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TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSLETTER No. 35

JUNE 2016

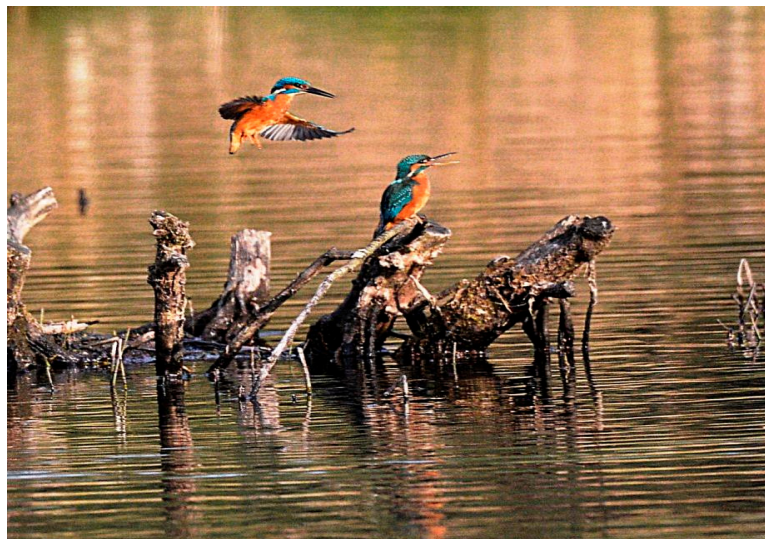
Welcome to the 35th Newsletter, now in its 17th year ... how time flies!

What a busy time we have had already, with a whole host of management projects and tasks carried out, and what a busy time the wildlife, especially the birds, are having.

The most pictured birds so far this year must be the kingfishers at Morton Lochs. FLOCKS of birders and photographers have been descending on the lochs, clicking away at the kingfishers. Whilst it is always wonderful to see visitors enjoying nature, the volume of visitors has not been without its problems. You may see a slight bias towards the kingfishers in this edition.

The weather this year has been like a pendulum, swinging from a mild March to the snow in April and back to sunshine this month - a welcome relief for us all! The improved weather and increased temperatures have seen orange tips around Morton Lochs and peacock on Tentsmuir Point. Dragonflies and damselflies are starting to dart around and we hope they take to the newly cleaned ponds. If you are interested in monitoring and recording these beautiful insects, let me know. Keep an eye open for the sea eagles.

The 17th Family Day event is coming up in July, as are our three joint Summer events with the Forestry Commission.



Kingfishers at Morton Lochs.
Image by kind permission of Chris Reekie.

Tom Cunningham
Reserve Manager

TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016

Scotland has been changing the world as we know it for centuries, one innovation at a time. From the wheels on your car and the tarmac they drive on, to the telephone, television and much more – all of this was possible thanks to Scottish ingenuity. In the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016, we celebrate awe-inspiring innovation, breathtaking architecture and brave, bold designs through new and exciting experiences and events.

It's not only bricks, stone and concrete that go towards the creation of beautiful buildings, but also, in nature, the elements and wildlife create some amazing habitats and sculpt their homes and landscapes. The wind and sea sculpt the sand dunes; birds build nests, rabbits and mice burrow into the earth digging holes for their homes. On the Family Day event, we will be looking at some of Nature's Grand Designs. See the Events section for more information.

NNR VISITOR SURVEY: Visitor Satisfaction

We are undertaking a survey to see your views on how you enjoy coming to our NNRs. I have just recently put up survey dispensers in the squirrel hide and at the Icehouse gate. If you come across these short survey forms (only seven questions), I would be over the moon if you would complete one. You can use the freepost address to send in the survey or, if you carry a pen, just put it back into the dispenser if you prefer.

GRATEFUL THANKS

To all the photographers who have sent me some wonderful, stunning pictures and allowed me to use the images in this Newsletter and on our Facebook page.



Reflections, on the South Loch. Image by kind permission by Julie West

TENTSMUIR POINT

THE DYNAMIC COASTLINE

The coastline and dunes on Tentsmuir Point have settled after the winter storms and high tides, and are greening up with the marram grass. Life looks good along our coast.

MANAGEMENT

The sea fences, which are so critical for summer grazing, have been repaired. All the damaged and rusted wire has been replaced, along with a number of rotten posts. It's amazing watching the experience of Bob Ritchie and Mikey Smith working, away with the

Reserve tractor, way out on the sand banks and the extended foreshore. Their work is synchronised to the seasonally low tides, giving them a safer, longer day fixing the fences.

With the dune heath and grassy swards greening up, the Limousin cattle will be back any day soon to enjoy summer grazing throughout the Reserve. You will probably see them out on the foreshore, occasionally standing in the shallows, hoping the sea breeze will take the flies away.

