

Orkney Field Club

Founded in 1959

Aim: To encourage the study and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the County



OFC Newsletter for Spring and Summer 2007

As this is being penned the wind is howling, snow, sleet and hail are hurtling past the windows and the birds are struggling to keep their footing on the ground in order to feed. The lazy, hazy days of last summer seem a million miles away! In 6 weeks or so's time could we really be treated to the sight of swallows skimming the water, migrating warblers searching among the emergent leaves for insects and broods of mallard ducklings racing around in the loch margins? The brain says "impossible" but the records say "have faith"! Let us hope that our outings in 2007 are blessed with the good weather we had last year.

OFC Programme

For trips involving ferries or shared transport please book with the contact **2 weeks** in advance; for other outdoor meetings please phone the contact a few days beforehand. Last minute changes will be notified on Radio Orkney. We suggest you bring binoculars, notebook, hand lens, packed lunch and foul weather clothing and footwear, also midge repellent from late June onwards. If you are interested in recording, Record Cards will be available from the event leader. Please remember that youngsters under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

As usual, in the interests of the mutual study, enjoyment and conservation of wildlife we include the RSPB Local Group programme of events.

April

Fri 20th Club Night. Islands of the North Atlantic

John Graham will give an illustrated talk on the seascapes, landscapes and cultural and natural heritage of uninhabited islands from the west coast of Ireland through the Western Isles to the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland. Kirkwall Community Centre, 7.30pm. Refreshments provided. Members £1, non-members £2.

Sat/Sun 21/22 Bag the Bruck

Joint event with RSPB Ig. Helping with the annual beach clean up organised by Environmental Concern Orkney and ridding the beaches of litter harmful to wildlife. Taking place at Waulkmill and Marwick Bay. Come any time between 10am and 4pm. Gloves and bags provided. Contact: RSPB Office on 850176 or Dick Matson on 751426.

Sat 28th Shapinsay Water Birds

Joint event with RSPB Ig. A visit to the RSPB Mill Dam hide and the Ouse. The best time of year to see ducks and waders in their breeding finery. Ferry dep's Kirkwall at 9.45am and Shapinsay on return at 3.15pm. Contact: RSPB Office on 850176 or Dick Matson on 751426.

May

Sun 13th Durkadale Tree Planting and Picnic

Joint event with RSPB Ig. Putting in more trees at the RSPB native tree plantation. Families welcome to help with the planting and have the trees tagged with their names. There could be some interesting birds about. Any time between 10am and 4pm. Contact: RSPB Office on 850176 or Jenny Taylor on 851322.

Sat 19th Fishing the Easy Way

Fish biologist, Malcolm Thomson, describes his research project into Orkney sea-trout populations and demonstrates how he captures live freshwater fish by electro-fishing (and releases them unharmed). Wellies advised. Contact: Dick Matson on 751426 for details.

Sun 20th A Walk on the Wild Side for Young People

Joint event with RSPB. A guided walk to discover the wildlife around the Loch of Sabiston and Marwick Bay. Especially for young people (accompanied by an adult). Meet at Dounby car-park (opposite the toilets) at 10am. RSPB binoculars available. Contact: RSPB Office on 850176 or Dick Matson on 751426.

June

Sun 3rd A Visit to Eday

By ro-ro to Eday, then, in conjunction with the Eday Ranger, taking a walk from Vinqouy Hill to Red Head looking at wildflowers of coastal heath, seabirds and raptors. Spectacular scenery as well! Ferry depts Kirkwall 9.20am and Eday on return at 18.40pm. Contact: Ray Hallam on 879490.

Sun 10th Families Moorland Safari

Joint event with RSPB. Explore the moorland around the Stromness Waterworks – search for wildflowers, hunt the juniper and spot the bird life. Suitable for all - children must be accompanied by an adult. Meet at Stromness Old Academy car-park at 2pm. Expect to finish by 5pm. RSPB binoculars available. Contact: Alison Skene on 850406 or RSPB Office on 850176.

Sun 24th Flora and Fauna of Harray

Taking a close look at the plants, insects and birds to be found around Winksetter and the Loch of Bosquoy. Meet at Harray Hall car-park at 10am. Contact: Dick Matson on 751426.

July

Sun 8th Day Trip to Caithness

By ferry from St Margarets Hope then on by minibus to Dunbeath where we will walk the course of the Dunbeath burn. As well as native woodland, we hope to see some different plants, insects and birds to our usual Orkney species. Contact: John Crossley on 831507.

Mon 16th to Sat 21st OFC Stromness Shopping Week Nature Competition

Look out for the kids' wildlife competition in the shopping week programme. For info and booking contact Alison Skene on 850406.

Sun 29th Families Moth Day

Joint event with RSPB. (Courtesy of the McRae family). Moth traps will be set on Saturday night in different locations and in the morning we will examine the catch at Binscarth with expert tuition. Meet at Binscarth Farm at 10.30am. Contact: Sydney Gauld on 852468 or RSPB Office on 850176.

August

Sun 12th Berriedale in Late Summer

By ferry to Moaness, on by minibus to Rackwick, then walking back to Moaness via Berriedale and Sandy Loch, looking at the flora and fauna. Ferry depts Stromness at 9.30am and Moaness on return at 18.30pm. Contact: Dick Matson on 751426.

September

Sun 9th Wader Teach-in

With expert guidance visiting wader hot-spots in East Mainland; hoping to see godwits, knot, sanderling as well as more common species and perhaps unusual migrants such as little stint. Contact: Dick Matson on 751426.

Fri 21st Club Night Talk

Speaker and subject to be decided.

