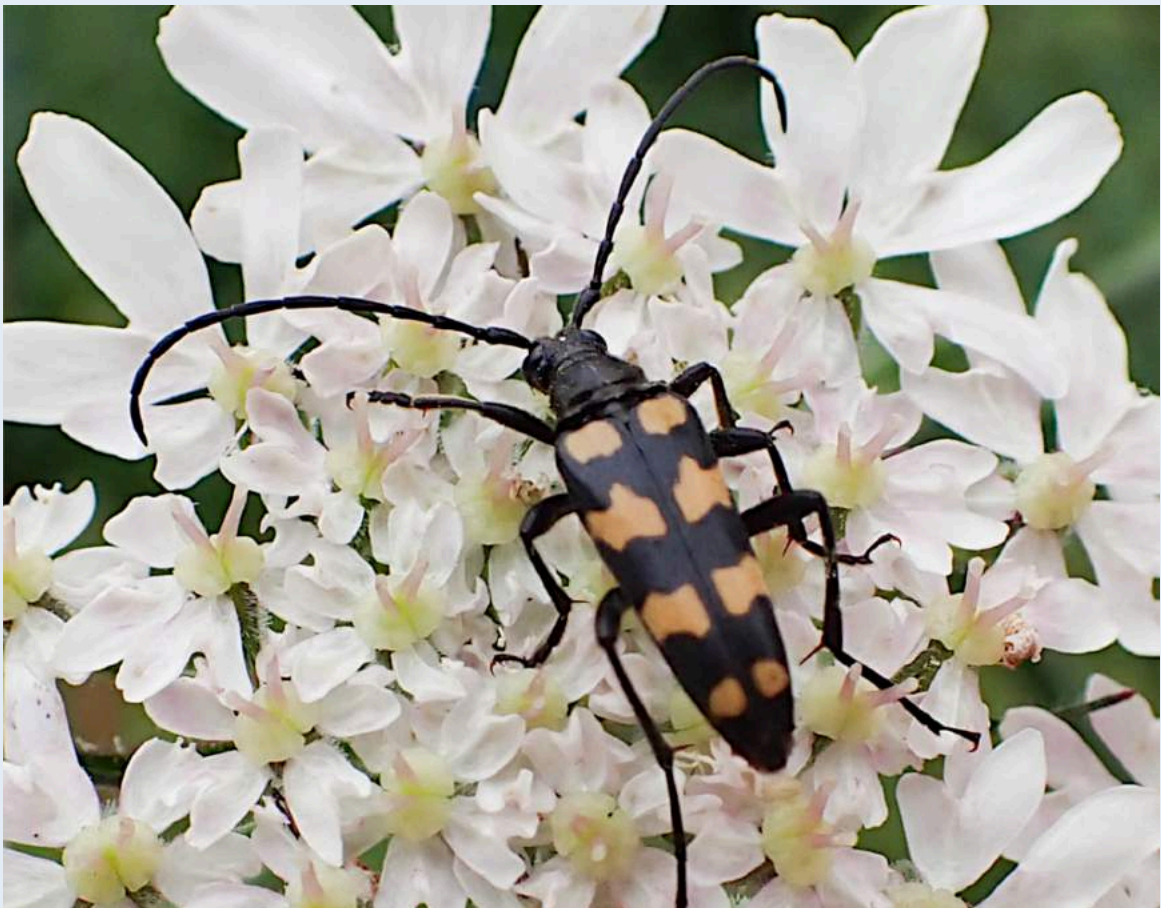




Edinburgh Natural History Society

2023 JOURNAL

A record of activities throughout the year





Edinburgh Natural History Society

Council October 2023-24

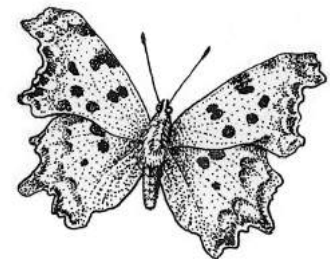
<i>President</i>	Vacancy
<i>Vice President</i>	Vacancy
<i>Secretary</i>	Joan McNaughton
<i>Treasurer</i>	David Adamson

Ordinary Council Members

Heather Kinnin, Dorothy Lyle, Ellie Mayhew, David Oates and Rob Wallace

Non-Council roles within the Society

<i>Excursion Committee</i>	David Adamson, Sarah Adamson, Wilma Harper, Jean Long and Lynn Youngs
<i>Indoor Meetings Organisers</i>	Gillian Steele
<i>Website & Social Media</i>	Sarah Adamson and Wilma Harper
<i>Links with other Groups</i>	Sarah Adamson and Wilma Harper
<i>Journal</i>	Dorothy Lyle and David Oates



The aim of the Journal is to give a snapshot of the Edinburgh Natural History Society in 2023.

RESOURCES

Enquiries regarding requests for loans of equipment such as microscopes should be made via the website.
A PDF copy of the Journal is available.

Thanks to members who made contributions and helped produce Journal 2023, especially to Jean Long for her meticulous proof-reading (*Nomina latina excepta*).

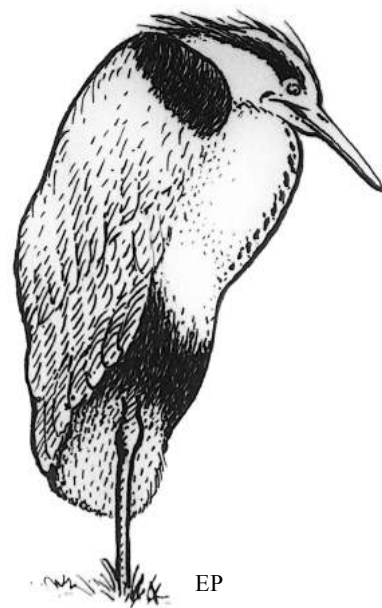
Contents

Editorial		4
Obituaries		5
<hr/>		
Nature Notes	A Mighty Foxglove	7
	Meetings with Moths. <i>Book Review</i>	7
	Mowing the Back Green	7
	Wintry visit to Portmoak Moss	8
	Recolonisation	9
	Speckled Wood in the Lothians	9
<hr/>		
Excursion Reports	January Gogarburn Estates	11
	February Ormiston Hall and Grounds	11
	Leadburn Community Woodland	12
	March Currie – Balerno circuit	13
	April Culross	14
	Torphin – Blinkbonny circuit	15
	Harlaw to Bavelaw	15
	Howietoun Fishery or Old Sauchiemill	16
	May Wilsontown	17
	Gifford	17
	Baron’s Haugh RSPB Nature Reserve	18
	Archerfield	19
	June Roslin Glen Country Park	21
	Cramond Island	22
	Summer Fayre at Tiphereth	23
	National Museum Collection Centre	24
	West Barns, Dunbar with BSBI	24
	July Corstorphine Hill with TWIC	26
	Leadburn Community Woodland with BDS	26
	Western Harbour Ponds	27
	Woodhall Dean	28
	August Oak Galls at Craigmillar Castle Park	29
	Millerhill	30
	Butterdean Wood	31
	North Berwick Law – Spiders	33
	TWIC Arniston and South Esk	33
	September Hillhouse Wood, by Bescraigs Country Park	34
	Musselburgh Lagoons	35
	Gifford Wood	36
	Woodmuir Plantation, by Breich	37
	More Galls at Craigmillar Castle Park	38
	October Heriot-Watt	38
	November Prestonpans to Musselburgh	39
	December Silverknowes and Christmas Lunch	40

Indoor Meetings	Scottish Plant Lore. <i>Dr Greg Kenicer</i>	41
	Cammo Conservation Projects. <i>Nick Benge</i>	41
	Members' Night	41
	Mangroves. <i>Professor Mark Huxam</i>	42
	AGM	42
	Cemetery Wildlife Watch. <i>Dr Per Smiseth</i>	42

Rainfall in Corstorphine		43
---------------------------------	--	----

Members' Observations	Observations in 2023	43
------------------------------	----------------------	----



PHOTOGRAPHS / ILLUSTRATIONS

Thanks to the following who kindly supplied photographs: Erica Bright (EB), Jane Dey (JD), Heather Kinnin (HK), Dorothy Lyle (DL), David Oates (DO), Joanie McNaughton (JMcN), Lynn Youngs (LY). All rights reserved. Photographs remain the property of the photographer and may not be reproduced without permission.

Cover photograph (DL): Beetle *Leptura quadrifasciata*
 Back cover photograph (LY): Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Illustrations: Eric Perry (EP), Jackie Muscott (JM), David Oates (DO).

Editorial

In May 2023 the Nats lost someone who for very many years played a central role in the life of our organisation. Dr Elizabeth Farquharson joined ENHS in 1959. Very soon she was leading outings and writing articles. It may well have been her inspiration that saw ENHS produce a Newsletter in 1965 - its first publication for 50 years. This Newsletter evolved into the Journal and Elizabeth remained on the Journal committee for 36 years until resigning at the age of 97 in 2012.

Elizabeth's article for that first Newsletter was "Badger Survey of the Edinburgh Area" and she went on to write many more articles on badgers during the 1970s and beyond. Her final badger article appeared 50 years later in the 2015 Journal entitled "Badgers and Tuberculosis".

How many of us will be writing journal articles at the age of 100? Mammals in general and badgers in particular were a great interest of hers and many of her outings reflected this. Members joining evening excursions to Corstorphine Hill were reminded to dress in dark clothing and those with white hair to cover it up lest they frighten off the badgers! Mammal skeletons were a fascination and Elizabeth examined many of the whale jawbone arches that used to be found around the country. Jean Long even recalls seeing a wild cat's head awaiting examination after decomposing in a pail in a corner of her home.

This home became an essential meeting place for council meetings after Elizabeth was elected to the council in 1971. It also became a repository for Nats equipment and a venue for the popular Christmas Wine & Cheese parties. For many, many years it was the very heart of operations!

Elizabeth had always been interested in fungi and in later years mycology became her passion. She spent many hours at her microscope pouring over tricky specimens and many more out in the field - happy to tutor Mary Clarkson as a beginner or to learn herself from her great friend and eminent expert Professor Roy Watling. She was a founder member of the Fungus Group of South East Scotland and for many years, with Mary Clarkson at the wheel, travelled the country to attend the biannual forays organised by the British Mycological Society.

Elizabeth led countless excursions, the last in August 2000 to Ravelston House Wood, and wrote many articles and excursion reports. The last in 2018 was suitably an article on fungi - "Red Roll-rim" (*Paxillus cuprinus*). Despite increasingly debilitating mobility issues Elizabeth continued to attend indoor events until 2019 when Covid intervened and where possible join excursions on her mobility scooter. Over the years Elizabeth undertook many roles. She first became President in 1973, was made Honorary President in 1984 and continued to attend council meetings until 2019.

Elizabeth represented ENHS at conferences and spoke on behalf of Natural History Societies at the Council for Nature held at Lancaster University in 1975. She had a way of bringing people together and in so doing broadened the sphere of the Nats and strengthened its very existence.

Members of ENHS past and present are indebted to the dedication, guidance and lifelong enthusiasm of a great naturalist, Dr Elizabeth Farquharson.

Dorothy Lyle



Obituaries

Michael Elliott Braithwaite

Michael Braithwaite was a first-class botanist who lived in the Scottish Borders near Hawick. Michael was Vice County Recorder for Berwickshire for the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) for many years. He was BSBI Treasurer for 11 years before being elected President, a position he held for 3 years. Michael wrote several books on the Flora of Berwickshire, and also on the wider Scottish Borders region.

Michael led many botany themed walks for the Edinburgh Natural History Society over many years. For members who were keen on the Flora, the excursions led by Michael, usually in the Borders, were always one of the highlights of the excursion programme. He would enthusiastically lead his walks, educating the Group about interesting species, their identification characters and habitats. Michael was always very encouraging to budding botanists. In respect of my own botanical journey, Michael thought that I should join the BSBI – “I think you could be useful, you could do some work!” he exclaimed to me on one outing. Shortly after this, I received a parcel containing a BSBI New Member package, and a compliments slip stating that membership fee had been paid courtesy of Mr Michael Braithwaite. I have remained a member ever since, and I still record plants for the BSBI in Cumbria.

Michael was the beloved husband of the late Paddy, who also used to come along with Michael to some of the ENHS outings. A Memorial Service for Michael was held at Denholm Church, on Friday 19th January 2024. Died 6th December 2023, Aged 81.

Roger Holme

I remember being on what I think was the last excursion that Michael led for the Nats on 27 July 2013. It was at Headshaw Haugh, east of the A68 after Soutra. This outing helped him contribute to the last stages of the BSBI re-survey of Berwickshire. A day out with the Nats meant there were more pairs of eyes than Michael’s alone. The day was memorable in more ways than one. Some species of plants appeared to have died out such as Common Cow-wheat (*Melanaplyrum pratense*), while others we found were new to the site, including Wood Crane’s-bill (*Geranium sylvaticum*). Michael’s outings could be quite an adventure. This one, in his own words, had a “formidable new fence to get over”, and “we crossed a field of rampaging bullocks and thigh-high thistles”. Nevertheless, as usual, we all learned from Michael’s extensive botanical knowledge.

Jean Long

Dr Elizabeth Farquharson

Elizabeth, who died aged 107 in May 2023, was the Society’s oldest member. She joined ENHS in 1959 and I believe that one of her early achievements was to restart the Journal in the 1960s. Until very recently Elizabeth was Honorary President, providing the front room of her house in Chamberlain Road for Council meetings. Her previous roles had included that of President. Elizabeth’s house had become the Society’s unofficial premises, being used to host Wine & Cheese parties, hold meetings and store equipment. I first remember meeting Elizabeth on a moss outing led by Joe Carlyle at Dalmeny Estate in 1985. In the 1990s I recall watching her dog, Akela, swimming into the Mill Dam Loch near Dunkeld to retrieve a rock. Elizabeth’s last outing was probably to Hermitage of Braid when she turned up on her electric mobility scooter.

At the time Elizabeth would have been about 100. Her main interests were mammals, particularly badgers, and fungi. The latter was a result of the help given to her by Dick Hunter at a Kindrogan course. When Elizabeth was no longer able to attend fungus forays Mary Clarkson and Jean Long would bring specimens collected on outings for Elizabeth to identify. She was also interested in the whales' jawbones which were used to form arches in such places as the Meadows in Edinburgh and on North Berwick Law. Elizabeth always had the Society's best interests at heart and could recall times when its finances were precarious. It is in large part due to her contribution and efforts that the Society exists today.

David Adamson

Andrew Gilchrist

We were sorry to hear of the death of Andrew Gilchrist on 8th March 2023. Andrew and his wife, Jean, who died in 2020, joined the Edinburgh Natural History Society in 1993 when they moved to Edinburgh on his retirement as a meteorologist. He soon immersed himself in the activities of the Society and became chairman of the Excursion Committee and edited the Journal in 1995/96.

Janet Watson, Frances Dunn, & Mary Clarkson

Sandra Stewart

We were also sorry to hear of the death of Sandra Stewart in October 2023. On joining the ENHS she soon became an enthusiastic member and was to be seen on most outdoor excursions and at indoor meetings. She served on the Council but will be specially remembered for being editor of the Journal from 1997 to 2008 and then continued to help on the Journal Committee until 2012. Sandra also compiled two lists of all the excursions (summer & winter) from 1987 to 2002. One list was in date order and the other alphabetically in place order. This was a very time-consuming exercise but has left us with two useful reference lists. Sandra did voluntary work at the Botanic and also enjoyed hillwalking and travelling, especially in France.

Janet Watson, Frances Dunn, & Mary Clarkson

A MIGHTY FOXGLOVE

Some years ago I got a plant of Spignel (*Meum athamanticum*) and a couple of Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) from Dorothy Stuart. The Spignel is still here despite being nearly overgrown by garden ‘thugs’ but the Foxgloves disappeared – probably unable to germinate. However, since I did some clearing a couple of years ago Foxgloves re-appeared. One had a particularly large rosette and produced a particularly large flower - over 2 metres high and with 9 large branches, one of which caught and saved the main inflorescence when it blew over in a storm.

Now Foxgloves are reputed to be biennial, and I certainly didn’t expect it to survive such an effort. However, it was still there in the spring and nothing daunted produced 6 more spikes – only a metre high but rather more manageable for a border. It will be interesting to see if any of the other Foxgloves that flowered this year will manage another season.

Jackie Muscott

MEETINGS WITH MOTHS (Book review)

Katty Baird. Harper Collins 2023

Katty, a long-time friend of the ENHS and well-known “moth-er”, takes us on a journey through her life of natural history. The journey is mostly autobiographical but particularly of note is her study of Alice Balfour and their shared interest in the moths of East Lothian. Katty is a proper zoologist and looks at the world with her senses and immense curiosity. I found her many stories interesting and enjoyable.

Reading about Maria Sibylla Merian, a seventeenth century naturalist, reminded me of the exhibition at the Queen's Gallery, Holyrood, where her works showed the relationship between caterpillars and adult species. Some of her theories have been disproved but more often we are relearning the lifecycles she had discovered. Katty brings time into her observations and talks about her nocturnal pursuits. Light has been used to attract moths for the last 150 years. In the early days enthusiasts sat up during the night to see what arrived at their light. Now folks set a trap with a light sensor and leave it until the morning. It is worth sitting for periods in the darkness or visiting at intervals during the night because you will be surprised by the comings and goings and those that remain. Katty has certainly done plenty of trapping and sitting and watching. Often referring to her children, Katty shows a soft touch encouraging an interest in natural history. From my own experience children learn a lot from their parents although you don't realise it at the time.

Do try this book - one of Katty's stories may resonate with your own experiences or tempt you to get closer to nature. It is a most enjoyable read and I recommend it to you.

Sarah Adamson

MOWING THE BACK GREEN

Recently our back green has been mown rather infrequently and with a higher cut. We had all the usual weeds despite regular mowing but it’s surprising what else has appeared. We already had Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) which I planted in a border in permanent shade. Perhaps it was too shady for it moved onto the lawn (also in permanent shade) where it makes a large patch of yellow in the spring. I also deliberately planted some Slender Speedwell (*Veronica filifolia*). However, I was surprised by the appearance of Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) followed by a blue patch of Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*) which passed un-noticed when the grass was well mown. Also surprising were the 2 Common

Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*). We had one last year which got trodden on, but it has managed to set seed this year. Other plants which have appeared include Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*) and Fox-and-Cubs (*Pilosella aurantiaca*). On the down side there is altogether too much Sorrel and Autumn Hawkbit (though the latter looks very pretty in the autumn) and some Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*). It will be interesting to see what appears next year.

