

Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF)

Newsletter 17 – December 2020

Welcome to the seventeenth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum.
This also represents the end of the fourth year of the forum

Plant of the month



Leaves

The Ivy has dark green and glossy leaves with pale veins. Leaves of juvenile forms have 3-5 lobes and a pale underside. On mature forms, leaves are oval, or heart shaped without lobes.



Flowers

Only mature plants produce flowers. They are yellowish green and appear in small, dome-shaped clusters known as umbels.



Berries

Black, berry-like and almost globular in clusters.

The photos above are of Ivy (*Hedera helix*). Ivy is an evergreen, woody climber which can grow to a height of 30m. It has two different forms – juvenile and mature. It has climbing stems with specialised hairs which help it stick to surfaces as it climbs, mature forms can be self-supporting. Ivy grows well throughout the UK and can be found in many habitats, including woodland scrub, wasteland and on isolated trees. It is tolerant of shade and survives in all but the most dry, waterlogged or acidic soils

There are two native subspecies of ivy in the British Isles: *Hedera helix* ssp. *helix* and *Hedera helix* ssp. *Hibernica*. The subspecies *Hibernica* is a ground spreading ivy. It is an evergreen plant so leaves can be seen all year round. It flowers from September to November and its fruits ripen from November to January. It can support at least 50 species of wildlife.

Ivy Nectar, pollen and berries are an essential food source for insects, such as bees, hoverflies and common wasps; an important food plant for some butterfly and moth larvae such as holly blue, small dusty wave, angle shades and swallow-tailed moth and for birds during autumn and winter when little else is about. The high fat content of the berries is a particularly nutritious food resource for birds, which include thrushes, blackcaps, woodpigeons, blackbirds, and migratory birds such as Redwing. It also provides shelter for insects, birds, bats, and other small mammals.

Ivy has long been accused of strangling trees, but in fact it doesn't harm the tree at all. It uses trees and walls for support allowing it to reach upwards to better levels of sunlight. It is not a parasitic plant and has a separate root system in the soil and so absorbs its own nutrients and water as needed. Ivy does not damage trees and its presence doesn't indicate that a tree is unhealthy, and it doesn't create a tree-safety issue. In fact, research by English Heritage has shown that in some cases, ivy can help preserve stonework on old buildings.

Mythology and symbolism

Wearing a wreath of ivy leaves around the head was once said to prevent one from getting drunk. The Roman god Bacchus, the god of intoxication, was often depicted wearing a wreath of ivy and grapevines. Ivy was also a symbol of intellectual achievement in ancient Rome and wreaths were used to crown winners of poetry contests. Wreaths were also given to winning athletes in ancient Greece.

It was also a symbol of fidelity and so priests would present a wreath of ivy to newly married couples. Today it is still the custom for bridal bouquets to contain a sprig of ivy. Because ivy is evergreen it made it a powerful symbol during the dark winter months of times past; sprigs of ivy and holly were brought into houses to keep evil spirits at bay.

For more on wildlife plants click on the following links

[Ivy \(Hedera helix\) - British Wildflowers - Woodland Trust](#)

[Ivy | The Wildlife Trusts](#)

Around the Golf Course

In April I wrote my first newsletter in lockdown and the second in July, who could have imagined that as I write this edition, we are about to be moved up to Tier 4 and another lockdown, although with slightly different rules. However, we must take the positives from these times. Residents have continued to report their sightings and send me photos and a selection are shown below



In July Trevor McClintock sent this photo of Male Mallards in Eclipse plumage which is a temporary or transition plumage.

Ducks are peculiar as they moult all their flight feathers, the long wing feathers all at once, so for about a month they can't fly and are vulnerable to predators. The males shed their bright body feathers first making them look very much like female ducks.

This is why in mid-summer you might wonder why you don't see drakes.

Once the flight feathers have regrown, the Birds moult again, and by October the full colours are back and are then easy to identify, just like the one below.



