

# Drumoig Wildlife Forum (DWF) Newsletter 8 – December 2018



**Welcome to the eighth newsletter for the Drumoig Wildlife Forum.**

**Plant of the month** – The above photo shows the Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) also known as Furze or Whin.

This plants flowers from December to June, but it is at its best from March to June, but it is usually possible to find some Gorse flowering at any time of the year. Gorse is found in open land, waste ground, hedgerows, by railways, roads and motorways, and on heaths, sea-cliffs and sand dunes. Its ability to appear in so many places is in part due to its ability to fix nitrogen, which gives it a competitive advantage in nutrient poor soils.

Gorse is a native, spiny shrub, growing up to 3m. It is striking because it is one of the few showy, native shrubs which flowers in the winter months. Flowers are up to 15mm and deep yellow. The pods are also up to 15mm and burst in the summer. The branches are mainly upright. Spines are up to 2cm and furrowed. Historically, Gorse has had several uses, e.g., hedging, fuel, animal fodder and besoms.

## **New species on Drumoig**

During the summer 3 new species have been added to our moth list bringing the total identified to 55.

### **Gold spangle**

(*Autographa bractea*)



By kind permission of  
Michael Duncan (Craigie)

### **Silver Y**

(*Autographa gamma*)



Found on my patio pot  
(Craigie)

### **Hummingbird Hawk Moth**

(*Macroglossum stellatarum*)



Two sightings of this fabulous moth  
were recorded in Craigie.

And the summer weather brought these butterflies to our garden



Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)



Small White (*Pieris rapae*)



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)

In addition, the following have been seen around Drumoig

**Two-girdled digger wasp**  
(*Argogorytes mystaceus*)



Bryan Knight spotted this small hole in the sand and was lucky to get a photo of the insect as well (see where arrow is pointing. See close-up below:



**Saw flies** (*Diprion pini*)



These strange looking caterpillars were found on our pine tree. It turned out they were the larvae from the Pine Sawfly, they can reach up to 25mm long and are pale green in colour with a brown head and black

The adult sawfly is a 10mm long brown winged insect and although they can appear fly like sawflies are more closely related to bees, ants and wasps.



**Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*)



This is a large hawker dragonfly (74mm in length) settled on our bird bath. It is on the wing from the end of June through to October. It is a species found mainly in the uplands of the north and west, particularly moorland pools and lakes, as well as garden ponds. Hawkers are the largest and fastest flying dragonflies; they catch their insect-prey mid-air and can hover or fly backwards.

**Garden Spider** (*Araneus diadematus*)



A rather plain name for this exotic looking spider. The Garden spider varies in colour from pale yellowy-brown to very dark brown, but they all have a characteristic white cross-shaped group of spots on their abdomen. The spin orb webs to catch their prey – flying insects. Orb webs are the most advanced spider webs, built by laying spirals of silk around radial threads. They sit in the centre of their web rushing out and wrapping any caught insect in sticky silk. After mating, the female builds a silken cocoon in which she lays her eggs. She protects this egg sac until she dies in late autumn. The spiderlings hatch the following May.

## Species of the month: Ladybirds (Coccinellidae)

Also known as Ladybeetles (Europe) or Ladybugs (USA)

Our garden was full of ladybirds this year, a great sign as numbers have been low in previous years.



Ladybirds can be found in gardens, grassland, woodland, hedgerows. They should be a gardener's favourite family beetle as except for a couple of species both adults and larvae are excellent predators of aphids and other pests.

Ladybirds lifecycle begins as a batch of bright yellow eggs laid by their mother near a food source such as in the colonies of aphids and other plant-eating pests. They hatch as larvae in four to 10 days and then spend about three weeks feeding up and may eat some 5000 aphids in that time. Once they are well-fed, they'll begin to build a pupa, and after seven to 10 days they emerge as adults. The adults don't usually develop their coloration until the second or third day after breaking out from the pupa.

The bold colours and markings help to warn off potential predators. They exude an unpleasant yellow substance (reflex blood) from their leg joints when attacked which is rich in toxic alkaloids. Their colouring is likely a reminder to any animals that have tried to eat their kind before: "I taste awful." A threatened ladybird may both play dead and secrete the unappetizing substance to protect itself.

There are 46 species of ladybird resident in Britain and the recent arrival of the harlequin ladybird has the potential to jeopardise many of these. The Harlequin Ladybird Survey will monitor its spread across Britain and assess its impact on native ladybirds.

The UK Ladybird Survey website (link below) is packed full of interesting information, such as an adult ladybird can smell with their feet and antennae; chew side to side rather than up and down; and their wings flap an astounding 85 times a second.

<http://www.ladybird-survey.org/ladybirds.aspx>

### Winter wildlife tips

As winter takes hold the food you put out for the birds becomes steadily more important as seeds, fruit and insects become harder to find. Blackbirds, Thrushes and Robins will particularly appreciate apple and pears cut in half. Feeding first thing in the morning is particularly important as it is when the birds are at their coldest and hungriest, but dinner at dusk is also good just before they roost.

A supply of fresh water, clear of ice is also important.

Also - why not create a dead wood pile, using sticks and logs. They're great for insects, fungi, mosses and lichens and if you're lucky a hedgehog or toad might take up resident.

### Injured wildlife wild birds or animals

If you come across wild birds or animals that are in danger or distress, then please call the Scottish SPCA animal helpline on **03000 999 999**. For more information on their wildlife rescue centre please go to <https://www.scottishspca.org/wildlife/>

## Events

**On Tuesday 31 July** eleven residents attended a guided walk around Morton Lochs with Tom Cunningham, Reserve Manager of Tentsmuir Forest. Morton Lochs is a hidden gem, right on our doorstep. It includes wetland and woodland and attracts a range of woodland and water birds, it is also a good site for butterflies and wildflowers, and has a Red Squirrel hide and otters have been seen there too.

