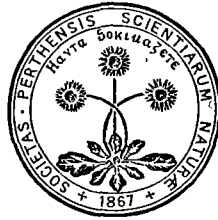


July 1986

PERTHSHIRE SOCIETY OF
NATURAL SCIENCE



BOTANICAL SECTION

Bulletin Number 9

INTRODUCTION

APOLOGIES for the long delay in issuing this number of the Bulletin, due to a combination of circumstances best described as ODTAA!

The articles and field meeting reports were all collected in 1984/5, so the editor thought it best to take advantage of this editorial to outline some of the changes that have taken place during the intervening period. First, your Editor (Helen) was moved by the Nature Conservation Council to Fife, and then to Wye in Kent, to help prepare the NCC response to the Channel Tunnel project. At the same time the Field Secretary, Nick, left to take up a new post as Conservation Officer to the Conservation Association of Botanical Societies, based in London. Nick and Helen are however retaining the Recordship of Vice-County 87 (West Perth) and hope to see something of the Section when they come up each summer for field work.

Perthshire has however gained by the arrival of a second Assistant Regional Officer, Mr Jeffrey Lunn. Jeff will be responsible for the area east of the Tay/Tummel/Garry line, north of Perth, and south of the A9 south of Perth, whilst Ros retains the rest of Perth and Kinross District. We welcome Jeff, and hope he comes to love it as much as we do!

Finally we wish the Section every success in the future. - - -

HELEN E. STACE.

REPORTS OF FIELD MEETINGS

DUNNING DEN AND BLAEBERRY TOLL - SATURDAY 5TH MAY

A party of eight assembled on a fine spring morning to walk up Dunning Den. As expected there was an excellent show of spring flowers, with Goldilocks (Ran. auricomus) and Ground Ivy (Glechoma hederacea) being found within a few yards of the entrance. We then entered a grove of Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) in full flower.

Under the deciduous canopy Moschatel (Adoxa moschatellina), Wild Hyacinth (Hyacinthoides non-scripta), Sanicle (Sanicula europaea), and Sweet Woodruff (Galium odoratum) were all present in abundance. Unfortunately the canopy is not entirely natural, since there was extensive felling, probably during the war, so there is a lack of old trees, and fewer species. Alongside the burn Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage (Chrysosplenium alternifolium) and Wood Stitchwort (Stellaria nemorum) were found in damper areas, while Early Purple Orchid (Orchis mascula) and Meadow Saxifrage (Saxifraga granulata) occur in rockier areas. Surely this must be one of the richest Dens on the north side of the Ochils!

The party travelled only a short distance before lunch, taken under an area of cliffs, also with an interesting flora. The remaining two and a half miles were traversed more quickly despite more difficult terrain, and Blaeberry Toll, at 1000 ft, was reached in time for tea, and a short talk on the Flora of Perthshire.

HELEN E. STACE

ABERNETHY GLEN AND CASTLE LAW - MONDAY 14TH MAY

On a pleasant, if rather humid, evening, eight members, including one very junior candidate-member, Marion Marsden's daughter, gathered at Abernethy Tower. Our objects were to make a general survey of the Glen and the rocky hill above, and if possible to relocate sites of Betony (Betonica officinalis).

Attendance by a former enthusiastic Section member, Pamela Cain, was most welcome. As a local resident she assisted Nick to lead the excursion and rounded off the evening by offering hospitality on our return to Abernethy.

Although there were no new records, the finding of a number of flourishing colonies of betony and of Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage (Chrysosplenium alternifolium) alongside its commoner relative (C. oppositifolium) made the walk worthwhile.

All in all, apart from attacks by insects and the dangers of sinking ankle deep in evil smelling black mud, as one member discovered to her cost, it was a good outing.

ANNE MATHERS

THE CORING/

THE CORING OF METHVEN MOSS - SATURDAY 26TH MAY

This outing had been billed as a reconnaissance, the site (NO 008234) had been selected the day before, and the 26th was spent in taking the peat core.

The Section foregathered at Newmiln Farm, home of member Su Grierson and her husband Sandy, who not only loaned us to carry out the coring, but themselves gave sterling help, enlisting also a daughter home from school for the weekend, and then entertained us royally to tea afterwards. Our most grateful thanks.

