



BIOLOGICAL RECORDING IN SCOTLAND

Issue No 109 - Sept 2018

ISSN 0966-1964

www.brisc.org.uk

www.facebook.com/BrisScScotland

Scottish Charity No. SC024418

Recorder News

CONTENTS

Recording a Butterfly with Conservation in mind.....	p.1
Chair & Editor's columns.....	p.4
When Wildlife finds you.....	p.5
Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?.....	p.6
BRSC Conference details.....	p.8
BRISC Bursary report.....	p.10
SBIF Update.....	p.11
NBN News.....	p.11
Events and bits.....	p.15
BRISC Committee.....	p.16

Recording a Butterfly with Conservation in mind

Barry Prater

If you look at the overall distribution in the UK of the Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes* you'll see that, although the butterfly occurs in some parts of northern England, it is primarily a Scottish species. Dig down further into the detail and it becomes clear that the Scottish Borders is a stronghold with many known sites both along the coast and scattered inland and every year there is a small influx of people

from the south who wish to see the butterfly.

However, despite this apparently satisfactory situation, the Northern Brown Argus is in trouble and as well being a UK BAP priority species it is on the Scottish Biodiversity List and has been a conservation priority for Butterfly Conservation for at least the past twenty years. The reason? It is in decline mainly through habitat loss. The caterpillars are reliant on Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* as their sole food-plant and this



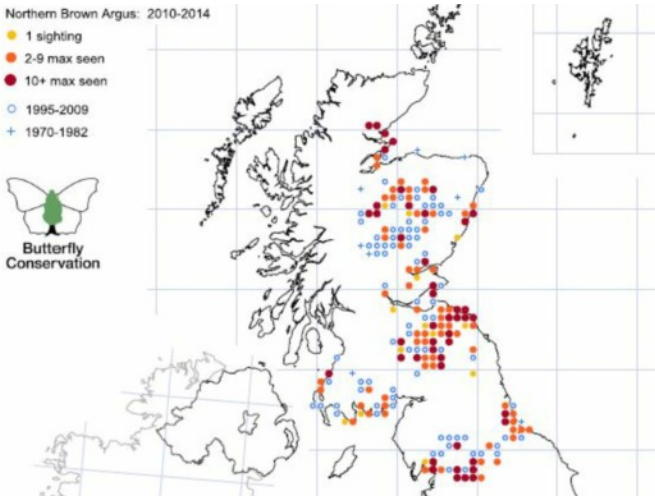
Northern Brown Argus in its full beauty

along with other indicators of species-rich grassland. These habitats are vulnerable to over-grazing (especially by sheep), enrichment prior to cultivation, scrubbing over from neglect and tree planting.

will be active, the brilliant white eggs are laid on the upper surface of the Rock-rose leaves and despite their tiny size they are very conspicuous. So it is possible to confirm the presence of the butterfly and that it is breeding even in

poor weather. Indeed some sites are known only from the recording of the eggs.

The list of target sites is long – over 150 – but during June to August this year around 20 local volunteers have visited more than 50 sites and reports are now coming in.



So, as a start to addressing these issues, Butterfly Conservation has embarked on a survey across the Borders which has the initial aim of assessing the status of currently known colonies – is the butterfly still there, how large is the colony, who owns the site, how is it currently managed, are there any known threats, etc?

Although the data have not been collated so no conclusions can be drawn at this stage, some interesting information is emerging. For example the size of colonies is extremely variable both in areal extent and apparent population. One extensive Peeblesshire site had a count of over 100 adults, while a Berwickshire colony with just a handful of Rock-rose plants squeezed into a tiny area on a woodland edge still revealed over 10 eggs although no adult butterflies were recorded.

Every year some of the better-known sites are visited to check on how the butterfly is faring but there are many which have not been looked at recently.

Several sites appear to be threatened by either gorse or bracken invasion to the detriment of the Rock-rose. Where remedies to this or other problems are clear and practicable then contact has

already been made with the land manager to encourage changes to be put in place.

