

# Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF) Newsletter 1 - March 2017



**Welcome** to the first newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum which was launched at the AGM on Wednesday 18 January 2017. The response from residents has been very encouraging and thanks go to everyone who has registered their interest in the forum, have completed the survey or attended the first talk. It has been a very busy few weeks and below is the progress so far:

An on-line survey was created and the link circulated to residents on 25 January. 33 residents took part and a summary of the survey is attached.

Residents were encouraged to take part in the RSPB Big Garden Watch which took place between Saturday 28-Monday 30 January. The RSPB are now busy collating those results and what is currently happening behind the scenes can be seen here <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/behind-the-scenes/>

The BTO's (the British Trust for Ornithology) National Nest Box Week ran from Tuesday 14 – Tuesday 21 February. To coincide with this the DCT purchased 20 bird boxes. The photo on the right shows the first box being installed. Thanks, go to Rob Pirie and Paul Edwards for undertaking this task and to Ian Menzies for allowing us access to site these in the woodlands around the Drumoig Golf Course. It is hoped that these boxes will attract a range of small woodland birds such as tits, robins, wrens, pied wagtails, and flycatchers. These boxes will be monitored on a regular basis and any activity reported on.

**A map of the location of all the bird boxes is shown on Page 4.**



An update on the progress of the DWF was given together with plans for future meetings.

Attendees also took part in a wildlife quiz, the photo on the left shows Johanna presenting Moira Cuthbertson, who won the quiz, with a prize of a bird feed starter pack.

28 residents attended the talk by Johanna Willi, the Biodiversity Co-ordinator for Fife Council at the Drumoig Hotel on Tuesday 28 February. She gave two very interesting talks one on Biodiversity, what it means and why it's important for wildlife and one specifically about gardening for wildlife.

We were also pleased to welcome Malcolm Hall, Head Greenkeeper for Drumoig Golf Club to the meeting and who we look forward to working with. Many of you will have seen Malcolm's wildlife photos in the hotel's lobby.

**A copy of the quiz and answers is on the website in the folder – Events Archive.**

## **Talks and walks – Dates for the diary**

- **Tuesday 11 April at 2pm** – is the date for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum. This will be at the Drumoig Hotel and will include a talk by Clare McElroy from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust on the plight of the bumblebee, its ecology and species identification and Duncan Davidson from the Butterfly Conservation - who will give a talk entitled “An Introduction to Moths”.  
Links to their websites are:  
<http://bumblebeeconservation.org/> and <http://butterfly-conservation.org/>
- **Tuesday 23 May (TBC)** – Plans are underway for a Guided walk of St Andrews Botanical Garden. The tour is given by garden volunteers, and as such is free on payment of the Garden entrance fee which is £5.00 for Adults and £4.50 for Concessions (Senior Citizens 60 and over). Refreshments can be arranged and residents would be free to stay on after the tour and maybe visit the Tropical Butterfly House at an additional cost of £2.95 per person. More details at the next meeting.
- **Saturday 10 June 10am** – Duncan Davidson has offered to set up a moth trap at Drumoig (location to be confirmed) on the previous evening. We can then meet with him to see what has been caught. Hopefully as this is a weekend residents who are normally at work, and children will be able to attend.
- **The Autumn / Winter Programme**  
Talks on Birds in Fife, Red Squirrels, Hedgehogs and The Woodland Trust are being considered as well as guided walks at Morton Lochs.

## **Website**

The Drumoig Community Website now has a new tab on the left-hand side for the Forum. Some information is now available including useful links to wildlife organisations and species identification websites and this will be updated and developed over the coming weeks. The link is:

<http://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum>

You can also find a copy of the Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve Newsletter in this section.

## **What's Happening this Month**

### **Gardening**

In the garden, one of the first signs that spring has arrived is the sight of bulbs such as snowdrops and crocus, and woodland plants such as primulas and cowslips as well as early flowering plants including hellebores and pulmonaria.

It's now time to:

- Trim straggly hedges and bushes before the spring breeding season gets underway.
- Think about having a wild flower patch in your garden or just in a pot in your garden.
- Buying new plants for your garden? Look for nectar-rich flowers that will attract many flying insects, including butterflies, lavender is good for bees and those that have berries are good for birds in the winter.
- Leave piles of deadwood and leaves in a corner of your garden, to give shelter to frogs and toads and many insects.
- Think about creating a water feature to provide wildlife with a year-round water source.
- Out and about – if you see bluebells (wild hyacinth) in Fife then please take part in the Fife Bluebell Survey at [www.fifedirect.org.uk/blubellssurvey](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/blubellssurvey)





### **Amphibians**

Spring is breeding time for frogs and toads, so if you have a pond expect to see large numbers returning. Amphibians will emerge from hibernation when the weather starts to warm up (night time temperatures over 5°C). Fife Council would like to hear when you first see returning frogs and toads by filling in their [Biological Recording form](#) or e-mailing them at [Nature.info@fife.gov.uk](mailto:Nature.info@fife.gov.uk)