We were joined by Dr Jim Dickson and his wife Camilla, and they took the Glasgow University landrover with the heavy equipment round by the disused Crieff - Methven Junction Railway Line while the rest of us walked over the fields. At the unloading point we made the acquaintance of Big Ivan and Little Iva, the corers, made after a Russian pattern, together with the rods, frames, levers, and slings through which by the application of many hands and brute force they were pushed down through the bog and pulled up again, bringing up 55cm samples each time. We cored to a total depth of seven metres, representing perhaps 6 or 7 thousand years before 'Present' (= 1950), and even then we did not reach bottom. Each sample had to be carefully wrapped, marked, and logged, so that no mistake would be made when they were examined in the University Laboratory. Everyone pulled, and pushed, their full weight in one or other of these tasks, and I hope found the operation interesting, if tough. Finally we had to carry everything back to the landrover, including the samples.

The first results of the analysis were given to the Section by Dr Dickson on Wednesday 12th March 1986.

The disused railway line also proved interesting, and worth a second walk along. There was a colony of Cowslips (Primula veris) which Su had netted against rabbits, and some Twayblade (Listera ovata). Other goodies may await discovery. On the walk over to the coring site a rather unhappy group of pines was inspected. It looked as though several distinct episodes of regeneration were present.

BILL GAULD

KILLIECRANKIE RSPB RESERVE - 3RD JUNE

This was a joint meeting with the Ornithological Section, twenty of whom turned out, and nine botanists, at Balrobbie Farm, although the weather forecast was poor and the day definitely unpromising.

We were greeted by the Warden, Martin Robinson who split the party into two groups, one to be led by himself, the other by Ewen Cameron, Chairman of the Ornithologists. Unfortunately the rain began just as we set off and got steadily worse, until at lunch time it was decided to call it a day. This meant that half the party visited the lower slopes of broadleaved woodland, while the others went uphill through the birches to the open moorland.

In neither group did the ornithologists have much luck, but the botanists going uphill found some 60-65 species. There may well have been more, but it was too difficult to keep recording sheets dry. Midway up the slope there were pockets of Meadow Saxifrage (Saxifraga granulata), Maidenhair Spleenwort (Asplenium trichomanes), Marsh Hawksbeard (Crepis paludosa) and a few spikes of Early Purple Orchis (O. mascula) provided a bright spots in the gloom.

ANNE MATHERS

BOAT TRIP TO INCHCOLM - SATURDAY 16TH JUNE

For our summer outing members set sail again, this time in the "Maid of the Forth" to Inchcolm Island in the Firth of Forth, the day being blowy but fair. Puffins were seen on the way over skimming the waves.

We visited the very interesting ruined Abbey of St Columba, founded in 1123, comprising some of the most complete monastic remains in Scotland. Much of the existing structure dates from the 13th and 15th centuries, the tower on the octagonal Chapter House/

Chapter House being important. A modern weather vane of St Columba at the prow took the eye as it glistened in the sun.

During our one and a half hour stay we found time to walk over the Island and among the more unusual plants found were handsome clumps of Wild Carrot (Daucus carota), Kidney Vetch (Anthyllis vulneraria), and an expanse of Pellitory of the Wall (Parietaria diffusa) on the cliffs.

The day was enjoyed by all present and we must thank Mr W.Scott for arranging this trip and also his son for providing transport there and back.

MARGARET R. MACDONALD

LAWERS MEADOWS - SUNDAY 17TH JUNE

The Section held a joint excursion with the Botanical Society of the British Isles Scottish Recorders' Weekend based at Firbush Point, Loch Tay. The primary aim of the excursion was to search for Alpine Bartsia (Bartsia alpina), recorded from the lower meadows of Ben Lawers by Maybud Campbell and Duncan Foore before c.1950. Despite repeated searches since then, Bartsia has not been refound. The present excursion provided a valuable opportunity for a further comprehensive search.

We therefore searched the extensive unimproved pastures near the National Nature Reserve boundary (the hill dyke at c.400m), spacing people out c.100ft above and below this level. We covered the boundary from the Loch Tay - Glen Lyon road to just above Lawers Farm, but despite assiduous searching Bartsia was not to be found. It was nevertheless an interesting day, with a number of nice plants being found, especially in the flushes. These were frequent along the boundary and clearly reflected the underlying rock type, with certain areas having very calcareous flushes influenced by the limestone, the remainder being much more acidic and peaty. The former contained very showy Early Marsh Orchid (Dactylorhiza incarnata) and Fragrant Orchid (Gymnadenia conopsea), together with such local species as Scottish Asphodel (Tofieldia pusilla), Broad-leaved Cotton Grass (Eriophorum latifolium), and Grass of Parnassus (Parnassia palustris). A more acid flush in contrast had Great Sundew (Drosera anglica). The drier sections of these pastures had, in the main, little of particular interest, perhaps reflecting underlying rock type and/or previous fertiliser/lime applications. However it was good to see one plant of Small White Orchid (Leucorchis albida), and on a small limestone outcrop Rock Rose (Helianthemum chamaecistus) and Hoary Whitlow Grass (Draba incana). It is to be hoped that further searches for Bartsia in this area will be carried out in the future, perhaps with rather more success.

