

# Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF) Newsletter 4 - December 2017



**Welcome** to the fourth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum. This also represents the end of the first year of the forum and I would like to thank once again all those residents that have attended events or who have sent details of their sightings. It has again been a busy time and below is the progress since the last newsletter:

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

**Plant of the month** - as it is Christmas it must be the Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) which is a native UK plant, and commonly found in woodland, shrub and hedgerows especially in oak and beech woodland. Holly is an evergreen shrub with distinct spiked, dark green glossy leaves, the bark is smooth and thin with numerous small, brown 'warts', and the stems are dark brown. The holly is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers occur on different trees. Flowers are white with four petals. Once pollinated by insects, female flowers develop into scarlet berries, which can remain on the tree throughout winter. Mature trees can grow up to 15m and live for 300 years.

Holly provides dense cover and good nesting opportunities for birds, while its deep, dry leaf litter may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with those of various moths including the yellow barred brindle, double-striped pug and the holly tortrix. The smooth leaves found at the tops of holly trees are a winter source of food for deer.

The berries are a vital source of food for birds in winter, and are also eaten by small mammals such as wood mice and dormice. An interesting fact is that the Mistle Thrush is known for vigorously guarding the berries of holly in winter, to prevent other birds from eating them.

## **Gardening tips**

If you wish to help garden wildlife survive the winter months ahead, try and avoid the temptation to do too much tidying up. Instead it is far better to let the garden die back naturally over the coming weeks. Fallen leaves, fallen fruit, decaying wood, and dead flower stems, will provide shelter, warmth and feeding opportunities for all manner of wildlife. Leaves that must be removed however, can always be added to a compost heap, which will provide a home for toads, hedgehogs and other small mammals.

Wildlife now needs your help by providing food and water, as well as providing the usual peanuts, fat, birdseed etc, your garden hopefully has some native trees and plant species (Crab apple, Elder, Holly, Hawthorn, Wild roses and Rowan) that provide an abundant source of berries and seed over the winter months. If not, then perhaps you could consider planting some of these in the spring. In addition, plants such as teasels are very attractive to finches.



## Bird Boxes



Bet this is busy at nesting time! Alec Burden spotted this collection of bird boxes in Fussen, Germany.

## Events

Saturday 19 August was a bright sunny morning and sixteen residents attended the second Moth Trapping reveal. Duncan Davidson, from the Butterfly Conservation had set traps on Friday and then brought them to a display table on the Drumoig Golf Club car park to show us. Duncan once again shared his excellent knowledge of moths with us.



There was a wide range of colour and sizes and as it was bright and sunny they were much more active than last time and often landed on people's hands.



In June Duncan recorded a total of 111 moths from 30 species. At this visit he counted 132 moths from 22 new species. This brings the total number of moths identified so far in Drumoig at 52.

Moths fly in the day as well as night, if you see a moth and want to identify it the Butterfly Conservation have an excellent website <http://butterfly-conservation.org/51/2/identify-a-moth.html>

On Tuesday 26 September thirteen residents attended a talk at the Drumoig Hotel by Ken Neil. Until he retired Ken worked for the 'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' project and he gave an excellent talk on his subject. It was both informative and delivered with great enthusiasm and left us all with a greater appreciation of Red Squirrels and their lives and how much they need our support.

The good news is that a number of residents at Drumoig have reported Red Squirrels either in their garden or on the golf course. For more information on how you can help Red Squirrels or to report a sighting (which will help the projects research) please go to the following website: <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>.

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 Anne Gibson who won the quiz prize, a mug featuring a Red Squirrel with Ken.



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

## Talks and walks – Dates for the diary

### Winter / Spring Programme

Talks on Birds in Fife by Norman Elkins, BTO, including Corn Buntings; 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.

### What's that bird?




In late autumn geese start to arrive to spend winter in the UK and in Fife the RSPB reserve at Loch Leven is one of the best places to see them.



Thousands of pink-footed geese over winter there and in November, the last RSPB count, the figure was 13,151. The geese depart their watery roost at dawn to feed in surrounding fields and return at dusk. Maybe you have heard (even if not seen) geese flying over Drumoig.

For more information on the reserve go to <http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/find-a-reserve/reserves-a-z/reserves-by-name//lochleven/index.aspx>


The following birds may also be seen at this time of year.





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|  |  |  |
| Curlew   | Lapwing  | Mute Swan  |

### Goose identification

Geese are divided into two main groups, the 'grey' geese (including the Greylag) and the 'black' geese, such as Brent and Barnacle geese and all have Amber UK conservation status. One of the most widespread, the Canada goose, is not native, but introduced to the UK from North America. For more information on geese go to:

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

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|  <p><b>Pink footed goose</b> (<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>)</p> | <p>The pink-footed goose is a medium-sized goose, smaller than a mute swan but bigger than a mallard. It is pinkish grey with a dark head and neck, a pink bill and pink feet and legs.</p> <p>This species does not breed in the UK, but large numbers of birds spend the winter here, arriving from their breeding grounds in Spitsbergen, Iceland and Greenland. Numbers in England are on the increase, particularly in Norfolk, probably due to better protection at winter roosts.</p> |
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|  <p><b>Greylag Goose</b> (<i>Anser anser</i>)</p>        | <p>Greylag geese are easily seen in lowland areas of the UK all year, sometimes even in suburban parks with lakes but especially on low-lying grassy fields in river valleys. Wild ones, however, are found mostly north of the Solway and can be seen at RSPB nature reserves such as Mersehead (Dumfries &amp; Galloway), Vane Farm (Fife) and Loch of Strathbeg (Grampian) from September to April. Wild breeding greylags can be found at Forsinard (Caithness &amp; Sutherland).</p> |
|  <p><b>Barnacle Goose</b> (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>)</p>  | <p>The Barnacle goose is a medium-sized, sociable goose, with black head, neck and breast with creamy-white face. This contrasts with the white belly, blue-grey barred back and black tail. It flies in packs and long lines, with a noisy chorus of barking or yapping sounds.</p>  |
|  <p><b>Brent Goose</b> (<i>Branta bernicla</i>)</p>     | <p>The Brent goose is a small, dark goose - of similar size to a mallard. It has a black head and neck and grey-brown back, with either a pale or dark belly, depending on the race. Adults have a small white neck patch. It flies in loose flocks along the coast, rather than in tight skeins like grey geese. It is an Amber List species because of the important numbers found at just a few sites.</p>   |
|  <p><b>Canada Goose</b> (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)</p> | <p>The Canada goose is a large goose, with a distinctive black head and neck and large white throat patch. An introduced species from North America, it has successfully spread to cover most of the UK. It forms noisy flocks and is often regarded as a nuisance in areas where large numbers occur on amenity grassland and parks.</p>   |

And Finally

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

Don't forget to visit the web page. If you can think of any other information that would be useful please let me know. The link is: <http://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum>

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