

Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF) Newsletter 14 – February 2020



Welcome to the fourteenth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum

Plant of the month

The above photo shows the Crocus, the name is derived from the Latin adjective *crocatus*, meaning saffron yellow with the Greek word for “saffron” being *krokos*. People started cultivating crocus 500 years BC. The flower was used by ancient Greeks and the Egyptians to ward off the fumes of liquor by weaving the crocus flower into wreaths for the head or placing in a spray of flowers on wine glasses. The fragrance of the crocus was thought to inspire love was even believed to bloom at midnight on Valentine’s Day. The first crocus seen in the Netherlands was in the 1560’s when corms were taken from Constantinople by the Holy Roman Emperor’s ambassador.

The Crocus is one of our first spring flowering plants and has long been a symbol of youthfulness and cheerfulness. It can be pollinated by various types of insects, such as bees, moths and beetles. It is a genus of the iris family comprising 90 species of perennials growing from corms. Flowers appear in autumn, winter, or spring and are usually yellow, white, mauve or lilac in colour. They are native to woodland, scrub, and meadows from sea level to alpine tundra in North Africa and the Middle East, central and southern Europe, in particular *Krokos*, Greece on the islands of the Aegean, and across Central Asia to Xinjiang Province in western China.

The Dutch Crocus or *Crocus vernus* has the largest blooms of all the crocuses and is probably the most popular variety of this versatile plant. Crocus bulbs need to be planted in September to October and will flower between February and April. Height is normally 8-12cm and spread 5-8cm. The crocus has a single, cup-shaped flower that arises from long tube, the flower is composed of six petals and the leaves have a sword-like shape and white central stripe. Leaves and petals are covered by a waxy cuticle that gives them natural insulation to protect them from frost and snow.



The spice saffron is obtained from the stigmas of *Crocus sativus*, an autumn-blooming species. Saffron is harvested by hand, ideally between dawn and 10am. Each plant produces three red stigmas which are then dried. It takes over 4,000 dried crocus stigmas yield one ounce of saffron! 90% of the world’s saffron is harvested in Iran, and it’s one of the most expensive and precious spices on the planet.

In addition to being used as a spice, saffron based pigment was used in cave art 50,000 years ago. It is also used in the manufacture of perfumes and in medicine, where studies show it has antibacterial properties. Saffron has historically been used as a dye for clothing and textiles, as one single grain can colour 10 gallons of water! Saffron is responsible for giving the robes of Buddhist monks, their signature deep reddish-gold hue.



Photos from Morton Lochs



Morton Lochs



Mill at Morton Lochs



Red Squirrel



Robin

These four lovely photos were taken at Morton Lochs and have been included by kind permission of Martin Hepworth (Comerton)



Crossbill



Water Rail



Wood Pigeon and Female Mallard



The first three photos were taken at Morton Lochs and the fourth shows the Snowdrops at at Cambo Estates and have been included by kind permission of Paul Edwards (Craigie)

News and Events



Friday 14 to Friday 21 February 2020 - National Nest Box Week

The idea is to encourage everyone to put up nest boxes in their own gardens or locally in order to promote and enhance biodiversity and conservation of breeding birds and wildlife.

If you want advice on buying or making your own box and where best to put it, please go to: <https://www.nestboxweek.com/>

Thursday 19 March 2020 - 7pm at the Drumoig Hotel "Our Wildlife Scotland – North to South"

Paul and I will be giving the above talk, it covers our journey from the Northern Isles to the Mull of Galloway the southernmost point of Scotland showing the places we have visited and wildlife we have photographed on the way.



Year of Coasts and Waters 2020

2020 is the Year of Coast and Waters, a themed year led by VisitScotland, celebrating Scotland's fantastic coasts and waters. For more information on where to visit and activities being organised go to : <https://www.visitscotland.com/about/themed-years/coasts-waters/>



Friday 20 March to Monday 13 April 2020

The Great British Spring Clean 2020

This is a countrywide project to clean up the environment around us particularly nature areas. Anyone can take part, and this can be a small effort such as picking up rubbish when you go dog walking to a planned beach clean. To sign up at log on to <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean/how-get-started>



Every two years, the Royal Entomological Society organises the week, supported by a large number of partner organisations with interests in the science, natural history and conservation of insects. <https://www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk/>



Tentsmuir NNR Reserve Newsletter No.39

Tom Cunningham has issued his latest newsletter full of interesting news, information and events. A copy is attached and can also be found on the DRA website.



**FIFE COAST &
COUNTRYSIDE TRUST**

Sunday 16 February 2020 from 10am to 12 noon

Winter Tree Identification Walk at Craighall Den

You can join the Fife Countryside Trust Rangers for this winter tree identification walk. You will learn how to recognise different tree species without their leaves, and we will discuss some of the basic history, biology and ecology of trees in the landscape. The walk will be to Craighall Den and then up the hill, through the woods. The total distance covered will be just over 2 miles, there and back. The path from Ceres is flat tarmac, on arriving at the Den the path becomes looser and is muddy in parts. A good general level of fitness would be required as the gradient becomes quite steep later in the walk. For more information and to book go to: <https://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk/events/winter-tree-identification-walk-craighall-den/>

Saturday 22 February 2020 from 10am to 12 noon

Winter Tree Identification Walk at Birnie and Gaddon Lochs

You can join the Fife Countryside Trust Rangers on a walk around these local lochs. They will be looking at the various trees and shrubs found there, including the orchard. You will learn ways to identify different species when they are not in leaf or bloom and to understand some basic tree ecology. You need to wear suitable outdoor clothing and sturdy footwear as the footpaths can be difficult. The event is suitable for adults and will involve a walk of around 3 miles. For more information and to book go to:

<https://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk/events/winter-tree-identification-walk-birnie-and-gaddon-lochs/>

Sunday 23 February from 10am to 2.00pm

Dune Action Day: Christmas Tree Crater, West Sands St Andrews

Following the donating and positioning of old Christmas trees into the dunes and St Andrews Links Trust help in covering them the next stage is to plant up the bare sand with dune grasses. Volunteers are needed to help with this task – meeting place is the West Sands Café. You will need old clothes, sturdy boots and gloves and coffee and cake is available at the finish. For more information see: <https://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk/events/dune-action-day-christmas-tree-crater-west-sands-st-andrews/>



Scottish
Wildlife
Trust

Scottish Wildlife Trust

The guide on the latest events and activities is available at the following link:

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/wildlife-events/events-and-activities/>

Used Stamp Collection 2019

Thank you to everyone who supported last year's appeal. The stamps have now been parcelled up and are on their way to the RSPB.



2020 Used Stamp Appeal



Please start collecting now for this year's appeal, and encourage your friends, relatives and colleagues to do the same.

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

This appeal is in aid of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. This society was founded in 1982 the offers help and advice to those with sick, injured or orphaned hedgehogs and maintains a list of rehabilitators in the UK. It is a registered UK Charity and is dedicated to helping & protecting hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) native to the UK.



For more information see:
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

And finally – Did You Know?



Bullfinch pairs have been reported to be long lasting, with individuals remaining together from one breeding season to the next.

During courtship male Bullfinches will offer a twig or root to a partner, which the female will then reciprocate before both birds fly off together with nesting material in their beaks.

Happy Valentine's Day

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

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