Dave Mackie and Murray will be back again soon for the annual herbicide treatment of the target species such as tree and scrub, which, left unchecked, would invade the dune grassland.

McIntosh & Robertson will carry out path improvement work on the Icehouse footpath around the same time as they carry out projects at Morton Lochs.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Educational visits so far this year have been very slow, with only one primary school, two colleges and one university visiting. However, there are a few visits booked during June. A number of university research projects have also started and a few High School students have been studying dune succession for their Higher and Advanced Higher Geography exams.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

We say goodbye to RSPB's Rhian Evans, who has been a brilliant colleague to work alongside, keeping us informed and providing reports on the white-tailed sea eagles. We all wish her the very best in her new challenges ahead.

The sea eagles have been spotted on a number of occasions feeding on the Abertay sand bars. Keep your eyes peeled, although you cannot mistake this massive bird for anything else!

Sea eagle update: two chicks have successfully hatched. Rhian kindly produced this shortened version of a recent press release: "It's really great news that there are two chicks again this year! Last year, one of the chicks sadly died of natural causes in the nest so we hope that this year both will fledge successfully. We have over 30 local volunteers involved in protecting and monitoring the nest, which helps keep the birds safe and provides us with a fascinating insight into their lives."

The common and sandwich terns can be seen on the Abertay sand banks and on the foreshore and heard with their chattering screech calls loud above the other sea birds. Skylarks made an early start on the site and my one big disappointment is that I did not hear a cuckoo this Spring.

We are hoping the exceptionally wet winter will improve the slack flora this year, especially for the seaside centauray, grass of Parnassus, coral root orchid and yellow rattle, to name a few.

In the slack near the Icehouse gate entrance, we have already spotted a few frogs and toads.

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

After a poor 2015, we are hoping for a good summer and despite a poor, cold start, this year's species monitoring so far has been promising, with orange tips, peacock and small tortoiseshell already recorded. Our intrepid, hard-working and dedicated volunteers have been out every week since April 1st and they will continue right through to September. Honorary warden Ailsa has already recorded a comma in her garden this year.



Orange tip butterfly by Julie West

Gerald Lincoln and David Bryant have started the moth surveys and after last year's great results, we are all hoping for some new firsts for the Reserve and in the Tentsmuir area.

MORTON LOCHS

MANAGEMENT

A good number of management projects will start soon and include Dave Mackie and his team, who will control the dense phragmites on the lochs and margins.

We have a number of projects which will start in September when McIntosh & Robertson will be increasing the size of the car park and improving the surface drainage and cleaning out the silted up west loch.

We will continue clearing many windblown damaged trees, especially along the south loch roadside.

HEATHER RESTORATION

Having planted in some very large clumps of heather in late autumn last year, we have monitored the heather plants for signs of new life and already a fair number are showing signs of greening up. The heather we have in Tentsmuir tends to start the new year's growth in early summer. Alex, Blair and volunteer Jim have been doing a splendid job of watering the large heather clumps every week, especially during the occasional dry spell. We want to make sure these plants get the best possible start in developing the root systems in their new environment.

DIFFUSE POLLUTION AT MORTON LOCHS

In addition to Richard Lockett (who developed the Catchment Improvement Project), we brought in pollution expert Stewart Moir of Moir Environmental, who will design a reed bed system at the entrance to the Reserve. As the inflow passes through the reed bed system, the plants will hopefully take up the nutrients before they reach the lochs, thereby improving the water quality. We await the design from Stewart.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

VIEW FROM THE SQUIRREL HIDE

This hide continues to be very popular and every day visitors can be seen watching the red squirrels on the feeders and trees. You can see some fancy cameras with huge lenses poking out of the hide viewing windows, hoping to catch them in action! In addition to the squirrels, you can observe woodpeckers, coal tits, blue tits, long-

tailed tits, wrens, chaffinches and, if you are really lucky, spot badgers snuffling around at the base of the trees picking at the dropped nuts.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Daniele Muir, British Dragonfly Society (BDS) Scotland Officer and I are hopeful that the population of dragonflies and damselflies will take to the ponds as a result of the ponds having been cleaned out over the winter.

If you have any questions about dragonflies, or if you are interested in getting involved with recording away from Morton Lochs, please contact me or Daniele at Scotland@british-dragonflies.org.uk. Training will be given, if required, along with identifying charts and recording forms.

More information can be found on the BDS website www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

BIRDS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

This spring, our star species on and around the lochs include the kingfishers, sedge & willow warblers, chiffchaff, blackcap, goldfinches, long-tailed tits, blue tits, coal tits, great tits, wrens and robins. Other notable sightings include otters, sea eagles, the early ospreys passing through, water rail, water voles, grey wagtails and little grebe.



