

# Autumn 2013 NEWSLETTER



Scottish  
Wildlife  
Trust



*Adult female palmate newt*  
© Anna Lechtenboerger

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



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**Chairman's News**

I started writing this editorial while visiting Monte Sybilline National Park in the Apennines of Italy this July. What a fabulous place this is to ramble through; mountains, forests, mediaeval villages and fabulous wildlife. There are already wolves, wildcats and bear in this rugged landscape and the park authorities have recently reintroduced the almost extinct Apennine chamois and, interestingly, the red deer. Well at least here they already have predators to control them. My wife and I were also surprised to see that dogs accompany flocks of sheep as their protectors and somewhat taken aback to be confronted by one on a mountain track when we got too close to his charges. I imagine our experiences reflected a strong policy to ensure a wide diversity of wildlife and continued use of resources by local communities.

It reminds me that the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, refreshed and re-launched by the Scottish Government in June, has the intent to better protect and improve our biodiversity (an ambition the previous strategy had managed only partly to address) by making sure that the value of the benefits we derive from nature are taken into account in the way we manage the environment. I hope this new way of thinking works! It is worth looking over the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy which can be seen at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5538/0>

**Roger Owen - Chair Aberdeen Member Centre****Update from the Reserves Manager****Red Moss of Netherley**

Management agreements with neighbouring owners of SSSI is still on going, though progressing slowly. Team from Dundee have strimmed the path and started work inserting further dams on SWT land. This is work funded by SRDP. I had to mark out and survey a walk through where this work is taking place, so if you are out there and come across what seems like random poles stuck into the

ground, please leave them there! Nick and Rose are still getting good results from their camera trap

### **Coulnacraig Meadow**

The meadow is due to be cut and raked at the end of August by the team from Dundee

### **Gight Wood**

Our contractor for the footpath maintenance has been helping us with some other tasks, such as replacing the blue reserve signs with more natural looking wooden signs. He is also cutting some of the bracken in an attempt to open up the ground for native tree regeneration. Another contractor will be felling some of the larger sycamores on the reserve over the winter months. I am hoping to offer Mike Stevens a contract to remove non-native regenerating saplings from the wood along with a small amount of hazel coppice. Mike has been helping us out with some maintenance on a voluntary basis.

I noticed on my last visit that the squirrel bridge had snapped. Not sure if/how we can repair this. A survey of the bridges by Forestry commission engineers has found a few problems, which we will have to try and find funding for in order to carry out.

### **Longhaven Cliffs**

Again our contractor has been carrying out footpath maintenance work. Mike Stevens has also carried out some voluntary work. Someone dumped around two dozen car tyres at the car park, however with the help of a nice lady from Aberdeenshire Council and local member Ben Mellor we managed to get them removed at no cost to the Trust. I have had a report that the cliff has collapsed undermining fencing at back of the quarry, however this is not on the footpath and Mike has erected a fence to stop people entering the area.

As always I am happy to answer any questions. It is easiest to contact me at [rpotter@swt.org.uk](mailto:rpotter@swt.org.uk)

Rab Potter  
Reserves Manager North East  
e-mail [rpotter@swt.org.uk](mailto:rpotter@swt.org.uk)

## Outing Report

### Amphibian and Reptile Summer Outing at John Hutton Institute Aberdeen

by Hollie Walker

I and eleven other wildlife enthusiasts had a fantastic day at the James Hutton Institute learning about Reptiles and Amphibians. The workshop was hosted by Rose Toney from North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership and presented by Trevor Rose from Friends of Angus Herpetofauna part of the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (accompanied by his daughter Abi) presented a fantastic workshop.

The day started with tea and coffee indoors ahead of Trevor's wonderfully informative classroom session and then, after some lunch we went out to the pond to test out some of our newly acquired skills.

The classroom session was comprehensive, covering everything from amphibian and reptile identification, habitat assessment, survey methods, recording, health and safety, licensing, and landowner permissions. Trevor provided an information pack to each attendee, with great reference materials including ID guides, leaflets, posters and a survey pack. We discovered interesting facts such as Aberdeenshire being home to the common lizard, slow worm, adder, common frog, common toad, palmate newt and rare sightings of the smooth newt. The UK holds 13 native species of reptiles and amphibians.



After lunch it was out to the pond and into the glorious sunshine, each of us equipped with a net and wellies. The nets were kindly lent to us by the University of Aberdeen for the day. The afternoon was a chance to test out what we had been taught in

the morning. And, as you can see from the photos, we managed to find a few palmate newts of all ages, along with a large variety of invertebrates. You can check out the fantastic YouTube video taken on the day at <http://youtu.be/s7lywWA8dT4> by Colette Jones.





We were able to see first-hand what Trevor had told us earlier about telling newt eggs apart; that palmate newt eggs are brown and great crested newt (GNC) eggs are white. They are usually found within leaves that have been folded by the newt for protection (see photo). We managed to find some brown eggs, but we also started to find some white

eggs in one area of the pond. Trevor was very surprised by this because the GCN were not thought to be so far north!