What happens next? The survey needs to continue at least through 2019, which will hopefully allow the bulk of the remaining sites to be visited. In addition, some work will be done to discover new sites – based on exploring areas where Rock-rose has been recorded. This has already happened to a limited extent in 2018, with some successes. As the survey gets completed a dossier of sites will be prepared and this will be promoted through agencies such as the planning authority and forestry organisations so that the information can guide future developments and avoid the destruction of or damage to Northern Brown Argus colonies.



A good bank of flowering Rock-rose
Helianthemum nummularium

So the future has opportunities for more people to contribute to the survey work with the prospect of making a real difference for this important species. For many of us this is **the** butterfly of the Scottish Borders.

Barry Prater
barry@prater.myzen.co.uk

Editor’s additional note:

The Scottish Borders has a very energetic and friendly Lepidoptera recording group, always happy to share their knowledge. There are excursions, and events as well as conservation projects as described above. We are also trying to keep the long running Butterfly Transect on Murder Moss going with volunteers. More are always welcome.

Contact us through Barry above, the editor or
www.butterfly-conservation.org



Conspicuous egg of Northern Brown Argus



*Chairman's
Column*

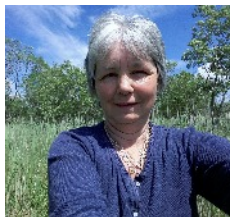
Chris McInerney

What an extraordinarily settled and hot (even very hot!) period we experienced during the spring and summer this year in Scotland. It will be fascinating to see how this continental-like weather will influence the life cycles of plants, insects, birds, reptiles and other animals that we all observe and record.

The 2018 BRISC annual conference is at the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow on the 13 October. It will focus on "Recording Urban Wildlife", and we have a number of excellent speakers, including presentations by Cath Scott (Glasgow's grassland water voles), Scott Ferguson (Seven Lochs Volunteers) Suzanne Burgess (Glasgow's Buzzing) and Fiona Weir (Connecting communities to nature). We have a slot for short talks by students who have received bursaries to attend BRISC sponsored courses. These are always a highlight.

Please take a look at the full programme and the booking and travel information on pages 8-9. There will be a short Annual General Meeting followed by an afternoon of choice activities in Kelvingrove Park.

We very much look forward to welcoming you to Glasgow.



Editor's piece

Sarah Eno

I apologise for the lack of varied material in this issue. The summer has whizzed by and despite best intentions I have not managed to chase up contributions. However, I am very appreciative of articles people have submitted, sometimes at the last minute.

One of BRISC's successful activities is the awarding of small bursaries to assist learning and development in natural history recording. These only happen due to the generosity of the donors - the Glasgow Natural History Society (GNHS), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Malloch Society and not least, an anonymous donor.

This year nine bursaries were awarded and the first two reports can be read starting on pages 10 - 12.

I managed some botanical tetrad surveys for the BSBI Atlas and also couple of potential Local Biodiversity Sites as well as surveying the Northern Brown Argus areas, on some of the hottest days. My garden wildlife has been very visible. Excited buzzing at the east end of our house turned out to be a honey bee swarm which much to our delight squeezed into the soffit space. They joined two other insect colonies already in this gable end - a Tree Bumble Bee nest t at the bottom and at the top was a wasp nest.

BRISC CONFERENCE RAFFLE

We would much appreciate any gifts for the Raffle to held at the conference.

When Wildlife Finds You

Andy Wakelin

There I was in July happily watching large red damselfly and common darter when a fritillary flew past. "Dark green", I thought, but after taking a few photos, the underwing pattern showed it was a High brown (*Argynnis adippe*)!

Where was I? Kiroughtree forest near Newton Stewart and about 75 miles from the nearest known colony in Cumbria. How did it get there? Accidental transport, bred and released or just flew – take your pick. Hopefully, there will be further sightings there in the next few years.

Six weeks later I was walking in Glen Esk by Loch Lee and as I sat down to tie my boot lace I saw what looked like a beetle struggle through the grass in front of me. I grabbed some photos and checked the ID when I got home and it looked like a large velvet ant (*Mutilla europaea*). A quick email to NESBReC and the ID was confirmed by Dr. Jenni Stockan of the James Hutton Institute. She had found them in Aberdeenshire in 2017 and they had not been seen in Scotland for 30 years.

They are not ants but parasitoid wasps preying mainly on bumblebees and honeybees. As the females are wingless they could be mistaken for ants, but the photo shows how much smaller a "normal" ant is.