Life in the garden

It has been a great time to watch wildlife in our garden, we have continued to see Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Great Tits, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Goldfinch, Collared Doves, Wood Pigeons and Robin and the occasional Sparrowhawk, and our lavender hedge was full of bees we counted as many as 100 at one time. However, we were very excited to finally get our first Red Squirrel in our garden recently, even though it was in a hurry to get away!



Nature found in unusual places

Palmate Newt found in the rockery



(By kind permission of Michael Duncan)

Bat found in wood burner, safely released in the garden



(By kind permission of Gordon Muir)

And not what you expect to find in your woodstore! Female blackbird on nest



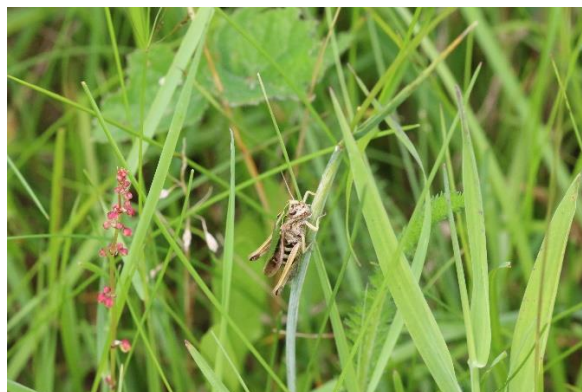
With five hungry mouths to feed, all fledged now



(By kind permission of Martin Hepworth)



Caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth on Ragwort



Grasshopper

(By kind permission of Paul Edwards)

Nature with a story



I found this large flying insect in a tree in the shrub land bordering the 9 hole golf course in July. It was at least 1" long (maybe 1 1/2") and was something I've never seen before.

I searched the internet and couldn't identify it, so wrote to the Forestry Commission, they thought it was a Sawfly, so I contacted the British sawfly organisation who said it was a parasitic wasp and to contact Dr Gavin Broad at the Natural History Museum in London as he was the UK expert. He immediately identified it as an *Amblyjoppa proteus*, a parasitoid of Elephant Hawk-moth. See below.



The following photos and text were kindly sent to me by Martin Hepworth



A Ruby Tiger Moth Caterpillar. There are two generations annually in the south - April to June and August to September. The caterpillars can be seen as late as November. They are present throughout the UK but less common in Scotland. You can often spot them wandering about during the day prior to pupating, which is when we saw them - there were several on the concrete bases as you walk round the par 3 golf course at the far end of the driving range.

The De Havilland Aircraft made the famous Tiger Moth trainer which was the standard RAF basic trainer from the 1930's to the 1950's. There were other versions in the same family such as the Puss Moth, Fox Moth, Hornet Moth and Gipsy Moth but not, as far as I know a "Ruby Moth" - perhaps they missed a trick!!



Comment - When you see the adult moth, I think Martin is right.

I recently came across this toad. Looking on the internet I think this is a common toad (*Bufo Bufo*). Toads, as opposed to frogs, are tailless, have warty lumps on their body and their rear legs are not webbed. Toads have the ability to change colour and vary from dark brown to grey to olive green to a sandy colour. They eat insects, worms, snails and slugs and are thus called "the gardener's friend". They live in shallow burrows most of the summer but mate near water and lay their eggs in water in a long string. They hibernate in deep leaf litter, log piles and burrows.



I have occasionally come across them in winter while gardening and they seem to be a very desiccated black splodge which appears to be dead but moves when you prod it!!!



(By kind permission of Martin Hepworth)



Martin sent me this lovely photo of a Painted Lady Butterfly (above left) and said that a stamp had been issued by the Royal Mail showing it (above right). I looked this up and found that a set of six special stamps had been issued as a collection called 'Brilliant Bugs' on the 1/10/20. The artwork was created by the acclaimed wildlife artist Richard Lewington and shows the Common Carder Bee, The Painted Lady, the Longhorn Beetle, The Elephant Hawk-moth, the Marmalade Hoverfly and the Ruby tailed wasp. (all six are shown on the right).



