

Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF)

Newsletter 13 - December 2019



Welcome to the twelfth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum. This also represents the end of the third year of the forum, and I would like to thank once again all those residents that have attended events or who have sent details and photos of their sightings.

~~~~~ Wishing You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ~~~~~

**Plant of the month** - as it is Christmas, I thought it was appropriate to have **Mistletoe** (*Viscum album*).

Mistletoe is known as a 'hemiparasitic' plant that grows in the branches of trees such as hawthorn, apple, poplar, lime and conifers (as shown in the first photo above). This means it takes nutrients and water from a host tree and although it is parasitic, it will not kill the host tree but can weaken it. Its green leaves also photosynthesise. There are more than 900 species of mistletoe around the world, but only one found in the UK and grows mainly in Wales the West Midlands and the South of England.

Mistletoe is an evergreen plant with distinctive forked branches and pairs of symmetrical evergreen leaves. In winter it produces clusters of pearlescent white berries (as shown in the second photo above) which are favourites with hungry birds such as thrushes.

In recent years, mistletoe's range in the UK has begun to expand, particularly into eastern areas of England. This may be due in part to an influx of Blackcaps that are migratory warblers, mainly from Germany, that have started overwintering in Britain. Mistletoe is an essential part of their diet, when they have eaten the white flesh of the mistletoe berry, the birds wipe their bills on twigs and branches, leaving behind the seed. If the seed is deposited on a host tree and manages to take hold, a mistletoe plant might germinate on the branch.



The mistletoe marble moth (*Celypha woodiana*) is a priority species for conservation in the UK. It is only found in six English counties, and populations are declining. It needs this unusual plant to complete its life cycle. Its larvae overwinter in small mines chewed into the leaves of the plant, which become inflated by late spring when the larvae are fully grown. The larvae then emerge from the mines and pupate in a cocoon under bark or among lichens on the host tree.

The romantic Christmas tradition of kissing under the mistletoe date back to pre-Christian days, with much dispute as to its specific origins. It also features in Druidic, Norse and Greek mythologies and has wide-ranging relevance to many cultures. In Druidry, it is used in ceremonies and, in the past, for medicine. The tradition of kissing under the mistletoe is linked with mistletoe being a symbol of fertility.

## Birdwatching

You main have seen flocks of birds recently on your berry trees and shrubs.



Redwing

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/redwing/>



Fieldfare

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/fieldfare/>

These were most likely to be Redwing and Fieldfare (as above) visiting this country mainly from Iceland, Russia and Scandinavia. We counted over 50 on the Rowan tree in the garden next to us, and it was stripped within two days.

## Past Events

### Tuesday 24 September 2019

25 residents and guests attended the seventh Drumoig Wildlife Forum Talk. Our speakers were Dominic Rye and Rachael Hunter, Assistant Countryside Rangers with the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust.

They both gave interesting and informative talks on their roles at the trust and specifically the Eden Estuary Local Nature Reserve and West Sands, St Andrews on how Climate Change effects the coastal systems they look after and answered questions from the audience. The Fife Coast and Countryside Trust have an excellent website, where you can find details of places to visit and walk and events that they hold. This can be found at: <http://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk>

A cheque for £30 has been be sent to the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust in appreciation of Dominic and Rachael' talks and for giving up their time to attend our meeting.

An update on the Drumoig Wildlife Forum was then given, highlighting the new wildlife photo and video gallery which can be found at: <https://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum/WildlifeGallery>

A quiz was held and was won by Audrey Pirie, a guidebook on the Fife Coastal Path was presented to her by Dominic Rye.



A book on the new Fife Pilgrim Way was raffled and raised £57, the winner was Anne Gibson, and this was presented by Rachael Hunter. In addition, the sale of fat balls and books raised £5.

## Tuesday 22 October 2019

11 residents met at Kinshaldy Car Park and then drove up to the Icehouse, where we started a guided walk through the forest to Tentsmuir Point. The guides were Tom Cunningham the Nature Reserve Manager for Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve part of Scottish National Heritage and Marijke Leith a Ranger.