Mutilla europaea in centre and 'normal' ant above

Sadly, they are a declining species in the UK, so may not be around for much longer, however they can be found in Europe, the Near East and North Africa.

So the moral of the story is keep your eyes open and you might be amazed by the wildlife that finds you.

For more information see scotlandsnature.blog/2017/05/04/meet-the-secretive-large-velvet-ant/

Or to learn more about velvet ants (and other bees, wasps etc) go to the Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society BWARS bwars.com/

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire? ***Project Update***

Helen Embleton

It's almost two years since the former Dumfries & Galloway Environmental Resources Centre (DGERC), evolved into the South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre's (SWSEIC). This was facilitated by the expansion of the records centre to include Ayrshire via the 'Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?' project.



Badgers, East Ayrshire (Donnie Briggs)

The Project has created a records centre in Ayrshire to provide a focal point to engage and support local people/groups in wildlife recording, undertake data collection/management and to enable curated data to inform environmental decision-making.

Since October 2016 we have been working hard to engage with local wildlife conservation organisations, recorders and the general public to

raise awareness of the importance of recording our wildlife throughout Ayrshire. We have been overwhelmed by the interest in the project, training courses and support we have received from everyone – a huge thank you to everyone in our Ayrshire recording community who have assisted!

During the project we have provided developed a new website, including online recording forms. We have also provided 34 training courses to train approximately 300 people to record Ayrshire's fantastic wildlife! Our courses have taken us all over Ayrshire, we have worked with both beginners and very experienced recorders to learn more about many difference species/taxa including: amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, dragonflies, wildflowers, hoverflies, bats,



Adders (John Donaldson)

badgers, small mammals, moths, wildflowers and rocky shore ecology.

We have also created Citizen Science projects specifically designed to appeal to anyone with an interest in nature to provide an easy way to get involved in wildlife recording.



Moth trapping at Stevenson Beach LNR

Mobilising old records, collecting and collating new records has been a huge task during the project. We have just added the 100,000th Ayrshire record into our database and we still have many other records to process. We have also established data sharing with various organisations to help ensure that our records can be put to best use.

The final three months of the project will concentrate on uploading more records, promoting and distributing the Citizen Science materials, finalising, publishing and promoting our wildlife recording toolkit for local communities.

We are also planning our end of project conference will be held in November – further details will be posted very shortly on the Where’s Wildlife in Ayrshire? Facebook page.

Even although our current project will finish at the end of November 2018, SWSEIC will continue to act as the local environmental records centre covering Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway and will collate and share records for the area.

The project is funded by Ayrshire LEADER 2014-2020 Programme, the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council.

Keep up to date with us at:

www.facebook.com/whereswildlifeinayrshire

www.facebook.com/swseic
twitter.com/wildayrshire

Helen Embleton
Where’s Wildlife in Ayrshire? Project Officer, South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre

BRISC Annual Conference and AGM 2017

Recording Urban Wildlife
Saturday 13th October 2018
Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland G3 8AG

Programme

0930-1000 **Arrival and registration**

1000-1005 **Chairman's welcome**

1005-1045 **BRISC Bursary talks** - 10 minutes each

Anthony McCluskey **Orchids**

Catherine Cumming **Lichens**

Logan Johnson **Bryophytes**

Gillian Simpson **Beetles**

1045-1110 Cath Scott (Glasgow City Council) **Glasgow's grassland water voles**

1110-1130 **Tea and Coffee**

1130-1200 Suzanne Burgess (Buglife) **Glasgow's Buzzing – meadow creation projects in Scotland**

1200-1230 Scott Ferguson (Seven Lochs, Glasgow) **Seven Lochs Volunteers - keep counting**

1230-1245 Fiona Weir (RSPB) **Connecting communities to nature - Giving Nature a Home in Glasgow and Edinburgh**

1245-1300 Anthony McCluskey (Butterfly Conservation) **The Urban Butterfly Project**

1300-1400 **Lunch and raffle draw**

1400-1430 **BRISC AGM and update on SBIF**

1430-1440 **Conference close and briefing for field visit**

1440-1630 **Field visit to Kelvingrove Park (RSPB)**

1630-1700 **Depart**

Booking and travel details next page

Costs: Student: £10; member £20; non-member £25.

