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marine nature reserves, bathing water quality, coastal litter and coral reef destruction to endocrine disrupting chemicals, over-fishing, offshore renewable energy and environmental impacts of finfish culture. Hard-won successes include achieving a ban on TBT anti-fouling paints on boats; helping gain protection for the magnificent Basking Shark under the Wildlife and Countryside Act; and influencing international and UK government policy on bathing water quality, oil pollution and port waste disposal. As the UK charity dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its wildlife, MCS has also maintained an active Scottish presence over the years.

MCS Scotland

An awareness-raising post, funded from 2000-2003 by Scottish Natural Heritage, The Bank of Scotland and The Robertson Trust, has enabled the Marine Conservation Society to bring the wonders of Scotland's sea life to dive clubs, schools, environment fairs, universities and industry throughout Scotland. With such a rich and varied marine environment, the 'task' has been a joy.

Representing over 75% of her jurisdictional area, Scotland's seas support:

- An enormous range of marine habitats - sea-lochs to sea-caves;
- 13,000 species of marine flora and fauna - opisthobranchs to Orcas;
- 71% of the UK fishery – Lerwick to Eyemouth;
- a burgeoning yet inadequately regulated aquaculture industry and;
- an oil industry expanding into the North Atlantic.



Beaches to Basking Sharks

An Introduction to the Marine Conservation Society

Calum Duncan

Marine Conservation Officer for Scotland

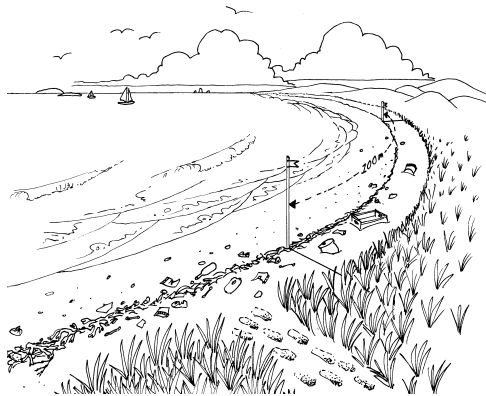
Over the last two decades the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) has led the way on issues oceanic and coastal, from

However, escapes and pollution from farmed salmon, toxic algal blooms, overexploitation of commercial fish stocks, destruction of ancient deepwater coral, radioactive hotspots, littered beaches and sewage pollution make regular news.

It is all very well spelling out some of the pressures facing our seas without providing interested pro-active people with the means to do something about it. Above and below the waves, MCS coordinates several community marine conservation schemes that BRISC members may be interested in – *Beachwatch*, *Adopt-a-Beach*, *Seasearch* and *Basking Shark and Turtle Watch*.

Beachwatch

Marine and beach litter, including plastic bags, cotton-bud sticks and fishing line, can have a wide range of impacts: thoughtless disposal can harm or kill wildlife, reduce the aesthetic quality of beaches, spoil fish catches and even damage human health and property. *Beachwatch* is an annual UK-wide beach litter survey and clean-up, organised by MCS since 1993 to provide a snapshot of the sources and amounts of marine litter around the UK coast. Now celebrating its 10th year, *Beachwatch* has become the most extensive monitoring programme in Europe for coastal and marine litter, and thousands of volunteers join the nationwide war on litter each year. As I write, *Beachwatch 2002* is imminent and looks set to be one of the biggest yet. The data gathered from *Beachwatch* is published by MCS and used to raise awareness of the impacts of litter and promote measures to reduce litter at source. To view the Beachwatch 2001 report please visit www.mcsuk.org and click on *Beachwatch*.



Adopt-a-Beach

Beachwatch is the flagship autumn event of the *Adopt-a-Beach* project. By adopting their favourite stretch of beach, conducting seasonal litter surveys and extending the litter monitoring throughout the year, communities are providing even more detailed information to help MCS turn the tide on litter both locally and nationally. Both *Adopt-a-Beach* and *Beachwatch* surveys involves recording every item of litter found on a representative 100m stretch of the chosen beach or, if shorter than 100m, the entire beach. Easy-to-use tally forms are provided categorising over 90 litter items. Whilst not biological recording *per se*, the obvious beach ecology and by-catch issues relating to marine litter may inspire some coastal BRISC members to get involved. Please log on to www.adopt-a-beach.org.uk for further details.

Seasearch

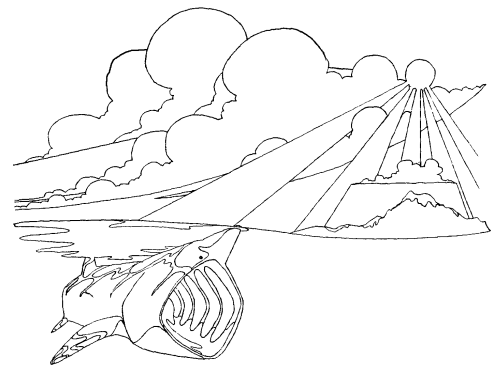
For those lucky enough to delve beneath the waves and explore the colourful biological treasures hidden there,

Seasearch is just the ticket. *Seasearch* is a volunteer underwater habitat survey project for recreational SCUBA divers. With over 16,000km of coastline there is still much to learn about Scotland’s underwater scenery and wildlife. Our invaluable eyes beneath the sea, recreational divers are privy



to alien biodiversity hidden from most by the sea’s veil. By recording very simple information – depth, time, latitude, longitude, species and habitats - they can make a valuable contribution to marine conservation. Since 2000, MCS Scotland has facilitated and help coordinate *Seasearch* expeditions to Loch Torridon, Loch Goil, Loch Nevis, Loch Roag in Lewis, Cape Wrath and the Isle of May, and trained divers in *Seasearch* techniques in St Abbs, North

Berwick, Macduff and Shetland. Although at first the idea of biological recording underwater is intimidating to some, *Seasearch* can be as simple or involved as participants wish, from a single dive to a week-long expedition. In fact, provided accurate position fixing, time, depth and simple habitat recording is carried out, “any dive can be a *Seasearch* dive”. Visit www.seasearch.org.uk for further details.