RSPB Local Group Programme

Sat/Sun 21st/22nd April Bag the Bruck (see OFC programme)

Sat 28th April Shapinsay Water Birds (see OFC programme)

Sun 29th April Harrier Sky Dancing. A guided walk to watch the spectacular courtship display of the hen harrier. Other raptors should also be on view. Meet at Rendall Hall car-park at 9.30 am. Contact: RSPB Office on 850176.

Sun 13th May Tree Planting at Durkadale (see OFC programme)

Sun 20th May A Walk on the Wild Side for Young People (see OFC programme)

Sat/Sun 26th/27th May Auskerry. A boat trip to this enchanting isle. As well as terns and other seabirds there is a chance of some interesting migrants. Book early. Contact: Jim Williams on 761317.

Sat/Sun 2nd/3rd June Copinsay. By boat to a seabird island paradise. Expect superb views of terns, puffins and cliff-nesting birds. Contact: Pauline Wilson on 741382.

Due to popular demand the Copinsay trip will be repeated on Wed 6th June.

Sat 16th/Sun 17th June Gairsay. A rare chance to visit this lovely island, noted for its seabirds, particularly arctic skuas. Contact: Jim Williams on 761317 for details.

Sun 1st July A Walk to Wastlee Moor. By ferry to Hoy then on foot from Melsetter to Wastlee Moor looking at birds of moorland and coastal heath as well as seabirds. Moderate walking, but difficult if continuing to the Berry (optional). Ferry depts Houton at 9am and Lyness on return at 1630 or 1815pm. Contact: Pauline Wilson on 741382.



Sat 21st July (reserve day Sat 28th July) Storm Petrel Ringing. Enjoy the amazing sights and sounds of a colony of the nocturnal storm petrel. Time: approx midnight. Venue to be advised. Contact: Jim Williams on 761317.

Thurs 9th August West Mainland Show. This year the RSPB staff are running stands at the Dounby agricultural show as well as the County Show. Any help from Local Group members would be appreciated. Names, please, to Pauline Wilson on 741382 or Morag Wilson at the Office on 850176.

Sat 11th August County Show. Please give up an hour of your time to help on the RSPB stand between 10am and 4pm. It's great fun! Contact: Pauline Wilson on 741382 or Morag at the Office on 850176.

Sun 23rd September to Sanday for Autumn Migrants. The event was so successful last year we are repeating it. We saw little stint, barred warbler, pied and spotted flycatchers, whinchat and redstart, as well as humming-bird hawk-moth and otter! We will visit Start Point, so wellies essential!! Ferry depts Kirkwall at 9.20am and Sanday on return at 18.10pm (gets in at 19.55). Contact: Dick Matson on 751426.

Lesser Butterfly Orchid Hunt!

This orchid is very rare in Orkney, with just four records, all in the 1980s and 1990s and in different parts of the islands. Its occurrence is almost certainly natural, and it is likely that the plant is to be found hiding away somewhere still, possibly in an inconspicuous, non-flowering stage.

It is an attractive plant, with creamy-white flowers tinged with green. The best time to look for the flowering plants is in June and July. It grows in damp heathy pastures, grassland and moorland.

There is a particular interest at this time because this orchid is the subject of a joint recording effort between Scottish Natural Heritage, the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland and Plantlife. Also it is one of the 32 species chosen by SNH, backed by the Scottish Executive, for its Species Action Framework – i.e. a list of priorities for conservation action and money. It would be great to find it again, and identify and conserve those places where it grows. How many really species-rich, damp meadows are left in Orkney at all?

Further information is on the SNH website www.snh.org.uk and leaflets may be obtained from their publications department (details available on the website).



The Common Hawker Dragonfly

This handsome insect can commonly be seen in the summer and early autumn around the pools and along the burns of North Hoy. There are sightings annually on Mainland although not nearly as frequent. Strangely there are many suitable breeding pools here but only one is known to have been used and that irregularly. The mystery is – does the species have some previously undiscovered breeding sites on Mainland or are the specimens seen here visitors from Hoy?



Last year we resolved to make a special effort to find any breeding sites for this species on Mainland. Unfortunately the early summer was so busy for most enthusiasts that the project was almost forgotten. Not only that, the early summer weather was so warm that breeding was largely complete by mid-summer.

We would like to make a special effort this year, so please report any sightings on Mainland so that we can search potential breeding pools in the area of the sighting. Please report these to the Dragonfly Recorder, Keith Fairclough on 721458 or Dick

Matson on 751426 or Brian Ribbands on 751439.

The 2007 AGM

The AGM was held as planned on 15th March. Thirteen members attended (it would have been nice to see more of our regulars supporting the Club at the AGM !). The formal business was over in half an hour, with Mildred Cuthbert presiding in lieu of Elaine Bullard; we then set to on the delicious refreshments and had a pleasant get-together. We finished off with a wildlife picture quiz which was won by Brian Ribbands with Gil and Jean Steven. John Crossley was re-elected Chairman, Sally Hallam Vice-chairman, Dennis Paice Treasurer and Dick Matson Secretary. Very many thanks to the members who contributed refreshments.

Elaine Bullard

Most of you will know that Elaine, our President, had an unfortunate accident before Christmas and after a spell in hospital has been in sheltered housing first in Kirkwall and then Westray. She returns to Mainland shortly to take up residence in a sheltered house in Kirkwall. We wish her all good fortune in her new home. As ever Elaine would be glad to receive visits from any of our members. For her new address please contact any Committee member.

Newsletter

Anyone willing to receive their Newsletter in future by e-mail (four or six A4 single-sided sheets) will you please send your e-mail address to dennis.paice@btinternet.com

You can also read our Newsletter or download it from the Field Club web site at

www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/FIELDCLUB

Membership

All memberships where due on the 1st January 2007 anyone who as not rejoined by the end of April will not receive any more publications.

