

# Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF) Newsletter 2 - May 2017



**Welcome** to the second newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum. Thank you to those residents that have attended events or who have sent details of their sightings. It has been a very busy few weeks and below is the progress so far:

**Wildflower of the month** is the Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (often known as Wild Hyacinth in Scotland) and is one of the UK's most iconic species. Britain is home to half of the world's population of the bluebell. It flourishes in mature broadleaf woodland with dappled sunlight. Its presence is an indicator of ancient woodland and can also show us where woodland once was, however they are increasingly under threat from the escape of the Spanish bluebell *Hyacinthoides hispanica* from gardens and subsequent hybridisation. Both the Spanish bluebell and the hybrid are more prolific than the native, taking over as they spread faster. Fife Council in conjunction the Fife Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage would like to know where you have seen bluebells recently so they can get a better idea of where they remain to help protect them. For more information or to take part in the survey go to the following link <http://beautiful.fife.scot/bluebell-survey/>

## Bird Boxes / Nesting update

We took on our biggest (and highest) bird box project this month, when a Tawny Owl Box was built by Alec Burden and installed Paul Edwards with the ladder ably footed by Alec. Thanks to both for undertaking this task.



The 20 bird boxes that were installed in February have been monitored on a regular basis and I am pleased to say that there have been 6 confirmed sightings of use 5 by Great Tits and 1 by a Blue Tit and there is also evidence of use of several others, this is very encouraging in the first year





## Is this the ultimate in house conversion?

Michael and Jeanie Duncan sent in this photo of their old swallow's nest which has been taken over by a wren. The wren has built an attic extension on the swallow's nest by liberally covering it with dead leaves and bits of dead grass and making a green roof with moss. The wren is often seen peeping out when the front door is opened and has been observed taking in feathers. We look forward to hearing more news about this resourceful little bird soon.



## What's that bird?

Thank you to the residents who spotted the first of our Swallows and House Martins. Swallows were first seen in Craigue on 19 April and in Comerton on 20 April. The first House Martins were seen at Comerton on 29 April. With the return of our summer birds we take a look at Swallows and Martins (Family name Hirundinidae) and Swifts (Family name Apodidae).

	
<p><b>House Martin (<i>Delichon urbica</i>)</b> <i>Where to see them:</i> Across UK, although scarce in far N and W of Scotland. Found around towns and villages, areas of mixed agriculture, near water and in the vicinity of woodland. <i>When to see them:</i> April - October <i>What they eat:</i> Aerial Insects <i>Description:</i> A small bird with glossy blue-black upper parts and pure white under parts. It has a distinctive white rump with a forked tail and, on close inspection, white feathers covering its legs and toes. It spends much of its time on the wing collecting insect prey.</p>	<p><b>Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)</b> <i>Where to see them:</i> Along rivers and other water bodies throughout UK. Also found around man-made gravel pits. <i>When to see them:</i> March-October <i>What they eat:</i> Invertebrates taken on the wing. <i>Description:</i> These are the smallest European hirundine, with dark brown upper parts and dark under wings contrasting with otherwise pale under parts divided by a distinctive dark chest bar. Agile fliers, feeding mainly over water.</p>
	
<p><b>Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)</b> <i>Where to see them:</i> They are found in areas where there is a ready and accessible supply of small insects. They are particularly fond of open pasture with access to water and quiet farm buildings. <i>When to see them:</i> March to October. <i>What they eat:</i> A range of small invertebrates <i>Description:</i> Small birds with dark, glossy-blue backs, red throats, pale underparts and long tail streamers. They are extremely agile in flight and spend most of their time on the wing.</p>	<p><b>Swift (<i>Apus apus</i>)</b> <i>Where to see them:</i> High in the sky in summer, they never perch on wires like swallows. You may sometimes see large numbers careering madly at high speed around rooftops and houses, often low, especially towards dusk. <i>When to see them:</i> April - August. <i>What they eat:</i> Flying insects and airborne spiders <i>Description:</i> A medium-sized aerial bird, which is a superb flier. It even sleeps on the wing! It is plain sooty brown, but in flight against the sky it appears black. It has long, scythe-like wings and a short, forked tail.</p>

For more information see the RSPB website here: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/s/swallow/index.aspx>

For those of you that have House Martins you may like to take part in the BTO survey at <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/house-martin-survey>

## Talks and walks

24 residents attended the talk by Clare McElroy, Bumble Bee Conservation Trust (BBCT) and Duncan Davidson, Butterfly Conservation, at the Drumoig Hotel on Tuesday 11 April. They both gave excellent talks on their subjects, which were very informative and delivered with great enthusiasm. The audience left with a greater appreciation of these two species, and the need for us to support them through their life cycle with the correct garden planting and habitat protection.

