

## **DRUMOIG WILDLIFE NEWSLETTER JUNE/JULY 2021**

April was the coldest & driest on record for many a year. May also turned out to be different from usual – wetter and colder! Towards the end of May, the Scottish haar made an unwelcome appearance giving us some colder nights and chilly mornings.



Misty morning



Evening sun

However, June started off with plenty of sunshine and the days became gradually warmer. The fairways greened up following the May rain but a few of the greens still showed evidence of the winter frost damage. Just when gardeners were turning to watering their gardens, we had 4.5mm of rain on the 14<sup>th</sup> June, followed by another dry spell, then 9.5mm on the 25<sup>th</sup> June.



7<sup>th</sup> green in June

Jennifer Laidlaw sent me this charming story about her pet oyster catcher: -

### **SILENCE IS GOLDEN – OR IS IT?**

During May two Oyster Catchers decided to take up residence on our driveway at Forgan Drive. Personally they are not my favourite birds. They are noisy especially early in the morning, and can be rather aggressive. After having their company for 35 days however my attitude towards them changed.

They chose to nest in one of my flowerpots. It was quite a deep pot and I thought it was on the small side, but I guess they knew best. Three eggs were laid. Both birds played their part

during the incubation period. They sat on the eggs in the most dreadful weather. You almost felt guilty passing them to go in to your warm house. Throughout the 35 days we became very protective of them. We even placed a notice on the gate to warn strangers that the birds were nesting and to keep well away from them.

One Saturday morning there was more noise than usual coming from the flowerpot. The one chick had hatched and was desperately trying to find its feet. Every so often it would sit down and have a rest. This went on for two hours. The mother meantime was still sitting on the remaining eggs. The “father” was hunting for food to feed the chick so it was a very risky time for the new born to be so alone. We were concerned for it. By the afternoon the chick was getting stronger and more adventurous. The other chicks had still not hatched so the mother was not leaving the nest.

The little chick was doing so well when disaster struck. Despite being with the father a crow swooped down and carried the chick off with the oyster catcher trying to chase it. I hoped that the crow might drop it and it would survive but perhaps not. It was so sad to see a life shortened in seconds.

We waited another 24 hours for the second chick to be hatched. It had great difficulty trying to get out of the flower pot. The mother bird kept trying to help it and in the end was successful. It was a bright little ball of fluff and this time both parents kept a watchful eye on it.



A distant shot of mother & chick

The third egg did not hatch.

It is so quiet now in our driveway. We miss the birds so much but I am pleased to report that the one little chick that survived is doing very well and living at the moment beside the 18<sup>th</sup> tee. Perhaps it will come back next year to visit us.

In the meantime, a friendly pheasant seemed keen to keep an eye on Jennifer – or was it after something?!

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Do you remember the pictures of the painted lady butterflies last year? So far, I haven't seen any this year but a recent article in the Times added some fascinating information.



Apparently storms in sub-Saharan Africa mean more butterflies in Britain! A recent study has shed more light on the epic migration of the Painted Lady between Africa and Europe. The round trip can be more than 8,500 miles, one of the longest by any insect species, and takes more than 1 generation. The number of Painted Ladies arriving in Britain is determined by how much rain has fallen in the preceding months in the semi-arid Sahel (Mali, Niger & Chad). After winter breeding in the Sahel the butterflies move north. The journey takes several generations with each butterfly living for only 2 – 3 weeks. The whole trip can take 4 months. The first generation may cross the Sahara and reach North Africa (Morocco), the next wave reaches South Europe, and so on until the first Painted Ladies arrive in Britain in May. A painted Lady has enough fat after it emerges from its chrysalis for 40 hours of non-stop flight, topped up by feeding on nectar where possible. Wet years in Africa seem to have produced a butterfly boom in 2009 & 2015. The indications are that rainfall in the sub-Saharan region has been above average this year, but the number of Painted Ladies in Europe can vary wildly from year to year, often with 100 times more from one year to the next. So watch out for the Painted Ladies this year - keep your eyes open!

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Christine has sent me the following few interesting pieces of information:-



The following website has a great range of local walks, including the Fife Pilgrim Way, Fife Coastal Path, the Lomond Hills, Beaches and Nature Reserves.

[Outdoor Access - Fife Coast & Countryside Trust \(fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk\)](http://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk)

Christine Edwards has sent a report in on one of her favourite walks.



The Glen Vale path is part of the Lomond Hills, there are two starting points as can be seen here:

[Glenvale Path - Fife Coast & Countryside Trust \(fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk\)](http://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk)

The one I use is via Gateside, as you travel from Drumoig and enter Gateside there is a turning on the left about halfway through the village, it is not signposted, but there is a school sign by it. You then carry on down the road and turn right at the T junction and carry on until you see the car park (it's quite small) on the left. When you come out of the car park turn left up the lane and then there is a gate on the left

You start in native woodland, then on to a well-made sandy path which takes you through heath moorland eventually arriving at John Knox's Pulpit. You can then either return the same way or can cross the pools and take the higher path back. It can be quite strenuous in places, with some tricky steps, and special care should be taken near the waterfall, but it is worth the views, which change



Caterpillar of the Emperor Moth. See link for more information

through the seasons. There is also the chance of spotting wildlife.