Jackie Muscott

WINTRY VISIT TO PORTMOAK MOSS

A joint fungi foray had been planned for the 2nd December with the Edinburgh Nats, ELFE (Edinburgh & Lothians Fungi Enthusiasts) and TAFFG (Tayside & Fife Fungus Group). Cameron DieKonigen was to be foray guide. However, the Nats and TAFFG thought it wise not to travel because of the snowy weather forecast, and cancelled. Six hardy members of ELFE made it to the Portmoak car park without too much trouble - and it was well worth the effort.

We set a target for the day of 20 species, no-one really expecting (unless perhaps Cam!) to find so many, especially with about 2ins of snow lying on the ground. For me the best finds came under the 'small is beautiful' banner. Three species on dead Holly leaves were Holly Speckle (*Trochila ilicina*) found on the leaf's upper surface, Holly Flyspeck (*Microthyrium ciliatum*) on both upper and lower leaf surfaces and *Pyrenochaeta ilicis*. The first two are visible with the naked eye, but *M. ciliatum* is much smaller; *P. ilicis* looks like a tiny wee black prickly sea urchin and really requires a hand lens, although I could just make it out with the naked eye if held up against the light and once I got my eye in! Another one on the 'tiny' scale was *Melanospora lagenaria*, growing on Birch Polypore (*Piptoporus betulinus*). It looks like a miniscule pinhead on a long thin black wiry thread. For me a hand lens was definitely needed! Still in the 'small' bracket was Pine Needle Split (*Lophodermium pinastri*).

The woodland looked like it was straight out of a Narnia snow-scene. The trees were all laden with snow and the conifers in particular had gossamer threads hanging down, possibly spider webs, but all with snowflakes hanging on them, as if suspended in mid-air. Some looked like diamond necklaces, others like fairy wands - just gorgeous. Now back to why we were there! There wasn't much wandering off the path the way ELFE and for that matter Nats members are known to do, with so much snow lying, but we didn't need to - we found plenty. The delicately-tinged purple of Purplepore Bracket (*Trichaptum abietinum*) on Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) brought the cameras out, even though a tad dried out. Also on Scots Pine was *Coniophora puteana*, a white resupinate fungus that was turning olive brown from the spores.

I for one wasn't expecting to see many gilled fungi, buried in snow as they were, but we did find a few. We spotted a somewhat wizened Butter Cap (*Collybia butyracea*) with some debate about what it was, but in the end it was



Common Rustgill *Gymnopilus penetrans* (JMcN)

confirmed as this, with very pale crowded gills. Two brightly coloured specimens were spotted, showing up clearly against the white -Tawny Funnel (*Lepista flaccida*), also wizened and bright orange with age and Common Rustgill (*Gymnopilus penetrans*), frozen stiff like a Belisha beacon on a snow-capped conifer log. Another gilled mushroom was Common Bonnet (*Mycena galericulata*), in not bad condition given the hard frost and despite being munched by some maggoty larvae! Back to crusts, and Vlad demonstrated how this pale orange fungus, Bleeding Broadleaf Crust (*Stereum rugosum*), lived up to its name by turning red when scratched.

Whilst poking around under bark (I forget what we were looking at) a ground beetle emerged. I posted my photo on the Edinburgh Nats' FB page where it was identified as *Dromius quadrimaculatus*, 5-6mm with distinctive markings. Adults are present all year round, living under bark during the day and hunting mites and springtails at night. It appeared to be showing interest in some Caramac-coloured slime mould!

We found a very conveniently-placed pile of large logs beside the path where we could sit and have lunch. A few passers-by and dog-walkers stopped to chat, curious no doubt as to why half a dozen grown-ups were picnicking in such cold weather. The phrase that came to mind was "You don't have to be mad to foray for fungi, but it helps!". After lunch we set off again to look for the target species, Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*). This fungus is parasitic, mainly on Birch (*Betula*). The spores enter the tree through wounds in the bark and rot the wood from the centre. The fruiting bodies are produced under the bark and are rarely seen, the only visible part being the sterile conk. It can take 10-80 years for the fungus to kill the tree. Unfortunately, we were unable to reach the Chaga but on the return journey to the car park we saw Blueing Bracket (*Postia subcaesia*) growing fairly high up on Elder (*Sambucus*). The blue tinge was visible, even at that height.

Finishing in the car park we found the last three of the day - Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*), Alder Whitewash (*Hyphodontia sambuci*) and then at the very end Aisling spotted Pocket Plum (*Taphrina pruni*) on Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). Only on one tree were there elderly and blackened fruits distorted by the fungus. The Nats missed a great day out in a beautiful snowy landscape with far more fungal finds than we had expected!

Joanie McNaughton

RECOLONISATION

A secluded part of our back green lies under a large Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) - not ours. There used to be grass beneath it and I planted some Winter Aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*). Then someone attached a swing from an overhanging branch, used by young children at first, but with the lockdown the area became a meeting place for the local children. The Aconites were trampled to death, and a larger and larger area of lawn became worn and turned to dust. Given the heavy shade I could not believe grass would ever grow there again. However, the swing has been little-used recently and last winter I was surprised to see Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) appearing on the outer edges of the ring of earth. By spring the whole outer area was a mass of Chickweed. By summer it was replaced by Annual Meadow Grass (*Poa annua*). I expect to see weeds and perennial grasses appear next summer, and the whole area to become recolonised eventually.

Jackie Muscott

SPECKLED WOOD IN THE LOTHIAN

In the ENHS Journal of 2011, Tom Delaney records that *Pararge aegeria* was still seen as a 'newcomer' to Scotland. By 2019 it was being seen in numbers and from 2020 the butterfly became so common, even in Edinburgh gardens, observations all but ceased.

The butterfly's re-colonisation began around twenty years ago with records in 2005 from Traprain Law and Tynninghame. The first local mention of *aegeria* in the Journal is in 2006 in an article headed 'Climate Change'. "A Speckled Wood, seen in Edinburgh in October, is a first record for the Central Belt". The same article also mentions two 'firsts' for Scotland - the Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and Holly Blue (*Celustrina argiolus*). The Comma (*Polyommia c-album*) had arrived and breeding had been confirmed just a short time earlier.

There has been an extraordinary 71% increase in distribution and 84% increase in abundance across the UK in the last 40 years, it's suggested as a result of the warming climate. Records from 2017 show that it would be unlikely to find a Speckled Wood butterfly in Fife. Now, this species has been extending its range up the east coast of Scotland and is found throughout mainland Scotland and into the islands.



P. aegeria has undergone many changes. There was a spectacular population crash around 1900 and the recent range expansion is replacing much of a previous distribution. *P. aegeria* is on a cline from southern to northern Europe. Four subspecies are recognized with two in Scotland, *tircis* (our local version) and *oblita* the northern form, darker with whiter spots.

It's the subspecies *tircis* which has gone through a huge range expansion north and is now very common in and around Edinburgh. The northern form *oblita* (also having gone through a range expansion), moving south and east from its northern and western stronghold, will meet and overlap, or hybridise, with *tircis* soon. They already have adjunct populations east of Inverness. It was J. M. H. Harrison who first defined *oblita* in 1949 from Rhum (the same Harrison accused of botanical fraud by Raven). Several people, including Dennis and Thomson, have extended the distribution data and *oblita* now has widespread west coast, Moray coast and north coast populations. Records showed that an isolated west coast of Scotland population remained after the crash in the late nineteenth century, restricting the UK population to southwest England and this Scottish population.

P. aegeria is an unusual butterfly. It's the only UK butterfly which can overwinter as both larvae and pupae, but it is also a very variable animal. It varies in colouration, more orange to the south, as well as having paler (perhaps seasonal) forms within local ranges. Also, there are two variable forms, differing in their hind wing spots. The upper hind wing spots can be three or four and the lower hind wing spots vary - five or six. The sexes are similarly variable but the two hind wing spot forms also vary in their behaviour. Males with four upper hind wing spots defend territories (sunlit patches of woodland) whereas the males with three upper hind wing spots patrol in search of females. The relative frequencies of the two phenotypes change with behaviour, throughout the adult season. Like other satyrs Speckled Wood have a swollen edge of scent glands on the front of the forewings. The spring brood has larger cream spots than those of the summer brood (*tircis* and *oblita*) and the females are slightly larger and brighter than males. The twice yearly broods mean that adults are on the wing most of the spring and summer.

The Speckled Wood is currently ubiquitous in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The adults accompanied us on our ENHS walks everywhere this year, from the East Lothian shoreline on the *Rubus fruticosus*, across to Kirknewton and up to the Pentlands, as well as in our city centre green spaces. We are lucky to have such a buoyant population in Edinburgh just now that can be watched and recorded. This year the butterfly was using my south Edinburgh garden well into the first week in October. I wonder what changes are in store for it.

David Oates

Excursion Reports 2023

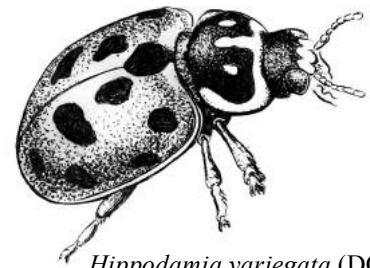


GOGARBURN ESTATES 21 January 2023
Leader: Sarah Adamson

Thankfully it was a cold but sunny day with crunchy iced paths which kept our boots clean. The plan was to walk a series of loops showing the varied habitats created over the last couple of hundred years. True to form there were soon groups of people lingering over this or that. Leading members were fortunate to see a large group of Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) retreating from the visitors.

Watching birds was a recurrent theme. At the East Lodge car park there were good views of Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) and Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*). Two pellets were examined, one with grain husks, snail shell and beetle fragments, and the other with small mammal bones. The final bird highlight was seen from the tram-stop, a Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) flying in a wide circle towards the south and then west. Trees showed their winter twigs and some like Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) already had male catkins and female flowers. Around the estates wood from natural fall and tree management is retained, often as wood chip paths which are replenished as the chips decay, as well as many wood piles. Three weeks earlier the Gogar Burn had flooded leaving silt and sand where paths had been. Fresh wood chips lay where the paths had been repaired. Fallen leaves are used for mulch and weed suppression, and in a small area as a trial to discourage Few-flowered Leek (*Allium paradoxum*).

Sue Jury, the newly appointed Midlothian Vice County Botanical Recorder, created a plant list and set off home with a sample of aromatic *Thuja plicata* with cones. Her list of 140 records were in the 3 monads of the site. There were overwintering ladybirds; Kidney-spot (*Chilocorus renipustulata*) and 11-spot (*Coccinella undecimpunctata*) were found again, along with 7-spot (*Coccinella septempunctata*) and 10-spot (*Adalia decempunctata*).



Hippodamia variegata (DO)

Adonis (*Hippodamia variegata*) with its distinctive pronotum was found in a pine shoot. In places winter gnats danced under the canopy of trees.

Before and after some visited Gogar Churchyard which lies close to the tram stop. Here there is a memorial to Lady Henrietta Liston, creator of Millburn Tower Gardens adjacent to the Gogarburn Estates. She was a 19th century botanist with links to RBGE. The loops were all completed and plans made for future visits. Many of those present were unaware of this area of land which lies so close to Edinburgh and can be reached by bus and tram.

Sarah Adamson



ORMISTON HALL and GROUNDS 11 February 2023
Leaders: Lynn Youngs & Jean Long

A large turnout of 22 members gathered at the entrance to Ormiston Hall and Grounds and we were blessed with lovely summer weather. We began our walk along the main driveway which was lined with magnificent Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) trees. Jean explained that this is not a native tree and it was not grown in Europe until after 1600. The name derives from the practice, in Turkey, of feeding the nuts to ailing horses. Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*) was also seen along this stretch. Further on we crossed an historic stone footbridge over the Belsis Burn where Stoneflies (*Plecoptera sp*) were spotted along with a Leopard Slug (*Limax maximus*). Beyond the

bridge Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and Butcher's-broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) were abundant and the leaves of Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatallina*) were also seen.

We had lunch in the grounds of West Byres Cemetery, Ormiston. En route we walked past an avenue of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) trees, some of which were showing their beautiful female pinkish red flowers. After lunch we took a detour to admire literally thousands of Winter Aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) that were bordering the Belsis Burn. It was a stunning spectacle much enjoyed by everyone. Our next stop was to marvel at the enormous Ormiston Yew (*Taxus baccata*) which is thought to be 750 years old. A very narrow entrance leads to a network of radiating serpent like branches that have become layered to the ground and it is a truly magnificent sight. Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*) was seen growing adjacent to the Ormiston Yew and a couple of Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) were spotted in the distance. To the north of the Ormiston Yew the ruins of Ormiston Hall (built for John Cockburn between 1745 and 1748) can be found.



Eranthis hyemalis (JM)

Our next stop was in a nearby area of woodland to look at a skeleton that had been found on the recce – it looked very strange and rather parrot like. The group were asked to say what they thought it was and three people answered correctly – Grey Squirrel! (*Sciurus carolinensis*). This area proved to be very productive for Fungi and species seen included Fragrant Funnel (*Clitocybe fragrans*), Beech Jelly-disc (*Neobulgaria pura*), Birch Polypore (*Fomitopsis betulina*), Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteus*), Smoky Bracket (*Bjerkandera adusta*), Wood Mulberry (*Beria moriformis*) and White Brain (*Exidia thuretiana*). A flock of Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*) was seen in a nearby field. Other birds spotted throughout the day included Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), Siskin (*Spinus spinus*), Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) and a large gathering of Western Jackdaws (*Coloeus monedula*).

During the day we had seen four species of Oak tree – Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*), Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*). Whilst walking back to the entrance an Oak Gall (*Andricus kollari*) was spotted on one of the Sessile Oak trees together with a tiny Red-legged Shieldbug (*Pentatoma rufipes*). Overall, a very enjoyable, varied outing and everyone seemed very pleased with their sightings. A return visit at a different time of year is highly recommended.

Lynn Youngs



LEADBURN COMMUNITY WOODLAND 25 February 2023

Leader: Joanie McNaughton



Diplolepis rosae (JMcn)

On a cold day with a strong wind, 12 Nats set out from the layby car park. We headed NW on the Leadburn Way then took the Grass Path. The group had already split into two, the mycologists bringing up the rear. Examining Robin's Pincushion aka Bedeguar Gall (*Diplolepis rosae*), all of which were vacated, it was suggested that other insects besides the Bedeguar Gall Wasp would have used the pincushions too. Looking at my photos afterwards I could see a dead insect head sticking out of one of the exit holes. Note to self – must examine these more closely in winter!

We saw many lichens and in particular fruiting *Cladonia* species on rotten stumps of felled trees. These stumps are the remnants of the then Forestry Commission working forest, which was the first parcel of land acquired by Friends of Leadburn Community Wood (FOLCW). One of my favourites, Devil's Matchstick (*Cladonia floerkeana*), was a bright splash of colour. This area now supports a healthy population of native trees such as Birch (*Betula*) and Alder (*Alnus*). Here Ellie and Charlie spotted a mass of shiny black eggs on one of the Birch trees; we also noted that no other trees hosted these eggs. After much discussion, we concluded that they were Birch Aphid (*Euceraphis betulae*). We then noticed a newly-hatched aphid, a tad early. It seemed unlikely it would survive the winter.

Still on the Grass Path but having now moved into open heath, with planted native Aspen (*Populus tremula*), we reached the spot where I had found a mushroom on the recce. Not knowing what it was I used the Seek (iNaturalist) app to see if that would help with ID. I find Seek not always 100% accurate and quite often gives American names, but in this case it worked and came up with "Lichen Agaric". I then looked that up on Google and straight away found *Lichenomphalia umbellifera* on the British Lichen Society website, looking exactly the same as the one I had found - not a fungus at all but a lichen in fact a lichenised basidiomycete aka basidiolichen! I was pretty excited so Heath Navel, its common name, became my target species for the outing itself. We found it, and in a couple of other locations too, all on rotten tree stumps. Vladimir confirmed its ID. It is more common in Scotland than in England; I wonder if it is perhaps overlooked, being tiny and looking like a parasol, as it was first officially described by Linnaeus (1753).

After lunch we continued in an anti-clockwise direction along the Dolphinton Way, another former railway line. Bryophytes at this time of year star on our outings and David noted 47 species of Moss and 8 Liverworts, none of which were particularly rare. The remnants of the brick wall round the old pump house (one of two ruined buildings which were used as a Royal Naval Armament Depot supplying the Royal Navy during WWII) and the final bit of railway track were different habitats and produced species not otherwise seen. The invasive *Lophocolea semiteres* was abundant, unfortunately. I learned on Google that this species "was first noted in Britain in 1955 on the Isles of Scilly." Since then it has been found at many sites, and in Scotland is predominant in the Central Belt. A list of all the Bryophytes seen is available on request from either David or me. The wall was also host to a carpet of Orange Rock Hair (*Trentepohlia aurea*), a species of filamentous terrestrial green alga. The orange colour is caused by carotenoid pigments which mask the green of the chlorophyll.

Since we were all feeling the cold walking into in the bitter wind, we beat a hasty retreat back to the cars, noticing a large flock of Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and Knot (*Calidris canutus*) murmuring in the distance over the East coast and a very brave Hawthorn Shieldbug (*Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*) sitting on a sheltered log. Sadly, Ben's mobile coffee/tea van had departed the car park - he must have packed in early.

Joanie McNaughton



CURRIE – BALERNO CIRCUIT 19 March 2023
Leader: David Adamson

On an overcast but dry morning eight of us, later joined by Erica, met at the Kirkgate in Currie to walk to Balerno via Lymphoy, returning by the Water of Leith Walkway. Spring had been delayed by the cold spell, which had ended three days earlier, and in the absence of sunshine many flowers of Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*) remained closed. However, the birds provided plenty of natural history interest. A flock of Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) was active in the far corner of a field, Nuthatches (*Sitta europaea*) were heard and seen and a Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) was on the

ground in a field near Lymphoy House. Later, Mandy saw a couple of Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) and most saw Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) and Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) on the Water of Leith.

On fence posts and railings near running water, we found stoneflies of at least two genera, *Leucra* and *Brachyptera*, and of family *Nemouridae*. We also found hibernating Orange Ladybirds (*Halyzia sedecimguttata*) on the railings by the Water of Leith. Before arriving at the track to the Malleny Garden car park we briefly diverted into woodland where the deep red colour of Scarlet Elf-cup (*Sarcoscypha* sp.) fungi contrasted with the green of the surrounding plants. There was Frog-spawn (*Rana temporaria*) in the ornamental pond outside Malleny House and nearby, a very pregnant Frog that posed for photographs.

After lunch we followed the Water of Leith walkway from its beginning at Graham Priestley's Commemorative Garden by Balerno High School and ending at the bridge near Currie Kirk.