ROSALIND A. H. SMITH

MEALL NAN SUBH AND SGIATH BHUIDHE - SUNDAY 17TH JUNE

Lack of time prevented an excursion to Creag Mhor, so instead the party visited Meall nan Subh and Sgiath Bhuidhe to look for Alpine Bearberry (Arctous alpinus). Six members of the Section drove up Glen Lochay and along the private road that crosses to Glen Lyon. From the summit of the road the group ascended the steep west slope of the hill, by way of some interesting flushes and cliffs with Bog Whortleberry (Vaccinium uliginosum) and a variety of sedges.

Proceeding along the summit ridge we found several patches of Alpine Bearberry. The plant is common enough north of the Great Glen, but this seems to be its only site in Perthshire, and it is some way south of any other British records. On less exposed areas of the summit ridge Cloudberry (Rubus chamaemorus) was flowering freely, and Lesser Cranberry (Vaccinium microcarpum) was noted in a boggy area just south of the summit.

On the descent were some patches of Dwarf Cornel (Cornus suecicum), and frequent spikes of Lesser Twayblade (Listera cordata) in full flower.

NICK STEWART

BEN CHONZIE/

BEN CHONZIE - SUNDAY 24TH JUNE

Only four of us joined this excursion - perhaps more would have come if they had known there would be a landrover to take us along Loch Turret. This gave us easy access to the main cliffs. On the way there Nick and Norman explored a cliff east of Loch Uaine and discovered Alpine Cinquefoil (Potentilla crantzii), Green Splenwort (Asplenium viride), Parsley Fern (Cryptogramma crispa), Mountain Melick (Melica nutans), all local plants. We then moved across to the main cliffs and were delighted to see Purple Oxytropis (Oxytropis halleri) last seen in 1961. About fifty plants were seen, at the eastern extremity of the cliff, on a pale coloured igneous dyke. This rock appeared rather acid, with Alpine Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla alpina) and Ling (Calluna vulgaris) the main associated species. Less encouraging was the failure to re-find Alpine Woodsia (Woodsia alpina) on the section of the cliffs where two plants were seen in 1976. Also disappointing was the failure to re-find Twinflower (Linnaea borealis), recorded by Buchanan White. There was compensation however in the impressive array of arctic alpines, including non-viviparous Alpine Poa (Poa alpina), and perhaps even more impressive the luxuriant tall herb ledges with Globeflower (Trollius europaeus) and Red Campion (Silene dioica). Norman and I ventured to the summit but low mist curtailed our view. We were however rewarded by finding Sheathed Sedge (Carex vaginata) during our descent. Finally we had a quick look at Lochan Uaine on the way back to the landrover, but found of interest only Floating Bur-reed (Sparganium angustifolium) and Awlwort (Subularia aquatica).

ROSALIND A. H. SMITH

BRIDGE OF GAUR - SUNDAY 22 JULY

This meeting, held jointly with the Botanical Society of the British Isles, was aimed at providing information on plants growing in some poorly recorded areas around Bridge of Gaur. Sixteen people attended, and it was decided to split into three groups.

Group One, led by Ros Smith, went to Finnart, where they visited Lochs Finnart and Monaghan. The area round these oligotrophic lochs has an interesting, mainly acid, flora and Great Sundew (Drosera anglica), and Few-flowered Sedge (Carex pauciflora) were frequent. The lochs also proved interesting for their dragonflies and damselflies.

Group Two, led by myself, went up Gleinn Chomraidh from Bridge of Gaur, and found mainly extensive bog vegetation. One area of cliffs on the north-west side of the glen proved to be fairly base-rich, and species such as Yellow Mountain Saxifrage (Saxifraga aizoides) were present.