Thanks to a partnership with the RSPB we are able to offer tickets for the conference at a reduced rate.

BOOKING by Eventbrite (its a big help if you can book by 7th October)

eventbrite.co.uk/e/recording-urban-wildlife-tickets-47732962576?aff=ebdssbdestsearch or search for BRISC at www.eventbrite.co.uk or email: briscsecretary@live.co.uk for other payment options.

Travel

Subway: Nearest underground station Kelvinhall. See <http://www.spt.co.uk/subway/>

Trains: Regular services from around Scotland. See <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/>

Buses: regular services from around Scotland. See <https://www.travelinescotland.com/buscoach-operators>

RAFFLE - please bring something for a prize

Aspen identification workshop and citizen science project

RiverLife: Almond & Avon and Eadha Enterprises invite you to attend an aspen identification workshop, natural history presentation and walk at **10am on 13th October at Whitburn Community Education Centre (EH47 8EZ) and Blaeberry Woods.**

This event marks the beginning of an exciting new project across the Almond and Avon catchments. The project involves the identification of Aspen stands across the two river catchments, propagation of local Aspen by schools and Scout groups and the planting of native aspen to improve riparian habitat.

At the end of the day you will be allocated a geographical area (at least 1km square) to carry out your own Aspen search.

To reserve a place or get more info please contact Luke
Email l.park@forthrivertrust.org or phone 07907 211199

BRISC PROJECTS BURSARY REPORTS

Wild orchids of Scotland

Anthony McCluskey

In June 2018 I attended the *Wild Orchids of Scotland* course at Kindrogan, led by Martin Robinson and funded through a bursary from BRISC. I was already interested in orchids and felt comfortable with most of the common species as well as a few of the more scarce species which are found close to where I live in Highland Perthshire.



Heath Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia borealis*

One of the key points that I took away from the course is that orchids are a promiscuous bunch with little respect

for the tidy groupings that we call 'species'! Within the spotted orchids, the *Dactylorhiza* genus, hybrids between species are regularly found. In some cases we can make good, educated guesses of the likely parent species, especially when those parents are still present at the site. Orchids can even hybridise between genera and on this trip we found at least one likely cross between a Heath Spotted Orchid, *Dactylorhiza maculata*, and Heath Fragrant orchid, *Gymnadenia borealis*! Delightfully breaking all the rules. Then there are the sub-species, and Martin showed us several sub-species of the Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*. These need to be seen in real life to appreciate the colour differences as they are hard to reproduce in books.

So where does all this leave my recording efforts? Thankfully, I feel more confident and interested in recording orchids than ever! I don't feel put off when I find a plant that *just doesn't fit* the usual species characteristics. And I now know what to expect when looking for some of the rare, or just under-recorded, species. Indeed, some are most likely vastly under-recorded. Tiny gems like the Lesser Twayblade, *Listera cordata*, are often found underneath patches of heather where we don't normally look for orchids. I'll also now know to look for the Coralroot Orchid, *Corallorhiza trifida* along the banks of lochs and ponds; they hardly look like flowering plants at all, being parasitic and therefore having no leaves, and a sickly

yellow hue with flowers that look mangled. There were so many times on the course when I or the others in the group exclaimed 'So that's what it looks like!', when we were shown a species we'd only ever seen in books before and were confounded by the appearance of the living thing. Attending a course like this is therefore so useful as a starting point or an advancement to the next level of recording.

Later in summer I'll be looking for the various helleborines and lady's tresses, species which were not in flower in June. I'll first visit known sites for these to get my eye in by seeing the things themselves and then keep an eye out for them when I go recording in future.

And that's part of the real value of courses such as these; as well as showing me what to look for it has certainly piqued my enthusiasm for recording and the provided guidance over how to submit my records to the correct place.

Brilliant Bugs

Joanna Lindsay

As a TCV Natural Talent trainee working with Buglife, I am fascinated by the amazing world of invertebrates! Prior to my traineeship I had always found the diversity of insects and other inverts truly extraordinary but I was lacking in depth of knowledge and basic identification skills for these groups. Consequently I jumped at the chance spend a year learning from people

at Buglife with the knowledge and skills I desired to learn.