Starting in the New Education and Visitor Pavilion, Tom gave a history of the site, how they maintain the reserve and the ongoing work the SNH is undertaking. In particular we learnt that a lot of work had been done to clear trees and encourage the regeneration of heathland, where mosses and lichens are in abundance and low-growing bushes of creeping willow are taking hold, here we saw a Stonechat and a flock of Goldfinches. Highland Cows graze the Reserve in the summer helping to conserve the area for wildlife and plants.



From there we walked towards the beach and it was interesting to see how the sand is building up back towards the forest and new marram grass is taking hold, maybe creating new dunes in the future. In fact, on average Tentsmuir Point has expanded by nearly 5 metres each year for more than two centuries. We saw several grey seals and oystercatchers and after reaching the point started a walk back to the forest.



We then took in the view of the tank traps built in WW2; it was amazing to be told by Tom that the water line had originally been level with these traps. Click below for two interesting articles on Tentsmuir during WW2.

<https://scotlandsnature.blog/2018/01/04/advance-entrench-hold-the-line/>

<https://canmore.org.uk/site/141482/tentsmuir-forest>

Walking along the path back some of us spotted a caterpillar which was identified by Marijke as a Ruby Tiger Moth caterpillar.

The walk ended back at the Kinshaldy car park, where the group had hot drinks and snacks.



The Scottish National Heritage have an excellent website, where you can find details of places to visit and walk and events that they hold. This can be found at:

<https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/scotlands-national-nature-reserves/tentsmuir-national-nature-reserve>

They also have a Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ScotlandsNNRs/>

A Drumoig Wildlife Forum have sent a cheque for £25 to the Scottish National Heritage in appreciation for the time taken by Tom and Marijke to guide us around this area.

## Bird Boxes

In the Spring of 2019 we had 32 nest boxes for woodland birds; Paul and I have undertaken our annual bird box survey and can report that of the 26 boxes checked so far 20 had nests in, this is an increase of 9 over last years' count. Three did not have nests and three were damaged beyond repair and six have still to be checked. Thanks to the generosity of those who purchased books and plants at the Summer Fayre and raffle tickets at the talks a total of £150.45 was raised and from this four more bird boxes have been purchased.

The Tawny Owl nest box was also checked and had evidence of nesting material.

## Winter wildlife tips

As winter takes hold the food you put out for the birds becomes steadily more important as seeds, fruit and insects become harder to find. High fat content foods such as fat balls /suet blocks are particularly good for birds. In addition, ground feeders such as Blackbirds, Thrushes and Robins will appreciate apple and pears cut in half. Feeding should take place first thing in the morning, when the birds are at their coldest and hungriest, with a second feed just before dusk before they roost.

Feeders and bird tables need to be cleaned on a regular basis to avoid the spread of disease. A supply of fresh water, clear of ice is also important.

For tips on what to feed birds go to: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/feeding-birds/>

In addition - why not create a dead wood pile, using sticks and logs. They're great for insects, fungi, mosses and lichens and if you're lucky a hedgehog or toad might take up resident.

## Forthcoming events

### Saturday 25 – Monday 27 January 2020 – RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

For more information on this event go to: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch>

## Local News

Eden Nature Reserve, Guardbridge

A new open hide was opened on 21 November next to the existing hide in Guardbridge and a free to use telescope has been installed. <https://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/walks/local-nature-reserves-others/eden-estuary/>

### 2019 Used Stamp Appeal

Please don't forget to collect stamps for this year's appeal (and encourage your friends, relatives and colleagues to do the same).

The collection is in aid of the **RSPB Albatross Task Force**. The project works with fishing crews to reduce the number of albatross's killed by being accidentally caught in trawl and longline fishing nets, and The Drumoig hotel is supporting the appeal and there is a collection box in the entrance hall. Further collections will be made in December or contact Christine Edwards who will arrange to collect them.

[drumoig.wildlife@gmail.com](mailto:drumoig.wildlife@gmail.com)



For more information see:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/our-positions-and-casework/our-positions/marine-and-coastal/saving-seabirds-globally/the-albatross-task-force/>

The next newsletter is planned to be issued in February 2020. Please keep sending your sightings or any other interesting information or photos you have on wildlife in your garden or around Drumoig.

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

Don't forget to visit the web page, the link is: <http://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum>

**And finally – Did You Know?**

Two red-breasted British robins are roughly the same weight as one medium sized chicken's egg.



Thank you and kind regards  
Christine Edwards  
Drumoig Wildlife Forum Co-ordinator