Rose and Trevor were obviously keen to investigate further, so we agreed to get a small group together in June to do some torch surveying one evening. The water was considerably lower on our second visit due to the prolonged dry spell; however we still managed to find some newts and a frog. All of the newts we found were palmate newts, however there were a large number of very light, almost albino palmates, which may explain the white eggs (see photo). This may have occurred as a result of offspring from just one albino female as the eggs were in close proximity, however there were a number of adults that did appear very light in colour when torching. So, no Great Crested Newts or Smooth newts that's not surprising considering they are equally as uncommon in Aberdeenshire.



The plan now is to further verify the populations in April next year when the pond is easier to survey and there will be more adults, so watch this space!

If you want to find out more information on the Friends of Angus Herpetofauna or would like to start surveying for Reptile and Amphibians yourself please check out the following websites:

<http://groups.arguk.org/fah/>

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

*Photos: Top left- Adult female palmate newt © Anna Lechtenboerger. Top right- Male palmate newt © Colette Jones. Bottom left- Folded grass with possible albino palmate egg inside © Anna Lechtenboerger. Bottom right- Possible albino palmate larvae next to normal larvae from torch survey © Trevor Rose*

### **Practical volunteering with Scottish Wildlife Trust**

Duncan Budge has been running a very successful and productive practical conservation work group in Dundee for nearly 20 years. His group undertakes a wide range of practical conservation tasks on reserves in Tayside, Angus, Autumn 2013

Perthshire, South Aberdeenshire and Fife. We are particularly keen to work with locally based volunteers who can spare a day or more a week and who are looking to get involved with our work over the longer term. This is an invitation to work with Duncan's team. In return, we can offer the opportunity to;

- Enjoy an interesting range of work on a wide variety of sites
- Learn more about conservation and reserve management and learn new skills
- Make new friends
- Keep active and enjoy the outdoors

We offer all tools & equipment, transport to and from the worksites (from Dundee) and we will reimburse your travel expenses to our team base.

For those who wish to commit to our work for the longer term we can offer the option to get training/get work related clothing.

If you are interested please contact Duncan direct [dbudge@swt.org.uk](mailto:dbudge@swt.org.uk) or 01382 205558.

### **Planning Volunteers Workshop – 4 December 2013**

Scottish Wildlife Trusts Planning Volunteers Workshop will be held on 4 December 2013. The exact location needs to be confirmed but it will be held in Edinburgh. The programme will include: a “master class” workshop going through a planning application piece by piece using PowerPoint, a talk from a SNH representative to discuss licensing, a talk from a Forestry Commission representative to discuss forest management plans, a talk from a Scottish Government representative to discuss the new National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy, a representative from PAWS to discuss wildlife crime and planning related issues and finally planning volunteer case studies. The details need to be finalised by Headquarters. The final programme will be put on our website. If anybody is interested in attending please contact Roger in the first instance.

### **Delivery of the newsletter**

At the AGM in April we pointed out that we could no longer afford the cost of posting out the Aberdeen MC newsletter to all our members. It was agreed that we would instead email it out to all members except to those who specifically request a paper copy or to those who do not have an email address. So this edition of the newsletter has been emailed to most of our membership. Please let us know by telephoning one of the committee members (numbers on the back of the newsletter) if you still want a copy by post. If you have received this copy by post and are willing to receive future copies by email please let us know by

emailing Gavin (the address is on the back of the newsletter). A copy of this newsletter is also available online through [www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/)

### **RSPB Friends of Strathbeg – Bird Food Sales**

Due to fluctuating prices, it has been impossible to include a Price List with this newsletter. Latest prices and orders forms will be available to download from the SWT website: [www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/](http://www.swtaberdeen.org.uk/)

## **Winter Talks 2013/2014**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012**  
**Badgers: a tribute to Mike Harris**  
**Eric Jensen**

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013**  
**What makes our citizen science buzz; photo submissions and online identification of our bumblebees**  
**Dr Rene Van de Wal – Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES)**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014**  
**New Local Nature Conservation Sites in Aberdeenshire**  
**Judith Cox (Aberdeenshire Council)**

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014**  
**Designing a Marine SPA (Special Protection Area) network in the UK**  
**Julie Black (Joint Nature Conservation Committee)**

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014**  
**Pearls in Peril – securing the future of the freshwater pearl mussel in Great Britain**  
**Chris Daphne – River Watcher**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014**  
**AGM then**  
**Wildlife Surveying for everybody**  
**Rose Toney LBAP co-ordinator**

All meetings take place at: Main Lecture Theatre, Zoology Building, University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Avenue, at 7.30 pm. For further details contact: Rodney Payne 01569 763742. Tea and coffee (and tray bakes!) afterwards £1.00.

**Raffle Prizes****Gavin Forrest**

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

**Contacts for Members**

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