John Knox's pulpit

[Emperor Moth \(butterfly-conservation.org\)](http://butterfly-conservation.org)



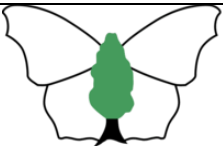
Grey Wagtail seen at the Waterfall – also Pied Wagtail



Nesting site for Sand Martins



Sand Martin



Butterfly Conservation

The Big Butterfly Count will run from Friday 16th July to Sunday 8th August 2021. The Butterfly Conservation would like your help, by spending just 15 minutes outside counting butterflies and moths. For more information go to: [www.bigbutterflycount.org](http://www.bigbutterflycount.org)

**mothnight**  
8 – 10th July 2021

The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, together with Atropos and Butterfly Conservation, would like your help in recording moths. For more information, go to <https://www.mothnight.info/>





[About the RSPB - The RSPB](#)

The RSPB was founded in 1889, but their first big success came in 1921 with the introduction of the Plumage (Prohibition) Act. It is hard to overstate the importance of this law, which banned the importation of birds' plumage. At the time, hundreds of thousands of birds, like egrets and hummingbirds, were being killed every year and their feathers used to decorate ladies' hats. The campaign to stop this trade, driven mainly by women (who at the time didn't even have the vote), was at the heart of the RSPB in its earliest days, and campaigning remains a key part of the organisation to this day. To learn more go to: [Celebrating the RSPB's founders and over 100 years of successful campaigns for nature](#)



Have you seen blobs of white frothy liquid form on plant stems and wondered what it was?

It's common name is Cuckoo spit, but it has nothing to do with the Cuckoo and is caused by froghopper / spittlebug nymphs, that are mainly active between May and July.

A small pale insect lives inside the froth or 'spittle'.



The froth serves multiple purposes.

1. It shields the spittlebugs from predators.
2. It insulates them from temperature extremes.
3. It prevents the spittlebugs from dehydrating.

The spittlebug nymphs feed off the plant sap and the plants that are most affected include chrysanthemum, dahlia, fuchsia, rosemary, rose, willow and lavender as seen in the photo.

## Used Stamp Collection 2020



Thank you to everyone who supported the used stamp collection. Unfortunately, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society were unable to take them, but the RNLI were able to.

These have now been parcelled up, despatched and confirmation of receipt confirmed. The RNLI were very grateful for these stamps which help support their organisation.



To learn more about the RNLI and the excellent work they do click on this link: [RNLI - Royal National Lifeboat Institution - Saving Lives at Sea.](#)

There is also a very good article on how they name their lifeboats – click here: [The sometimes strange, often wonderful, world of lifeboat names \(rnli.org\)](#)

Another mystery! I recently bought a new birdfeeder from Aldi – quite a bargain, really! Only £3.75. On the face of it, it seemed ideal for the smaller birds with a nice perching platform all the way round. But, for some reason, the birds have boycotted it and it remains stubbornly full. I've tried it in the front and back garden, but still no interest. Does this mean I have to be less of a cheep-skate?



The blackbirds have returned to nest in our external wood store again. The female seems much less timid than last year and does not fly off every time we pass.



Blackbird sitting on eggs.



Blackbird about to feed chicks



2 chicks waiting to be fed

Steve Norrie sent me this excellent gallery of bird shots taken in and around his garden. Steve thinks that “re-wilding” his garden has proved quite an attraction :-



Robin fledgling



Mature Robin





Oyster catcher.



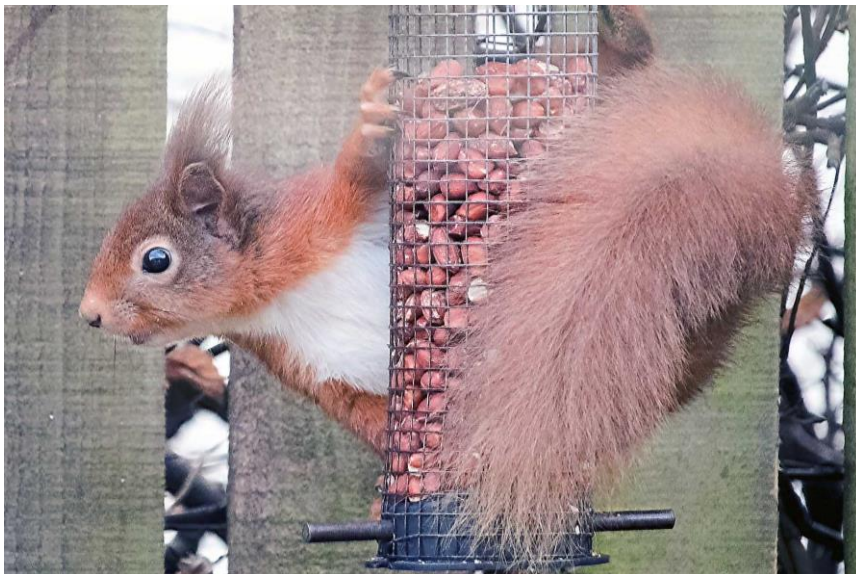
Linnet



Rock pigeons with their lovely iridescent plumage.



Goldfinches



Squirrel Nutkin!

### Des Res

I don't know if any of you are thinking of moving house but here's a local des res at a bargain price (advert seen in the Sunday Times "Home" section)!!



**FIVE £5M**  
Earlshall Castle near St Andrews is a well-kept and restored 16th-century, ten-bedroom dwelling, with three cottages and a 125-year-old world-famous topiary garden.  
**0131 247 3738, savills.com**

The image shows a large, multi-story stone castle with several towers and a flag flying from one of them. In the foreground, there is a meticulously maintained garden with several large, rounded topiary bushes. The sky is clear and blue.

That's all for this issue! Remember that it won't happen unless we have contributions from you – so keep your eyes open!

Martin Hepworth