

Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF)

Newsletter 15 – April 2020



Welcome to the fifteenth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum.

This special 'Lockdown' edition is putting a spotlight on Drumoig. It will take in the birds, flora and fauna that can be found on and around the golf course and in our gardens. In addition, there will be information on wildlife organisations and tips on gardening for wildlife.

Bird of the month

This edition could not start with a better subject than the Swallow. On Thursday 9 April, Paul and I were delighted to see our first Swallow on Drumoig this year. It sat on the lamppost across from our house. Many residents keep records for first sightings and the earliest time one has been seen is the third week of April. Since then a second swallow was seen over Craigie Farm on the 20 April.

Much folklore surrounds the Swallow and seeing the first swallow of the year is regarded as a good omen. So, although Aristotle (384 BCE – 322 BCE) famously said "One swallow does not a summer make" we can only hope that this sighting is a turning point for us all this year.

British swallows spend their winter in South Africa. Their journey takes about six weeks. They travel through western France, across the Pyrenees, down eastern Spain into Morocco and across the Sahara. Some birds follow the west coast of Africa avoiding the Sahara. Other European swallows travel further east and down the Nile Valley. Swallows put on little weight before migrating.

They migrate by day at low altitudes and find food on the way. Despite accumulating some fat reserves before crossing large areas such as the Sahara Desert, they are vulnerable to starvation during these crossings. Migration is a hazardous time and many birds die from starvation, exhaustion and in storms.

Migrating swallows cover 200 miles a day, mainly during daylight, at speeds of 17-22 miles per hour. The maximum flight speed is 35 mph. An amazing feat when you consider this bird is only 17-19 cm long, has a wingspan of 32-35cm and only weighs 16-25g. Male and female swallows are virtually identical in appearance. They eat a range of small invertebrates which are caught on the wing. They always drink on the wing, flying low to sip the water.

Swallows arrive in the UK in April and May, invariably the male arrives back first singing over his territory in the hope of attracting a mate. Females generally appear a week to a fortnight later. It takes a pair of swallows up to 1,200 journeys to build a nest build that are made out of mud. Only the female lines the nest. By early June, most swallows have started to breed and by July the first brood of young has usually left the nest and flown away. The parents will normally then go on to raise a second brood and sometimes a third. The lifespan of a Swallow is only about 2 years. Swallows return to their wintering grounds in September and October.

For more information on Swallows see:

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

<https://app.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob9920.htm>

We are fortunate to have the Drumoig golf course around us giving us the opportunity to take our daily walk there whilst keeping to social distancing. During these walks there is the opportunity to spot wildlife and plants, here are a few things to look out for

On the lake by the 11th



Oystercatcher



Tufted Duck (Male and Female)



Mallard (Female and Male)



Little Grebe – also known as a Dabchick



Moorhen



Heron



Canada Goose



Pied Wagtail

On 20th April we saw a pair of Mallards with 9 ducklings and two Mute Swans have arrived on the lake, we have also seen a pair of Linnets, preparing a nest.

It is now officially Spring and how lovely it is to see the trees coming into leaf and many of them in flower, which also attract butterflies and insects. Here are a few seen on the golf course



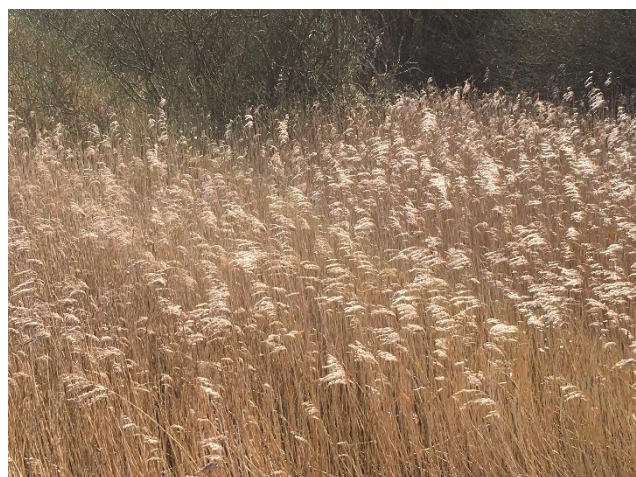
Pussy Willow



Peacock Butterfly on Pussy Willow



Gorse



Reed bed by 18th Tee Off



Sloe (Blackthorn in Blossom)



Cherry tree in Blossom

Life in the garden

This is a busy time for birds, they have either built or are in the process of building their nest. We watched a Coal Tit pulling the moss from our hanging basket the other day to line its nest. Here are some of the visitors to our garden.



Yellowhammer



Goldfinch



Ladybirds



White-tailed Bumble Bee



Small Tortoiseshell

In addition, we are visited by Blackbird (Male and Female), Blue Tit, Collared Dove, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Dunnock, Robin, Sparrows, Starling and Woodpigeon

Watch wildlife from your home



Please don't forget to get your notebook and your camera out and record visitors to your garden (or during your walks) and send them to me for the next newsletter.








A pair of Red Squirrels – by kind permission of Lesley Burden (Craigie)

For tips on feeding garden birds go to:

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/inthewild/feedinggardenbirds>

Wildlife Organisations

If you are interested in learning more about wildlife, looking to identify species you have seen then the following wildlife organisation websites are full of information. You can also help them by sending your sightings and taking part in the surveys they have running.