Nature Surveys

In the last newsletter I reported on the survey of trees and shrubs I had undertaken. Over the last few months, I have now undertaken a survey of Wildflowers and Grasses.

Wildflowers of Drumoig

The big question is – Is a wildflower a weed? The Oxford Dictionary states that a Wildflower is 'A flower of an uncultivated variety or a flower growing freely without human intervention', whereas a wildflower growing where it is not wanted and in competition with cultivated plants is known as a weed. Many consider the UK native dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) to be a weed since their plants spread quickly and can be difficult to remove. However, dandelion flowers are an important source of food for bees and other pollinators early in the season, as they are one of the earlier-flowering species. So perhaps we should not judge them too harshly!

Wildflowers and wildflower-rich habitats support insects and other wildlife in the form of leaves, nectar, and pollen, also shelter and places to breed. In return, insects pollinate the wildflowers, enabling them to develop seeds and spread to grow in other places, the insects themselves are eaten by birds, bats, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals, all of whom contribute to the cycle of life. Wildflowers can also be helpful to keep soil healthy. When wildflowers become established and spread their roots, they stabilise the surrounding soil, given protection against erosion.

Wildflowers also contribute to scientific and medical research. Some UK native wildflowers contain compounds which can be used in drugs to treat diseases. For example, foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) contain chemicals used to treat heart conditions. If we were to lose wildflower species, we could lose potential new medicines. Most importantly, perhaps, wildflowers are beautiful and provide us with habitats that buzz with life.

I counted **88 Wildflowers and 8 Aquatic plants and 9 Grasses and Bracken** in my survey around Drumoig. These range from ground covering to freestanding plants, some flowering throughout spring, summer and into Autumn, such as the Pink Campion and some that only have a short life span such as Orchids. Many of them fulfil important roles for wildlife such as the Ragwort which is the food for the Cinnabar Moth and Scabious which provides pollen for bees. Many of them produce beautiful flowers, such as the Nettle-Leaved Bellflower and others have exotic names such as Common Rampion-fumitory, Lady's Bedstraw and Mouse-ear Chickweed.

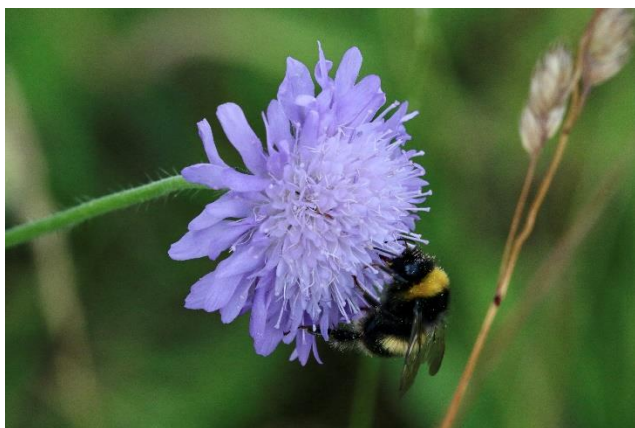
Below are some images of Wildflowers at Drumoig



Common Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)



Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)



Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)



Common Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*)



Nettle-leaved Bellflower (*Campanula trachelium*)



Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*)



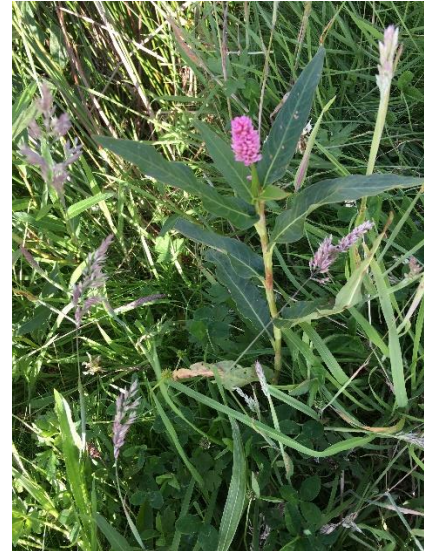
Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*)



Weld (*Reseda luteola*)



Water mint (*Mentha aquatica*)



Water Smartweed (*Pericaria amphibia*)

Grasses of Drumoig



Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*)

Grass is a monocotyledon plant, herbaceous plants with narrow leaves growing from the base. The most common kind of grass is used to cover the ground in a lawn.