Group Three, led by Richard Thomas, went up Glen Duibhe from the east end of Loch Eigach. Again the main vegetation was blanket bog, with local Great Sundew and Few-flowered Sedge. But the river runs through an interesting gorge, in which Wood Cow-wheat (Melampyrum sylvaticum) was found.

NICK STEWART

TILlicouLTRY GLEN - SUNDAY 14TH OCTOBER

When asked to write this report I was somewhat surprised as I am not a botanist, and I had made no attempt to keep a note of the plants seen on the outing. "Never mind" I was told "It will be nice to have something different"! So here follows the account of a botanical outing written by a non-botanist participant.

I should perhaps, at this stage, explain that my interest in botany stems largely from my research and experimentation on the subject of early Scottish plant dyes. This in turn means that all the plants referred to in this account are also dye-plants!

Sunday 14th October was a glorious autumn day, and about fifty botanists assembled at the foot of Tillicoultry Glen Nature Trail. I think that about seven members from Perth were present. The leaders were Brian Coppins (lichens) and Alan Bonnell (fungi).

After being amazed/

After being amazed at the large turn-out, my next impression was one of horror at all the empty baskets and garden trugs being carried for the purpose of collecting fungi. Dyers who use plants are often fiercely attacked by conservationist (in some cases quite justifiably) and when speaking to Dyers I always take great pains to suggest that they should go out in groups only for the purpose of plant identification, and that they should go singly to collect, so that one area will not suffer too much depletion. They are also told to identify before gathering to avoid taking a rare species in error. Whilst I know that dyers sometimes take larger quantities (but not always), I nevertheless feel compelled to wonder what impact fifty mycologists could have on one Nature Trail or one rare species by all taking home specimens for later identification?

The pace up the trail was slow, with the leaders being constantly asked for information, but with so many knowledgeable people around I found it easy to get assistance with identification problems. I was delighted to find Marjoram (Origanum vulgare) and Sweet Woodruff (Galium odoratum) in the glen. Both are traditional dye plants of Scandinavia, Northern Europe, and parts of England, but have no recorded use in Scotland as they only grow in a few locations. There were not many lichens to be found in the lower wooded area of the glen.

Lunch was taken on the open hillside above the glen, and the view across the Forth was impressive. Looking at the industrial complex of the upper Forth one imagined the air pollution on these hillsides being high, but incredibly the lichen growth here was widespread and varied. Brian Coppins explored the rock on which he had been sitting to eat his lunch and found several Cladonias, including C. pyxidata (formerly used in Scotland for a red/purple dye), and Umbilicaria polyrrhiza and U. polyphylla (both used for a purple dye). On my way back to the car-park later I found U. pustulata and was pleased to report this to Brian. He had also seen it, and said that it was one of six "firsts" for the area he had found that day.

Being a "loner" at heart I found that after lunch I had unthinkingly but not surprisingly headed up a different hill from everyone else. I looked back on the snake of people heading up the trail from Tillicoultry, and reflected on the impact that such enjoyment of the countryside can cause on hillsides like this. Perhaps it is as well that Sundays are not always so sunny!

On my way back I heard what I took to be foreigners on the other side of a rock outcrop, but I was unable to identify the language. It turned out to be a group of Edinburgh ladies talking "fungi"! They complained that there had been fewer fungi than expected due to the recent dry weather, but their baskets looked pretty full for all that.

I found the day interesting and enjoyable, and it was really nice to see such a wide range of ages from toddlers upwards all sharing a common interest on such a pleasant day. But please will someone remind me to take notes in future!

SU GRIERSON

THE MOTTO OF THE PERTHSHIRE SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCE

At the Section Committee meeting on 7 November 1985 I was asked the meaning of the Greek motto of the Society:-

"Panta dokimazete"

These are the first two words of verse 21, chapter 5, of St Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is in English:-

"Examine everything; hold on to the good."

BILL GAULD

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL - NEW PERTHSHIRE ADDRESS

The Nature Conservancy Council now has an office in Perth at:-

Cleeve Gardens
Oakbank Road
PERTH PH1 1HG

Telephone: Perth 39746

NATURE CONSERVANCY COUNCIL NEWS

Those of you who remember Eddie Idle's expert exposition of the wildlife of Loch Lomond on the PSNS trip a few years ago will be sorry to learn that he has now left Scotland, having been promoted to Assistant Director, England, based at NCC's new GBHQ, Peterborough. His place as Regional Officer has been taken by Barrie Pendlebury who, like Eddie, has come from SW Scotland.