David Adamson



CULROSS 1 April 2023

Leader: Wilma Harper

Culross is a useful starting point for an outing, with parking, loos and cafes. My original plan had been to do the walk round the Valleyfield lagoons but a quick run round suggested that there wouldn't be much to see and it can be very bleak if the weather turns. In doing the research for this article, I found a news release from Scottish Power (04/12/2023) noting that the restoration works had been completed and there are now record numbers of waders and Pink-footed Geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) wintering on the site - so maybe one for another year.

Rather than going east from Culross, a westward route would be explored. The Fife Coastal Path follows the railway embankment which has created an artificial shoreline with stranded brackish reed lagoons. Heading inland and uphill we were rewarded with views across the Forth. The pine trees of Waas plantation, part of Devilla Forest, would be our lunch stop. A path leads into the middle of the wood to the site of a plague grave marking the spot where three children were buried in 1645. Such a remote location would be selected to avoid disease spread but more often the graves were unmarked. It was a sheltered location for lunch. After, David Adamson found two mosses that he rarely sees - *Tetraphis pellucida* on rooting wood and *Aulocomnium androgynum* on a collapsed dyke. I've seen Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) in the wood but we weren't lucky that day, however there were Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) in the arable field close by.

A sign by one field told the story of how the farm was using a seed mix round the margins to support beneficial insects and reduce compaction on the headlands. It was too early in the season to see these plants but we had seen a similar approach on an outing in another part of Fife.

Also of note nearby was an avenue of alternate Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) and Monkey Puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*), part of the north drive planted around 1840, leading to Dunimarle Castle. Not all the trees in the original avenue survive but they are a conspicuous part of the landscape from many directions.

From the ruins of the West Kirk we headed back into Culross village and were rewarded with sightings of a pair of Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) on the Abbey Tower before adjourning to the Biscuit Café for tea and cake, or in David's case a Waldorf salad wrap!

Wilma Harper



TORPHIN – BLINKBONNY CIRCUIT 15 April 2023

Leader: David Adamson

Meeting outside Tiphereth near the Torphin bus terminus, the eleven who set out on this circular walk were joined by Dorothy at Blinkbonny Park. We began by following the path bordering Torphin Quarry and continued west to Easter Kinleith Farm, at which point we descended the wooded ravine of Poet's Glen. The Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) at Easter Kinleith were a welcome sight. While not making a summer they certainly confirmed that spring had arrived. Sue recorded the plants in each of the monads which we visited, accompanied by Marion whose vice-county is East Lothian. Large patches of the leaves of Blue Sow-thistle (*Cicerbita macrophylla*) were found in more than one monad, and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) was flowering on the slope above the Water of Leith walkway near Blinkbonny.

The picnic table at Blinkbonny Park was put to its proper use. We then completed a circuit of the park to see the extensive Badger (*Meles meles*) setts excavated in the coal ash, particularly on the steep west slope. Insects were a bit scarce today, perhaps awaiting a prolonged spell of warmer sunshine and the flowering of Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). However, we did see queens of at least three bumblebee species, as well as a stonefly, butterfly and some ladybirds.

The final part of the outing took us past Woodhall House and up a particularly steep and stony path back to Tiphereth. The view of distant snowy mountains gave us an excuse to rest during this last section.

David Adamson



HARLAW to BAVELAW 20 April 2023

Leader: Ian Moore

On a sunny morning tempered by a chilly east wind seven enthusiastic birdwatchers met outside the visitor centre at Harlaw where our leader outlined his plans for the day. Ian is an award-winning author, his most recent book being "The Lost Birds of Middlemarch, Britain and the World". This gives a clue to his passion, which is observing and recording birds in his local area.

Since 2006 Ian's area has been Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve, where he is Wildlife Liaison Officer for the local Friends group. However, today's walk took us outside Edinburgh to the fringe of the Pentland Hills, following the path from Harlaw Reservoir to Bavelaw via the north shore of Threipmuir Reservoir.

Our first stop was to observe the birds in a ploughed field, where Red-legged Partridges (*Alectoris rufa*), Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) and gulls were feeding. John pointed out about 5 Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*) in the next grassy field. While we saw few birds around Harlaw Reservoir, Threipmuir was more rewarding with views of Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*), Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*) and Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), albeit quite distant. However, it was only when we reached the birchwoods near Red Moss that we became fully aware of spring birdsong, particularly from the many Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus trochilus*). These woods seemed full of birds sheltering from the wind and enjoying the sunshine, including Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*) and Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*). Moving on, our view from Redford Bridge showed that water levels were high in Bavelaw Marsh, and the Dabchick (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) and Tufted Ducks were all near the water's edge. Apart from some probable Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) and a Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) the post-lunch visit to the Robin Aitken bird hide produced no additional species.

Our final venue was the Red Moss boardwalk. From here we watched a couple of pipits, identified as Tree Pipits (*Anthus trivialis*) by Carolyn and David who managed to hear snippets of song. We also saw a Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) flying with some Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Ian told us that a large mixed flock of these species, plus another winter thrush, had been present in a nearby field recently. Finally, Ian gave all of us a lift back to Harlaw in his 9-seater Landrover, having parked this at Red Moss and cycled to meet us at Harlaw in the morning.

Inevitably we noticed more than birds on our walk. My first Blaeberry Bumblebee (*Bombus monticola*) of 2023 was feeding on willow near Redhall Bridge with at least three other bumblebee species and likely *Andrena clarkella*. Sarah photographed a Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) on the Red Moss boardwalk and David identified a spider, previously found by John and Christina, as being *Larinioides cornutus*. There was also a Birch Shieldbug (*Elasmotethus interstinctus*) on the boardwalk, a few Dark-edged Bee-flies (*Bombylius major*) and our final find was an Eyed Ladybird (*Anatis ocellata*) in the Harlaw car park.

Thanks to Ian for an excellent outing in which we saw or heard 46 bird species, and Ian probably learned a bit about other natural history from the rest of us.

David Adamson



Dark-edged Bee-fly *Bombylius major* (DO)



HOWIETOUN FISHERY or OLD SAUCHIEMILL 29 April 2023

Leader: Sarah Adamson

Although the day was damp with a light east wind this did not deter us from exploring some new areas belonging to Michelle Pearson. Michelle seeks out like-minded people and is helping the area welcome back wildlife. There is a force driving Michelle, which is hard to identify, but it enables her to inspire and involve a wide range of people in her mission. Last summer a small group spent a day there recording nature.

As we parked our car by the old mill we were greeted by Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*) before making our way around just a small part of her project. Several visits have enabled us to see the estate in different seasons.

Towards the end of this visit David Adamson began showing some of the group a moss clad wall. With Wilma Harper I explored other areas. There were several cairns and close to one there was a young Walnut Tree (*Juglans regia*) with the inscription:

“This Walnut Tree is dedicated with gratitude to my father, Bobby Pearson born 11th April 1945. A 'hard nut to crack' and not one to suffer fools gladly. His overwhelming generosity has made saving this landscape from development, preserving its historical importance and enhancing habitat for wildlife a reality. March 2018”

Later with David Oates we lingered nearby beside a large hollow tree and wondered, in its winter state, about its identity. Eventually, Wilma opened a bud and we found empty Walnut shells - *Juglans regia* - a truly majestic specimen. Michelle told us afterwards that Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) roost in the tree. This place holds many stories to be investigated. Howietoun Fishery was established by Sir James Maitland in 1881. In the 1870s Sir James began scientific trials into trout breeding. A small mound topped with trees has a 'thinking place' built by Michelle in the pandemic. The mound, it turns out, is a heap of dumped shells, mainly scallop and oyster. Early in the life of the fishery some experiments were made regarding different food sources.

The use of shell fish seems expected but the use of horsemeat, processed in the mincing house, was more surprising.

The day ended back in the old mill where we enjoyed strawberry tarts kindly provided by Michelle.

Sarah Adamson



WILSONTOWN 6 May 2023

Leader: Ellie Mayhew

Following an interesting and enjoyable visit to Wilsonstown in September 2022, the Nats made a return visit on 6th May 2023, in the hope that a different season would yield a new set of species.

Wilsonstown is a brownfield site. It was an ironworks during the industrial revolution, and coal continued to be mined there until the 1950s, but it is now managed largely for wildlife with some areas of commercial forestry. We walked through an open meadow area, along a wooded burn, and then crossed the road into the old ironworks site where the habitat is open with grassy tussocks, mounds and a few small areas of scrub. Species of note included the first Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) of the year for many of us, singing from a tree, the Snail-eating Beetle (*Silpha atrata*), pine sawfly larvae, a Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) and Siskin (*Spinus spinus*). We also saw a Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter niger*) being mobbed by a Carrion Crow (*Corvus corvone*), and some common but enjoyable species such as Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) and Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*). Plant species I noted during the outing included Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Good Friday Grass (*Luzula campestris*).

Unfortunately, the rain didn't quite hold off for us and those of us who chose to forego waterproof trousers bitterly regretted it! The deluge prompted a swift end to our excursion, with the group frogmarching back to our start point – though, typically, the rain had stopped by the time we arrived in the car park. A few people stayed on after the majority of the group had left, and were rewarded with a close-up view of a Blue Shieldbug (*Zircona caerulea*), spotted by Dorothy Lyle. I must admit, I was slightly envious!

Many thanks to all who joined and braved the downpour. It was a brilliant day out.

Ellie Mayhew



GIFFORD 13 May 2023

Leader: Dorothy Lyle

On a beautiful sunny morning seven of us set off to explore the community woodland and the adjacent pond area in Gifford. This has proved a happy hunting ground in the past and it certainly lived up to its reputation that day.

We started off by opening a couple of moth traps I had set in my brother's garden. Alas there was nothing to be seen. Trapping in many places had been badly affected by the cold spring. After that disappointing start we set off for the woods and before we had gone very far our fortunes changed as Ashleigh Whiffin spied an impressive *Oiceoptoma thoracicum*, the first of many beetles to be found.



Rhagium bifasciatum (DO)

David was on a mission looking for hoverflies and bees and there were plenty of those to be seen. Donald had his net at the ready for flies. Joanie was keeping her ears tuned into the birds who were singing away lustily and she, Sarah and Jean were keeping an eye on just about everything. We meandered through the woods which were looking beautiful clothed in their fresh green leaves and then lunched at the nearby Broadwoodside Pond. Butterflies, moths, beetles and bugs all abound in that area so there was plenty to keep us all busy as there was one shout of discovery after another.

Fawn Wood still had to be visited but we only managed a corner of it, progress being slow but very fruitful. In the warm sunshine it was a pleasure to be able to wander at snail's pace and eventually we arrived back at my brother's garden for a cup of tea to end the day.

Dorothy Lyle

List of some of the species seen:

Hoverflies: *Cheilosia albitarsis s.l.*, *Cheilosia variabilis*, *Dasysyrphus venustus s.l.*, *Episyrphus balteatus*, *Eristalis pertinax*, *Melangyna cincta*, *Platycheirus albimanus*, *Portevinia maculate*, *Rhingia campestris*, *Syrphus sp.*, *Xylota segnis*

Bees: *Andrena haemorrhoa*, *Andrena scotica*, *Bombus hortorum*, *Bombus hypnorum*, *Bombus lapidarius*, *Bombus pascuorum*, *Bombus pratorum*, *Bombus terrestris*, *Bombus vestalis*, *Nomada sp.*, *Osmia bicornis*

Wasps: *Dolichovespula saxonica*, *Vespula vulgaris*

Other flies: *Beris sp.*, *Bibio marci*, *Cimbex femoratus*, *Empis tessellate*, *Gymnochaeta viridis*, *Leuctra hippopus*, *Tachina ursina*

Beetles: *Cantharis pellucida*, *Deporaus betulae*, *Oiceoptoma thoracicum*, *Rhagium bifasciatum*

Bugs: *Piezodorus lituratus*, *Tachycixius pilosus*, *Zirconia caerulea*

Micromoths: *Adela reamurella*, *Micropterix calthella*.



BARON'S HAUGH RSPB NATURE RESERVE 20 May 2023

Leader: Joanie McNaughton

The last time I led a Nats' outing to Baron's Haugh was in August 2018 and I had hoped to lead there again in a different season. We were due to revisit this RSPB reserve in May 2020, however Covid struck and everything was cancelled. This time the outing took place on a lovely May day, birds singing, blossom out and beasties mating.

The reserve lies within the Dalzell Estate, comprising woodlands, grasslands, open water, haugh and riverbank. Four of us met in the car park and set off down the wooded path towards the Marsh hide. We stopped to admire Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) blossom and looked at a few seemingly dead leaves. This is caused by the fungus Hawthorn Leaf Blight (*Monilinia johnsonii*). The brown leaves mimic the scent of the Hawthorn flowers and this attracts pollinators that in turn carry the conidia to disperse the fungus. I put one of these leaves into a pot to examine at home. I forgot all about it until 4 months later, opened it and the smell of Hawthorn hit me. The leaf was covered in white powdery conidia.

Along the hide path we looked at a Phantom Crane fly (*Ptychoptera contaminata*) with another, *Ptychoptera albimana*, dead in the ditch water, Water Measurer (*Hydrometra stagnorum*), mating Stoneflies (*Plecoptera*), a gravid female Green Dock Beetle (*Gastrophysa viridula*) egg-laying, and a fresh male Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*). We noted two non-native plants (from America), Piggyback Plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*) and Parrot's-feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*). We didn't tarry in the hide, but a Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) washing prey caught our eye and it was nice to see Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) hawking over the haugh. Walking along the Lime Walk Rob spotted a Water Ladybird (*Anisosticta novemdecimpunctata*) with its distinctive elongated shape and 6 spots on the pronotum. Usually found at the water's edge, we were surprised

to see it sitting on a Lime (*Tilia*) leaf, and we then saw another one close by. Rob was also sweeping vegetation along the path and caught two longhorn beetles, Lime Beetle (*Stenostola dubia*) and the tiny, more common *Gramoptera ruficornis* swept from Hawthorn.

There was so much to see, too much to write about, so I have decided from now on to note the things that particularly caught our attention. Springtime had definitely arrived, and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) serenaded us all day. We saw a pair of mating *Cantharis decipiens*; is it common for the male to mate upside down while she is right way up?! There were many Orange-tip butterflies (*Anthocharis cardamines*) and I found several eggs, one with a newly emerged larva beside the empty egg and a fresh Green-veined White (*Pieris napi*) nectaring on Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*). There were clumps of Green Dock Beetle (*Gastrophysa viridula*) eggs and beside one such clump Jean found a host of dead Caddisflies (*Trichoptera*) stuck to the under-surface of Dock (*Rumex*) leaves. Rob found at least five species of Weevil across the reserve: the bi-coloured *Phyllobius oblongu* on Lime (*Tilia sp*), Common Leaf Weevil (*Phyllobius pyri*), Clay-coloured Weevil (*Otiorhynchus singularis*), Chequered Weevil (*Liophloeus tessulatus*) on Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) and another new one for me was a mating pair of Figwort Weevil (*Cionus scrophulariae*). An Orb Weaver Spider (*Larinioides sp*) impaled on a Gorse (*Ulex sp*) spine was oozing a clear orange liquid, as if it was bleeding. Jean found Pocket Plum (*Taphrina pruni*) on Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), a fungal plant pathogen that forms a gall on the fruit.

I haven't mentioned much about the Botany - there was so much to see that I couldn't take all the plants on board as well. However, we did see lots of Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and Large Bittercress (*Cardamine amara*). Finally, the icing on the cake, which I had spotted on the recce, was the beautiful Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*).



Ornithogalum umbellatum (JMcN)

The River Clyde forms one of the Reserve's natural boundaries and over the years there has been much damage through flooding and erosion. The section towards the east side of the reserve was inaccessible, the path having been completely washed away so we were unable to reach the Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) nest viewing point. We did however see a small section of the Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) nest colony, although it looked as if it too was about to suffer erosion.

There were, however, a few birds zipping back and forward over the haugh, but none near the nest holes. We cut across to the Chestnut Walk and up the hill to the car park. The outing had taken us a good bit longer than I expected, my last photo being timed 17.15, well past the usual coffee and cake time on a Nats' excursion!

Joanie McNaughton



ARCHERFIELD 27 May 2023
Leader: Marion Moir

Eight of us met in the Walled Garden car park on a lovely sunny day with a brisk wind. This was a combined walk between the Lothian Botany Group and the Edinburgh Natural History Society (ENHS) and the intention was to teach identification of wild flowers. The Edinburgh Geology Group was also meeting there and several ENHS members were with them which led to an interesting confusion. We started in the car park with "weeds" along the edge – *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Thale Cress), *Cirsium vulgare* (Spear Thistle) and *Claytonia perfoliata* (Spring Beauty) –

this *Claytonia* grows all along the coast of East Lothian, whilst the pink one, *Claytonia sibirica*, is more inland in woods. There was also *Petasites pyrenaicus* (Winter Heliotrope) under the hedge. A Common Blue Butterfly (*Polyommatus icarus*) was seen in this warm spot.

The walk took us past Home Farm, which was the home of the late Duke of Hamilton, and we studied the *Juglans regia* (Walnut Tree) in the garden grounds. It was pointed out that if you cut a twig horizontally, the exposed pith is segmented and this is diagnostic for common walnut. There was also an *Aesculus carnea* (Red Horse Chestnut) overhanging the path, often planted in estate grounds.

We moved on to look at woodland plants – *Bromopsis ramosa* (Hairy Brome), *Geum urbanum* (Herb Bennet), *Aegopodium podagraria* (Ground Elder), *Rumex sanguineus* (Wood Dock) and *Symphytum tuberosum* (Tuberous Comfrey). We discussed the fruit bushes often planted in estate woods for the benefit of birds such as *Ribes uva-crispa* (Gooseberry), *Ribes nigrum* (Blackcurrant), *Ribes rubrum* (Red Currant), *Ribes sanguineum* (Flowering Currant, garden escape) and how different the leaves smell for easy identification. There was also *Sambucus racemosa* (Red-berried Elder) and *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder Rose). The walk led us down the wooded west side of Archerfield, past the golf course to the sand dunes. We saw Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) which are welcome to roam on the estate, Speckled Wood Butterflies (*Pararge aegeria*) and lots of Orange Tip Butterflies (*Anthocharis cardamines*) - the male with the orange wing-tip and the female without.

The interesting plants started opposite the golf course where the ground is more sandy and there is a boundary to Muirfield Golf Course and the Millenium Wood. We found *Astragalus danicus* (Purple Milk-vetch), *Lotus corniculatus* (Bird's Foot Trefoil), various sedges - *Carex hirta* (Hairy Sedge) and *Carex flacca* (Glaucous Sedge) - and *Hippophae rhamnoides* (Sea Buckthorn). This area was sheltered from the sea winds and we saw various Wall butterflies (*Lasiommata megera*). *Solanum dulcamara* (Bittersweet) grew in the scrub and where work on the golf course had made the track more exposed of vegetation, we found *Amsinckia micrantha* (Common Fiddleneck), *Echium vulgare* (Viper's Bugloss) and *Carduus crispus* (Wetted Thistle). They have been planting *Ammophila arenaria* (Marram) to stabilize the sandy banks.