## Birds

- Are starting to find nesting sites, you can help by installing bird boxes in your garden and by tying up bunches of tiny twigs, dried moss, and other stringy vegetable matter near your feeders for them to use in their nests. If you are lucky to have birds nesting in your bird boxes, in your trees and hedges, then keep a note of the species and timings.
- It's World Sparrow Day is on Monday 20 March 2017 – <http://www.worldsparrowday.org/>  
Sparrows are finch-like birds. They have stout bodies, rounded wings and broad heads with deep, conical bills adapted for seed-eating. They are social and loosely colonial when breeding. Most nest in cavities but some may nest in bushes or trees, building untidy nests of grass and assorted rubbish. They have no well-developed songs, but several variations on loud chirps and cheeps.

In the UK we have two species:

House Sparrow - Male	House Sparrow - Female	Tree Sparrow – Male / Female looks same
		
<p>A male House Sparrow has brown upper parts, streaked with black; grey head and rump; red brown shoulders and black bib, white wing-bar; is more heavily built than a tree sparrow. The female is brown with a streaked back.</p>		<p>A Tree Sparrow is smaller than a house sparrow and more active, with its tail almost permanently cocked. It has a chestnut brown head and nape and white cheeks and collar with a contrasting black spot. Both sexes are alike.</p>
		<p>The Dunnock is often referred to as a Hedge Sparrow but in fact is not related to either the house or tree sparrow. It has a grey eye stripe, throat and breast; brown back and dark streaks. It has a thin bill a squeaking call and both male and female are like. A Dunnock almost always feed on the ground.</p>

## Hedgehogs

will start to become active after hibernation, so keep a look out for them. They feed on snails, slugs and worms, so are useful pest controllers in the garden and are sadly in decline, so need our help.

## Ladybirds

Adult ladybirds become active March – April as they leave their overwintering sites to find food, aphids (greenfly). I saw my first 7 Spotted today – more about them in the next newsletter.

And lastly – Enjoy spring and keep a notebook handy and make a note of what you see, where you see it and when you see it. This will be helpful information for recording our wildlife and any future surveys

If you have any questions or would like more information on the Drumoig Wildlife Forum please contact me at [dct.wildlife@gmail.com](mailto:dct.wildlife@gmail.com)

Christine Edwards, Drumoig Wildlife Co-ordinator

## Results from the Drumoig Wildlife Forum Survey – February 2017

33 residents completed the on-line survey (15 from Comerton, 14 from Craigie and 4 from Forgan)

From the survey it was established that 30 residents currently feed the birds in their garden, the majority with hanging feeders containing mixed seed, suet balls / fat blocks and peanuts, 6 also use Nyger seed (a good way of attracting Gold finch) and 6 sunflower seeds. 12 residents have bird tables 7 ground feeding stations. A number also add mixed dried fruit and dried mealworms to the seed mixes.

23 of residents have a water source, 16 have bird baths, 4 ponds and 2 have alternatives, such as filled containers and water features. Those with ponds also reported having frogs, toads, water beetles and invertebrates. Unfortunately many have lost their fish to the otter.

21 of residents have nest boxes the majority are the classic nest box, but some have open fronted (for species such as the robin) and the sparrow terraced box. Supply of insect biomes and a hedgehog were also reported. 7 reported house martin or swallow's nests, 18 have birds nesting in their hedges and 9 have birds nesting in their trees.

Birds recorded as nesting in gardens were blue tits, great tits, yellow hammer, robins, blackbirds, wrens, swallows sparrows, coal tits, collared dove, 1 resident has had an oystercatcher nesting in a flowerpot or on their drive.

32 residents were interested in gardening and the full range of the trees and plants listed on the survey are to be found around Drumoig. The most popular being Rowan, Silver Birch and Holly trees, Beech and hawthorn hedges, Berberis, Buddleia, Cotoneaster, Honeysuckle, Lavender and Foxgloves. Additional species were spruce and fir trees, sedums, viburnum, geranium and willow.

Only 8 of residents were members of wildlife organisation and all of these were members of the RSPB, with some also being members also being members of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Ornithologist Club, British Trust of Ornithology and Butterfly Conservation.

All of the Amphibians, Bees, Butterflies, Moths and Dragonflies and mammals listed on the survey had been seen by at least 1 resident with the honey bee (25), common toad (22), red admiral (21), roe deer (19), common frog (19), large white butterfly (15) hedgehog and stoat (14 each) having the highest sightings. It was also good to hear that 13 residents had seen the Red Squirrel. In addition to the list there was a sighting of a Cinnabar Moth.

Of the 55 birds listed on the survey all were seen by at least one resident except for Redpoll, Wheatear and Willow Warbler. The top six birds were the Blackbird (31), Robin (30), Pheasant (29), Buzzard (28), Blue Tit (26), House Sparrow (26) and the least common was Kingfisher (2), Reed Bunting (2), Merlin (1), Tufted Duck (1).

Christine Edwards  
09 March 2017

