends northerly, before Meike Croft which is situated on the A90. Visitors using the reserve path can cut up just past this house to a small lay-by. There is, in theory, a footpath all the way into Boddam, which used to be managed by Aberdeenshire Council, but no maintenance has been carried out for several years.

As with Gight, a gentleman called Adam Lovell who lives in Peterhead, has come forward in response to our Volunteer Ranger advert and is doing a similar role to Ealasaid at Longhaven.

We are now at that time of year when I am busy planning budgets and work programmes for our reserves and staff in the North East for 2014. As always I am happy to answer any questions. It is easiest to contact me at

[rpotter@swt.org.uk](mailto:rpotter@swt.org.uk)

**Rab Potter - Reserves Manager North East**

### **Local Nature Conservation Sites**

Aberdeenshire Council has a duty under the Nature Conservation Scotland Act (2004) to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out all its functions and to take measures to enhance biodiversity where possible. This includes the protection of sites of importance for their ecological and geological interest. As part of the portfolio of "recognised nature conservation sites" Aberdeenshire Council has relied on a network of sites identified in the late 1970's as "Sites of Interest to Natural Science" (SINS). It is widely recognised that the SINS system was out of date and urgently required a review to reassess sites, consider new candidate sites and to provide more accurate site boundaries.

A review process that has taken place, employing a scientific panel to identify and evaluate sites and a decision making panel to consider the wider implications of designation. This panel has come to a conclusion and has proposed a set of "Local Nature Conservation Sites" (LNCS). These represent the best local biodiversity and geodiversity sites in Aberdeenshire, to be used alongside the protections given to International and Nationally important designated sites such as "Special Protection Areas" and "Sites of Special Scientific Interest".

These vary considerably in size from a few hectares to extensive stretches along river valleys. The sites include a range of habitats such as lowland raised peat bog, woodland, grassland, wetlands, coastal sand dunes and lochs. Features of geological and geomorphological interest include exposures of various rock types, deposits such as the Buchan Gravels and glacial features. The majority of sites are in private ownership with a few owned and managed by public bodies or charities.

The majority of Aberdeenshire's coastline has been included within a LNCS reflecting the high biodiversity and geological value of these areas. Although much of the coastline is already covered national designations, the area considered to be of local interest was often greater. The national designation for many coastal areas covers their geological interest only. However, these sites often support habitats and species of regional value. Much of Aberdeenshire's coastline is used by breeding seabirds which feed offshore and, the coastal waters are important for cetaceans and seals. The offshore boundary for LNCS has therefore been drawn approximately 2km out to sea to flag up the biodiversity interest of these areas.

The Local Nature Conservation Sites are currently being consulted on as part of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan Main Issues Report. It is being suggested that it would be appropriate to publish these sites within the Local Development Plan to ensure they are given appropriate weight in decision making.

**Judith Cox**

## Botanical Outing at Loch of Strathbeg



Our regular June botanical outing saw us in the Loch of Strathbeg area between Peterhead and Fraserburgh led by the ever-enthusiastic David Welch who acts as botanical recorder for the North Aberdeen vice county of which this is a part. Using the RSPB Visitor Centre as a base we visited several sites in the vicinity and clocked up, not only a few miles but also, at least for many of us, a few new plant species.

The morning saw us walking through the dune slacks near the lighthouse at Rattray Head. One of the most abundant plants here is White Forget-me-not (*Plagiobothrys scouleri*) which is thought to be an alien bought in from North America when the St Fergus oil terminal was constructed.

Visits to a couple of specific locations to check on known plant sites proved successful though in both cases there was cause for concern about their long-term future. Near the old church in Old Rattray the locally-rare unbellifer, Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*) was located but getting squeezed out by a new hedge. On the roadside near Rattray House we relocated a population of Rough Chervil (*Chaerophyllum temulum*), common in the south but very infrequent in the NE, but only a handful of plants could be counted.

To finish the day off we drove in convoy – or should that be formation – along the old runways of Crimond airfield to get to Fen Hide on the edge of the main loch. No less than seven Willow species were found here Grey (*Salix cinerea*), Crack (*S. fragilis*), Bay (*S. pentandra*), Tea-leaved (*S. phyllicifolia*), Purple (*S. purpurea*), Osier (*S. viminalis*) and what was thought may be *Salix capreola* - a cross between *S. caprea* and *S. aurita*. The presence of so many different species may be due to planting in the early years of the Reserve. At the old boathouse nearby we found Water Whorl-grass (*Catabrosa aquatica*) as well as what we assumed was a Woodpecker hole next to the path with the clear sound of chirping coming out - well it is an RSPB Reserve. Many thanks to David for an excellent day of botanising.

A full report of all the species found on the day may be found online on the SWT Aberdeen web pages

[www.swtaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk)

**Bob Daley**

### Raffle Prizes

The members centre runs a raffle at the winter meetings. Members kindly donate all the prizes, meaning that all the money raised goes to member centre funds. So if anyone would like to donate items for prizes for meetings this Autumn they will be greatly appreciated. Please hand them to any committee member if you have any suitable items.

### RSPB Friends of Strathbeg – Bird Food Sales

Money raised is now nearly £88,000 - a big thanks for all your support. Due to fluctuating prices, it has been impossible to include a price list with this newsletter. Latest prices and orders forms will be available to download from the SWT website: [www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/)

### Indoor talks and outings for 2014

Indoor meetings take place at Main Lecture Theatre, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Ave, AB24 2TZ at 7.30 pm.

**Thursday 20th March:** Pearls in peril - securing the future of the freshwater pearl mussel in Great Britain - Chris Daphne River Watcher

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April:** AGM then Wildlife Surveying for everybody - Rose Toney LBAP Co-ordinator

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May 10.00 - 15.00**

Pond surveying with Rose Toney  
The James Hutton Institute, Macaulay Drive,  
Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen  
Packed lunch and stout footwear  
Booking essential  
Further details and booking contact: Rodney Payne  
01569 763742

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October:** Conservancies in Africa - Jill Matthews

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November:** Weird, Wonderful and Colourful - Marine life of the North Sea - Sarah Gosden Buchan (Ranger)

**9-11<sup>th</sup> May**

May Festival - Aberdeen University  
SWT will have a stand  
An all-encompassing arts and science festival  
For more information go to:  
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfestival/>

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June 10:00am**

Botanical Outing with David Welch  
Haddo Area  
Meet in Haddo House main car park NJ867344 (note there is a car park change at Haddo ~£1-50)  
Packed lunch and stout footwear  
Booking essential  
Further details and booking contact: David Elston 01224 868153

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August 10.00 - 15.00**

Discover more about the world of badgers with Eric Jensen  
Out in the field looking for signs of badger activity  
Meet car park Bennachie Centre, Chapel of Garioch, nr Inverurie NJ698216  
Packed lunch and stout footwear, no dogs  
Booking essential, maximum 20  
Further details and booking contact: Maureen Borthwick 01224 733920

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July 10.00 - 15.00**

Walk with the Ranger in Buchan with Sarah Gosden  
*Location to be confirmed*  
Packed lunch and stout footwear  
Booking essential  
Further details and booking contact: Rodney Payne 01569 763742

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 10:30 – 15:30**

Joint Outing with Grampian Fungus Group in Monymusk Area with Toni Watt  
Meet Donview Visitor Centre car park NJ672190  
Packed lunch optional and stout footwear  
Booking essential  
Further details and booking contact: Maureen Borthwick 01224 733920

Local SWT website: [www.swtaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk)

National SWT website: <http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

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Photograph by Rose Toney.