Tom gave a history of the site, how they maintain the reserve and the ongoing work the SNH is undertaking and then took us for a walk around the reserve.

It was lovely to have Grace and Lily two younger residents of Drumoig with us on the walk and thanks to their excellent work of spotting and picking up some of the local wildlife, I was able to get some photos which are also included seen below.



Here is a list of some of the wildlife / flowers that were seen across the group.

<p><b>Birds</b>            Blue Tit            Buzzard            Canada Goose            Chaffinch            Coal Tit            Coot            Gadwall            Goldfinch            Great Tit</p>	<p>Birds contd.            Little Grebe            Mallard            Moorhen            Mute Swan            Robin            Wood Pigeon            Yellowhammer  <b>16</b></p>	<p><b>Mammals</b>            Red Squirrel</p> <p><b>Flowers</b>            Harebell            Ragwort (Good for            Cinnabar Moth            caterpillars</p>	<p><b>Other</b>            Ladybird            Grasshopper            Large White            Butterfly            Small Copper            butterfly            Pond skater</p> <p><i>Type unidentified</i>            Frog            Beetle            Damsel fly            Dragonfly</p>
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A donation of £25 has been sent to the SNH for them for use at Morton Lochs or a project of their choice.

For more information on Morton Lochs and the Tentsmuir Forest go to:

<https://www.nature.scot/enjoying-outdoors/scotlands-national-nature-reserves/tentsmuir-national-nature-reserve>

For more information on all Scotland's National Nature Reserve go to [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)

A map of Tentsmuir Forest and its walks is attached and can also be found on the DRA website: <http://drumoig.btck.co.uk/DrumoigWildlifeForum>

**On Thursday 20 September** twenty-one residents attended the Drumoig Wildlife talk. Our speaker was Colin Edwards from the Forestry Commission, he used to manage Tentsmuir forest and other woodlands within Fife and is a trained forester and woodland ecologist, and now works as an Environment Policy Advisor at the Forestry Commission, Scotland, he was also representing the Butterfly Conservation.

Colin gave an excellent talk, the breadth of the subjects he was able to speak about made the talk both enjoyable and informative and he was asked many questions by the audience. He also gave tips on how to make our gardens more wildlife friendly, this included having a 'messy area' where wildlife plants could grow and a log pile to encourage insects.

An update on the Drumoig Wildlife Forum, was given and some photos of recent sightings of butterflies, moths, caterpillars and insects seen on Drumoig during the summer were shown. Plans for talks and events in 2019 were also outlined. A contribution towards the refreshments raised £28.



A quiz was held and was won by Jeanie Duncan and a bird feeder was presented to her by Colin Edwards.

A book called Caledonia – Scotland's Heart of Pine was raffled and raised £28, the winner was Debs Thompson, and this was presented by Paul Edwards.



A cheque for £30 has been sent to the Butterfly Conservation in appreciation of Colin's talk and giving up his time to attend our meeting.

### **Talks and walks – Dates for the diary**

The 2019 programme is in progress, with the first talk already booked. The programme will have a maritime theme and includes the following:

1. **Tuesday 12 February at 7pm at the Drumoig Hotel**  
A talk by Monica Arso Civil a Research Fellow at the School of Biology, Scottish Oceans Institute, University of St Andrews. Monica's research interests focus on marine mammal populations and in particular around St Andrews Bay and the Firth of Tay and her talk will cover bottle-nosed dolphins and seals.
2. A trip on a boat along the River Tay in the summer.
3. A talk by the RNLi or by the Fife Coast Countryside Trust
4. A walk at Tentsmuir in the Autumn with Tom Cunningham to look for waders and seals and to learn about the coastline.

### **RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 2019**

This will take place from Saturday 26 – Monday 28 January. For more information see:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>

## Local news

The Fife Coast Countryside Trust are a local independent charity based at the Harbourmaster's House in Dysart and are dedicated to giving everyone the opportunity to experience Fife's great outdoors. They manage, maintain and preserve wide areas of the countryside of Fife, promoting responsible access to the wonderful and diverse outdoor sites around the area. They look after over 30 sites and path networks throughout Fife including the Fife Coastal Path, the Lomond Hills Regional Park, local nature reserves and other locations which are important for recreation and conservation.

They also manage the Coastal Visitor Centre at the Harbourmaster's House in Dysart. The centre gives an opportunity to find out more about the importance of Fife's Coastal fringe over the years and learn a little about the Fife Coastal Path. The two nature reserves that they manage nearest to us are the Eden Estuary Reserve at Guardbridge and Birnie and Gaddon near Collesie. For more information and to sign up for their newsletter go to:

<http://www.fifecoastandcountryside.co.uk/>

A very BIG thank you to everyone who purchased plants and books and the Summer Fayre and raffle tickets at the DWF talks, a total of £150.45 has been raised to date. The photo below shows the items purchased at a cost of £136.20. The balance of £14.25 will be carried forward to our next project.



An unusual garden visitor. This Heron was spotted in a garden in Craigue  
Photo by kind permission of Audrey Pirie

## And Finally



I had hoped to have home grown brussels sprouts for Christmas, but the Small White and Large White caterpillars got there first. Oh well they do turn into lovely butterflies! It's off to Morrisons then!

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

Christine Edwards, Drumoig Wildlife Co-ordinator

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)

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>