Notification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest has continued apace during 1984, and nearly all 99 SSSIs in Perth and Kinross are now fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. We are however still prepared to consider new sites - we only need one more to make a Century (!) - so if any member knows of anywhere of special botanical interest please let me know. We are now negotiating compensatory management agreements on those few SSSIs where proposed land use changes are going to be damaging to nature conservation interests. All owners and occupiers now have to consult us about land use changes on SSSIs and although most are very good about it, a few have failed to consult, either intentionally or because they have overlooked the law. We are getting extra money to help us to monitor damage to SSSIs but obviously even with this it will be impossible for us to keep our eyes on all 99 sites as well as we should. So if anyone sees an interesting area being drained, ploughed, felled etc. please could they let me know as soon as possible so that I can follow if up.

ROSALIND A. H. SMITH 25 JANUARY 1985

SORBUS ARRANENSIS IN PERTHSHIRE?

On a visit to Inchmahome Priory on 27 August 1984 I observed that two of the rowan trees planted as amenity trees on the lawn behind the Priory have leaves typical of Sorbus arranensis. It is probable that these trees were planted over ten years ago by the Ministry of Works (Ancient Monuments).

This species occurs naturally only on the island of Arran and is believed to have been brought there accidentally by the Romans.

W. F. FRENCH

GIANT HOGWEED (HERACLEUM MANTEGAZZIANUM)

This plant was introduced to Britain from the Caucasus as a garden plant. Sadly it spread rapidly and in some areas (eg East Lothian) it has taken over completely, especially along river valleys. Because of its enormous size it swamps other plants and is therefore a thoroughly undesirable addition to our flora. This is recognised in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which makes it an offence to introduce Giant Hogweed into the wild. In Perth and Kinross we have been fortunate in not having very much of it to date. The local authorities are keen to try to control it now while they have the chance, and we are trying to trace all its sites in the District. The ones I know of so far are as follows:-

1. A.984 just East of Dunkeld
2. A.923 by Cardney House
3. A.93 near Fersie Manse
4. River Tay, Perth - Inchyra, and downstream to Paddockmuir
5. A.977 West of Kinross near "golfball"
6. River Devon, up to Glendevon Village
7. A.822 near Ardoch Camp
8. Allan Water, up to Braco (? A.822, A.9, B.8033 affected)
9. Stirling Street, Blackford
10. Netherton Farm, Blackford
11. Muirmont banking, M.90
12. M.90 at Glenfarg
13. Isolated pockets along M.90

If any member knows of any other sites for this plant I would be very grateful if they would let me know.

ROSALIND A. H. SMITH, NCC

A NEW FLORA OF KINROSS-SHIRE

Members may be interested to note that a second edition of the "Wildflowers of Kinross" has been produced by George Ballantyne, the Vice-County Recorder for Fife and Kinross. It has been extensively revised to incorporate much new survey work and also features eight pages of line drawings.

Copies, a bargain at only £3 each, can be obtained from Ros Smith.

HELEN E. STACE

THE REFLECTION!

To what extent does the flora of an area reflect the fauna or vice-versa?

During the hard weather last winter, when gardening or botanising outside were out of the question, my wife and I decided to put up ground nuts for birds and were successful in attracting several Blue Tits and Great Tits, and the occasional Coal Tits. We were also delighted to find, at midday on Sunday 3rd February 1985, that we received two visits from a Spotted Woodpecker, On the following day a Siskin appeared and has since reappeared several times.

Why should they visit us?

Just across the road from the house is a Birch wood, so we are, in effect, on the edge of the wood - and therein lies the reason for the siskin and the woodpecker.

Two springs ago a Woodcock, another woodland bird, raised a brood in a shady area at the top of the garden, and in a spot only three yards from its nest a pheasant and a partridge have both raised a brood in past years.

This time the ECOTONE, or edge effect, is showing, as on the other side of the garden, where there is an area of arable land. Thus the plants to provide both shelter and food are close at hand. Someone else has realised this too as we had a visit from a Weasel when the snow was on the ground. He was foraging and was not disturbed by the human audience on the other side of the window - so far as we know he left us without hospitality!

Not far from the house is a mixed uneven aged wood, with some gaps in it; it is the home of Roe Deer. On the north side of the wood is a field recently sown out in winter wheat. Up to six Roes (including two last year's calves, an old buck, and two which I think are does of breeding age) came out to feed on the germinated wheat, usually late in the afternoon. If disturbed they gracefully jump the fence and take cover in the wood. They are also very partial to strawberry foliage, and in the late spring of 1984 travelled some quarter of a mile to feed on it. This is ideal Roe Deer country, with small broad-leaved, coniferous, and mixed woodlands, and areas of arable land between them. Unfortunately someone, sometime soon, will have to control their numbers.