Although a generalist at heart with a desire to learn something about everything, a large part of my traineeship is focused on freshwater invertebrates. I assist with a public engagement project called 'Marvellous Mud Snails' which aims to raise awareness of the rare Pond mud snail



Water scorpion *Nepa cinerea*

(*Omphiscola glabra*) and the importance of freshwater habitats for invertebrates in general.

Over the first few months of the traineeship my knowledge of freshwater invertebrates gradually improved but when I was told of the bursaries BRISC were offering for studying under-recorded groups I knew it would be a great opportunity to delve deeper and refine my identification skills.

Thanks to support from BRISC and SNH I was able to attend a weekend course on 'Identifying and Recording Water

Bugs' at FSC Malham Tarn Field Centre, led by Sharon and Peter Flint.

Though aquatic hemiptera are just one group of freshwater invertebrates, they are incredibly diverse. Where before I had thought there was simply a lesser water boatman and a greater water boatman and that was that, I was amazed to discover that there are, in fact, several species of both which all look almost identical until examined under a microscope! Over the two days I absorbed a plethora of anatomical terminology which had looked like a different language to me before; and

learned that it is okay to make mistakes and that not always being



Lesser Water Boatman *Callicorixa praeusta*

had refined the art of handling and manoeuvring tiny, delicate bugs underneath a microscope (almost).

Both the course and my traineeship have allowed me to become more confident in using biological keys to identify and to record invertebrate species. Most importantly I have

able to get down to species level is perfectly acceptable. Every record counts, even if it's just recording 'water boatman' or 'dragonfly'!

Throughout the rest of my traineeship, and hopefully in my future roles, I will continue to encourage schools and community groups to get involved in biological recording through citizen science whether its recording bugs in their local pond or birds in their back garden. I will also continue to improve my own identification skills not only to satisfy my own curiosity when I spot something crawling around in my garden but so I can confidently record it as well!

SBIF update at September 2018 **Christine Johnston**



The SBIF Review Working Group has been continuing with preparation of its paper on recommendations and a detailed business case for the biological recording infrastructure in Scotland. The work is nearing completion and over the last few months the SBIF Advisory Group has provided comment on the emerging sections. It is expected that the final document will be published before the end of 2018.

After publication work will continue on communicating the recommendations and other outputs of the Review to key stakeholders through talks and articles, and invitations to contribute to relevant events and newsletters are welcome. Development work will also focus on planning for the next stages which will include looking at funding options and identifying priorities and opportunities for potential early adoption of our recommendations.

Details of the Review and all highlight reports and approved papers are shared publicly on the Scotland pages of the NBN website:

nbn.org.uk/about-us/where-we-are/in-scotland/the-SBIF-review/

Follow @sb_info_forum on Twitter for informal news on #SBIFReview and sign up for the NBN's monthly Network News for updates at:

nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/latest-stories-from-our-network/enews-sign-up/

NBN Update ***September 2018***

NBN Atlas Scotland Stakeholder Engagement Day

A successful stakeholder engagement day was held for the NBN Atlas Scotland on 21 June at the Battleby Conference Centre, near Perth. Twenty-three stakeholders from across Scotland attended to share their views on the future development and uses of the [NBN Atlas Scotland](http://nbn.org.uk/news/nbn-atlas-scotland-stakeholder-engagement-day-review/).

As well as listening to three interesting speakers, everyone worked together to create and prioritise a wish-list of around 40 development suggestions. The process prompted much discussion, which was extremely useful. The suggestions will now be taken to the NBN development team and the NBN Atlas and NBN Atlas Scotland steering groups to discuss, prioritise and identify the next steps in taking them forward. nbn.org.uk/news/nbn-atlas-scotland-stakeholder-engagement-day-review/

Experts needed for species groups!

We are pleased to have published the new [sensitive species policy](#) for the NBN Atlas. This was written in conjunction with many Network members who have helped to shape and solidify the NBN's position on the display of sensitive species, and the criteria that define them.