Lunch was taken under the shadow of the trees. We heard Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) and watched House Martins (*Delichon urbicum*). Then, to our surprise, a performance of the Duke of Hamilton's aeroplane doing loop the loop kept us entertained. We learnt how *Anthriscus caucalis* (Bur Chervil) has a hollow stem and *Chaerophyllum temulum* (Rough Chervil) has a solid stem which eases identification. On the way towards the sea through the Marram, we came across *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood Sage) and *Vicia sativa* (Common Vetch), and then a bare area covered with *Pilosella officinarum* (Mouse-ear Hawkweed) and *Astragalus danicus* (Purple Milk-vetch), also *Valerianella locusta* (Common Cornsalad), *Thymus politrichus* (Thyme), *Aira praecox* (Early Hair-grass), *Festuca ovina* (Sheep's Fescue), *Myosotis ramossissima* (Early Forget-me-not), *Veronica officinalis* (Heath Speedwell), *Sedum acre* (Biting Stonecrop), *Trifolium dubium* (Lesser Trefoil), *Cerastium diffusum* (Sea Mouse-ear), *Arenaria serpyllifolia* (Thyme-leaved Sandwort), *Cruciata laevipes* (Crosswort) and *Bromus hordeaceus* (Soft Brome). There were Swifts (*Apus apus*) flying overhead as we headed towards the dunes where we looked for *Mibora minima* (Early Sand-grass) the smallest grass in the UK. It was fairly past its best, better seen at the beginning of March, but still intriguing, and mixed with *Saxifraga tridactylites* (Rue-leaved Saxifrage) in flower.

Beside the beach we found *Ligusticum scoticum* (Scots Lovage), *Thalictrum minus* (Lesser Meadow-rue) and the grasses *Trisetum flavescens* (Yellow Oat-grass) and *Avenula pubescens* (Downy Oat-grass). On the beach was a large patch of *Honckenya peploides* (Sea Sandwort).

Past the memorial to the Duke of Hamilton we saw a Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*) singing in typical style on top of a bush. The cliffs near the caves showed quantities of *Senecio squalidus* (Oxford Ragwort), before we left the beach by the wooden ramp to climb up through the woods, passing *Conium maculatum* (Hemlock) and grasses *Schedonorus gigantea* (Giant Fescue) and *Brachypodium sylvaticum* (False Brome).

Our return took us back up the Archerfield drive to the Walled Garden. Surprisingly, down the path came a Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) minding its own business but it soon ran away.

Marion Moir

Empis tessellata (DO)

Rob Wallace's list of insects:

Soldier beetles: *Rhagonycha lignosa*, *Cantharis nigricans*,
Cantharis decipiens, *Cantharis livida*, *Cantharis rustica*,
Cantharis cryptica/pallida.

Click Beetles: *Denticollis linearis*, *Athous haemorrhoidalis*,
Dalopius marginatus.

Weevils: *Nedyus quadrimaculatus*.

True Bugs: *Stenodema laevigata*.

Flies: *Empis tessellata* - a dance fly.



ROSLIN GLEN COUNTRY PARK 1 June 2023

Leader: Alan Krumholds, Ranger for Midlothian Council. ENHS Leader: Lynn Youngs

Ten members gathered in the Roslin Glen Country Park main car park to meet up with Alan Krumholds, Ranger for Midlothian Council and Site Manager for the Council owned area of Roslin Glen. Alan began by explaining that Roslin Glen is managed by three parties – the Roslin Castle Trust, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Midlothian Council. The Council owns and manages the amenity grassland adjacent to the car park area and the disused railway line that leads to the Gunpowder Mill complex. Alan then went on to describe the work undertaken in 2010/11 to sow wildflower seed in designated areas throughout the amenity grassland. Wildflower species planted included Ladies Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*), Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*), Dame's Violet (*Hesperis matronalis*), Meadow Cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*), Meadow Vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) and Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). Hedge planting in this area was also undertaken with Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) being the main species planted. These areas have now reverted to a wild and rich habitat which has increased the biodiversity value of the site attracting birds, bees, insects, bugs, spiders and butterflies. The planted areas also greatly enhance the amenity value of the landscape and in the afternoon sunshine everyone enjoyed the display of the numerous different wildflowers and the beautiful colours. Local community groups and schools were involved in completing the planting work and ongoing maintenance is overseen by Alan again with the help of local volunteers.

We walked further up the River North Esk and Alan pointed out the invasive Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) on the banks of the river. This non-native plant is impossible to eradicate but Alan has been trained in injecting the stems with chemicals to control its spread. The chemicals used are compatible with protecting the river system. Alan went on to explain that the part of Roslin Glen managed by Midlothian Council was a very industrialised area. A carpet factory adjacent to the car park was closed in 1968 and we were shown the location of cottages that housed factory workers. For over 100 years the factory produced world famous tapestry carpets.

The second part of the walk saw us crossing the B7003 to walk along the disused railway line to the Gunpowder Mills complex. This was in business from 1850 to 1954 and it was the biggest in Scotland. The mills at Roslin produced high grade gunpowder used in the Napoleonic, Crimean and Boer Wars, among others. The mill hugely influenced the type of tree grown in the surrounding area: - Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) was grown for charcoal and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) was planted because it provided a high quality of gunpowder.

Midlothian Council has managed the woodland area over the years by replacing the non-native Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree with native species of Oak (*Quercus robur* and *Quercus petraea*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Birch (*Betula pubescens* and *Betula pendula*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

During the day there were a number of interesting sightings – lovely displays of Pyrenean Valerian (*Valeriana pyrenaica*), Golden-scaled Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*), Hard Shield (*Polystichum aculeatum*) and Soft Shield (*Polystichum setiferum*) Ferns, a 2-Spot Ladybird (*Adalia bipunctata*), Nettle Rust Fungus (*Puccinata urticata*) and a Red-breasted Carrion Beetle (*Oiceoptoma thoracicum*) but the highlight for most was a Sycamore gall. This gall showed as bright pink patches on the underside of leaves and it was very felt-like to touch. Simon Kennedy advised that the gall was most probably caused by the acerine mite *Aceria pseudoplatani* and thanks go to Simon for later confirming this identification.

Over the course of the afternoon, we learnt so much from Alan about his management of Roslin Glen and how the industrial heritage has influenced the plants that are found there. We concluded the day by thanking him very much for leading such an interesting and informative walk.

Lynn Youngs



CRAMOND ISLAND 10 June 2023

Leader: Sue Jury

16 of us met at the car park in Cramond. We were to make a crossing to the tidal Cramond Island. While waiting for all to arrive we started doing a little plant recording in the car park, where there is an abundance of Broad-leaved Ragwort (*Senecio sarracenicus*). Sadly, it was not in flower yet. There are only 2 sites for this species recorded in Midlothian - the other is on the North River Esk. Another interesting species we found was *Oleria macrodonta* (New Zealand Holly) - we have only 2 other records. This species is planted in poor soils and coastal areas. I think I remember reading that the deer don't like it. It is abundant on the Isle of Harris.

We proceeded on to the island looking for *Zostera* which has been planted for the geese. It is a grass-like plant which, unfortunately, we didn't find. Cramond Island is one of the best places to see some coastal plants in Edinburgh. Though in Midlothian there is a lot of coastline, most of it is built over, consequently coastal plants have been lost as there is little beach habitat. There has been some attempt to restore some species in fenced off areas on the Cramond foreshore.

Once on the island we found a lovely area on the west side and spent some time looking at it. There was *Atriplex littoralis* (Grass leaved Orache), a new species for the island and *Cakile maritima* (Sea Rocket) - a nice update. We headed then to the centre of the island. Plants on the rocky areas were very dried out due to the recent dry spell of weather. In the wooded area we found 2 Juniper bushes (*Juniperus communis*). It had been recorded on the island for the first time this year. For lunch we headed to a sheltered area on the north west of the island with sun and shade for all to enjoy. Here we saw more coastal species including *Koeleria macrantha* (Crested Hair Grass) -

another new plant. It was found together with large clumps of *Ononis repens* (Restharrow) and *Plantago coronopus* (Buckshorn Plantain).

After lunch we continued around the beach, where to our great surprise we found *Hyoscyamus niger* (Henbane) in flower on the edge of the shore. A single plant stood all alone. Henbane has not been recorded on the Island since 1997. I have been told it is abundant at a certain site on the Isle of May. An alarm had been set on my Phone so we did all get off the island safely and in time before the incoming tide cut us off from the mainland! Thank you all for coming and making a great day.

Sue Jury

David Adamson's list of other species seen:

Butterflies & Moths: Yellow Shell (*Camptogramma bilineata*), Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

Bees: *Micrandrena* sp., *Bombus pratorum*, *Andrena scotica*,
Nomada sp., *Bombus lapidaries*, *Bombus terrestris* or *lucorum* agg

Flies: *Urophora stylata*, *Chrysotoxum bicinctum*,
Cheilosia illustrata, *Eupeodes* sp.

Bugs: *Tingis cardui*

Beetles: *Isomira murina*

Grasshopper: *Chorthippus bruneus*

Wasps: *Chrysis ignita* complex, *Crabo* sp., *Ancistrocerus scoticus*

Sea slater: *Lignea oceanica*

Spider: *Salticus scenicus*

Chrysotoxum bicinctum (DO)



SUMMER FAYRE at TIPHEREETH 17 June 2023

We were invited to attend this sunny event and meet the community. At Tiphereth, a Camphill Trust Community lives and works in and around Torphin Quarry. Our little group was Sue Jury, Jean Long, Vladimir Krivtsov, David Adamson and myself. We chatted with residents and their families, staff, local interested people and fellow group representatives. Some of the staff live with their families whose children are an active and enthusiastic part of the community.

Exploring the nooks and crannies for plants, we captured a couple of jumping insects of interest to the community - a grasshopper nymph and a click beetle. The resident Peregrines (*Falco peregrinus*) and their young provided an aerial display, including a couple of new fliers squabbling over some food. Sue was particularly pleased to see Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) found by David and Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) on the spoil heap and in the quarry.

The community garden was home to Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia micrantha*) and Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*). The community members spend much time out-of-doors for their work and leisure. The residents notice what is about them and the staff feel that they would like to know more about their patch. We offered to share our time with the community and increase the level of recording in the area. The quarry has recent bryophyte records and we are gradually checking old plant records and finding new plants. Invertebrates are rarely recorded here. Larger animals are present and noisy, especially the Peregrines (*Falco peregrinus*) and Ravens (*Corvus corax*).

Thank you to those who came along and for the community hospitality. I look forward to many return trips to Torphin.

Sarah Adamson



NATIONAL MUSEUM COLLECTION CENTRE 21 June 2023

Leaders: Sarah Adamson & Ashleigh Whiffin

The Nats had been invited to visit the National Museums Collection Centre in Granton by the Curator of Entomology Ashleigh Whiffin. The date was set to coincide with Insect Week and the object was to learn more about the site and to help add to its species list. Consequently 10 Nats met up at the entrance on a lovely June morning and were met by Ashleigh and by me (wearing my Nats hat and my NMS volunteer hat!).

The required security procedures completed, Ashleigh gave everyone a quick introduction to the site. This included an overview of the work that has been done over the past couple of years to improve the biodiversity of the area. With the help of Anthony McCluskey of Butterfly Conservation, a plan to manage the grassed and wild areas of the site had been developed. Many areas had been left uncut during the growing season, with just margins and paths maintained, leading to a huge increase in the diversity of plant and insect life.



Geometra papilionaria (DL)

Today the Nats were here to see what had been done and to see what they could find. Before we set off round the grounds, we briefly had a look at some of the moths which had been trapped the previous night. Alongside a Malaise trap, Light trapping is one of the methods regularly used to record what is in the area. That morning there were 25 different moth species from 2 traps and these included some impressive specimens notably a Poplar Hawkmoth (*Laothoe populi*), a Ghost Moth (*Hepialis humuli*) and a Large Emerald (*Geometra papilionaria*).

Then it was time to get down to business outside with a guided tour which slowly wound its way round the site. Everyone was keeping an eye out for their own specialities and before long David was off in search of hoverflies and Sue, Marion and Heather were deep into botanising, furiously noting down all their sightings. Over the morning the plant species list rose from 93 to 163 and there was an unexpected discovery of Yellow Fox and Cubs (*Pilosella caespitosa*), a nationally rare Rare Alien species, which had not been seen in Midlothian this century.

Bugs and beetles, ferns and fescues were all to be found and everyone had an enjoyable morning in the sunshine finding out more about the site and adding to its growing species list. Thanks for a great visit go to Ashleigh, who will I hope, invite the Nats back another day.

Dorothy Lyle



WEST BARNS, DUNBAR with BSBI 24 June 2023

Leaders: Marion Moir (vice-county recorder VC82), Caspian Richards (BSBI member, Dunbar) & Sue Jury (vice-county recorder VC83)

We had perfect weather for our outing and about 30 people arrived and were divided into groups with 3 leaders. The route was a circuit through the saltmarsh, along the dunes and over to the plantation for lunch, followed by a look at the marshy area in the woods for a different habitat. Caspian had printed a list of plants, so everyone saw the same plants, and we had placed stick markers on the dunes.

The saltmarsh is a large area in the hinterland of the dunes where there is a great variety of salt-loving plants. We looked at *Juncus gerardii* (Saltmarsh rush) growing in lines with their black

seeds and *Blysmus rufus* (Saltmarsh Flat-sedge), shorter, and with flat black seeds. Two more members of the Sedge family (*Cyperaceae*) here were – *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (Grey Club-rush) with grey round stems growing on the saltmarsh flats and *Bolboschoenus maritimus* (Sea Club-rush) with triangular stems in a brackish marsh under a bridge. The unusual *Trifolium fragiferum* (Strawberry Clover) grows on trodden ground with *Lysimachia maritima* (Sea Milkwort) and nearby *Carex otrubae* (False Fox-sedge). Our groups sprawled down looking closely at the two saltmarsh sedges: *Carex distans* (Distant Sedge) with spaced female spikelets and *Carex extensa* (Long-bracted Sedge) with a long bract and female spikelets clustered at the top. On the boardwalk across the saltmarsh, we looked at *Suaeda maritima* (Annual Sea-blite), *Salicornia* (Glasswort or Samphire), *Spergularia media* (Greater Sea-spurrey) with petals longer than sepals, comparing it to *S. marina* with petals shorter than sepals, and *Artemisia maritima* (Sea Wormwood). *Puccinellia maritima* (Common Saltmarsh Grass) with its one-sided toothbrush look was compared to *P. distans* found on road verges, upright and like a Christmas tree.

The dunes are covered with *Ammophila arenaria* (Marram) and *Leymus arenarius* (Lyme Grass) which protect a surprising number of plants, some possibly planted such as *Eryngium maritimum* (Sea Holly) and some from bird-dropped seed *Clematis tangutica* (Orange-peel Clematis) which is thriving. *Elymus junceiformis* (Sand Couch) grows on the seaward side of the dunes and the characteristics of this in comparison to *Elymus athericus* (Sea Couch) were discussed. The Sand Couch spikelet breaks up easily, has bluish leaves and grows on the sand dunes. The Sea Couch has stiff double upright leaves rolled inwards and overlapping spikelets with awns/hairs on a muddy sand habitat - some has been found near Edinburgh at Seafield, first in Scotland.

The Marram protects small plants such as *Erigeron acris* (Blue Fleabane), *Trifolium arvense* (Hare's-foot Clover), *Arabis hirsuta* (Hairy Rock-cress) flowering earlier, *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) and tall *Poa angustifolia* (Narrow-leaved Meadow-grass), frequent on the dunes. In one place we found *Calystegia soldanella* (Sea Bindweed) with its succulent kidney-shaped leaves and flowers of pink/white stripes. *Festuca arenaria* (Rush-leaved Fescue) is one of the important grasses of the dunes on the East Lothian coast. Its spikelet is hairy and it has inrolled leaves, growing right in the midst of the Marram and often on a hillock. The grass *Parapholis strigosa* (Hard Grass) has previously been found on the saltmarsh but was not found this time as we crossed the saltmarsh towards the Plantation.

The lunch area under the pine trees revealed a different habitat of acid marsh on top of the calcareous sand with *Thalictrum minus* (Lesser Meadow-rue), *Carex arenaria* (Sand Sedge), *Echium vulgare* (Viper's Bugloss), *Neottia ovata* (Common Twayblade), *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* (Marsh Pennywort), various sedges, *Juncus inflexus* which doesn't grow much further north of the central belt of Scotland and *Eleocharis quinqueflora* (Few-flowered Spike-rush). *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* (Common Spotted Orchid) and *D. purpurella* (Northern Marsh Orchid) were nearly past flowering but the hybrid *D. x venusta* was interesting to see with the characteristics of both. *Parnassia palustris* (Grass of Parnassus) also grows in the marsh. *Brachypodium pinnatum* (Tor Grass) covers an area under the pine trees of about 10 sq m and is also found on the limestone opposite Blair Atholl near the M9, but is mostly found in England. *B. sylvaticum* grows in the dunes. *B. phoenicoides*, found at Yellowcraigs nearby in three areas, was identified by Michael Wilcox and is replacing *B. rupestre* - an important find as it comes from southern Europe. How did it come to be at Yellowcraigs?

After a long walk out to the Tyne Estuary and down a forest track, we came to the rare *Corynephorus canescens* (Grey Hair-grass) which grows along the side of a sandy path. On our return journey, we crossed a bridge with the Sea Club-rush mentioned earlier, and below was growing *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup), *Solanum dulcamara* (Bittersweet), *Eleocharis palustris* (Common Spike-rush) and *Ceratophyllum demersum* (Hornwort).

Returning via the toilet blocks, we noted *Lepidium draba* (Hoary Cress) on the bank and *Anthriscus caucalis* (Bur Chervil) growing under the trees.

Everyone seemed to have enjoyed the day and survived exposure to the exceptional June heat. I would like to thank Caspian and Sue for helping in preparation and on the day.