Basking Shark

Basking Shark and Turtle Watch

Readers may already be familiar with *Basking Shark Watch* - a sightings scheme launched by MCS in 1987 encouraging those that live, work or holiday on or near the sea to report Basking Shark location, behaviour and size on dedicated recording cards. Since project inception, MCS has collated 4,220 records cataloguing 17,424 shark sightings, enabling mapping of geographical and temporal variation in surface sightings in UK coastal waters. Hotspots are apparent

around the coast of Cornwall and Devon, the Isle of Man, the Isle of Arran and, to a lesser extent, around the Hebrides. In 1998, the *Basking Shark Watch* database helped secure protection for the world's second largest fish in UK waters under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Readers who visited the Scottish Wildlife and Countryside fair this year may have collected from the biodiversity tent an updated *Basking Shark Watch* card. In keeping with the lead partner status of MCS on the UK Marine Turtles BAP, there is now scope to record sightings of leatherback and hardshell (Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill etc) turtles on the card. This may come as a surprise to many. However cold-adapted leatherbacks are deliberate summer visitors to NE Atlantic waters, following the Gulf Stream to gorge on their staple diet – jellyfish.



Wolf Fish

Don't forget, the Marine Conservation Society also produce the *Good Beach Guide*, the UK's leading independent guide to bathing water quality, the *Good Fish Guide*, the ultimate consumer guide to eating 'eco-friendly' fish, and the invaluable *UK Marine Conservation Action Guide*.

Please visit www.mcsuk.org to find out more about the work of the Marine Conservation Society or contact Calum Duncan on 0131 226 6360 and mcs.scotland@care4free.net.
(All four illustrations copyright Calum Duncan)



PLANTLIFE

Plantlife Scotland: branching out

Deborah Long

Conservation Officer, Plantlife Scotland

Plantlife – The Wild Plant Conservation Charity - is a UK wide independent charity dedicated to conserving native plants in their habitats. Based in London, Plantlife now also employs two full-time outposted officers, Trevor Dines in

Wales and Deborah Long in Scotland. The aim of these two posts is to extend Plantlife's work in Scotland and Wales. I now work alongside Michael Scott, Plantlife Scotland Coordinator, who retains his role in policy and membership.

Current Plantlife campaigns

Every year, Plantlife runs a number of campaigns, hoping to get more people actually involved in the world of plant conservation: these are all part of our 'Making it Count for People and Plants' project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Earlier in 2002, Plantlife ran the 'Common Plants Survey'. This aims to provide baseline data to track changes in the distribution and status of 65 of our most common plants, much like the 'Breeding Bird Survey' (British Trust for Ornithology, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Joint Nature Conservancy Council). Started in 2000, the Common Plant Survey was conducted across the UK, although with only 17 sites in Scotland, most of them in West Lothian. In 2001, the project was postponed because of Foot and Mouth restrictions. Data from the 200 responses across the UK this year are currently being put into a database for analysis later in the autumn. Results from this second phase will be included in Plantlife's Making it Count for People and Plants annual report, due to be published in March 2003. Further details will be available on our web site at www.plantlife.org.uk. The next Common Plant Survey will be launched in Spring 2003.

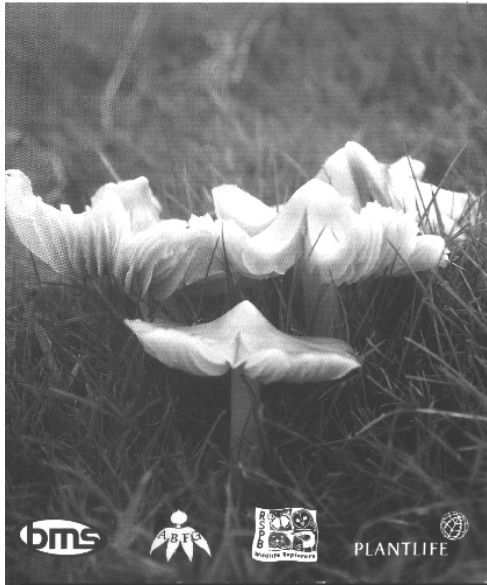
However, not everyone wants to devote themselves to a common plants survey and, to encourage as wide participation as possible, Plantlife also runs, every year, single species surveys. These are aimed at non-specialists and are also suitable for schools and youth groups. In the summer this year, we ran the 'Counting Cranesbills' campaign, asking people across the UK to record where they saw populations of three of our native cranesbills and to describe the habitat and extent of the populations. Last month, along with the British Mycological Society, Association of British Fungus Groups, and RSPB, we launched our new survey, the 'Pink Waxcap Survey', where people are asked to record where they find one of three very distinctive waxcaps, the Pink Waxcap (*Hygrocybe calyptriformis*), the Parrot Waxcap (*Hygrocybe psittacina*) and the Blackening Waxcap (*Hygrocybe conica*). The Pink Waxcap is one of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan species about which we still have very little information, and we hope this survey will help us pin down its distribution across UK. The other two waxcaps are more common species but also grow in grassland habitats. Plantlife aims to launch a single species survey every year, both to encourage participation and to collect data about the distribution of some of our rare and more common plants.

One other project in which we are encouraging people to become involved is our 'County Flowers' project. The aim of this project is to get people thinking about plants and what they mean for their local area and areas they have visited. We hope that by the end of voting on 1 December 2002, people will have identified a flower emblem for each county

across the UK that they feel embodies their county and that they will be proud to use as a county emblem.

Both the Pink Waxcap survey and the County Flowers project can be found on our website and on-line participation is encouraged. If paper copies of the survey form and the voting form are required, then the Plantlife hotline can be used, leaving your name and address on 0207 808 0118.