We have had some species experts who have volunteered themselves to review the lists of their species groups against these new criteria for which we are very grateful. However, we still need more! To find out which species groups we still need to review, please visit:

nbn.org.uk/news/experts-needed-for-species-groups/

NBN Stakeholder Group – opportunity to get involved

Do you want to play an active part in the running of the NBN Trust? Are you able to use your individual experience to think strategically?

If so, we still have some places left if you would like to join our new NBN Stakeholder Group. nbn.org.uk/news/nbn-stakeholder-group-places-left/

If you have already expressed interest in the Group we will be in touch with you again in the next couple of months.

NBN Conference 2018 – places are filling up!

This year's conference is taking place on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 November at the Albert Hall in Nottingham. The theme is: "The NBN in a Changing Climate".

Bookings are still open and you can find more information about the speakers and the new Network Knowledge Exchange sessions on the NBN website: nbn.org.uk/news-events-publications/nbn-conference-2/nbn-conference-2018/

NBN Trust AGM

The NBN Trust AGM will be held on Wednesday 21 November 2018, in Nottingham as part of the NBN Annual Conference. The main items for voting include:

- Confirmation of the NBN Trust Accountants
- Voting on NBN Board of Trustees members continuity of service
- Special Resolution – amendment to the Articles of Association.

All members of the National Biodiversity Network are eligible to vote except for Corporate Members and NBN Trustees.

For more information on how to vote, visit: nbn.org.uk/news/nbn-trust-agm/

UK Awards for Biological Recording and Information Sharing 2018

The nominations have now closed and the Award ceremony will take place on Wednesday 21 November in Nottingham.

Each of the six Award winners: Gilbert White Adult, Gilbert White Youth, David Robertson Adult, David Robertson Youth, Lynne Farrell Group and Adult Newcomer, will receive their prizes that day.

We are indebted to our sponsors, Opticron, Paramo, the Field Studies Council (FSC), Nature Photographers Ltd, NHBS and British Wildlife Publishing.

EVENTS

Butterfly Conservation Trust 10th anniversary and Members Day

Saturday October 6th, Conference Centre, Battleby

Details: www.butterfly-conservation.org

Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI)

Scottish Members Conference

Saturday 3rd November, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh

Details: www.bsbi.org/scotland

Forth Naturalist & Historian

Annual Conference: The Ochils - A Special Place

Saturday November 10th. Stirling University

Details: www.fnh.stir.ac.uk/

TWIC (Wildlife Information Centre)

Autumn Conference Saturday November 10th at Melrose Corn Exchange

Details: to follow www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording_conferences.php

NBN Conference - The NBN in a Changing Climate

details see page 14

Inner Forth Landscape Initiative

Still have several events between now and end of the year

www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/

OTHER ITEMS

BCT Identify a Butterfly - online tool

www.butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/identify-a-butterfly

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew - State of the World's Fungi

A report and a fascinating website with wonderful photographs

www.kew.org/state-of-the-worlds-fungi

**COPY DEADLINE
FOR ISSUE 110
DECEMBER 15TH**

Articles are welcomed but also snippets of interesting recording news and details of events. Anyone who has received a new and relevant book please consider writing a review for us.

Please send articles in Word or Open Office format. Photos are welcomed, best as jpeg and less than 800kb in size. Please do not embed them in your text - its quite hard to extract them!

Please send by email to the editor.



The honeybee swarm on the gable soffit
July 2018

BRISC Committee members

Chris McInerny, Chair

Email: chairman@brisc.org.uk

Louisa Maddison, Secretary

Email: secretary@brisc.org.uk

Jonathan Willet, Treasurer

Email: treasurer@brisc.org.uk

**Andy Wakelin, Membership &
Web manager**

Email: webmaster@brisc.org.uk

Sarah Eno, Editor

Email: saraheno@riseup.net

**Christine Johnston, Scottish NBN
Liaison Officer**

Email: c.johston@nbn.org.uk

Graeme Wilson

Email:

graeme@wildlifeinformation.co.uk

Richard Weddle

Email: richard@canto.plus.com

Kelly Anne Dempsey

Email: DempseyK@angus.gov.uk

Sarah Jayne Forster

Sarah-Jayne.Forster@rspb.org.uk

Francesca Pandolfi

Francesca.Pandolfi@eastdunbarton.gov.uk