

www.nnr-scotland.org.uk

TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSLETTER No. 33

JUNE 2015

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of the Reserve Newsletter. In this Newsletter read all about our planned summer events and of course a brief note or two about what's going on.

Are you in need of a gobsmacking WOW moment? Then get up and have a look around Tentsmuir Point. The amazing dynamic coast line has changed massively once again. Just in the space of a few days over the last week or so, a huge chunk of dune edge has been plucked away and the deep channel in front of the WWII Command Post has emerged from the rising foreshore which stood over the winter.

The wonderful image below and the red squirrel image was kindly provided by John Cumming who has the patience of a saint waiting for the perfect moment. He also provided a sea eagle image for the new Annual Report, which you can view on line on the website above.

It is time to get out there and enjoy the walk around Tentsmuir Point & Morton Lochs where you might catch a glimpse of the sea eagles; the osprey fishing; red squirrels feeding and scurrying around the trees; the elusive silent otter and many other great sightings.



White-tailed sea eagle over the Abertay Sands by kind permission from John Cumming at www.DTXimages.com

TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

THE YEAR of FOOD & DRINK 2015

The Year of Food and Drink is a Scottish Government initiative led by EventScotland and VisitScotland celebrating our exceptional natural larder, the role food and drink plays in shaping our economic success and the people, landscapes and culture that make our food heritage so unique. We will of course be putting our own spin on this on our summer events.

In early Spring, Tentsmuir NNR took part in a nationwide competition run by VisitScotland where the winner will shortly enjoy a two-night stay for four people in the glorious Fife countryside, staying at the wonderful self-catering Sandford Country Cottages with a luxury welcome hamper on arrival. The best part of course, is a tour of Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve with the reserve manager. What a prize eh?

THE RESERVE PLANS 2014 TO 2024

Just to remind you can read our current Reserve Plan 2014-2014 and all about the management of the Reserve on our NNR website:

www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/tentsmuir/management/reserve-planning/

THE ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15

I recently finished the Annual Report for 2014/15. The report was designed by Sue Walker, who transformed all the information and images I sent to her into print. Many thanks to everyone who sent me some great images. You can view the Annual Report on our NNR website:

www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/tentsmuir/publications

TENTSMUIR POINT

THE DYNAMIC COASTLINE

The dune landscape as you all know, changes daily and the amazing erosion over winter has brought about one of the most dramatic changes made to the northern dune edge in my time here. I had thought the foreshore was stabilising a bit but even during the last week in May there was a massive chunk of dune washed away just south of the WWII Command Post. You can see an image of this on our Facebook page, see the back page for details.

MANAGEMENT

The Limousine cattle will soon be back to enjoy grazing for another summer throughout the Reserve.

The Great Slack had some smallish areas of flooding during the winter however, not as much as I have seen in previous years.

After the winter storms, the sea fences were much in need of their annual maintenance which was carried out by Bob Ritchie and Mikey Smith from Kinnaber. Fortunately, it was mainly replacing the old rusting fence wires and the renewing the occasional side anchor post.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Since April, we have had two Primary Schools, one High School, two college visits and one university visit to Tentsmuir Point. Longforgan Primary School came in a double decker bus and seventy seven children enjoyed a great day out. Visitors to the forest that day must have been a bit bemused to see the double decker bus trundle past as we drove up to the

Icehouse coach park. The nursery children at the Tayport Forest School continue to pay weekly visits to Tayport Heath & forest. They have been coming for two years now, which says a lot about the benefits of outdoor education on the Reserve & forest.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

The white-tailed sea eagles are regularly observed mooching about on the Abertay Sands and flying in the surrounding area. We all hope they have a successful season once again. Keep your eyes peeled if you're taking a walk along the foreshore or anywhere in the area for the sea eagles. All sightings of the birds are gratefully received by emailing eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk.

Osprey have been observed and I was absolutely delighted to see an adult flying with a fish in its talons!

The butterflies have had a slow start mainly due to the cooler weather. However, Daphne who has carried out the butterfly monitoring on the south transect for ten or more years, was particularly happy when she spotted a green hair streak.



Green hairstreak butterfly. Image by kind permission from Daphne MacFarlane Smith

I was thrilled to bits when I received an email from Alan Foulds who carries out the rare plants surveying for us. Alan wrote: "I have just had my first botanical outing to Tentsmuir for this season. Last year, I only started looking around in July. I don't know if the season is a bit behind and slow this year due to the weather but I found quite a few plants I did not see in 2014.



Coral-root orchid image by kind permission from Alan Foulds.

What I did find on the NNR was the Coral-root Orchid, all of it an area of Great Slack. I could well have missed others elsewhere but once I had got my eye in and realised how small they were, they were slightly easier to spot. I hope to go again in a fortnight in order to re-find the plants. I counted 45 spikes in total in about 8 distinct patches.”

This is great news and thanks go to Alan. So if you are out and about keep your eyes peeled and if you come across coral-rot orchid I would be delighted if you would let me know.

