



Newsletter July/August 2017

The reserve has been packed lately with people enjoying the golden sands, glorious blooms and colourful bugs and beasties that St Cyrus NNR has to offer! It's lovely to see so many people enjoying the place and we have noticed an increase in people popping into the office interested in a butterfly, or flower they have taken a picture of.

Alas Andrew has finished his year long placement and is now in Slovenia for a month, it has been an absolute pleasure working with such a knowledgeable hard working guy! He will be back as a volunteer until he finds his dream job!

So much has been happening and I am already feeling the effects of no Andrew, so I will whistle stop tour a few of the highlights! So much is going on wildlife wise, that it's like watching a wildlife documentary but for real! And it's all on our doorstep!



Our botanical surveying has been going very well and this year has been an incredible year for Nottingham catchfly and Maiden pink. The number of plants has increased as has the areas in which the plants are growing, great news!

Occasionally we get osprey visiting the reserve and when we do they are usually seen from the bird hide. These fish eating birds migrate from Western Africa and are attracted to the fish that can be found in the warm shallows or as they run up stream to spawn. The females are much larger than the male birds, which is true for many of the raptor species and they are monogamous and unless something happens to their partner the pair will stay together for life. They are beautiful birds if you ever get chance to see them, perhaps you will be lucky enough to see one catching a big fish!



We have had a few walks and talks focusing on moths, a big thanks to Paul Brooks and Brian Stewart for being indispensable with ID and offering great power point presentations! Our public moth night was superb! We had a great crowd of people and lots of fantastic moths to look at, I'm sure one of our younger members may be hooked for life!





Pop down after dark one night to check out the moths flying around the office and the BATS! I had a lovely evening of bat detecting recently. Bat detectors can be bought pretty cheaply these days and they allow you to eavesdrop into the secret conversations of the bat world. Different species have different frequency so you can tell the species you are seeing/hearing. It was so lovely to hear their echolocation clicks getting closer and closer as they closed into their prey, usually a juicy moth, eventually their clicks turning into a satisfying blowing a raspberry smacking sound as they captured it! One even took a moth from the top of my hat! Magical!

The seabird activity has been stunning, last week we saw huge congregations of Gull, Tern and Gannet feeding on small Herring and Sprat in the shallows. We had a summer group of 6 year olds on one of these great days and as the birds drove the shoals closer ashore the fish started to touch our legs and feet as we marvelled at this natural spectacle. So many people on the beach stopped to watch too! Andrew had the pleasure of watching a similar scene when a pod of Bottlenose dolphin joined in!

The peregrines and their fledged chicks are great to watch just now, they are as noisy as ever. Pop down to the cliffs and watch feeding time - peregrines hitting the pigeons with so much force it looks like an explosion of feathers, birds fighting over the food – ferociously at times, then the birds ‘mantling’ wings outstretched hiding their prey.

Another stranded Harbour porpoise was found and picked up by Andrew, we sampled it for the Marine Mammal Stranding team and will let you know when we have any results. The Porpoise was a young female calf. So sad to see such a young animal not make it, she was just beginning to get her first teeth. Harbour porpoise are regular occupants of these shores but they are much harder to see than the Bottlenose dolphin due to their size (they are between 1.4 and 1.7 meters), less gregarious ways and the fact they do not travel with large pods/groups. They are still quite mysterious creatures and not as much is known about this species as the other marine mammals.

Watch out for the Lions mane jellyfish, they do sting. The popular remedy is to pop shaving cream on the area and ‘shave’ it off with a bank card or similar! Lions Mane are the largest of the jellyfish species and some on the beach have been the size of dustbin lids! But the really big ones can have bodies up to 2.3M diameter with tentacles 37m long! They eat zooplankton (mini animals in the water) little fish and other jellyfish. They have a main body (the bell) which they pulsate to enable them to get around and trailing stinging tentacles they use to capture prey! They act as mini floating oasis for certain types of shrimp and young fish. The recent warm weather has produced lots of plankton in the sea causing a feeding frenzies and ‘blooms’ of jellies!



The Clegs are out in force! I know they hurt and the bites can be horrid (I say this sporting 4 horrific swollen bites on my right lower leg!), but these little creatures are so beautiful when you see them close up! Their eyes are spectacular, with iridescent patterns of green, and their wings are beautifully patterned brown lace. If you get the chance, have a look!



On the 16th September we are having an open doors day. We are going to be busy writing a new 10 year management plan for the reserve and want you to be involved with this process. So please pop down to find out about the work we do on the reserve and why the reserve is so special and share your ideas, wants and wishes for the next 10 years! We are having a poetry walk too and you can find out more about the new local edibles trail! If you can't join us on the 16th we will be sharing information about our plans on the website and social media and would welcome your comments.

Wildlife highlights: Having a Pipistrelle bat take a moth from my hat! Having Sprat and young Herring swim in between my legs (and one under my foot!) and watching the wildlife spectacle of birds ploughing down into the wavelets to catch them! Putting moths all over Andrews face for a photo shoot! Looking at a clegs eyes close up!