THE PINK WAXCAP SURVEY



Back from the Brink

'Back from the Brink' is Plantlife's main conservation initiative. It is a programme of practical action, aimed at specific plants and their habitats threatened by extinction. Back from the Brink work is firmly linked to the national biodiversity initiative, with its emphasis on measurable targets and multi-disciplinary partnerships.

In Scotland, we have 59 species within Back from the Brink, 51 for which Plantlife is the Lead Partner in the Biodiversity Action Plan process. Back from the Brink incorporates research collaborations with universities, national surveys, programmes of volunteer management action, producing and disseminating management advice and conducting a range of biological monitoring programmes. As part of the national biodiversity action programme, we work with other Lead Partners and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Officers across Scotland, providing support, information and advice on our listed species.

This year, we have five priority species in Scotland: Juniper, Twinflower, Pillwort, Irish Lady's Tresses, and a group of Hydroid fungi, although I am also setting up strategies for all species included in the Back from the Brink programme, drawing together information and collating research, survey data, and providing advice. Once these mechanisms are in place, attention will turn to establishing volunteer

programmes for practical action, probably in 2003-4, as part of our 'Flora Guardians' initiative.

Plantlife Scotland can be contacted at:

Plantlife Scotland
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
20a Inverleith Row
Edinburgh
EH3 5LR

TEL. 0131 248 2859

FAX. 0131 248 2901

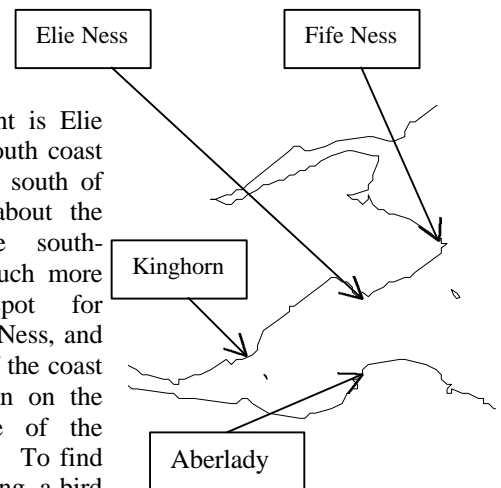
Email: deborah.long@plantlife.org.uk

website www.plantlife.org.uk

Passerine migration at Elie Ness

Chris Smout

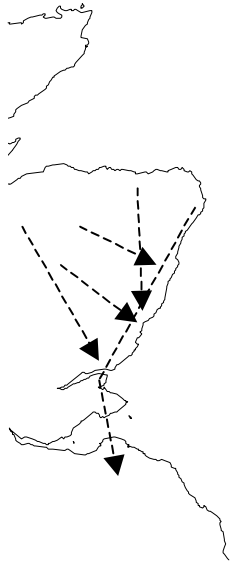
Watching diurnal passerine migration has gone out of fashion among birdwatchers. Many go in for twitching rarities, some for sea-watching, combing the local patch, or doing useful census work for the BTO and the WWT. But much can be learnt and much fun can be had by scanning the heavens for little birds, in the right place and in the right time.



My watch point is Elie Ness, on the south coast of Fife, 17kms south of St Andrews, about the same distance south-west of the much more famous hot-spot for rarities at Fife Ness, and 13kms north of the coast of East Lothian on the opposite shore of the Firth of Forth. To find a narrow crossing, a bird would have to follow the Fife coast west for over 30kms, and cross at Kinghorn. I came to appreciate its potential in 1997, after going there on 7 September a little after dawn and seeing 737 Meadow Pipits pass in an hour, heading out to sea in the teeth of a substantial south-westerly breeze. Since then I have watched it in every year. It is boring in spring, and only wakes up in the last week of August. From then until the first week of November it is absorbing, though in no year have I been able to watch it consistently without a break of a couple of weeks. It still produces good records until the start of the New Year.

The best time to watch is the hour after dawn. Some birds move later, like Skylarks, and some come at least throughout the morning, like the hirundines. Ideal conditions are either windless or with a headwind from the south or southwest, up to force 4. Anything stronger than force 5 brings the

migration to a halt, or at least diverts it westwards along the coast, but a breeze or very light, damp drizzle brings the birds down to a lower flight path and makes them easier to see. Northwest winds are less good, and a northerly is hopeless – then the birds either fly too high or circle on reaching the coast. Anything northeast, east or south-east, above force 1, also presents a problem. The pipits at least, in these circumstances, turn and fly northeast into the wind along the coast, many apparently ending up grounded at Fife Ness. I fancy that a few of the rarities for which Fife Ness is famous arrive in this way, having made a landfall to the north and coasted down southwards before turning north-east. A Red-throated Pipit there in 1998 was part of a gathering of Meadow Pipits, and these had been streaming northeast for days over our house at Anstruther, half way between Elie Ness and Fife Ness, in a spell of easterly weather.



What will trigger a big movement is hard to predict, but sometimes it seems that a spell of blustery southwest winds and rain, followed by slightly better weather, brings the largest numbers. Maybe it concentrates birds along the Scottish East Coast, and they then move south, passing over St Andrews but missing out the detour to Fife Ness where little diurnal passerine movement is ever seen. This would bring them straight over Elie

Ness. In still weather their direction is usually south, in a southwesterly breeze usually southwest (but drift could then still bring them towards the shortest crossing of the Firth of Forth). Even so, many birds still hesitate and circle when they pass the shore out to sea, and a few come back. I suspect that the reason why so many birds move in the first hour after dawn is that they arrived on the south coast of Fife late in the previous afternoon, and chose to feed, rest and roost overnight before crossing the sea. Even under good conditions, but more in westerlies and north-westerlies, a proportion choose to follow the coast in a westerly direction and avoid the crossing.