MORTON LOCHS

MANAGEMENT

The new west loch sluice was enhanced recently with the addition of a safe working platform which will enable us to manipulate the sluice boards to adjust the water levels in a safe manner. Willie Fenton at Fenton Fabricators carried out the work and Willie also fabricated a diffuser plate which allows the water to flow more gently over the sluice preventing erosion of the outflow ditch.

The road up to Morton Lochs car park was recently upgraded using the tarmac plainings from the nearby roadworks. In preparation for further road upgrade work, some of the roadside trees were felled, mainly tall Sika spruce, Corsican spruce, Douglas fir and a few alder which were in poor condition. The spruce and fir trees are not native and we were particularly keen to have them removed from the Reserve. The drive up is now safer and a bit more comfortable.

VIEW FROM THE SQUIRREL HIDE

The squirrel hide and the feeders have been very popular, especially with visitors who have never seen let alone be close to a red squirrel; to say that some visitors have been thrilled is an understatement!



Red squirrel at Morton Lochs. Image with kind permission by John Cummings www.DTXimages.com

WILDLIFE UPDATE

Danièle Muir – British Dragonfly Society (BDS) Scotland Officer kindly provided the following article.

As many of you will know, Morton Lochs is a wonderful place to enjoy spotting dragonflies, which is why it was declared a 'Dragonfly Hotspot' in 2014. The BDS has been working with SNH to involve more people in dragonfly recording and conservation on the site, and ran a

Dragonfly Identification and Recording day in August '14 where we enjoyed close views of many species of dragonflies.



Female Black Darter by Daniele Muir

This summer we are keen to start a Dragonfly Recording Transect and are looking for volunteers to take part. The route of the transect goes past meadows, woodland, small ponds, ditches and the lochs, so includes a variety of beautiful habitats where dragonflies and damselflies can be spotted.

If you are interested in taking part in any kind of dragonfly recording on the reserve (or elsewhere!), please contact Tom on Tom.Cunningham@snh.gov.uk

We will be running a Dragonfly guided walk on Fri 17th of July from 11am to 1pm where we will cover the identification and ecology of the commoner species found at Morton Lochs, along with the folklore which surrounds these amazing insects. Numbers are limited so please book your place with Tom.

If you have any questions about dragonflies, or if you are interested in getting involved with recording away from Morton Lochs, please contact Daniele on Scotland@british-dragonflies.org.uk More info can be found on the BDS website www.british-dragonflies.org.uk

Otters, sea eagles, kingfisher, water rail, occasionally the osprey and the little grebe as well as the red squirrels are the star species spotted regularly on the Reserve. Orange Tip butterflies are having a very good season and have been spotted regularly.

VOLUNTEERS

Our wonderful band of dedicated volunteers continue to carry out an amazing amount of work throughout the Reserve and much of it is unseen. I will provide a larger article on this topic in the next Reserve Newsletter and hopefully I will get some articles from the volunteers.

WHAT'S ON

FAMILY DAY OUT - Thursday, 9th July 2015 - "Top Secret – The War Years". Starts at 1pm.

The sixteenth **FREE** annual NNR event will be held on Thursday, 9th July and it should be another exciting day out. The event will be dedicated to the Scottish Government's Year of Food & Drink 2015. In addition, we will of course show everyone all about the flora & fauna on the Reserve.

As it is also seventy years since the end of WWII we are going to focus on how people lived with food rationing, fishing, living off the land and (maybe) some did a little bit poaching.

The new style shorter activity sessions will continue, so cram as many of the activities in and learn all about the flora and fauna and what goes on in the Reserve. There may be 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; you finish one and then move onto the next one. Activity leaders, colleagues and the volunteers will help you all the way.

In addition to the short activities, Cat & John Franchetti along with Pete Cunningham will deliver the following; Water workshop, July themed month of berries, small game workshop and Fish for Health. Cat will also provide the afternoon's story session: Smell the story and taste the tale!

There will also be;

- Art wonders with David Mitchell
- A mystery activity with Elspeth Christie
- Hanging about on the Beach, a craft workshop with Aileen Carr & Allison
- Minibeast Marvels with Andrea Roach
- The RSPB- Learn all about the White tailed sea eagles and other birds
- Top Secret – a fantastic model scene of the dunes, with the Polish Army and Dads Army. A game made by the excellent modelling hands of Alex Easson
- Beach Bingo with Dave & Gavin
- Animals and their food chain with Myra & Sarah

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 all children must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

To book, please phone my office telephone and if I am not in, please leave a short message on the answer 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 & Forestry Commission Scotland

Alex and I and some of our wonderful volunteers will 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, 30th July 2015

Fortress Fife

- Try out our World War 2 quiz trail
- Make Do And Mend with Lisa
- Top Secret

Thursday, 6th August 2015

Whodunnit?

- Big bug extravaganza
- Lisa's crafty corner

- Build a Bee Hotel
- Thursday, 13th August 2015

Have a Hoot

- Follow the Owl quiz trail
- Lisa's crafty corner
- Pellet Probe

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.

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PS It's the season end, the summer break, safely tucked in mid table, the season ticket already purchased, a new manager in place (who plays attractive football), a new dawn is breaking over San Starko. Come on you mighty Raith Rovers.