Grey wagtail. Image by kind permission from Julie West

Birders and photographers have flocked to see them, which is wonderful. Some visitors have been so eager to capture that special shot and have been walking in front of the hide and disturbing them.

As Kingfishers are protected as a Schedule 1 bird, we have put up signs reminding visitors that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb at, on or near an active nest.



Kingfishers mating. Image by kind permission from Chris Reekie.

VOLUNTEERS Our wonderful band of dedicated volunteers continues to carry out an amazing amount of work, much of it unseen, throughout the Reserve. We are also fortunate to have Blair Johnston, our current Student Placement, who carries out an enormous amount of management work throughout the Reserve. He is currently on three weeks' holiday in Argentina, volunteering on a mountain nature reserve. I am sure he will have some amazing tales to tell and images to show us! After we interviewed several candidates for the next student placement, we are happy to announce Ruari Dunsmuir will start in July.

WHAT'S ON

FAMILY DAY OUT - Thursday, 7th July 2016 - "Nature's Grand Designs". Starts at 1pm.

The seventeenth **FREE** annual NNR event will be held on Thursday, 7th July and it should be another fantastic, exciting day out. The event will tie in with the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, and will be dedicated to nature's own building designs and we will of course show everyone all about the flora and fauna on the Reserve.

The new-style shorter activity sessions will continue, so please squeeze in as many of the activities as you like, and learn all about the Reserve's plants and animals. You may have a moment or two to wait after one activity ends and the next one begins, but come and enjoy, learn and try several different ones. Each activity will last 20 to 30 minutes. Activity leaders, colleagues and the volunteers will help you all the way.

After last year's hugely successful and fun time main attraction with Cat Frankitti I asked if she would like to come back this year. Cat was so enthusiastic and believe me, you will all have so much fun and learn so much, I cannot wait!! The attraction is called "**Smell the story, taste the tale**" Cat, her husband John and volunteer Pete Cunningham will provide food tasting, hunter-gatherers and some more pirate shenanigans – you'd better find out for yourselves on the day!

There will also be:-

- Art creations with David Mitchell
- Fife's Knitted Nature & their homes
- Give a bug a home
- Nature's Sand Builders

We have a few more activities still in the planning stage, and all will be great fun to do.

Book early to avoid disappointment. With the exception of the £2 charge for the car park, it's all free! (It's now £2 at the barrier - please have change ready.) **So be at the car park for 12:30 ready to board the coaches.**

There are normally 120 places available and the event books up fairly quickly. I also keep a reserve list, as there is usually a visitor or two who may have to cancel suddenly. If you are unable to attend after booking, please contact me as soon as possible to let me know, so I can call and let someone else take up your place. **Please don't let me or other visitors down.** Remember a responsible adult must accompany all children.

To book, please phone my office telephone and if I am not in, please leave a short message on the answering machine with your name and telephone number and I will contact you to confirm the booking. If I do NOT contact you, you are not on my list!

Summer Events with SNH and Forestry Commission Scotland

Alex and I, and some of our wonderful volunteers, will also hold three events in the picnic area at Kinshaldy car park. No booking is required, just turn up and join in the fun. Starts 12:30 and finishes 3:30pm.

Thursday, 28th July 2015

Kinshaldy Olympics

- Try out our Nature Olympics
- Lisa's Crafty Corner
- Tom's Time Trials

Thursday, 4th August 2015

Ladybirds

- Big bug Top Trumps
- Lisa's crafty corner
- Pebble Bugs

Thursday, 11th August 2015

Big birds & poop

- Follow the Owl quiz trail
- Lisa's crafty corner
- Poo are you? (There will be some changes to the event title & the activities planned for this event)

DOG POO!

Unfortunately, this is still a regular topic for the newsletter. However, the good news is Fife Council's Dog Warden Community Officers will be visiting Tentsmuir on a regular basis and we will be supporting them.

Useful websites: www.snh.gov.uk and www.nnr-scotland.org.uk for information on the Reserve and surrounding area, as well as our work in SNH.

To keep up to date on our Facebook page  "Scotland's National Nature Reserves", all you need to do is "Like" the page to follow us.

Read about all of Scotland's NNRs in our [NNR Visitor Guide 2016](#)

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PS What a season the mighty Raith Rovers had: we enjoyed a brilliant run in the league, went close in the play-offs and had a good Cup run. However, we lost our superb manager and coaches to another club but we have a new manager, a new assistant manager and coaches all I need now is a talented midfielder and rip roaring winger in place and so here's to the new season – not asking too much and I cannae wait. Mon the Rovers!