Marion Moir



CORSTORPHINE HILL with TWIC 8 July 2023

Leaders: Natalie Harmsworth & Sarah Adamson

We met at the Corstorphine Road entrance to Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve and made our way towards the part of the Hill where recording would start. En route we paused to look at the small patch of Knawel (*Scleranthus annuus*) on a bare patch on the south-facing slope above Balgreen. Recording began by the Zoo boundary fence when we entered grid square NT2073, and continued into grid square NT2074. Although the primary focus was on plants, we looked at almost everything. Zoe found Trailing St John's Wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) in the car park near Clermiston Tower, and Natalie found Mat Grass (*Nardus stricta*) and Pill Sedge (*Carex pilulifera*) in a small patch that may be a relic of the Hill's semi-natural vegetation. According to Alison Mackintosh's book, published by the Friends of Corstorphine Hill, maps from the 17th and 18th centuries show the Hill as almost treeless. Other notable plants found were Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*), Small Balsam (*Impatiens parviflora*) and Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*). Unfortunately, the last of these is invasive and covers much of the Hill.

We lunched between showers on a glaciated dolerite outcrop where there are cup-marked stones. The full force of the westerly wind hit us when we left the shelter of the trees, and it was a relief to escape its blast when we moved over to the path on the east side of the Hill. Our turning point was opposite the top of Drumbrae Drive, and the return journey was in the lee of the tall, thick hedge which separates the Hill from Clermiston Road. Grass mowing has been restricted and many wildflowers have been sown, boosting the species lists for plants and invertebrates. On one Bramble thicket (*Rubus sp.*), almost certainly not planted, were bumblebees representing all seven species which were seen during the day. An unusual find was a gall, *Sphenella marginata*, which causes the flowerheads of Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) to become spherical.

Being gluttons for punishment, most of us continued to record as we returned to the entrance opposite Balgreen Road, the outing having lasted seven hours. Almost our final record was a pair of Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), now common in and around Corstorphine Hill.

Thanks to Natalie and Sarah for organising and leading this enjoyable visit to a nature reserve within the city.

David Adamson



LEADBURN COMMUNITY WOODLAND with British Dragonfly Society 8 July 2023

Leaders: David & Sarah Adamson & Andrea Hudspeth from BDS

Despite the forecast of heavy thunderstorms in the afternoon, fourteen of us optimistically turned up at Leadburn Community Woodland to learn about dragonflies and damselflies. We were fortunate to have Andrea Hudspeth of the British Dragonfly Society to provide her expertise, as well as her laminated guides, nets and trays.

After Andrea's introductory talk about the local species and their life cycles, we spent the morning session at Craighburn Pond, where we saw at least five species of damselfly. After lunch the group walked a short distance to the pond beside the old building described as the "ammunition store". At first this pond disappointed us as only a few Common Blue Damselflies (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) seemed present. However, a male Common Hawker (*Aeshna juncea*) soon appeared, patrolling his territory and chasing away another hawker, followed by the appearance of a Four-spotted Chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*) which kept to its own corner of the pond. The photographers among us took good photos of both species, quite an achievement since the hawker didn't seem to settle at all.

Our final activity was sweeping the peaty water with nets in the hope of catching some nymphs. Again, this was initially unsuccessful, although we had a lot of "by-catch" such as beetles and mites that Vladimir was able to identify, as well as the efts of newts. However, Andrea's persistence was rewarded with a couple of Common Darter nymphs (*Sympetrum striolatum*), both showing a pattern that Andrea described as being like striped pyjamas. Despite searching, we were unable to find any exuvia left by emergent adults.

The heat and humidity seemed to increase as the skies darkened and we were grateful to end our outing before any heavy rain arrived. As we left the second pond a Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) landed on the apex of the ammunition store roof.

The species found were: Damselflies: Azure (*Coenagrion puella*), Common blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), Blue-tailed (*Ischnura elegans*), Large Red (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*), Emerald (*Lestes sponsa*). Dragonflies: Common hawker (*Aeshna juncea*), Four-spotted chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*).



David Adamson



WESTERN HARBOUR PONDS 15 July 2023

Leaders: Jane Dey & Averil Logan

Members of ENHS were invited to meet representatives of the Save Western Harbour Ponds group, and walk the site that is proposed for development. In the end it was just a small group of Nats who met at Newhaven Harbour on a glorious summer's day.

Jane provided a bit of background to the area and the reason for the very active campaign. The 4 building plots, adjacent to Lighthouse Park and behind the existing development of flats, were abandoned at the time of the 2008 financial crash. Nature took over, and ponds formed in three of the plots, with woodland and scrub self-generating in the fourth. The site has become an interconnected haven for wildlife, and the ponds, being fenced off, are largely undisturbed, allowing bird, plant and insect life to thrive.

It's only a short walk along Western Harbour Waterfront Promenade Lighthouse Park, and the "nature reserve" as locals have come to see the area. This path proved rich in flora and insects and we spotted birds as well, both offshore and in the vegetation. It is always useful to have these wildlife corridors, especially if they are not manicured. In Lighthouse Park someone cleverly

spotted a colony of leafcutter bees (*Megachilidae* sp) around one of the benches, so care had to be taken when finding somewhere to sit for lunch!

We had to walk the perimeter of the ponds as access is not possible. There were resident Swans (*Cygnus olor*) with cygnets and Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) with offspring at different stages of development, suggesting two broods. Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) clamoured in the trees, and there were also Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*), Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) as well as Sparrows (*Passeridae* sp). Dragonflies (*Anisoptera*) were in evidence, but difficult to ID at a distance. The foray into the woodland area proved to be a highlight of the day. Set in a hollow and surrounded by trees, it was particularly warm, and we were delighted by clouds of butterflies, including Meadow Browns (*Maniola jurtina*), Small Skippers (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and Small Tortoiseshells (*Aglais urtica*). There was at least one Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet (*Zygaena lonicerae*) moth, as well as Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) moth caterpillars. Other finds included a ground crab spider, and a good population of Cream-streaked Ladybirds (*Harmonia quadripunctata*), which are apparently scarce in Scotland, as well as 2-spot Ladybirds (*Adalia bipunctata*) and much interesting flora. David Adamson was able to confirm Sickie Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), a plant he had never seen before.



Yellow Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris* (JD)

At the time of writing FM Developments have held consultations before seeking planning permission to build high-density housing on the wooded plot, with the aim of buying the land if they are successful. They will subsequently seek to buy and develop the rest of the plots too. I would urge you to visit this little-known area for yourselves, possibly before it is too late. The campaign has been successful in obtaining permanent tree preservation orders on the site and is hopeful that they may yet protect all of this local asset.

Jane Dey

A few examples of flora and fauna (not mentioned above):

Jersey Cudweed (*Helichrysum luteoalbum*), Weld (*Reseda luteola*), Rabbit-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*), Yellow Toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*), Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), Hirondines, Eider duck (*Somateria molissima*) – seen offshore.



WOODHALL DEAN 29 July 2023

Leaders: Rob Wallace & Lesley Fairweather

A group of 10 met at the ford car park at the Scottish Wildlife Trust reserve, Woodhall Dean. The weather was good and before the start David Adamson gave us a talk on the problems of picking up Ticks from the grass and Bracken and the dangers of steep-sided ravines along the two main burns, Woodhall and Weatherly. Luckily everyone was attentive. Rob caught a tick in his net so all could have a close-up look – but not too close!

The bird life was fairly quiet but the Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) serenaded the group as we walked along the circular path. We also heard young Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) as they begged for food from the parents. The path into the reserve passes a sandstone conglomerate of rock with ancient Sessile Oaks (*Quercus petraea*) still growing from it. One of the oaks had a nest of Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) all working hard.

The hunt was on for two varieties of robberflies which were found by Rob, and one was very much admired on the bridge at Tinker's Leap where it remained for all to see. This was *Machimus atricapillus* and the smaller one found in long grass was *Leptogaster cylindrica*. Just before the bridge the search was on to find a grass, *Festuca altissima*, which was seen by several of the group thanks to Vladimir's sustained effort. No Adders (*Vipera berus*) were spotted this time but one or two have been reported this year by volunteers working in the reserve.



Leptogaster cylindrica (DO)

A shower of rain hastened the end of lunch, taken by the bench put up for Bob and Betty Smith, and the circular walk continued by the "meadows" where wildflowers are being encouraged to grow by giving the grassland an annual cut. Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) was found by several people which was very encouraging. A group of Parent Bug nymphs (*Elasmucha grisea*) was spotted by Sarah Adamson all huddled together on a birch leaf – so easy to miss and really interesting to have it pointed out.

Having had reports of the presence of Purple Hairstreak (*Quercusia quercus*) butterflies in the reserve everyone was on the lookout – Joanie succeeded by returning one evening and finding one in the oak canopy. Everyone saw the Speckled Wood butterfly (*Pararge aegeria*) now abundant in Scotland. Some blue damselflies were also present by the water on the outside of the reserve.

Lesley Fairweather



OAK GALLS at CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE PARK 5 August 2023
 Leaders: Chang-Ti Tang & Sarah Adamson

Having discovered many galls during the pandemic I finally found a post-doctoral gall scientist, Chang-Ti Tang, who works with Professor Graham Stone at the University of Edinburgh. Chang-Ti was happy to lead an outing. Almost twenty of us got together with him in Craigmillar Castle Park to look for oak galls. As we walked around all of us learned about galls - information on causers, the galls themselves and new galls. With some of Chang-Ti's colleagues we found galls just beginning to grow and some from a previous season. Spending a couple of hours under oak trees showed how rich the biodiversity is and the importance of mature trees. We looked mainly at *Quercus petraea* and, as the heavy rain started, we looked at knopper galls on *Quercus robur*. *Andricus quercuscalicis* is the wasp gall-former for knopper galls. Usually, a gall is known by the name of the gall-former, however, if the gall has a characteristic appearance, then that becomes a common name, such as artichoke, marble and so on.



Knopper Gall (DL)

That day we only scratched the surface of galls and looked at *Andricus*, a genus of oak gall wasps in the family *Cynipidae*. There are many other groups of gall causers and variations in lifecycles all for another day. As usual there was the distraction of true bugs, probably their peak season and also a friendly dragonfly. Despite the weather cutting short the event it was a fantastic opportunity to learn a bit about galls and find out about other people's interests.

Sarah Adamson



MILLERHILL 7 August 2023

Leaders: Sue Jury & Vladimir Krivtsov



Nine of us met at Shawfair Station, on the new Borders Railway, to investigate the brownfield site across the road from the station. The site was formerly the huge Monktonhall Colliery, and its associated bing, which produced coal for Cockenzie Power Station from 1967. It was mothballed by the National Coal Board twenty years after it started production but a group of former miners from the pit used their savings and redundancy money to reopen it in 1992. Sadly, for those involved, they ran into financial difficulties and the mine closed for good in 1997.

Verbascum virgatum (HK)



In 2019 the Millerhill Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre (RERC) opened on the north east of the site. The plant processes waste from Midlothian and the City of Edinburgh Councils, turning waste (food and non-recyclable) into electricity and recycled material into saleable form. The rest of the site forms part of a huge proposed development in south east Edinburgh, including a large amount of housing but this has been under discussion for at least ten years (and probably longer).

Before we had left the station David had spotted a social wasp (probably *Vespula rufa*) and the botanists were knee deep in the greenery but we had a lot to cover. The entrance to the site had Ribbed Melilot (*Melilotus officinalis*) and Pale Toadflax (*Linaria repens*) still in flower. Earlier in the year there had

been Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*) here but we couldn't find it on this occasion. Sarah, poking about in surface rubble, then found a beautiful fossil called *Stigmaria*. These are the rooting structures of ancient swamp forest trees (probably *Lepidodendron*) from the Carboniferous period (approximately 358-298 mya). This is, of course, the same period during which the Midlothian coalfield coal measures were laid down. The first of the day's mulleins was then spotted – a tall, impressive Twiggy Mullein (*Verbascum virgatum*) and a lot of Scarlet Pimpernel (*Lysimachia arvensis*, formerly *Anagallis arvensis*), Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*)* and Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*). The small ladybirds were Adonis (*Hippodamia variegata*) and the hoverflies mostly *Sphaerophoria* sp (including *S.scripta*).

Going towards the RERC buildings Sue showed us how to distinguish Red Clover from Zigzag Clover and it's not what you think. Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) has a pair of leaves very close under the flower but with Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*) the first pair of leaves is down the stem. Then David found an interesting moss, *Aloina* sp, and a sea of gentians. Autumn Gentians (*Gentianella amarella*), about 30 plants in flower, were covering a small area.

In the wood, mainly Willow (*Salix* sp) and Birch (*Betula* sp), we came across Common Wintergreen (*Pyrola minor*) and Yellow Bird's-nest (*Monotropa hypopitys*) which was first discovered here by our very own Vladimir Krivtsov. On the way to the colliery bing for lunch we saw, among others, Bronze Shieldbug (*Troilus luridus*) adults and nymphs, Hairy Shieldbug (*Dolycoris baccatum*), Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), Narrow-leaved Ragwort (*Senecio inaequidens*), Small Toadflax (*Chaenorhinum minus*) and more Twiggy Mulleins.

After lunch we did a circuit of the bing finding cushions of Mount Olympus St John's Wort (*Hypericum Olympicum*), Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*), and a small bright orange fungus called Moss Sentinel (*Rickenella fibula*). Other fungus finds of the day included: Turf Mottlegill (*Panaeolus fimicola*), The Flirt (*Russula vesca*) and Common Earthball (*Scleroderma citrinum*). After a quick look at Sulphur Cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*) and Cutleaf Bramble (*Rubus laciniatus*), and then failing to find the Sticky Catchfly (*Lychnis viscaria*) which grows here (too late in the season probably), we descended off the bing onto farmland. The field edges brought us a mix of old crops, invasive species and farm favourites including Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum ssp.*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Field Pansy (*Viola arvensis*).

The final stop of the day was a pond (pretty much dried up enabling comfortable investigation even without wellies). Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), Reedmace/Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), Pale Persicaria (*Persicaria lapathifolia*) and Pink Water Speedwell (*Veronica catenata*) were among the finds.

Thanks go to Sue and Vlad for an excellent day on an excellent site and to David, Sarah and Carolyn for the non-botany input to this article. As Douglas said at the very start of the day: 'You never know what you are going to find on a brownfield site'. He was certainly right about that.

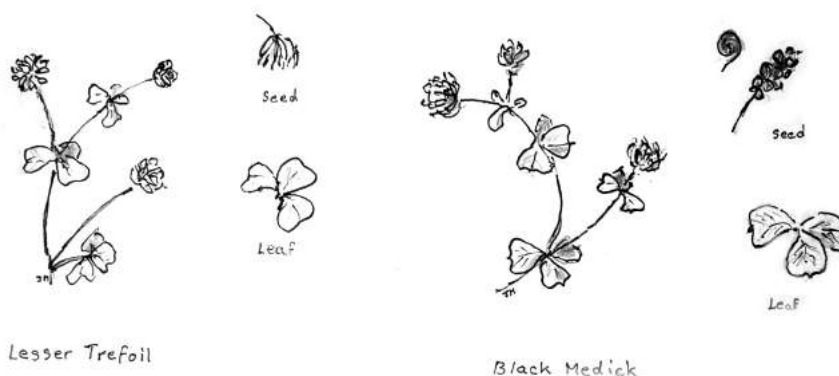
Heather Kinnin

*** Notes on the Lesser Trefoil and Black Medick** (Text and illustration Jackie Muscott)

Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) and Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*) are both members of the Pea Family (Fabaceae) and are very similar. Differences are as follows:

	Lesser Trefoil	Black Medick
LEAFLETS (in threes)	Triangular, rounded or slightly depressed at the tip	Similar, but with a distinct Triangular point at the tip
FLOWERS	Small, Clover-like, a clear Yellow	Similar, but a slightly deeper yellow
SEEDS	Straight pods, initially Protected by dead petals	Coiled pods which turn black with age

Mature plants of Black Medick may be more robust in appearance.



BUTTERDEAN WOOD 12 August 2023
Leaders: Lynn Youngs & Jean Long.

A small group of 8 met in the car park of Butterdean Wood arriving by a combination of car, public bus and bicycle. The wood covers an area of over 100 acres and since 1998 it has been owned and managed by the Woodland Trust who purchased it from East Lothian Council. It is predominantly broadleaved woodland, a relatively rare habitat locally within East Lothian but there are a number

of different woodland types present on the site. We made our way along the main pathway and a couple of the group spotted a Western Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) cross the path just a short distance further on. We also spotted a Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) butterfly, the first of many that we would see over the course of the day. Great Tit (*Parus major*), Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*) and Eurasian Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) were flitting between the trees, the only birds of the day.

Our route was planned to cover a large number of the paths that criss-cross the site and we initially headed towards the Alba Trees Nursery. Trees along this stretch were magnificent and included European Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Lawson Cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsonia*), Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*), Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Grand Fir (*Abies grandis*), Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*), Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*) and Common Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). We arrived at the Alba Trees Nursery and Jean gave an interesting overview of the work that goes on there. Alba Trees is a cell-grown forest nursery and grows for the commercial and conservation sectors across the UK, producing over 1 million trees per annum. The Nursery is also a major employer within East Lothian.



Epinotia ramella (DL)

Our walk continued until we reached a large clearing for lunch. The fine weather held for most of our break until a very heavy shower caused us to run to the nearby tree canopy for shelter. During the lunch stop Dorothy found two micromoths – *Argyresthia goedartella* and *Epinotia nisella* – and several caterpillars of the Pebble Prominent moth (*Notodonta ziczac*) feeding on Aspen (*Populus tremula*). Four Shieldbugs were also seen during the day – Parent Bug (*Elasmucha grisea*), Red-legged (*Pentatoma rufipes*), Birch (*Elasmotethus interstinctus*) and Bronze (*Argyresthia goedartella*).

Once the shower had passed, we continued in an easterly direction and enjoyed the typical woodland plants on either side of the path – Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Thyme-leaved Speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*), Slender False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and one small ditch held a lovely display of Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*). European Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) was abundant and some of it was still in flower. We were all delighted to spot three Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) spikes growing close to each other on a track lined by Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees. Although not in flower, seeing this plant was one of the day's highlights. Our route took us towards a WW2 building and a few metres before it a beautiful display of a white parasol-like fungus was spotted growing in beech mast. Vlad took a specimen and later identified it as the rare *Leucoagaricus nympharum*. This is a species that has only been recorded twice before in Scotland, both in the East Lothian area. Thanks go to Vlad for confirming the identification and the finding has been reported to the Woodland Trust. Other fungi seen during the day included Blackening Russula (*Russula nigricans*), Red Cracking Bolete (*Xerocomellus chrysenteron*), Horsehair Parachute (*Marasmius androsaceus*) and the lovely Lilac Bonnet (*Mycena pura*).

We were now on our way back to the starting point and along the final stretch of the walk we added Hart's-tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) to our day's list. It had been a very enjoyable outing and a return visit at a different time of year is definitely recommended.

