

NEWSLETTER 22 - AUGUST 1998

PROGRAMME FOR 1998/99

The following programme has been arranged so far:-

- 18th September * Highland Orchids
Murdo MacDonald
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm
(Postponed from 27th February 1998)
- 9th October Otters on the West Coast of Scotland
Ro Scott
Kirkton Church Hall at 8.00pm
- 13th November * Trekking and Wildlife in Patagonia
Phil Swainson
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm
- 11th December * Vikings in the Highlands and Islands
Alan Small
Auchtertyre Community Education Hall at 8.00pm

* These lectures have been arranged in association with the University of Aberdeen Centre for Continuing Education.

VOLUNTEER STILL REQUIRED TO ORGANISE TEA & BISCUITS AFTER MEETINGS.

NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN

Our attempted clean-up of Kirkton Bay duly took place on 25th April as announced in the April Newsletter. Two trailers and a horse-box were filled with rubbish, predominantly plastic and polythene, and the north eastern corner of the Bay certainly looked much better for our efforts. However partly due to the low turn out of volunteers and partly due to the difficulty of getting transport to much of the shoreline there were large areas that we didn't even start to clear. It will be interesting to see how quickly the area cleared becomes polluted again so that we can assess how often it would be necessary to organise a clean-up and determine how we could tackle the rest of the Bay. A big thank-you to the volunteers - Kate and Tim Godfrey, Eleanor and Hubert Hunton, Pat Mucklow, Julie and Brian Neath, Bill Ramsay and Maud and Roger Tufft. Also to two non-members, Duncan Glen-Riddell and Christopher Voisey, who also joined in. A special thanks to Tim for coordinating the operation and for transporting the rubbish back to Glaick where it had to be double handled into skips. Farquhar Macrae kindly provided a trailer and helped with the transportation.

BOAT TRIP TO EIGG

Over 50 members and friends enjoyed the best weather we have had for our annual boat outing since the visit to Raasay in June 1993. The sea between Skye and the Small Isles can rarely be as calm as it was on 20th June. In these circumstances it was disappointing that the only cetaceans seen were one or two Harbour Porpoises; the conditions would have been ideal for watching dolphins! However the Manx Shearwaters did their best to make up for this omission. There were shearwaters in view for virtually the whole of the outward and return journeys and we must have seen several thousand altogether. Just after leaving Eigg we sailed through some huge rafts, the birds waiting until the last moment before taking wing and pattering across the mirror-like surface

of the sea. It was a magical experience. Guillemots were numerous and we also had excellent views of Razorbills, Puffins and Gannets.

On the island we admired the new building developed by the Eigg Heritage Trust near Galmisdale pier. It houses a grocery shop, post office, tearoom, craftshop, toilets, showers and information point - an impressive achievement within a year of the Trust taking over ownership of the island. We then went our separate ways, some crossing the island to the sandy beach at the Bay of Laig, a few climbing An Sgurr and others enjoying the weather in the vicinity of Galmisdale and Kildonnan. John Phillips was lucky enough to come across a Transparent Burnet Moth, one of the specialities of the inner Hebridean islands. Thanks to Pat Mucklow for organising the outing this year and for coordinating with skipper Bruce Watts. Thanks also to Bruce and the crew of "The Western Isles" for honouring the booking despite the tragic event the previous week which must have affected everyone in the Mallaig/Arisaig community.

SPRING 1998 - WILDLIFE REPORTS

I was away for the first half of April so missed the main arrival of Wheatears and Ring Ouzels. An early Wheatear was seen by Barbara and Harry Corrins near Morvich on 28th March and one was reported at Ardelve on 7th April. Ring Ouzels were well established in traditional breeding territories during the second half of the month and Willow Warblers were abundant from 21st April. The week-end of 24th-26th April saw a mass influx of migrants with Swallows and Cuckoos widely reported and Common Sandpipers, Tree Pipits and Redstarts also arriving. The picture looked rather bleak again for House Martins with very few to be seen during May but an unexpected late influx occurred in June and changed the situation completely. This delightful bird has been a common sight subsequently in Dornie and some other localities for the first time for several years.

The Orange-tip butterfly is another species which was observed more frequently this spring. Pat Davey saw one in her garden at Braeintra on 16th May then Pat Mucklow saw one at Nostie on 17th and there was another at Allt nan Sugh on 19th. I had my first positive sighting since 1994 just east of Reraig on 27th May. However on the whole it has been a frustrating year so far for butterfly watching as the rare sunny spells have invariably been accompanied by a fresh breeze. As a result the few butterflies out and about have been difficult to approach. I saw an early Green Hairstreak near Galltair on 27th April - my first April record of this species - and they were numerous again on Carr Brae during May with 21 counted there on 8th. Another less widespread species was noted near Galltair on 25th June when 4 Large Heath were identified amongst the numerous Small Heath. I also had a rare sighting of a Small White in the same area. Most of the "small" or "cabbage" white butterflies seen locally are in fact Green-veined Whites.

Newsletter compiled by Brian Neath (01599 555 341)