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 below shows Jeannie Duncan (centre) who won the quiz prize, a selection of wildflower plants with Clare (left and Duncan (right).



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

Note: The BBCT have a great kids section on their website with activities for all different age ranges, they are in pdf form and can be printed from their website at the link below.

<http://bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/bumble-kids/activities/>

They also have a BeeWalk project – more information can be found here:

<https://bumblebeeconservation.org/get-involved/surveys/beewalk/>



On Tuesday 16 May six residents took part in the first DWF Bird walk. This took place at Birnie & Gaddon Lochs, near Colessie. Although the birdlife was quieter than normal we did see 17 species as listed below.

Blackbird, Bullfinch, Buzzard, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Chaffinch (M), Common Gull, Coot, Greylag Geese with goslings, Jackdaw, Mallard (M/F), Mute Swan, Oystercatcher with chick, Robin, Rooks, Willow warbler, Woodpigeon. In addition we were surprised to see a large Terrapin

These lochs were excavated during the 1980's and 1990's as sand and gravel quarries and have been restored to provide a home for a large range of bird and plant species. The two lochs are joined by a network of paths and whilst the site is predominately open water surrounded by sparse woodland it also includes smaller areas of wetland and grassland habitats that help attract a variety of wildlife.

It is well worth a visit, a slow walk around the two lochs takes about 1.30 – 2 hours. For more information see:

[http://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/Local-Nature-Reserves/Birnie-Gaddon\\_33.html](http://fifecoastandcountrysidetrust.co.uk/Local-Nature-Reserves/Birnie-Gaddon_33.html)

## Talks and walks – Dates for the diary

The next three events are

- **On Saturday 10 June at 10am** – we will meet Duncan Davidson, Butterfly Conservation at the large car park at the Drumoig Hotel, where he will give us the opportunity to see the moths he has trapped on the previous evening (and then release them). Hopefully as this is a weekend residents who are normally at work, and children will be able to attend.

- **On Tuesday 27 June** - 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.

**There will then be a break for the summer with our next indoor meeting being:**

- **On Tuesday 26 September at 2pm**  
Several residents have reported sightings of Red Squirrels on the golf course (around the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>) this is very encouraging. So, the next talk will be on the subject of Red Squirrels and will be given by Ken Neil who up to his recent retirement worked for 'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels'
- **Winter Spring Programme**  
Talks on Birds in Fife by Norman Elkins, BTO, a talk on Hedgehogs by Scottish Wildlife and a talk about trees by the Woodland Trust are being considered as well as a guided walk at Morton Lochs.

### **RSPB Big Garden Watch**

The results from the survey which took place between Saturday 28-Monday 30 January have been received. The total birds counted in the UK was 8,074,966 and in Scotland 626,184. The top 10 birds seen / counted are:

<b>Top species</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Fife</b>
1	House Sparrow	House Sparrow	House Sparrow
2	Starling	Starling	Starling
3	Blackbird	Chaffinch	Blackbird
4	Blue Tit	Blackbird	Woodpigeon
5	Wood Pigeon	Blue Tit	Blue Tit
6	Goldfinch	Woodpigeon	Chaffinch
7	Robin	Great Tit	Robin
8	Great Tit	Robin	Goldfinch
9	Chaffinch	Goldfinch	Great Tit
10	Long Tailed Tit	Coal Tit	Coal Tit

### **And Finally Gardeners Corner**



Why not take part in the Butterfly Conservation "Plant Pots for Pollinators" scheme this month and help butterflies, bees and other declining species. To take part click on the link below:

Here you will discover why pollinators are important, you can then download a planting guide and shopping list, plot your pot on the map and find out how pollinator-friendly your neighbourhood is. There are some great tips on their blog about butterfly-friendly gardening

[http://butterfly-conservation.org/10759/plant-pots-for-pollinators.html?utm\\_source=Dotmailer&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=8327258\\_June%202017&utm\\_content=PPFP&dm\\_i=DGT,4YHCQ,NLHC4K,IUBYX,1](http://butterfly-conservation.org/10759/plant-pots-for-pollinators.html?utm_source=Dotmailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=8327258_June%202017&utm_content=PPFP&dm_i=DGT,4YHCQ,NLHC4K,IUBYX,1)

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)  
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