By far the commonest birds to see are Meadow Pipits. On 10 September 2000, one memorable morning with no wind and a touch of drizzle, following a spell of unfavourable winds, I estimated that 4,340 pipits flew over in an hour. Only on one subsequent occasion, though, have their numbers exceeded 1000 an hour. Other common species are Pied Wagtails (max. 131 an hour), Linnets (max. 277 an hour), Goldfinches (max. 96 an hour) and Swallows (max. 214 an hour). Also quite regular are Reed Buntings (max. 36 an hour), Greenfinches (max. 20 an hour), Redpolls (max. 10 an hour), Twite (max. 12 an hour) and Grey Wagtails (max. 9 an hour). I have seen Tree Sparrows on several occasions (max. 30 an

hour) and, on occasion such unexpected travelers as Rooks, Jackdaws, Carrion Crows, Dunnocks, and Mistle Thrushes. Starlings, Skylarks, House Martins and Sand Martins pass, but seldom or never in three figures, and Chaffinches seem to fly very high – I have never even seen 10 in an hour, but I may hear them. Some birds are irregular: Woodpigeons appeared only in two years, but once managed 400 an hour. Bramblings and Siskins occur annually in very small numbers, but I have yet to see a movement of Redwings or Fieldfares. Merlin, Sparrowhawk, Common Snipe and Tree Pipit come into the category of five or less a year, and birds recorded three times or less in five years include Snow Bunting, Lapland Bunting, Short-eared Owl, Hobby (snatching a Meadow Pipit in flight), Yellow Wagtail, and Crossbill. Other non-passerine occasionals have included Black-tailed Godwit and Stint. Geese, of course, are regular: sometimes flocks of Pinkfeet fly over from their roost at Aberlady Bay to feed, up to 30kms distance, on fields in the East Neuk of Fife. I am not really involved in seawatching, but various skuas and divers, Little Auks, Leaches Petrels and a Mediterranean Gull have been seen passing the Ness in this period.

The visible migration of passerines remains the phenomenon that I find the most fascinating. It will be seen from this list that almost all the migrants that I see are probably Scottish-bred birds moving south. Some would think this rather prosaic, but nothing to do with migration is anything less than mysterious to contemplate and thrilling to watch.

Chris Smout

[The maps have been produced using DMAP – ed.]

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Following the appointment of Alan Cameron, our Development Officer, BRISC has become much more active. It has long been a top priority for BRISC to see a network of fully functioning Local Records Centres for Scotland, and towards this end Alan has spent four busy months meeting the LRC managers and working with them to complete a first consultation round assessing the current situation. The information gleaned will form the basis for a report to Scottish Natural Heritage and will be used in further discussions with LRCs on enhancing their capacity. Alan also organised a LRC workshop in September, to provide a coherent structure within which LRCs can plan their development, and to provide a model on which LRC partners can develop policy, as well as providing a forum for discussion. A report of the workshop is available by contacting Alan (see backpage of newsletter for details).

It is BRISC's view that LRCs are in a unique position to provide a local focus for wildlife and habitat information; to work closely with and support the local recording community; and on the basis of this to deliver valuable inputs into the Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the local Planning System. In order to provide these functions,

however, LRCs need to have adequate and competent staff to process and analyse data and to respond quickly to queries. For this they need a measure of financial security, for instance through service level agreements with users, in particular with their local authorities and with Scottish Natural Heritage, but also with other potential partners who need such information. It is very heartening to note that the Heritage Lottery Fund (see article below) is now much more positive towards supporting biodiversity initiatives. We can be grateful to the National Biodiversity Network, who has long been lobbying for this.

The importance of data provision is clearly recognised by SNH who has recently set up a new Data Unit, based at Battleby. The unit is headed by Alan McKirdy, and Geoff Johnson, who is part of the unit and NBN coordinator, has been co-opted to BRISC committee in place of Jeanette Hall. At this point I should like to express our sincere gratitude to Jeanette for her substantial input into the work of the committee over the last two years. Her advice and support has been very much appreciated and we wish her well in her new post as Woodland Advisor.

Several events have been arranged for members this winter. On Saturday 7 December we have a special morning with the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh to examine their internationally famous herbarium. See the special notice for this day on page 9. Numbers have been restricted to 12 on a first come first served basis, so do reserve your place early to avoid disappointment.

Tuesday 21 January has been earmarked for a seminar at Perth Museum or possibly at Battleby, on the technical aspects of the National Biodiversity Network. Important developments have taken place in this areas of the NBN since the launch in Scotland just one year ago, and we feel it would greatly benefit members to be kept up-to-date regarding these. It is also intended to formally launch our own three-year development project at this event, celebrating with a glass of wine. A booking form will be included with the next mailing, but you can reserve a place already now by contacting me on 01333 310330 email amsmout@aol.com or Alan Cameron on 01786 474061 email brisc@btcv.org.uk

Our annual conference and AGM is fixed for Saturday 22 February 2003 at the Burrell Collection at Glasgow, a venue which has proved very popular in the past. The topic is 'Trends and Change'. Seven excellent speakers have already been signed up, and the full programme and booking form will be included with the January mailing, and also be available from the website.

Those of you who had booked to attend the day on Integrated Habitat Systems at Perth Museum on 19 September, will be relieved to hear that Bill Butcher is now back to work, apparently none the worse for his unplanned head-on collision with a cricket ball. Bill says how very sorry he was to have let people down and would like re-arrange the seminar later this season.