Our rarest visitor was a Red-legged Partridge; we know that, at the time it was here, a couple of local estates were breeding them and releasing them for sport. What had probably happened was that there was a pressure of numbers at the point of release, leading to their dispersal.

Owls we also have, though so far we have not identified them. They are probably an indication that somewhere the vegetation suits a vole population.

So it is fair to say that the fauna occupies the habitat created by the flora!

We look forward to future observations.

W. F. FRENCH

ENVOI/

ENVOI - BLAEBERRY TOLL - A BOTANISTS' H(E)AVEN!

As you may know, Blaeberry Toll (NO 024103) was for five years the home of our Field Secretary, Nick Stewart, and myself, Helen Stace, then Editor of this Bulletin. When we heard that our jobs were taking us south of the Border, Freddie French suggested that we might like to record some of the interesting finds around our former home.

Blaeberry Toll was once the toll-house on the road that passes over the Ochils from Dunning to the Yetts of Muckhart, and it sits just below the summit of the road at 1,000ft. Skymore Hill, rising behind the cottage to the west of the road, gives the cottage its name since much of the hillside is clothed in blaeberrries. Unfortunately most of the area is heavily grazed by sheep, thus restricting the number of berries, and consequently the number of blaeberry pies!

In the immediate vicinity of the house, the area of most interest was the two pasture fields just south of the cottage. The nearest one may once have been wooded, since in springtime the top end becomes a drift of pink and white wood anemones. The second is more varied because it is rather knolly with outcrops of lava. As these are crumbly, some interesting plants are present, including Mountain Everlasting (Antennaria dioica), Bitter Vetch (Lathyrus montanus), and abundant Mountain Pansy (Viola lutea) in an acid turf with blaeberry and some heather. Near the boundary fence, and on the adjacent road verge, there are patches of gorse, and these habitats combined are perfect for the Green Hairstreak butterfly, which often came from there to our garden rockery. (The authors here note that the verge should be drawn to the attention of the Scottish Wildlife Trust for possible listing. The problem is of course that the habitat to conserve is both within and without the "pale", and it is the combination that is important.)

One of our first excursions from the house, by bicycle, was to visit a site where Francis Buchanan White had recorded, about a hundred years ago, bay willow (Salix pentandra) and Downy Willow (S. lapponum). We located the former, but there was no sign of the latter, possibly due to extensive afforestation.

En route to this site we discovered a number of interesting areas including a small bog and a stretch of roadside now scheduled as a listed road verge by the SWT. The former included a carpet of Cranberries (Vaccinium oxycoccos) with Lesser Tussock Sedge (Carex diandra), both rare species in the area. The verge included the only plants of Globeflower (Trollius europaeus) still surviving in Kinross-shire, and extensive patches of Spignel (Meum athamanticum). This plant is quite rare in Perthshire, but is locally common in this part of the Ochils. Indeed one hill near Glendevon village is named Baldmony Hill after Baldmony - another of Meum's English names.

Travelling north from the cottage the best area is undoubtedly Dunning Den, which was explored by the Section in 1984 and written up in Bulletin No. 9. One plant of particular interest found beside the burn above the main Den was Alpine Bistort (Polygonum viviparum), possibly reflecting the severe weather we sometimes experienced at the cottage. However we often had better weather than the villagers down below, who could be blanketed in fog while we were in bright sunshine above it!

We rarely did any botanical exploratino east or west from the cottage. Going up Skymore Hill the ground becomes very tussocky and difficult to traverse, eventually giving way to forestry, while all the ground east of the road, opposite the cottage, was forested. We have since heard that further areas around the cottage are to be afforested, although Skymore Hill has been spared on scenic grounds. An ascent of the hill, on a clear day, affords a magnificent view of the Grampians across Strathearn, visible to a lesser extent from our kitchen window!

Being surrounded by open moorland, but with some plantations of varying age, and several fire ponds, etc., the cottage was also a wonderful place for naturalists interested in mammals and birds, but that is another story - - - !

HELEN STACE & NICK STEWART

WE WISH BOTH HELEN AND NICK THE VERY BEST OF FORTUNE IN THE FUTURE!