Lynn Youngs



NORTH BERWICK LAW - SPIDERS 20 August 2023

Leader: David Adamson. Guest: Katty Baird

Eleven of us met at the Law car park for an outing focussing on spiders. Katty had expected to join us much later but the attraction of the Women's World Cup football final brought an early finish to Katty's morning moth event in a nearby housing estate. After some debate about whether a particular spider had six or eight eyes we stopped by a small pond where Dragonflies and Damselflies were abundant. On the pondside vegetation were the silken webs and retreats of *Larinioides* spiders. In most cases spiders can be identified in the field to genus level but require microscopic examination to be sure of the species. Some careful sweep-netting produced other species including a *Xysticus* Crab Spider and mainly immature *Tetragnatha* and *Pardosa* spiders. The latter are the fast-moving Wolf Spiders which hunt their prey instead of using a web to catch it. Nearby a large Garden Spider (*Araneus diadematus*) sat in the middle of its orb-web waiting for its next meal. On Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) were many hammock-like sheet webs made by Money Spiders (*Linyphiidae*).



Larinioides spider in silk retreat

After lunch we spent a while scouring the south facing rock-face of an old quarry where Jumping Spiders of the species *Pseudeuophrys lanigera* and *Salticus scenicus* were common. Like Wolf Spiders these hunt their prey instead of relying on webs. In turn these spiders are preyed upon by wasps of the family *Pompilidae* which were also seen on the rock-face. Katty showed us *Textrix denticulata*, an attractive relative of the House Spiders (*Tegenaria*) which we also found. Our attempts to lure *Amaurobius* spiders from their silk retreats using tuning forks and electric toothbrushes were unsuccessful. Perhaps they don't fall for that trick anymore.

Just before we left the old quarry, we were joined by eight Exmoor Ponies (*Equus ferus caballus*) which graze some of the rank grasses which would otherwise cover North Berwick Law. Their grazing helps ensure that plants like Maiden Pink (*Dianthus deltoides*) are still present on the hill. As we followed the footpath round the base of the hill a Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) was seen off by one of three Kestrels (*Falco tinnunulus*). At the edge of the ponds below North Berwick Law were a Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and some Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Earlier we had seen a Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) and Pied Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*). The ponds are clogged with Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) so that the areas of open water are small.

As ever the wooden fenceposts between the path and the ponds proved to be productive; as well as many *Pardosa* spiders we found a couple of *Tibellus oblongus*, a straw-coloured species matching the colour of the dead grasses. Rob collected an unusual weevil and identified an odd fly as *Coremacera marginata*. We also found a dark male Field Cuckoo Bumblebee (*Bombus campestris*). Usually, this species is pale yellow brown but this individual was black.

Thanks to Katty for sharing her knowledge of spiders and other wildlife at North Berwick Law.

David Adamson



TWIC ARNISTON and SOUTH ESK 26 August 2023

Leader: Natalie Harmsworth

The party of TWIC and ENHS members met in the Gore Glen car park off the A7 and crossed the bridge over the Borders railway to descend into the deep shade of the woodlands. It was a bit like Conrad's Heart of Darkness, only a bit darker. I quickly became disorientated and it was only much

later that I realised that we had followed the course of the River South Esk upstream in a south-westerly direction. Natalie had provided lists of species previously recorded from the site. These included Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) as recently as the 1990s. Our aim was to update these lists. While the botanists botanised, some of us looked at the invertebrates. One highlight was an active colony of large digger wasps *Mellinus arvensis* nesting in sandy ground near the river and bringing in captured prey to feed to the larvae. Another notable event was finding two or more robberflies *Machimus (Tolmerus) atricapillus* on fenceposts. Spiders included the Sputnik Spider (*Paidiscura pallens*), recognisable by its white spiky egg sac. A Caddisfly was identified as *Odontocerum albicorne*. Other invertebrates of note were the hoverfly *Baccha elongata*, the social wasp *Dolichovespula sylvestris* and the Hairy Shieldbug (*Dolicoris baccarum*).

As a result of a recent meeting at Craigmillar Castle Park, under the expert guidance of Chang-Ti, some of us had taken an interest in oak wasp galls. The oak trees were certainly numerous in these Arniston woods. However, the galls here were elusive except in a sunny area near the lunch stop. In total we found at least four *Andricus* and two *Neuroterus* species.

Thanks to Natalie for leading another successful joint outing.

David Adamson



HILLHOUSE WOOD, by BEECRAIGS COUNTRY PARK 2 September 2023

Leader: Wilma Harper

Rob Wallace and Maggie McKenzie joined with all the members of the Events Committee on a warm, sunny morning to explore Hillhouse Wood. This wood lies immediately north of the Beecraigs overflow car park and is on a north-facing slope with views across the Forth towards the Ochil Hills. While much of Beecraigs is coniferous woodland, Hillhouse is a more mixed wood with old shelterbelts of Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Oak (*Quercus spp*) infilled in the 1990s with mainly broadleaves and pines. Wilma's list had around 25 species of trees and shrubs. In the past the local area was widely quarried and mined for limestone to produce quicklime to fertilise farmland. There is a good path network within the wood.

As usual we looked at almost everything, some admiring the *Russula*, *Laccaria* and *Leccinum* fungi under the older trees across the road from Beecraigs. Rob turned logs over and used his sweep-net to find beetles, ants and other insects. Jane took photos of tiny flies. Some of us hunted for galls, partly because this was the start of British Galls Week. On one Oak (*Quercus sp*) tree we found six gall species. We then retraced our steps for a short distance to look at an unusual paint-splatter fungus on the leaves of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) *Cristulariella depraedans*, known as Grey Mould Spot or Sycamore Leaf Spot, with only 90 records in Scotland.

Further along that path we saw leaf blotches on the leaves of Horse Chestnuts (*Aesculus spp*). Unlike the damage from the micromoth Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner (*Cameraria ohridella*), these were irregular brown blotches with yellow margins which are caused by the fungus *Phyllosticta paviae* (*syn. Guignardia aesculi*). We paused a while to enjoy the butterflies, hoverflies and bees at another patch of Scabious. At last, we saw the Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*) which had been calling for a while.

As we were only a short distance from the Beecraigs Café the outing ended at a picnic table with ice cream, coffee, and distant views across West Lothian as far as the Bass Rock and Lammermuirs. Thanks to Wilma for another interesting outing to a place that we rarely visit.

David Adamson



For many of us this was our first visit to Musselburgh Lagoons (now Levenhall Links) since the group outing on December 3rd last year. Our start was delayed due to a car fire on the city bypass which affected some participants. This was not a hardship though, as we scanned the many hundreds of birds on the mud flats, moving in response to the incoming tide with more birds on the sea around the mouth of the Esk. Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) twittered from a nearby Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*). The problem of disturbance by dogs was however all too evident, forcing many waders to fly early to high tide roosts, reducing their feeding time. The five common gull species, including immatures, were present. Several tripod mounted telescopes in the group gave good views of a pair of Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), a bird that is easily overlooked, and the first Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) of the autumn newly returned from breeding grounds in eastern Europe. Three Goosanders (*Mergus merganser*) were on the river mouth with more offshore: all grey with rufous heads and crests denoting females and immatures. A flock of mainly female Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) also moved out. We saw more confusing piebald males (due to moult) further out. Even the large herd of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), which is always present here, moved well out to sea. One Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) swimming in the river was a concern. Many Auks (*Alcidae*) have been feeding, or attempting to feed, well up the Forth repeating a pattern of recent years though whether due to food availability or avian flu or a combination we cannot yet say. Hundreds of dead Auks have been counted on East Lothian beaches. More Guillemots and Razorbills (*Alca torda*) were seen from the sea wall and Crows and Jackdaws (*Corvidae*) patrolled looking for food which can include dead or weakly waders.

Sea conditions were exceptionally calm, but the main Scoter (*Melanitta sp*) flock was well offshore. We could see that the majority were Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) due to intermittent white wing flashes but even with scopes it wasn't possible to locate the rare scoter species that have been seen here recently. Telescopes did confirm a few Red-throated Divers (*Gavilan stellata*) now minus their red throat feathers. More obligingly a few Slavonian (*Podiceps aaauritus*) and Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) were closer. As usual Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) fished offshore. There were few terns, though one Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) flew by with some Sandwich Terns (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) fishing offshore.

Turning away from the sea we made for the original Scrapes, built 20 years ago. These are six shallow ponds where waders and some other birds roost and feed especially during high tide. The Scrapes have three open-topped hides robustly constructed from vandal-proof brick. By visiting all three we were able to view good numbers and variety of waders and wildfowl at very close range. Thankfully, no dogs disturbed the birds during the hour that we spent here. Among the ducks and geese were Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), Teal (*Anas crecca*), Wigeon and Greylag (*Anser anser*) and Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). The wader species were even more varied with Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Knot (*Calidris canutus*), Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*), Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), and both Bar- (*Limosa lapponica*) and Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*). A Roebeek (*Capreolus capreolus*) briefly emerged from long grass to quench his thirst. Leaving the third hide we noted that the Broadleaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) which we saw a year ago was still growing well.

We began to head westwards back to the Esk but, en route, we tried out two of the six new hides that surround the New Scrapes which have been created on what was the western ash lagoon. Neil Clark, who has recently retired as East Lothian's Countryside Officer, described the long process of habitat creation to compensate for the loss to wildlife when Cockenzie power station was built.

From the boundary path, gates allow access to the hides. From these hides we looked across a moat to an area of shallow water and gravel islands. The moat gives the nesting and roosting birds some protection from ground predators such as foxes and dogs which is lacking at the older Scrapes. Here we caught up with more Godwits, many Curlew and large numbers of Oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*), a couple of Ruff and more geese and gulls. Scanning with a scope revealed a Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*) on the gravel, another bird that is often overlooked among the numerous Wood and Feral Pigeons (*Cloumba sp*). The surrounding ground has been planted with native trees and bushes.

Earlier Pauline had seen a migrant Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), and Sue and Sarah found a couple of Adonis Ladybirds (*Hippodamia variegata*). There were many Speckled Woods (*Pararge aegeria*) among the trees. Andrew identified a Common Blue butterfly (*Polyommatus icarus*).

Another very enjoyable and informative visit to Musselburgh ended before the threatened thunderstorms arrived.

Stan da Prato & David Adamson



GIFFORD WOOD 16 September 2023

Leader: Dorothy Lyle



Phosphuga atrata (DL)

Six of us (Caroline joined us later) started our Gifford outing by opening a moth trap in my brother's garden. There wasn't a great catch but there were some lovely moths - a Rosy Rustic (*Hydraecia micacea*), a Green-brindled Crescent (*Allophytes oxyacanthae*) and a Svenssons (I think) Copper Underwing (*Amphipyra berbera svenssoni*). There were also four caddisflies including a Cinnamon Sedge (*Limnephilus lunatus*) and 2 *Potamophylax sp* which David Oates was able to identify.



Abia fasciata (DL)

We then made our way into the woods in somewhat damp conditions inspecting progress, as we went, on the new pond area which seemed slightly more naturalised than it did on our last visit. For the fungus enthusiasts there were lots of specimens to be seen in the woods among them Purple Jellydisc (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*), *Pleurotus spp*, *Russula paludosa*, *Hypholoma sp*, *Stereum hirsutum*, *Marasmiellus ramealis* and *Gymnopus androsaceus*.

For the entomologists there were not so many insects to be seen. Earlier in the week the area had been full of insects with large numbers of Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) and Peacock (*Aglais io*) butterflies everywhere. Unfortunately owing to the wet conditions there was not a butterfly in sight! There were few flying insects but we did spot several sawfly larvae some of which could be identified as Banded Honeysuckle (*Abia fasciata*) and *Eura pavidia*. There was also a twig-like geometrid caterpillar on Willow (*Salix sp*), which was probably Peppered Moth (*Biston betularia*), Alder Spittlebug (*Aphrophora alni*), Parent Bug (*Elasmucha grisea*), 7-spot Ladybirds (*Coccinella septempunctata*) and a lovely Black Snail Beetle (*Phosphuga atrata*).

Probably our most interesting sighting came at the end of our walk when what was termed "tree snot" by Ashleigh was spotted on an Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) beside the path. On closer inspection this was seen to be eggs and, in some places, tiny hatched larvae encased in mucus hanging from the edges of some of the leaves. These were the eggs of a caddisfly later identified by Craig Macadam as *Glyptotaelius pellucidus*. The eggs are normally laid on vegetation overhanging water

so that the emerging aquatic larvae drop into water. On this occasion the eggs had been laid on a tree overhanging a puddle which I'm afraid would dry out before too long.

Despite the damp conditions a good day was had by all and Gifford had once again come up with some very interesting sightings.

Dorothy Lyle



WOODMUIR PLANTATION by BREICH 23 September 2023

Leader: David Adamson

To the calls of Pink-footed Geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) and the occasional Raven (*Corvus corax*), seven of us slowly made our way along a damp path from our meeting place in Woodmuir Road, Breich, the cool air reminding us that summer was over. Even the last flowers of Devil's Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) had been deserted by the bees and hoverflies. Thankfully, with the onset of autumn, we could turn our attention to aspects of the natural world that are easily overlooked during summer's abundance. Rushes flower unobtrusively but today we noticed at least six species. At one point we compared five different species of fern, all growing together and with a sixth only a few yards away.

Much smaller, and more difficult to name, are mosses, liverworts and lichens, and we spent so much time looking at these that the walk originally planned had to be shortened. After using Carolyn's trackside collection of mosses and liverworts to explain some basic features of bryophytes we then found *Sphagnum* species which have particular structures, leaves and cells which are absent from other mosses. Lichens and some bryophytes, including dark patches of *Frullania dilatata*, covered the bark of a Rowan tree (*Sorbus aucuparia*). After two hours we had walked half a mile and it was lunchtime.

It is often during a lunch stop that interesting finds are made. Today Tom found an orange and black Sexton Beetle (*Nicrophorus vespilloides*) to add to the large springtail, *Tomocerus pilicornis* which he had found earlier. A White-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum s.l.*) was reluctant to leave one of the few Hogweed (*Heracleum sphodylium*) still in flower. At the edge of the path were a Dog Lichen *Peltigera sp.*, a tiny liverwort *Cephaloziella sp.*, and an upright moss with hair-tipped leaves *Racomitrium ericoides*.

After retracing our steps for a short distance, we followed a path towards the main Forestry Car Park, pausing to look at Mare's Tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*) growing in a Sphagnum-bordered pool. However, our main diversion was to cross a ditch into a clearing, overlooked by a large triangular bird box, where the ruins of old kilns provided a drier, more basic habitat. Orchid spikes of a *Dactylorhiza* species were beginning to wither, but some Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) still flowered and the red caps of *Hygrocybe* fungi contrasted with the black tongues of *Geoglossum* species. Our only *Encalypta streptocarpa* moss was growing on the mortar of the old kilns.

By Woodmuir Road, beyond the car park, we passed some of the regular criminal fly-tipping which blights this part of the site. However, as a side effect of the dumping, there are long-established garden plants such as *Spirea* on both sides of the road. So far the fly-tipping seems to be confined to this part of Woodmuir and is uplifted, when reported, by the landowner - Forestry and Land Scotland.

David Adamson



MORE GALLS at CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE PARK 30 September 2023

Leaders: Chang-Ti Tang & Sarah Adamson

A smaller group including different people turned up for this second gall outing to Craigmillar. We re-found some of the previous galls and could see the changes that had taken place with signs of adult emergence via holes in the gall. Soon we saw a chalcid parasitoid wasp, *Torymus sp.*, infecting a Silk Button Spangle Gall (*Neuroterus numismalis*). Chang-Ti will collect some of these galls to observe for emergence of parasitoids over the winter. It is common for a number of these to infect a single gall and this is studied in the laboratory.



Andricus aries (DO)

There were more *Andricus spp* not found on the previous visit. Ramshorn Gall (*A aries*) was new to Chang-Ti and an eye-catching specimen. Revisiting the Artichoke Gall (*A foecundatrix*), we found some capsules where the gall-former develops. The capsules eventually pop out of the top of the artichoke structure and fall to the ground leaving the leafy part behind. The residents of an Oak are sometimes represented as a number which is variable and often over 2500. Our two, *Quercus robur* and *petraea*, yielded 15 species. Commonly, a gall-former will require two hosts to complete its lifecycle. Knopper Galls (*Andricus quercuscalicis*) require both *Q robur/petraea* and *Q cerris*.

Our next gall hunt may include looking for gall causers laying eggs in the early growing tissues such as catkins and the fresh spring galls.

Sarah Adamson



HERIOT-WATT 28 October 2023

Leaders: Carolyn Hargest & Lynn Youngs

A group of 15 people turned up for a short, leisurely walk starting at Hermiston Park and Ride. The weather was unexpectedly dry – which was particularly welcome as so much rain had fallen recently and even more was forecast. The aim of this woodland amble was primarily to look at fungi, plus interesting trees and flowers. The campus has a nice circular perimeter trail, and an interesting self-guided tree walk, which starts from the main reception. However, to search for fungi our planned route was short, and our anticipated pace slow.

All good forays start in the car park and this was no exception. We found Grey Knight (*Tricholoma terreum*), Pestle Puffball (*Lycoperdon excipulliforme*) and Brown Rollrim (*Paxillus involutus*) to mention a few. Also, in the car park the invasive species Smooth Tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*) was *probably* seen - but a definite ID would need to be made in spring. By the roadside we saw the hybrid Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna x C subsphaerica*) only recently recorded for the first time in Scotland, and now being seen absolutely everywhere! Creeping Chinese Bramble (*Rubus tricolor*) was growing nearby, and on the campus, Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra ssp*) and Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) – with fruits growing in an upwards direction. Several botanists already finding the pace too slow, headed off to some nearby ponds in search of more plants to record. Those keen on fungi, continued to enjoy looking at, and sometimes tasting them (then spitting out) – a useful way to gain more information to help with ID. The sparse orange milk of the Saffron Milkcap (*Lactarius deliciosus*) was mild tasting, but the gills of the Beechwood Sickener (*Russula nobilis*) were definitely hot! An interesting mite gall *Aceria macrochela* was found on a Field Maple leaf (*Acer campestre*). Other galls seen on Oak were the wasp galls Common Spangle Gall (*Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*) and Marble Gall (*Andricus kollari*).

At lunchtime we met up with the botanists and discussed our finds, including the stunning Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), Broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), Oxford Ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*) and Snow-White Wood-rush (*Luzula nivea*). Amazingly, Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) was a new record for the campus – though this had been noted on our recce! After lunch, we explored a grassy roadside, home to several types of Waxcaps (*Hygrocybe*) and a tiny black Earthtongue (*Geoglossum*). The day featured many discussions, frequently consulting the ubiquitous “*Collins Complete guide to British Mushrooms and Toadstools*” and plenty of laughs – probably best not to mention our hilarious discussion about the White Domecap and comparing stipes!