The big issue exercising conservationists in the last few months has been the drafting of a Biodiversity Strategy. As

members will know, this arose out the first Scottish Biodiversity Forum back in February 2002, when Alan Wilson, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, asked the Forum to produce a Strategy for Scotland's biodiversity. The time scale was tight: a draft Strategy was to be ready to launch for consultation at the next Forum meeting in February 2003. A Steering Group was formed, with representation from a wide range of bodies including NGOs and chaired by Jane Dalglish (SEERAD). Recognising the need for the widest possible consultation, a series of workshops and seminars were organised in August (as advertised in the last issue of this newsletter) on Conservation Priorities, Marine & Coastal, Landuse, Business & Development, and People. An Integration Seminar was held at Battleby on 2 October, and we are now awaiting the full draft for further consultation later this year. Some people who were present on 2 October expressed unease that the focus of the strategy seems to be hi-jacked by awareness-raising and education, rather than any actual conservation. We shall have to wait and see what the draft comes up with before we can judge. I don't envy Sarah Hochnell, Scottish Biodiversity Project Officer, who has to pull all those strands together into a document less than 20 pages long.

BRISC has throughout the process stressed the critical need for monitoring and access to quality data to be part of the strategy – because otherwise, how can we know whether the strategy has the desired effect? And even if trained volunteers can be induced to do much of the data collection, it should not be forgotten that there are serious cost implications in processing the data, quality control, and making the resulting information readily available. These things require time and technical skills, which cannot come for free, and this badly needs to be recognised across the board and especially by the Scottish Executive.

As you know, we have been working on producing a directory to the Scottish Natural History Societies and allied groups, to be a companion volume to the 'Source Book'. It has proved quite testing to get all the material together, but we are now nearly there. We hope to have it with the printer by the end of October, but because we are getting a special deal (thanks to Perth & Kinross Council), it may be early January before it is actually ready for distribution. More about that in the next newsletter

Thank you to all who have renewed their subscription and even better, signed a banker's order form. For anyone who has not renewed, this will sadly be the last newsletter you will receive from BRISC. We have no wish to lose you, but regrettably we cannot afford the production and mailing out of the newsletters without receiving your subscription in return. However, there is still time. Please contact Lesley Brown, our membership secretary c/o CARSE, Smith Museum, Dumbarton Road, Stirling tel 01786 446008 email carse@carsec.freeseerve.co.uk

Anne-Marie Smout

National Biodiversity Network



HLF Guidance Notes for Biodiversity Grants

Since 1995 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has been distributing funds from the National Lottery to help organisations of all sizes achieve successful projects across the whole range of heritage. 'Heritage' includes many different things that have been, and can be, passed on from one generation to another, for example records and collections held in museums or archives, or the countryside, habitats and priority species identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Many aspects of the National Biodiversity Network programme meet the aims of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Therefore in 1999 the consortium of voluntary and public sector organisations which ultimately formed the NBN Trust, worked together to produce a framework document aimed at national recording schemes, societies and Local Record Centres titled 'Nature at your fingertips'. This framework document was designed for NBN related projects wishing to seek Heritage Lottery Funds. In particular it was for projects that were likely to be seeking support to promote and increase public access to reliable biodiversity information throughout the UK.

'Nature at your fingertips' was received by the HLF Trustees in March 2000 and the HLF agreed in principle to consider applications for funding projects that helped to grow the NBN.

In April 2002 the HLF completed its Strategic Review setting out how they aim to distribute Lottery funding over the next five years.

In light of this, the NBN Trust worked with staff at the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce a joint set of guidance notes, taking into account the changes following the Strategic Review but still incorporating previous agreements and policy decisions.

The notes identify the criteria and objectives of both organisations and are to be used in conjunction with the 'Your Heritage' application pack for grants between £500 and £50k and the 'Heritage Grants' application pack for grants of £50k or more, produced and distributed by HLF. The notes also update and integrate the 'Nature at Your Fingertips' document.

It is hoped that the notes will not only benefit prospective applicants but also HLF caseworkers, ensuring a consistent approach from both sides.

For your free copy of the HLF Guidance Notes please visit the NBN Trust web site or contact the Secretariat direct at support@nbn.org.uk.

Fundraising

Due to increasing budget constraints, the NBN Trust has unfortunately had to take the decision to stop providing free fundraising support. However Rosie Garwood, previously the NBN Trust's Business Development Manager, is still available to contact on a freelance basis and has ample knowledge of the NBN and the HLF funding procedures. Rosie's details are featured at the end of this article.

When making an application to the HLF it is worth noting where NBN Trust advice or documentation has been used; for example the Linking Local Record Centre publications, the Linking National Societies & Schemes general guidance notes, or the 'Nature at Your Fingertips' document. (Further details of these publications are available by contacting the NBN Trust Secretariat).

When applications are submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund, it would be advisable to inform the NBN Trust Secretariat about the project via e-mail. Unfortunately the NBN Trust is unable to give open letters of support for projects, but it will respond to requests for comment on applications when made by a HLF casework officer. Past experience has shown that the HLF will seek confirmation that the applicant has indeed been in contact with NBN Trust and whether the project is in accordance with NBN Trust aims/ guidance etc.

Further information

For further information regarding HLF Grants please contact:

Heritage Lottery Fund Head Office
7 Holbein Place
London, SW1W 8NR
Tel 020 7591 6000
Fax 030 7591 6001
Web www.hlf.org.uk

For fundraising advice (available on a freelance basis) please contact:

Rosie Garwood
Tel 01509 560484
E-mail rosie.garwood@ntlworld.com

To receive your free copy of the HLF/NBN Trust Guidance Notes please contact

Joanne Payne
NBN Trust Secretariat
Tel 01636 670090
Fax 01636 670001
E-mail j.payne@nbn.org.uk
Web www.nbn.org.uk

Butterfly Monitoring Workshop 6th December 2002

Do you carry out, or organise butterfly monitoring? Then you may be interested in a workshop to be held by Butterfly Conservation (Scotland) in Perth on 6th December.

The aim of the day is to make sure that the data provided by current butterfly monitoring recorders is being put to full use. Presentations will show results from the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme, how data is organised, and how to use the "Transect Walker" software, which is available free from Butterfly Conservation's website and allows the easy flow of data from the recorders to the data analysers. In addition, the workshop will be able to bring together the current situation as regards to butterfly transect recording in Scotland, and identify the gaps or areas where more support is needed.