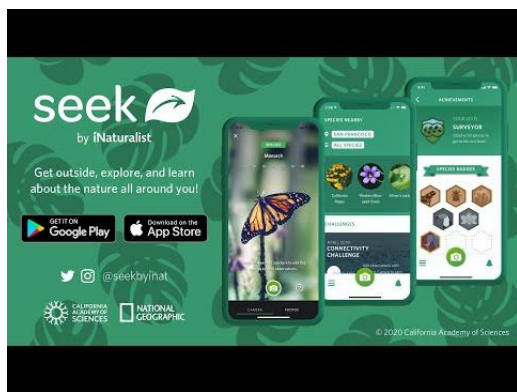
The true grasses include cereals, bamboo, and the grasses of lawns (turf) and grassland. Uses for graminoids include food (as grain, sprouted grain, shoots or rhizomes), drink (beer, whisky). Thatching thatch, paper, fuel, clothing, insulation, construction, sports turf, basket weaving and many others.

Grasses are an important food for many animals like deer, cattle, sheep, mice, grasshoppers, and caterpillars. Unlike other plants, grasses grow from the bottom, so when animals eat grass, they usually do not destroy the part that grows. Without grass dirt can wash away into rivers and cause erosion.

Many grasses are short, but some grasses, like bamboo can grow very tall. Plants from the grass family can grow in many places, even if they are very cold or very dry. Several other plants that look similar but are not members of the grass family are also sometimes called grass; these include rushes, reeds, papyrus, and water chestnut.



Orchard Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*)



If you are interested in identifying wildlife, plants, and fungi and learn about the organisms all around there are a number of Free Apps that you can download. I have used Seek by iNaturalist to identify the Trees, Shrubs and Wildflowers I have found for my surveys. It is easy to use just open the camera, point at the plant, insect etc. and it should give you an identification and allow you to take a photo.

iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. Seek was originally created with support from HHMI Tangled Bank Studios and enhanced with support from Our Planet on Netflix and WWF.

"Going, going, gone" - the demolition of the Scottish Golf Union building
 (The four photos below by kind permission of Martin Hepworth)



What's On - Wildlife Organisations



The Great Scottish Squirrel Survey took place between 21-27 September 2020

A record number of squirrel sightings were reported by the public during these dates. In total 2,100 people – three times the number who took part in the first national survey in 2019 – logged 548 grey squirrel and 2612 red squirrel.

This mass citizen science event run by Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, a partnership project led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, has helped to create a Scotland-wide snapshot of numbers and locations, and will provide valuable data for conservationists and its inclusion in a national database will directly influence conservation action in the future.

You can report sightings of both red and grey squirrels anytime by going to: <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/squirrel-sightings/> and click on Report a Squirrel sighting.

Butterfly Conservation



The Butterfly Conservation held their 11th Big Butterfly Count between 17 July and 9 August 2020 and 111,628 people took part across the UK and almost 1.4 million butterflies were counted. However worryingly this summer's count saw a reduction in the average number of butterflies logged per count of -34% in comparison with 2019.

Scotland's Top Ten for 2020 were (% is the change from 2019)

1	Small Tortoiseshell down (-21%)	6	Ringlet (+94%)
2	Small White (-25%)	7	Green-veined White (+5%)
3	Large White (-5%)	8	Red Admiral (-50%)
4	Meadow Brown (+100%)	9	Six-spot Burnet (+208%)
5	Peacock (-56%)	10	Common Blue (+27%)

For more information on butterflies and moths see: <https://butterfly-conservation.org>



Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve Newsletter No.40 – July 2020

Tom Cunningham, Reserve Manager retired on 30 June and his final newsletter recalling his time with Scottish National Heritage is attached and can also be found on the [DRA website](#)

Marijke Leith who was on a student placement when residents were given a guided tour of Tentsmuir in October 2019 has been made the new Nature Reserve Manager.