 <p>https://www.bto.org/</p> <p>The BTO are running two projects</p>	<p>Garden BirdWatch</p> 	<p>The BTO Garden BirdWatch offers a great opportunity to learn more about garden birds and other wildlife, and to contribute directly to BTO's important scientific research on the value of gardens for wildlife.</p> <p>The Garden Bird Watch is now in its 25th year and to celebrate the BTO are offering a free one-year membership if you take part in its survey. For more information go to: https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/join-gbw</p>
	<p>Nesting Neighbours</p> <p>This is a survey of nesting sites you might have in your garden. For more information go to: https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/nesting-neighbours?dm_i=NXX,6T1K8,W9VWA1,R8Y79,1</p>	
		<p>This website includes a section on how to identify the bumblebees in your garden. For more information go to: https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/</p>
<p>Butterfly Conservation</p> 	<p>This excellent website give information on Moths and Butterflies and has a 'How to identify section'. https://butterfly-conservation.org/</p> <p>The Butterfly Conservation would like as many people as possible to take part in the 2020 Garden Butterfly Survey. For more information go to: https://www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org/</p>	
		<p>RSPB Big Garden Watch 2020</p> <p>The results have been issued and the RSPB have reported that 485,930 people across the UK took part (13,172 more than 2019) and recorded 7,833,350 birds (164,212 more than 2019).</p> <p>The Top 10 birds counted in Scotland can be found on the attached poster.</p>



Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a partnership project that is working to ensure red squirrels continue to be a part of Scotland's special native wildlife. They monitor squirrel numbers (Red and Grey) and would like to hear about your sightings. **To report a Red Squirrel Sighting go to:**

https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/squirrel-sightings/?ssrs_sighting_add=1#BreadcrumbsAtTop



The Ospreys are Back at the Loch of Lowes Wildlife Reserve. A new female osprey NC) has joined the regular male LM12. For more information and to see the live webcam go to: <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/2020/03/the-new-bird-on-the-block/>



SCOTLAND
THE BIG PICTURE
rewriting nature's story

Their mission is to help drive transformational change towards a vast network of rewilded land and water across Scotland, where wildlife and people flourish. It was founded by a team of professional communicators, who work with a range of partners and clients to produce innovative films, books, photo-stories, presentations and education resources, all designed to inform and inspire. For more information go to: <https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com/Home>

I encourage you to watch a short film called 'Rearing Reds' by Polly Pullar, writer and Director of SCOTLAND: The Big Picture. Here is the link: <https://vimeo.com/344134549>

Polly is an experienced wildlife rehabilitator, and she received three young red squirrels just days old, and thought their chances of survival were slim, but their story is a joy to watch.



Scottish Ornithologists' Club
<https://www.the-soc.org.uk/>

SOC was established by a group of Scottish Ornithologists in 1936 to promote the study, recording and documentation of Scotland's birdlife and to support the conservation of wild birds and their habitats throughout Scotland and to develop an interest in wild birds.

They have made a digital version of their Club's March 2020 journal and have offered it free for anyone to read. **A copy is attached.**

Gardening tips



For residents of new properties this could be a good time to plan your garden and for existing residents, maybe you would like to consider making part of your garden wildlife friendly.

The attached guide '[Gardening for Wildlife](#)' should hopefully help with your plans. It also includes links to several organisations offering suggestions and advice.

Although visiting garden centres is not possible just now a number of companies are selling plants and seed on-line.



Roof repaired



Roof replaced

(Thanks also to Alec Burden for the loan if the ladder)



All done

Special thanks go to Gordon Bruce and his son Tristan from Forgan Drive. They spotted that an old Barn Owls nest in an Ash tree on the edge of the farmland behind the top of Craigie Hill had lost its roof.

The photos show the repaired roof, then Tristan taking on the task of climbing up the ladder and replacing it and the finished box.

Hopefully, the Barn Owls will make good use of their newly refurbished property.



2020 Used Stamp Appeal



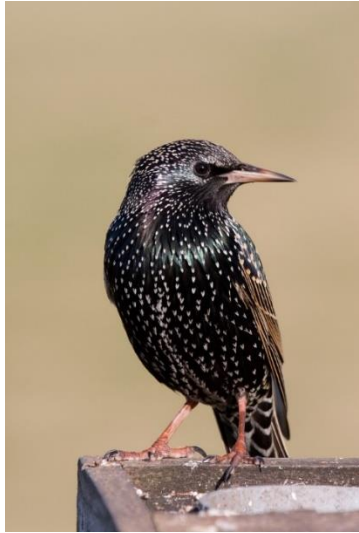
British Hedgehog Preservation Society

For more information see:

<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/>

Please don't forget that the collection for this year's appeal (British Hedgehog Preservation Society) is still ongoing. Please save your stamps and once the Drumoig Hotel reopens then stamps can be deposited in the collection box in the entrance hall.

And finally – Did You Know?



In some gardens, Starling have learned that they can use herbs to prevent parasites from getting into their feathers!

They have been observed picking herbs from gardens and taking them into their nests or roosting areas.

A recent communication from a Garden Bird Watcher stated that the Starling in her garden favoured sage, but also took lavender and rosemary. Presumably, the aroma of these plants deters the parasites from lingering in their feathers.

It never ceases to amaze us how ingenious some birds can be!

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

Stay safe and keep well and let nature give you hope in these uncertain times.

Thank you and kind regards

Christine Edwards
Drumoig Wildlife Forum Co-ordinator