The workshop will be led by Dr. Tom Brereton (Butterfly Conservation) and Nick Greatorex-Davies (Centre of Ecology and Hydrology). It is open to anyone interested and is free of charge.

Booking forms will have been sent out by 18th October. If you do not receive one and would like to attend, please contact Butterfly Conservation on 01786 447753.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I read Alex Lockton's news from the BSBI in the previous issue of *BRISC Recorder News* with interest but was surprised to learn that bird data could swamp LRCs and would be difficult to interpret.

Whatever the present position of the BTO on sharing bird survey data, decisions about site conservation status cannot be made on the basis of non-effort related vascular plant data alone. Equally, habitat data in the form of Phase 1 or NVC give little or no reliable indication of site status even for lower plant communities, let alone anything else. Surely what is needed is as broad a range of data for as many different groups as possible. BTO bird survey data cumulatively represent the most comprehensive source of effort-related records obtainable on the distribution and abundance of any group of organisms in the UK. It must be of crucial importance to an understanding of the importance of sites and, as such, should be essential for LRCs and the local communities they serve. I am sure that BTO is more than capable of assisting with the local interpretation of survey data and that the armies of local volunteer recorders on whom they rely (vastly outnumbering botanists) would not want it otherwise.

As for indicators of habitats, ancient or otherwise, it could be argued that invertebrates yield more sensitive data over smaller areas with a more easily measurable response to change on site, but perhaps that is another story.

Yours sincerely,

Ross Andrew
Millfield Cottage,
Costa, Evie,
Orkney

[The editor is always pleased to publish letters from readers with a view to open up and stimulate debates ed.]

IT CORNER

A NEW DESIGN FOR OUR WEBSITE!

Andy Wakelin, our Website manager, has been working on a new design of our website, and this is now up and running. Please do take a look and let us know what you think. It is still at the same address: www.brisc.org.uk

JNCC launch Habitats Directive resource

A new electronic information resource, 'The Habitats Directive: Selection of Special Areas of Conservation in the UK', which describes sites in the United Kingdom recognised as internationally important for habitat and species conservation at European level, has been launched by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). It replaces a JNCC report published in 1997, since when the number and extent of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) has increased substantially.

The information is now on JNCC's website at www.jncc.gov.uk/SACselection and will be updated whenever the UK submits new data about candidate SACs to the European Commission. As well as up-to-date details of the selected sites throughout the UK, users will be able to find out about the SAC selection process, and the habitats and species represented by SACs. It is now possible to search for information in various ways, for example by feature name, site name, or geographically.

The pages have links to other information from JNCC and elsewhere on the web, and also include a range of supplementary material, with a downloadable spreadsheet allowing users to answer complex queries themselves.

Also on the website is a new version of the '*Handbook on the UK status of EC Habitats Directive interest features*'. First published in 2000 as JNCC Report 312, the new UK distribution maps and resource data on habitat extent and population size take account of the latest available information, and are now database-backed to enable future updating. However, the main improvement is that, for the first time, the maps are now closely linked with the SAC selection web pages, enabling users to compare the

distribution of habitats and species with the SACs selected for these features.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

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A special chance for BRISC members to see the herbarium at the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh – Saturday 7 December 2002

A morning has been arranged for members at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to examine the famous herbarium. Numbers have been restricted to 12 on a first come, first served basis, so do reserve your place early. There are two million dried plant specimens, from all over the world, but what will especially interest members is the extensive Scottish collections, with much of the material stemming from the nineteenth century or earlier. These undoubtedly constitute valuable records and it is hoped that the data will eventually become available electronically. *Douglas McKean, who will be meeting our party, has asked to be notified of any particular interests, so that he can have appropriate material readily available.* We meet outside the RBGE at 10.30

Please reserve your place early to avoid disappointment, by contacting Anne-Marie Smout tel 01333 310 330 email amsmout@aol.com.

BOOK REVIEWS

Marren, Peter (2002). *Nature Conservation*. Harper Collins, London. 344 pp. ISBN 000 711305 6 hbk. £34.99; ISBN 000 711306 4 pbk. £19.99.

Marren's latest book reviews the history of wildlife conservation in Britain in the post-war years. 1950-2001 are the dates given in the sub-title but the emphasis is mainly on the last quarter of the past century, describing events since publication of Dudley Stamp's *Nature Conservation in Britain* in the same New Naturalist series, in 1969.

After a crucially important author's Foreword, emphasising how much the world has changed since 1970, and an introductory chapter about *Where we are now*, the subsequent twelve chapters are grouped into three parts. Part I describes the *Dramatis Personae*, the main agencies and important players, the volunteer army and conservation politics. Part II is about *Wildlife Habitats*: nature reserves, the farmed environment, woods and forests, and what Marren heads as "bricks and water" for conservation in urban and

marine habitats. Part III, *Living with wildlife*, describes some famous causes célèbres (such as battles about skiing in the Cairngorms), animals that become a nuisance (how society tries to balance sentiment and practicalities), biodiversity (of particular interest to BRISC readers) and a chapter on aliens and introductions, headed *Sea Eagles and Parrot's Feathers: Invading and Settling*. Parrot's feather is an attractive aquarium plant, *Myriophyllum aquaticum*, and - as with so many alien species - its troublesome blocking of water courses probably originates from household throw-outs. The book concludes with a summing up headed *Whither nature conservation?* There are several appendices. The first provides a valuable summary of main events affecting nature conservation in Britain in each of the years 1970-2001. Appendix 2 is a useful glossary, followed by six pages of references and an index. There is a central sixteen page set of colour plates; all other photographs are monochrome.