Progress continued – at a slow pace – due to the abundance of interesting finds. A Common Striped Woodlouse (*Philoscia muscorum*) was spotted on the same tree as a tiny Dewdrop Bonnet (*Hemimycena toturosa*). A further grassy area had Honey Fungus (*Amillaria mellea*) foraged by Tanya, for cooking up later. Meanwhile an interested student chatted with us and looked at our basket of colourful specimens, keen to know more about the group. By the Marriot Hotel there were lots of pink Lilac Bonnet (*Mycena pura*), red Russula including the Beechwood Sickener (*R. nobilis*) and several Cortinari species, including *C. balteatus*. This was initially presumed to be a Field Blewit (*Lepista personata*), but thanks to Vlad who worked on the specimen, it was revealed to be quite a rare species - only about 22 records in the UK!

Then we made a short detour towards the main reception for some interesting green fungi, the Aniseed Funnel (*Clitocybe odora*) named because of its delicious smell! On our return leg, we encountered Pleated Inkcap (*Coprinus plicatilis*) and the aptly named Grooved Bonnet (*Mycena polygramma*) with its distinctive grooved stipe.

It had been a good day out with a wide variety of species seen – over 75 fungi, plus many nice trees and flowers. Heriot-Watt is a treasure trove, worthy of many more outings.

Lynn Youngs



PRESTONPANS to MUSSELBURGH 11 November 2023

Leaders: Sarah & David Adamson

After coffee at the Coastline Café in Prestonpans our walk started on the concrete casing of the old ash pipe which runs from Cockenzie to Musselburgh Lagoons. The surface was slippery, and waves were lapping at its base, so it was with some relief that we reached dry land at the west end of the town. From here we were able to follow the shore, much eroded by the recent storms which had exposed the coal waste used to create this man-made section of coast. Ellie picked up a lump of coal with iron pyrites on its surface, Jean found some fossils and Sarah collected pottery fragments.

Soon we were past the old harbour of Morrison's Haven and entered the landscaped Levenhall Links. Carolyn's telescope was put to good use scanning the waves for seabirds. As well as lots of Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and Shags (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*), some Razorbills (*Alca torda*) and a Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) there were Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*), Goldeneyes (*Bucephala clangula*), Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*), Eiders (*Somateria mollissima*), a Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), a diver, Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*), Redshanks (*Tringa totanus*) and a Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*). As it was nearly high tide, we could have seen more bird species by visiting the old Scrapes, but instead we made for the new Scrapes which are nearer Musselburgh and were on our planned route. The new bird hides could be improved by providing better drainage, but they do provide excellent views of the birdlife which included Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*), Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Mute Swan (*Cygnus alor*), Oyster-catchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) and probably some Twite (*Linaria flavirostris*). Among the gulls was a single

immature Greater Black-back (*Larus marinus*) preening itself. All the grasslands of the Links were covered in gossamer, shimmering in the low sunlight. On almost every fence post were Money Spiders (*Linyphiidae sp*) which had created this gossamer, but on the fenceposts by the path through the new Scrapes were other creatures. Probably the most attractive were the Adonis (*Hippodamia variegata*) and 11-spot Ladybirds (*Coccinella undecimpunctata*) but they had rivals in Nursery-web Spiders (*Pisaura mirabilis*) and a spectacular parasitic wasp *Pimpla rufipes*.

Although the tide still covered the shingle and mud at the mouth of the Esk and most birds were offshore, our final avian spectacle was a feeding frenzy further upriver where Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), Mallards and assorted others competed for bird food under a town footbridge.

David Adamson



SILVERKNOWES and CHRISTMAS LUNCH Friday 29 December

Leaders: Frances Dunn & Ailsa Milton

Eighteen people gathered in the car park of the Toby Carvery, Lauriston Farm, for a local stroll prior to returning for Christmas lunch. It was a cold but bright day and we were to be blessed with good weather conditions for the duration of the day. Our walk began by heading for the Silverknowes Promenade along a grassy track and a flock of 80+ Wood Pigeons (*Coluba polumbus*) was immediately spotted flying close by. Unfortunately, the flock of wintering Curlews (*Numenius arquata*) which is often present in the fields adjacent to the Toby Carvery was nowhere to be seen. As we reached the Promenade smaller groups of people began to naturally form into those who wanted to linger and look at wild plants and those who were keen to press ahead to focus on spotting fungi. The tide was well out and wading birds identified were numerous - Redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), Oystercatchers (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and a small number of Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*).

The botanists focused on identifying plants by their winter leaves and the first sighting was a non-native Narrow-leaved Ash tree (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). This tree has pale brown buds which readily distinguishes it from the black buds of the related Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Other plants identified by their leaves included Red Campion (*Silene dioica*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Scentless Mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). Douglas very helpfully gave us tips on separating Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) leaves from Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), pointing out that in Creeping Buttercup the leaves are divided into 3 lobes with the central lobe being long-stalked. This long-stalk is absent in Meadow Buttercup.

On the way back we looked at the seed heads of Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*) and an umbellifer that we thought might be Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). Joy took some of the seeds home and they matched with Wild Parsnip so this identification was confirmed. The fungi group had a very successful foray and identified White Brain (*Exidia thuretiana*), Brittle Cinder (*Kretzschmaria deusta*), Smoky Bracket (*Bjerkandera adusta*) and Rhizomorph, the bootlace of Honey Fungus (*Armillaria sp.*) This group also spotted the beautiful, delicate pink female flowers of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

Everyone arrived back at the Toby Carvery for the Christmas lunch which we all enjoyed, particularly the scrumptious desserts! A jolly, fun time was had by all and it was lovely to see new members and old friends. A big thankyou to Frances and Ailsa for organising both the lunch and the pre-lunch walk.

Lynn Youngs

Indoor Meetings

SCOTTISH PLANT LORE - a Natural and Social History

Dr Greg Kenicer 18 January 2023

Greg works at RBGE and took us on a tour through his book 'Scottish Plant Lore', outlining the use of plants by people over many centuries in Scotland. The book contains many fine botanical illustrations and is published by RBGE. Plants have been important to the economy and culture in agriculture and industry, providing food, drink and medicines. Children often have memories of plants from their childhood. He told many stories about the plants that cross paths with humans in Scotland and then engaged with the audience over questions.

Sarah Adamson

CAMMO CONSERVATION PROJECTS AND MORE

Nick Bengé 15 February 2023

Nick enjoys telling people about his pet projects. At Cammo Country Park he has transformed former agricultural land by increasing the planting of trees and other flowering plants. He innovates to solve planting problems and is supported by his local community. New ponds created at Cammo quickly became home to much water life. They are easily accessible by public transport in north west Edinburgh. ENHS have often explored the Cammo area which includes the River Almond. Recently his new project at Roborough, Devon, has diverted much of his attention. You can see his activities here - <https://www.roboroughrewilders.org/>

Sarah Adamson

MEMBERS' NIGHT 2023

Sarah Adamson & Ellie Mayhew 19 April 2023

This was the first since the pandemic and an opportunity to socialise and share some of the interests followed by members. A shaky start followed the late arrival of two presenters held up in traffic. Fortunately, the plans were for informality and members were able to mingle and try out activities. Ellie Mayhew had a quick visual quiz identifying digital images of nature and then a close-up look at some feathers using a USB microscope to see small features of feathers with differing functions. Ellie had also prepared a board of feathers for us to identify.

David Adamson took over with the USB microscope to show some moss specimens. It was amazing to see how the mosses rehydrated while we watched the big screen. It was clear that the USB microscope is a handy, cost-effective way to magnify, create images and project small specimens. The downside was the effect of shaky hands, especially since both users had not used the device before. The upside is availability of stands and, increasingly, new additions such as wireless or free-standing devices. The basic software is free and easily downloaded. Sue Jury, Botanical Vice County Recorder for Midlothian, told us about 'her story' for remembering plants and names. She went on to show us a hybrid holly leaf and highlighted the recent article in the Botanical Society of Scotland newsletter by Max Coleman, RBGE.

At refreshments time little groups formed to look at some photos matching caterpillars with their adults by Dorothy Lyle, Sarah's assorted photos with scientific names and Ellie's feather board. Others took the chance to try out the USB microscope. Those attending appeared to enjoy the opportunity to look at what others do and perhaps more informal events like this would be a useful addition to our regular events.

Sarah Adamson

MANGROVES

Professor Mark Huxham 26 September 2023

Professor Mark Huxham, who is Professor of Teaching and Research in Environmental Biology at Napier University, is an expert on mangroves. Much of his work centres on the ecology of coastal ecosystems and he told us about how he had spent many years in Kenya studying ecosystems there with particular emphasis on mangroves. He explained the dependence of the local communities on the mangroves' resources and went on to tell us of the pioneering community-based project he helped to set up there. This project aimed to conserve and restore these remarkable forests.

It was an interesting and informative talk illustrated with some wonderful photos, opening up the world of mangroves about which most of us knew very little.

Dorothy Lyle

AGM and talk by local VC BOTANICAL RECORDERS

25 October 2023

Following the business of the AGM Sue Jury and Marion Moir gave us a rundown of their work and their new botanical group. Useful tips include: the four W's - What?, Where?, When? and Who? - go together to make a Record which is only of value if you Report it.

- What – ideally a scientific name for the plant, some photos (in focus) from different angles and showing parts and whole plant. Comment on habitat.
- Where – site name and grid reference – 6 or 8 figure. OS Locate App displays a 6 figure and shares a 10 figure grid reference.
- When – date and time seen
- Who – your name and anyone with you who helped with identification.

Do consider joining their group to find out how they manage their records and receive new records. Sue planned to look at polypody ferns over the winter and requested samples. The samples keep well sealed in a plastic bag in the 'fridge. Label with who, where, when and habitat (wall, rock, tree etc).

Sarah Adamson

CEMETERY WILDLIFE WATCH

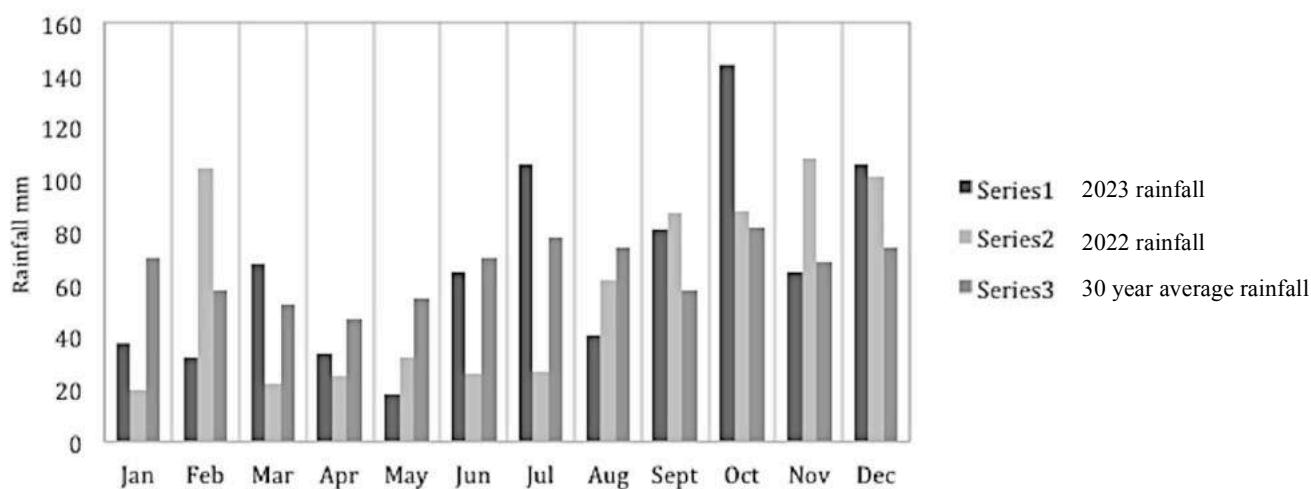
Dr Per Smiseth 21 November 2023

Per is a Lecturer in Animal Behaviour, Institute of Evolutionary Biology, University of Edinburgh. Over the last few years he has set up and facilitated a public engagement activity exploring the recording of wildlife found in cemeteries. Per manages the data through iRecord where individuals can add their records directly to the project. A Facebook group of the same name allows communication between participants. This is a place for people to seek help about their sightings and identification. Most participants are in Scotland but gradually more people are recording from elsewhere in the UK. If you would like to take part, the iRecord activity and Facebook group may be easily found as Cemetery Wildlife Watch.

Sarah Adamson

Rainfall in Corstorphine 2023. Though you may feel, like me, that it never seemed to stop raining in the last few months of the year, there were several very dry months in the first half of the year, and so the annual total 798mm was just slightly above the 30 year average. *Frances Dunn*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2023	38	32	68	34	18	65	106	41	81	144	65	106	798
2022	20	104	22	25	32	26	27	62	87	88	108	101	702
1991-2020	70	58	52	47	55	70	78	74	58	82	69	74	787



MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS

LB - Lynn Blades
 MC - Mary Clarkson
 JL - Jean Long
 DL - Dorothy Lyle
 JM - Jackie Muscott
 JMN - Joanie McNaughton

JANUARY 2023

- 01-Jan In Inch Park, near the Braid Burn, I saw lots of Redwings (*Turdus iliacus*). JL
- 03-Jan In Morningside Cemetery I found Orange Ladybirds (*Halyzia sedecimguttata*) after Joanie told me where to look for them. JL
- 04-Jan Common Wasp (*Vespula vulgaris*) was outside one of my windows. JL
- 06-Jan There were female flowers on Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) in Hailes Quarry Park. JL
- 11-Jan I spotted two Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) on the Union Canal in the Wester Hailes area. I was very pleased to see an Otter (*Lutra lutra*) nearby. JL
- 13-Jan On a recce in Warriston Cemetery with Ashleigh Whiffin for "Winterwatch" found hundreds of ladybirds predominantly Orange but also Pine (*Exochomus quadripustulatus*), 10-spot (*Adalia decempunctata*), Cream Spot (*Calvia quatuordecimguttata*) and Harlequin (*Harmonia axyridis*). Also found a small Buff Footman (*Eilema depressa*) caterpillar on a gravestone - they feed on lichen. DL
- 21-Jan On Sarah's Gogarburn excursion I noticed Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) in flower. JL
- 25-Jan c46 Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) at Sighthill roundabout on Calder Road. Irruptions happen every few years when food runs out in the Scandinavian Taiga where they breed. JMN
- 29-Jan A Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) by the Peffer Burn, east of the footbridge at Aberlady. JL

FEBRUARY 2023

- 02-Feb Walking the Penicuik railway walk I spotted Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) in flower. JL
13-Feb Mating Grey Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) spotted in the garden. JMN
14-Feb Dead Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) seen in reeds on motorway side of Linlithgow Loch. Reported it but the rangers already knew - cause of death given as Avian Flu. JMN
19-Feb I was delighted to see a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) flying along the Canal at Cammo. JL
19-Feb A good view of a female Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*) feeding on peanuts in the garden. Earlier (12/2) I heard one drumming in Grange Cemetery and saw it move but not a good view. Later (23/4) I heard one at Astley Ainslie and again get a glimpse as it moved. JM
22-Feb At Cammo, saw a Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*), a Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), f. Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), Long-tailed Tits (*Aegithalos caudatus*) and a Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*). JL
23-Feb On recce for outing to Leadburn Community Woodland saw Heath Navel (*Lichenomphalia umbellifera*) a lichenised basidiomycete aka basidiolichen. We found it and several more in a few locations on the outing itself. JMN
25-Feb On the roadside just south of Howgate I noticed a dead Badger (*Meles meles*). JL
28-Feb Spring Hazelcup (*Encoelia furfuracea*) on Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) - the first time I have found this at Bawsinch NR. JMN
-

MARCH 2023

- 04-Mar A 7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella 7-punctata*) was on the move in the sunshine at Gifford. JL
04-Mar Stonefly *Brachyptera risi* on a bridge in Gifford Community Wood. Also masses of Frog-spawn (*Rana temporaria*) in my brother's pond. I heard that not a single tadpole was ever seen after some predator had a feast! DL
08-Mar Two Otters were fishing at Figgate Park. JMN
11-Mar Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) was flowering in Holyrood Park. JL
11-Mar Male Kingfisher in front of the Sanctuary Hide at Bawsinch NR plus a juvenile Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*). JMN
16-Mar At Bawsinch NR *Meotomyces dissimulans*, uncommon, first found there by Vladimir on 25th February – common name Winter Brownie. JMN
19-Mar On David's Balerno Circuit I saw Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) in flower. JL
27-Mar Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) singing in Blackford Glen. Peacock (*Aglais io*) and Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urtica*) butterflies seen. JM
27-Mar An early Dark-edged Beefly (*Bombylius major*) spotted at NMS Collection Centre, Granton. DL
-

APRIL 2023

- 03-Apr I saw my first Peacock Butterfly (*Aglais io*) in the Glenrothes area. JL
04-Apr Bleach Cap (*Disciotis venosa*) and Haw Goblet (*Monilinia johnsonii*) both new to me, Bawsinch NR. JMN
07-Apr Discovered behind old buildings at Astley Ainslie, *Nonea lutea*, a plant that looks very like Yellow Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*). Also saw a Peacock Butterfly in our garden. JM
07-Apr Mating Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) seen at Bawsinch NR. JMN
09-Apr Mating Pine Ladybirds spotted in Comely Bank Cemetery. DL
11-Apr Several Eyed Ladybirds (*Anatis ocellata*) seen in Gifford Community Wood. DL
14-Apr In Pollok Country Park there was Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and a few Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) - all had flowers. JL
15-Apr On the Torphin/Blinkbonny excursion I saw Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*) all flowering. JL
17-Apr A large number of Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) were singing their heads off in trees along the old railway lines at Trinity. One competing successfully with a Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). JM

- 19-Apr Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) were flying around Fox Lake near West Barns - the first sighting for me this year. There was a Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) at Hedderwick Farm. JL
- 20-Apr Lovely golden and purple micromoth *Dyseriocrania subpurpurella* seen in the garden at Barnton, near Oak (*Quercus* sp) with which it is associated. DL
- 21-Apr Semifree Morel (*Morchella semilibera*) found at Bawsinch NR, another first for me. Also the first time I had seen a Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) on the reserve - a beautiful fresh male. JMN
- 22-Apr Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) was flowering near Shiel Bridge, Rosewell. In Beeslack Wood I noticed that Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Wood Anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*) and Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) were in flower. JL
- 25-Apr On holiday in Speyside found masses of False Morel (*Gyromitra esculenta*) growing along little-used forestry path to Loch Vaa. Not to be confused with the true Morel - same season but highly toxic, even deadly. JMN
- 26-Apr Pair of Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) at the well-known nest site near Kingussie where they took turns to sit on the nest. Also Aspen Bracket (*Phellinus tremulae*) seen at Insh Marshes. JMN
- 27-Apr There was a female Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) with Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) at Milton Loch, Boat of Garten. JMN
- 29-Apr Party of Crested Tits (*Lophophanes cristatus*) calling at Loch Mallachie. JMN
-