**FIFE COAST &
COUNTRYSIDE TRUST**

If you want to plan some winter walks, there are lots of ideas on the FCCT website. I have just been on the Glenvale Path in the Lomond Hills and it had a flat, well-made path, and wonderful scenery. [Outdoor Access - Fife Coast & Countryside Trust \(fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk\)](https://fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk)



The Scottish Wildlife Trust have a particularly good website and you can sign up for their weekly newsletter.

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/scotlands-wildlife/>

Follow the link below to see on-line videos, wildlife webcams and to join on-line talks

[Watch Wildlife Webcams Online | Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)

Follow the link below to take part in the weekly 'Wild Trivia' quiz's, which are a great way of learning about nature.

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/category/wild-trivia/>



RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch will be held from

Friday 29 to Sunday 31 Jan 2021

To take part go to:

[Big Garden Birdwatch | Join the fun - The RSPB](#)

RSPB Scotland's James Silvey shares how he has turned his garden into a mini nature reserve and how you can too!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1GVW6MZ2SU&utm_source=notes_on_nature_august_2020&utm_medium=email&utm_content=12&utm_campaign=notes_on_nature

National Nest Box Week (NNBW)



Sunday 14 to Monday 21 February 2021

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

For more information about the event, and to get advice on buying or making your own box and where the best place to put it is the please go to: www.nestboxweek.com



Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) is a collaborative project between the [Zoological Society of London \(ZSL\)](#), the [British Trust for Ornithology \(BTO\)](#), [Froglife](#) and the [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds \(RSPB\)](#) which aims to monitor the health of, and identify disease threats to, British wildlife.

If you find a sick or injured Amphibian, Bird, Hedgehog or reptile please report it to GWH, for more information and a guide to diseases go to: <https://www.gardenwildlifehealth.org/about/>

If you find a bird with a ring, please also report this information to EURING at: <https://euring.org/>

2020 Used Stamp Appeal



British Hedgehog Preservation Society

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 or contact me for collection / drop-off. For more information see:

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

Winter scenes from around Drumoig (By kind permission of Martin Hepworth)



This is the time nature needs our help – providing seed, fruit and high fat content foods, such as fat balls / suet pellets are particularly good for birds. A supply of fresh water, clear of ice is also important.

For more information go to:

[Help wildlife this winter | Conservation | Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)

[Feeding Birds | What Can I Feed Birds? - The RSPB](#)

And finally

As advised at the last AGM, this was my last year as Drumoig Wildlife Forum Co-ordinator. I would like to send my heartfelt thanks to all those residents that have attended events, who have sent in sightings, photos, and videos and those of you who have encouraged wildlife into their gardens. Drumoig has proved to be a haven for nature and special thanks go to Ian Menzies for allowing us the freedom to erect the bird boxes and undertake the surveys on the golf course.

Statistics since starting – Number of:

Wildflowers / Aquatic plants	96	Bird Boxes	32
Birds	58	Newsletters	17
Moths	55	Talks	7
Trees and Shrubs	28	Walks	4
Mammals	13	Moth Trapping	2
Grasses and Bracken	9	Boat trip	1
Butterflies	7	Photo Gallery (see link below)	1
Insects	10	Video Gallery (see link below)	1
Amphibians	3		

Photo Gallery - [Drumoig Residents Association - Wildlife Gallery \(btck.co.uk\)](http://btck.co.uk/WildlifeGallery)

Video Gallery – [Wildlife in Drumoig - Google Photos](https://www.google.com/photos/all/albums/drumoig-wildlife)

Paul and I will continue to survey and maintain the bird boxes and once we have undertaken this task, I will arrange for the results to be sent to you.

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

Thank you and kind regards.

Christine Edwards

drumoig.wildlife@gmail.com

Web page - <http://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum>

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