From the foregoing it will be appreciated that this is not a time-sequenced historical survey. Rather it is a review of selected crucial issues and events. Their geography, as much in the lowlands of England as in the estuaries of Wales or the Highlands of Scotland, is a valuable perspective on where maximum fuss and media attention has occurred, as well as the consequences arising therefrom. All readers should find references to events which chime with their own personal experiences. Personally, my most painful reading - because I am married into farming families and have so many friends in the business - comes from Marren's retelling of the terrible harm done by agriculture. The variety of causes, direct and indirect, resulting in damage to Britain's wildlife is truly awesome, especially as so much has been done with seemingly good intentions and at public expense. There is much about the important contribution made by county wildlife trusts and other NGOs. The chapter on woods and forests traces the mostly beneficial changes by the state and private sectors for the conservation of ancient and semi-natural woodlands.

Marren concludes by considering the uncertainties of coping with overall changes in the environment of Britain, such as climate change, rising sea levels and widespread pollution. He worries about the rise of conservationists and the death of natural history and the danger of turning something wonderful into something boring. This is so true; too often in recent years one has been dismayed at bureaucratic conservation-speak, mythically secure so long as notionally measurable indicators are 'in place'. Marren speculates how the future for wildlife will play out and whether the catastrophe of modern farming could be nature's opportunity. He ends with a plea for naturalists to put the conservation industry behind them for a while and rediscover the inquiring spirit. "We should affirm that there is more to nature than conservation".

This is an excellent book. The personal recollections and selected quotes from other authors enliven every page and weave a deeply moving tapestry of our times. The book is dedicated to Derek Ratcliffe for his unique contribution to the protection of wildlife in Britain.

Thomas Huxley

Scott, A. (2002). *A Pleasure in Scottish Trees*. Mainstream, Edinburgh. 202 pp. ISBN 1 84018 568 6 hbk. £12.99.

As the years roll away from celebrations of the Millennium, we may forget the many happenings stimulated by the closing years of the century. One such, involving numerous projects for tree planting and other wood related activities, was the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust. Alistair Scott's book was written as a contribution to the MFST, support also having been provided by the Scottish Forestry Trustees, who commissioned Heather Insh to provide twenty-two line drawings that greatly enhance the book's enjoyment.

During Scott's career in the Forestry Commission, in a variety of postings and duties including the higher echelons of its Corstorphine headquarters, meetings with him always contained some memorable reminder that not everyone who worked for the Commission was steeped in the sap of Sitka spruce. This was as much because of the way Scott expressed his ideas as because of their novel approach, reinforced by the surprise discovery of Samuel Palmer prints on his office walls. It is this lively mind and warm personality that has now given us a most delightful book about trees in Scotland. Essentially it is a compendium of a hundred short articles, grouped under the headings: Native Woodlands (10), Native Trees (10), Restoration of Native Woodland (8), Traditional Estates (3), Some Classic Sites of Plantation Forestry (5), Community Woodlands (4), Particular Conifers (29) and Particular Broadleaves (31). The numbers in the captions for the thirty-two colour photographs by the author cross-reference to the number of the article. There is a bibliography, a list of tree related organisations but no index.

The foregoing summary of the book's structure suggests a logical ordering of content whereby to navigate around the places and trees that have given the author pleasure. The reality, however, is of articles written in a somewhat random way, in response to a variety of stimuli, and the subject grouping something of an afterthought. But this is what gives the book such a special flavour. One never knows what fragment of history (of royalty, battles or plant hunting in Bhutan), what praise for a colleague or grandchild, or words of practical advice will come next. It might be comparing past and future forestry policies and practices or descriptions of pivotal moments in changing attitudes to forest design. The subject groupings and individual article headings give little clue as to where these insights will occur. One has to read the whole book to find them.

Inevitably, Scott's selection of woods and trees will not please everyone. As the Chairman of the Scottish Forestry Trust writes in his Foreword there are many other places which some might argue are on a par with those chosen. But this is what makes the book such fun: scoring which places one has visited and what favourites have been omitted. The Hermitage, for example, gets only a passing mention, whereas it would be in my top ten! However, for the most part the book leads to a compelling need to revisit many places with the benefit of Scott's expertise and sharp eye. And as to his writing, this should give readers pleasure of a

very high order. Here is an example: "When I was there the dog belonging to a local family was in disgrace, having wallowed in the mud around the pond before going for a swim among the water lilies. It looked like fun."

Thomas Huxley

Downie, R (ed) (2001). *Alien Species: Friends or Foes?* Supplement to *The Glasgow Naturalist*, vol 23.

ISSN 0373-241X £10.00 + p.&p.– Free to members.

Having just returned from Australia, I am highly conscious of the threat posed by invasive plants and animals. Large areas of the bush there are dominated by alien plants (often extremely attractive in themselves), and the stringent biosecurity measures the Australian government have put in place attest to the seriousness with which they view the potential economic damage that can be done by aliens.

In this country, we are much more relaxed about aliens, and yet many thousands of pounds are being spent on controlling rhododendron and Giant Hogweed, and literally millions, including European funding, in a bid to eliminate the American mink from the Uists. There is growing concern about the threat posed to our native water plants by highly invasive species commonly on sale in garden centres – especially since climate change will make invasion all the more likely – and the forthcoming Scottish wildlife legislation, promised for consultation in spring 2003, gives the opportunity to close this loophole and ban the sale of the most potentially damaging species (please start lobbying your MSPs now).

Against this background, this large and elegant supplement to *The Glasgow Naturalist* is highly timely. It is the proceedings of the 150th Anniversary conference of the Glasgow Natural History Society, held in the city in June of last year. The volume is nothing if not controversial. As Aubrey Manning notes in this foreword, "speaker after speaker told of worst fears not borne out by hard facts; some called for tolerance and even a qualified welcome".