MAY 2023

- 03-May There was a male Orange-tip Butterfly (*Anthocharis cardamines*) resting on a Dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp) in Craigmillar Castle Woods - my first sighting for 2023. JL
- 05-May In St Katharine's Park, Liberton, I saw my first Speckled Wood (*Perarge aegeria*) of the year - the first of many I saw throughout 2023. JL
- 07-May Blackford Pond, a pair of Little Grebes (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) - the female on the nest. JL
- 10-May Delighted to see a pair of Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) on the feeders in the back green. I used to see small flocks in the winter, but fear they have been depleted by the virus which affects them. It's been a good year for finches as I've seen Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*), Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) and Bullfinches all feeding regularly throughout the winter. JM
- 11-May Holyrood Park around Wells o' Wearie saw mating Holly Blues, 2 Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) chicks in pond and a Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) overhead with an egg in its bill, until I got the photo up on a big screen and discovered it was a golf ball! Later also saw a Holly Blue resting on a big erratic boulder along the Innocent Railway. JMN
- 11-May Beautiful male longhorn micromoth *Adela reamurella* near Broadwoodside Gifford and in the Community Wood, a snakefly - the first I had seen. Unfortunately not positively identified from my photo. (see 10/7) DL
- 15-May In Gifford spotted tiny weevils on Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) some mating - confirmed as *Nedyus quadrimaculatus*. DL
- 17-May Wall Brown butterfly (*Lasiommata megera*) seen at NMS Collection Centre Granton. DL
- 24-May I heard my first Swifts (*Apus apus*) of 2023 flying above our garden. JL
- 29-May The first male Orange-tip for this year seen in our garden. JL
- 30-May Speckled Wood, the first of the year for me, seen in Craiglockhart Dell along with both male and female Orange-tips and a Green-veined White (*Artogeia rapi*). It seems to be a good year for Orange-tips as Mary Clarkson and I saw numbers at Cramond on 13th May and more in Blackford Glen on 3rd June. JM
- 31-May Saw Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) in flower in George Square Garden. JM
-

JUNE 2023

- 03-Jun Swallows and more Orange-tips in Blackford Glen. JM
- 07-Jun At Druim Mor, near the Kerrera ferry crossing, found a click beetle *Ctenicera currea* var. *aeruginosa* with vivid metallic purple/green colouring. I only saw males which have distinctive toothed antennae. JMN

- 10-Jun At Glen Lonan saw hundreds of Beautiful Demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*), a healthy number of Dark Green Fritillary (*Speyeria aglaja*) and a Golden-ringed Dragonfly (*Cardulegaster boltonii*). Over the hill at Ballindore saw one female Chequered Skipper (*Carterocephalus palaemon*). JMN
- 15-Jun Near Rosewell saw my first Red Admiral of the year. JL
- 16-Jun Visited Longniddry Bents on a hot day after a long period of dry weather. Everything very parched and dried up apart from Bloody Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguinum*) and Burnet Rose (*Rosa spinosissima*) both of which were thriving. No butterflies! JM
- 17-Jun Speckled Woods seen in the garden along with Red Admiral. JM
- 21-Jun Saw a Red Admiral in Grange Cemetery. JM
- 24-Jun At the Scottish Entomologists Gathering at Dundreggan found the micromoth *Caucas fibulella* and the caterpillars of Yellow-barred Brindle (*Acasis viretata*) and Hebrew Character (*Orthosia gothica*). The latter was parasitised and passed to Dr Mark Shaw for rearing. DL
- 25-Jun Saw my first Speckled Wood in our garden. Also some ladybird nymphs on a Veronica shrub. JL
- 26-Jun Fig Tree (*Ficus carica*) by the Water of Leith near the weir at Trinity had quite a lot of small fruit (which had disappeared by 25th July). Speckled Woods and Red Admirals also present. JM&LB
- 28-Jun By Craiglockhart Pond I heard a bird calling and to my surprise it was a Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) up in a tree. I didn't know they were able to climb trees. JL

JULY 2023

- 01-Jul A great many Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet moths (*Zygaena lonicera*) by the little France Flood Lagoon which had just recently emerged. Seen in the same area Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*) butterflies and some small brown ones flitting about - probably Skippers. JM&MC
- 01-Jul *Xylota sylvarum*, a very dark male seen sunning himself on Dock (*Rumex* sp) leaf at Bawsinch NR. Then another male spotted later in the day on an Oak (*Quercus* sp) leaf. ID confirmed as two distinct individuals by Chris Sellen on UK Hoverflies FB group. JMN
- 02-Jul TWIC had been asking for records of Daddy-long-legs Spider (*Pholcus phalaglodes*) and I discovered that I had one in the house. Later it got into and out of the bath (it's very light) and even made a web there. A House Spider (*Tegenaria gigantea*) also got into the bath around this time (which I had to get out). JM
- 03-Jul The first for this year - a Comma (*Polygonia c-album*) was in our garden. JL
- 05-Jul I found White Selfheal (*Prunella laciniata*) flowering near Cademuir Car Park. I had seen it there a few years ago and was pleased to see it was still there. JL
- 08-Jul There are usually Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*) and Meadow Brown on Midmar Meadow in July, recently more of the former than the latter. On this occasion there were plenty of the latter but NO Ringlets. By way of compensation some Skippers were flitting about. JM
- 08-Jul Delighted to find a Sabre Wasp (*Rhyssa persuasoria*) in a log pile at Gifford Community Wood and several longhorn beetles of two species *Leptura quadrifasciata* and *Pachytodes cerambyformis*. DL
- 10-Jul Once again in Gifford found another snakefly. This time it could be positively identified as *Atlantoraphidia maculicollis* - a rare Scottish record. DL
- 12-Jul Holyrood Park, Haggis Knowe, where Maiden Pink (*Dianthus deltoides*) is doing well. JMN
- 19-Jul In Holyrood Park around Samson's Ribs I found three male Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), one male *Eupeodes corollae* on Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), one adult Hairy Shieldbug (*Dolycorus baccarum*) and eight nymphs (3 different instars) and Forked Spleenwort (*Asplenium septentrionale*). JMN
- 20-Jul Meadow Brown butterflies seem to be having a good year - I counted at least 30 on Craigmillar Park meadows. There were also Large Whites (*Pieris brassicae*) and Large Skippers (*Ochlodes sylvaticus*), one of which actually rested and let me have a look at it. JM
- 20-Jul I found a tiny Vapourer (*Orgyia antiqua*) caterpillar at NMCC Granton. DL
- 25-Jul Walking by the Water of Leith near the weir at Trinity we noticed a man with a long-lens camera so we asked what he was seeing. Across the water was a Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) hiding and some butterflies fluttering in the sun - 2 Commas and 21 Holly Blues. Without binoculars all we could see were vivid flashes of orange and blue as they flitted about. There was also a Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) still as a statue on the wall. JM&LB

- 25-Jul When I got home I found a young Great Spotted Woodpecker feeding on nuts in the garden. It stayed for about 15mins before being disturbed by a Magpie (*Pica pica*). JM
- 28-Jul Along the driveway from Eaglescairn House I spotted a longhorn beetle probably the 4-banded one *Leptura quadrifasciata*. JL
- 28-Jul In Saltoun Wood on ponds I saw several mating pairs of Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*) and Black Darter (*Sympetrum danae*) males mostly sitting on stones. I didn't see any females. JMN
- 28-Jul Very surprised to find a Lunar Hornet Moth (*Sesia bembeciformis*) on a path at NMCC Granton - the first clearwing I had seen. DL
- 29-Jul On the Woodhall Dean outing I was interested to see Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*), Phacelia (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*) and Bifid Hart's Tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*). JL
-

AUGUST 2023

- 01-Aug Evening visit to Woodhall Dean with Natalie Todman and Lesley Fairweather to look for Purple Hairstreak (*Neozephyrus quercus*) as reported on Butterfly Conservation's East Scottish Butterflies FB group. Success – hawk-eyed Natalie spotted one flying in to rest on an Oak leaf. A Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) was also active, feeding above us. JMN
- 01-Aug A large number of Peacock butterflies seen near Danskine Loch. LB
- 06-Aug A Holly Blue seen in the back green along with a Speckled Wood. JM
- 08-Aug A Holly Blue seen at the top of Observatory Road where there is a wild garden. JM
- 11-Aug Along Balcarres Street Shaggy Soldier (*Galinsoga quadriradiata*) was growing. JL
- 15-Aug Two Holly Blues seen on Globe Thistle (*Echinops* sp) at Phantassie Farm, East Linton. JL
- 15-Aug Bawsinch NR Striated Earthstar (*Geastrum striatum*), mating Holly Blue (2nd generation). JMN
- 20-Aug At Musselburgh Lagoons on the old scrapes were Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) and Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). Also, there was a lovely view of a Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) as it slowly walked towards the tree belt. JMN
- 25-Aug A Square-spot Rustic (*Xestia xanthographa*) flew into my bathroom. Joanie identified it. JL
- 30-Aug Spent 10mins watching a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) on a wall on the opposite side of the Water of Leith between the Modern Art Museum and the viaduct. It didn't do much! MC&JM
-

SEPTEMBER 2023

- 05-Sep A veritable field of Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) seen in dunes at Aberlady NR, also Autumn Gentian (*Gentianella amarella*). There was Sea-buckthorn Bracket (*Fomitiporia hippophaeicola*) along the path leading to the Marl Loch. JMN
- 09-Sep A Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) was in Kinross Cemetery near Kirkgate Park, Loch Leven. JL
- 14-Sep Counted 8 Larch Ladybirds (*Aphidecta oblitterata*) on metal fence near Redford Bridge at Bavelaw Marsh, males pursuing females and mating. Watched David Chamberlain (RBGE), Kat O'Neil & Richard Kehoe (Nature Scot) searching the drained Bavelaw Marsh for the critically endangered Round-leaved Bryum (*Bryum cyclophyllum*) and the vulnerable Channelled Crystalwort (*Riccia canaliculata*). They were successful on both counts. JMN
- 20-Sep At least 6 dead Auks (*Alcidae* sp) - Guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and Razorbill (*Alca torda*) - found along the shoreline and a steady stream swimming into Findhorn Bay which is not normal for this time of year. This was reported to Defra and the cause of death/unusual behaviour was given as starvation. JMN
- 23-Sep In bright sunshine a very late Buddleia was in full flower on St Alban's Road - complete with about 12 Red Admirals feeding. They were the only butterflies I had seen on Buddleia this year. Are the trees and butterflies getting out of step with each other? JM&MC
- 25-Sep Fork-palped Harvestman (*Dicranopalpus ramosus*) spotted at Inverewe Gardens - easily recognised by its pedipalps which appear forked. This non-native opilone, now frequent in England, has spread across Europe from Morocco. JMN
- 28-Sep 6 Swallows were at Stonelaws on the John Muir Way, north of East Linton. These were the last I saw in 2023. Earlier that day I saw some Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) flowering in Binning Wood. JL

OCTOBER 2023

- 06-Oct Redlead Roundhead (*Leratiomyces ceres*) found at Edinburgh University's King's Buildings campus. This is a non-native species from Australia that has been moving gradually north from England. Also seen there and new to me were Goldleaf Shield (*Pluteus romellii*) and Weeping Widow (*Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*). It is a great place for fungi! JMN
- 07-Oct A live Death's-head Hawkmoth (*Acherontia atropos*) was brought to the Butterfly Conservation Autumn Gathering for everyone to look at. It had been found in a St Andrews garden. JMN
- 18-Oct Large number of Red Admiral butterflies on Ivy (*Hedera helix*) by the river near Polton.LB
- 21-Oct Around 80 Shaggy Inkcaps (*Coprinus comatus*) were growing on a small area of grass to the east of Buchanan House, East Suffolk Road. JL
-

NOVEMBER 2023

- 06-Nov Counted 3 out of the original flock of 50 Waxwings at Dalmeny Street Gardens, Leith. This is looking like a real irruption year with far more birds than in January, hundreds being seen throughout Scotland particularly in the NE with flock sizes of up to 200 birds. JMN
- 19-Nov Delighted to find a flock of 220 Waxwing, location previously advised on Twitter, at Whitehill Farm Road near Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh. JMN
- 22-Nov There were more mating Grey Squirrels in the garden again (see 13/2 entry). JMN
-

DECEMBER 2023

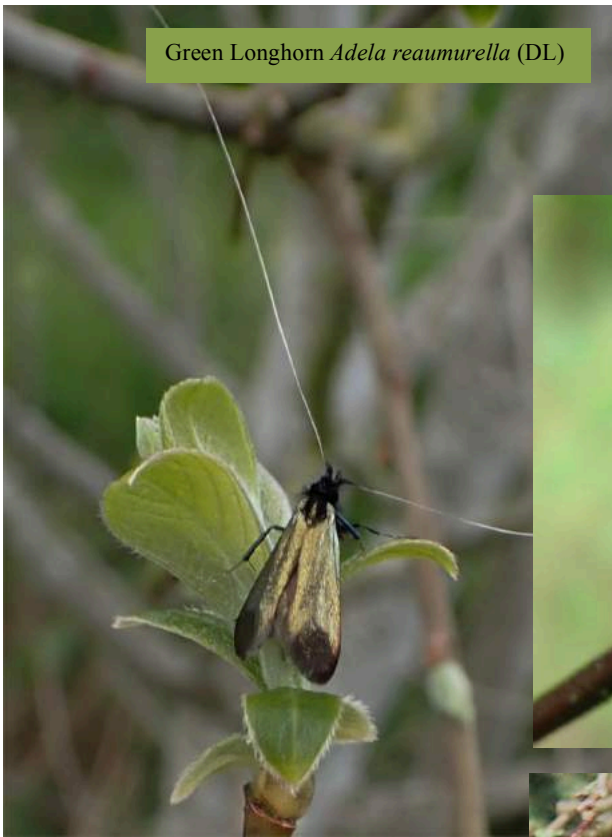
- 02-Dec Deep crisp and even snow at Portmoak was beautiful. A joint fungal foray was scheduled but sadly ENHS cancelled. ELFE went ahead and 6 of us found 25 species of fungi which was pretty good for December and the ground covered with snow. JMN
- 15-Dec For Cemetery Wildlife Watch and a first for that activity found a sac spider *Clubiona brevipe*. Only a handful of these have been recorded in Scotland. ID was confirmed by the Spider & Harvestmen Recording Scheme website. JMN
- 16-Dec Hawthorn Shieldbug (*Acanthomosa haemorrhoidale*) on a gravestone in Grange Cemetery. JL
- 22-Dec A fine display of nacreous clouds seen at sunrise today. JMN
- 29-Dec Found on the Nats post-Christmas walk exceptionally early female flower on Hazel. New to me was Narrow-leaved Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) with dark brown buds as opposed to the black buds of *Fraxinus excelsior*. JMN
- 31-Dec Some of the Hazels had female flowers on them in Hermitage of Braid. JL
- 31-Dec First year I've taken part in the New Year Plant Hunt. Today the back garden - I didn't manage to get out anywhere else - produced 3 species in flower - Spotted Dead-nettle (*Lamium maculatum*), Winter Jasmine (*Jasminium nudiflorum*) and a Viburnum sp. Snowdrops (*Galanthus* sp) are in bud but sadly they don't count. JMN.



Edinburgh Natural History Society
edinburghnaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

Green Longhorn *Adela reaumurella* (DL)

2023 MEMBERS SIGHTINGS



Alder Tongue Gall *Aphrina aldi* (LY)

Beautiful Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* (JMcN)



Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (LY)

Pebble Prominent *Notodonta ziczac* (DL)



Mottled Sedge eggs
Glyptotaelius pellucidus (JMcN)



Orange ladybird *Halysia sedecimguttata* (EB)

Nematus septentrionalis (JMcN)



Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus* (JMcN)



Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* (LY)



Heath Navel *Lichenomphalia umbellifera* (JMcN)



Rhingia campestris (DO)



Common Scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis* (LY)



Eider Duck *Somateria molissima* (LY)



Trifolium arvense (JD)



Red-legged Shieldbug *Pentatoma rufipes* (DL)



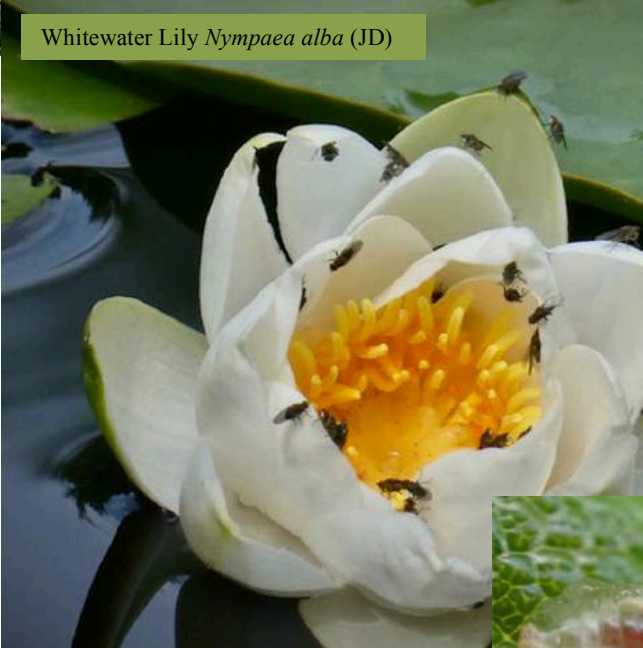
Silver Ground Carpet *Xanthorhoe Montanata* (DL)



Twite *Linaria flavirostris* (LY)



Whitewater Lily *Nymphaea alba* (JD)



Episyrphus balteatus (JMcN)



Dog Stinkhorn *Mutinus caninus* (JMcN)



Brown Hare *Lepus Europaeus* (LY)



Atlantoraphidia maculicollis (DL)

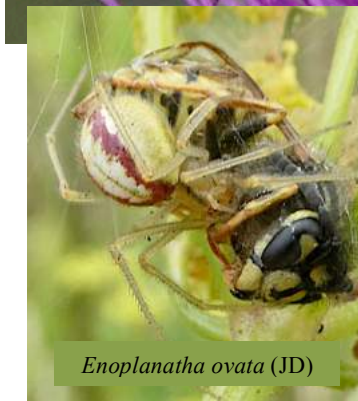




Eristalis intricarius (DO)



Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae* (JD)



Enoplanatha ovata (JD)



Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* (LY)



Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (JMcN)



Tachina fera (DL)



Scarlet Elf Cup *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (EB)



Hairy Shieldbug nymph *Dolycoriscus buccarum* (DL)



Eyed Ladybird *Anatis ocellata* (DL)