Professor Jim Dickson – never one to shy away from controversy! – argues in his opening paper that Scotland is not Hawaii (or indeed Australia) and that the threat of invasive plants is therefore exaggerated. He states that "no British endemic plant has been made extinct or is in danger by the spread of invasive alien plants, and there appear to be very few rare British plants which are so threatened". The first statement is difficult to contest, but then the UK has precious few endemic plants and the vast bulk of our conservation effort is directed at protecting the other 99.9% of species which are abundant in other parts of Europe. Should we also abandon that effort? The second half of the statement is more doubtful: Slender Naiad *Najas flexilis* and Pillwort *Pilularia globulifera* are two rare species which are under conservation pressure for a whole variety of reasons but which certainly are not helped by alien water plants invading some of their remaining habitats.

Nevertheless, Professor Dickson's meticulous historical perspective is valuable. He is right in arguing that many alien plants enhance our landscapes, such as Buddleia in rubbly

urban wasteground which is so valuable to Lepidoptera, while others are fascinating cultural legacies. He is right too that Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed (along with animals like the Rabbit and probably the Mink) are now so well established in Scotland that attempts at control are totally futile, other than in localised areas. It is therefore difficult to disagree with his overall conclusion that “what should be avoided is the expenditure of large sums of money in sometimes ill-thought-out, often fruitless control measures that result from the mindset that alien species in general are undesirable and fit only for extermination”.

That is why legislation to ‘lock a few stable doors *before* the horses bolt’ is so vital. Lynne Farrell in her contribution to the conference considers the need for such measures with respect to aquatic aliens, and she lists the 10 most harmful alien invaders which Plantlife is lobbying to be banned from sale.

Other invaders are documented in the volume: the Pacific Signal Crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*) into the Clyde and the Galloway River Dee; the New Zealand Flatworm (*Artioposthia triangulata*), which is devastating earthworm populations and disrupting soil ecology in many parts of Scotland; the Ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*), a fish introduced as bait by irresponsible anglers which is now highly abundant in Loch Lomond and its feeder rivers, and threatens the native Powan (*Coregonus lavaretus*). These examples alone are a chilling reminder of why we need to be much more guarded in our cavalier and reckless approach to non-native species.

Other conservation *bete noir* are also considered in detailed, including Sitka spruce and the Beaver (surely a native species, even if the stock for reintroduction will have to come from Norway). The arguments are also rehearsed for and against the control of the (well-named) Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), and the threat it poses to the native White-headed Duck (*O. leucocephala*) on mainland Europe. Of course, the former is an appealing species, in a cartoonish sort of way, which I have seen as far north as Shapinsay on Orkney. It does no damage here, and may well be “a popular and welcome addition to our nation’s avifauna” from a chauvinistic and insular perspective, but we have wider responsibilities, as Paul Walton from the RSPB argues in his paper. If we rail against those Mediterranean countries which shoot ‘our’ songbirds on migration, do we not also have a responsibility to protect their biodiversity by eliminating a North American competitor which is only here because of careless insecurity in wildfowl collections in the 1950s? Surely this is not ‘ethnic cleansing’, as some argue, but simply a matter of social responsibility to our European neighbours? The real question, as Professor Chris Smout notes in his ‘Afterword’, is whether extermination is possible, and at what cost.

There is no simple solution to any of these conservation controversies. Debate, such as that stimulated by the Glasgow conference and rekindled by this publication, is important, and it is also essential that any decisions are based on the hard scientific facts which these papers present, rather than emotive and emotional arguments. Having read all the

arguments in this book, I still cannot accept that aliens, in general, should be shown “tolerance and even a qualified welcome”. However, I have abandoned my initial prejudice that all copies of this volume should be publicly burnt in the streets! Instead, I would encourage everyone responsible for the management of Scotland’s biodiversity, or who simply enjoys our native wildlife, to read the 15 papers in this volume with consideration and a little healthy scepticism.

Then let’s all press Ross Finnie to make sure we get the legislation needed to stop more dire mistakes being made in the future.

Michael Scott
(Co-ordinator, Plantlife Scotland)

Inverness BRC up and running again!

Jonathan Watt has been appointed to the post of Assistant Curator (Natural Sciences) at Inverness Museum and is now responsible for the Highlands Biological Record Centre. Jon says that the HBRC is (or will shortly be) up and running again. is hoping to get our Recorder 3.3 upgraded to R2000, or R2002, in the next couple of weeks, and hopes to be able to start entering data again soon. His contact details are

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SOME DATES FOR THE DIARY

- 26 October 2002 - The Marine Conservation Society Annual Conference.** Venue The National Museum of Scotland. Advance booking essential. Tickets are £35.25 includes tea, coffee and buffet lunch, from Richard Harrington, MCS Communications Officer Tel: 01989 561585 Email: richard@mcsuk.org
- 6-9 November 2002 - Nature and People: conservation and management in the mountains of Northern Europe.** International conference organised by SNH and others – venue Pitlochry Festival Theatre – with field visits on 9th. Booking form from SNH
- 16 November 2002 – Scotland’s Weather & Climate: Living with Change.** Forth Naturalist and Historian 28th annual symposium. Venue University of Stirling, Theatre A3. £10 (lunch extra) Booking to M. Scott, Pathfoot C4, University of Stirling, Tel: 01786-467269 Email mbn1@stil.ac.uk
- 6 December 2002 – Butterfly Monitoring workshop, Perth.** See notice on page 8.
- 7 December 2002 – BRISC members’ visit to Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. 10.30-13.00.** Numbers restricted to 12 – on first come basis. Booking Anne-Marie Smout Tel: 01333 310330 amsmout@aol.com
- 21 January 2003 – BRISC Seminar on the technical aspects of the National Biodiversity Network Seminar -** Advanced bookings Alan Cameron on 01786 474061 brisc@btcv.org.uk
- 22 February 2003 – Trends and Change. BRISC Annual Conference and AGM.** The Burrell Collection, Glasgow. Booking form with January mailing or from our website at www.brisec.org.uk