

# Perthshire Society of Natural Science

## Nature Section

### Newsletter January 2023

A very happy New Year to all.

#### **The year that was**

We are now half way through our first winter programme and soon we will be sitting down to plan a spring/summer series of outings. A major portion of our previous programmes had been planned and led by our chairman of the Botanical Section, Alistair Godfrey. Alistair died in December and a short obituary is included.



Our autumn began with a talk from the Bamff Estate on beavers and re-wilding, which generated a lot of discussion. Unfortunately, the second talk on ‘Project Seagrass’ was cancelled at the eleventh hour as the speaker was away from Perth, but we are grateful to Tom Ryan for stepping in with a talk, and demonstration, on photographing birds in flight. In the absence of a bird model, he had to make do with a plastic pterosaur. Our third talk on the Firth of Tay and the birds was a comprehensive review of the birds and their haunts from data collected by volunteer surveyors over many years. This talk had to be by zoom, so was recorded and is available to view through the web site.

*\*An expanse of seagrass of the W coast of Australia has been shown to be all one clone, and at 180km long, it is claimed that it is the largest*

*area of a single cloned organism. This seems to displace a Utah aspen as the largest, which is estimated to cover 108 acres, or 43.6 hectares, which I find to be 436,000m<sup>2</sup>. Assuming the seagrass could be 0.5km broad throughout 180km, that would be 90,000,000m<sup>2</sup> (the area wasn't calculated by the researchers).*

*\* Data for 'The Firth of Tay' review was collected by volunteers contributing to the British Trust for Ornithology's Wetland Bird Survey. The local organiser is hoping to recruit new recorders. If you think you could help, look at the web site [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) or, if perhaps you are not sure, drop me an email [jeffreybanks@btinternet.com](mailto:jeffreybanks@btinternet.com)*



### **Winter Programme, 2023**

We start on the **11th January** with Dr Mike Robinson on, "Perth – Biodiversity Capital of Scotland." Mike might be well known to you from the prominent role he has already played as CEO of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and now is leading this initiative from the RSGS.

On **1<sup>st</sup> February**, we welcome Dr Rosalind Bryce from UHI, Perth, where, as a director of the Mountain Centre she has led research into many issues affecting our uplands, from managing red deer to tourism and crofting.

An extra talk that wasn't in the programme circulated in our previous newsletter has been arranged for **8<sup>th</sup> February**. Logan Steele has a long experience of volunteering for The Tayside Raptor Monitoring Study Group, part of the wider Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, which has just celebrated 20 years of activity. Logan has extensive first hand knowledge of the raptors to be found in Perthshire.

We welcome back Althayde Tonhasca of NatureScot for the talk on **1st March** on 'Insects and Pollination.' It 's not just bees.



On **22nd March**, our own member, Martin Robinson, will take us back to the Uplands, but this time in Tanzania and Malawi. Martin has a wealth of experience of our wildlife, having led tours, and the Botanical Section outings.

### **22nd March AGM**

This will be the first opportunity for the Nature Section to get together to decide our future. It is a result of the last 2 -3 years of restrictions, that many Section members do not know each other. This is the time to rectify that, to find out about peoples' interests and expertise, and so to form a committee, including key office holders.

### **Alistair Godfrey**

Alistair came to Perth to work for the Perth and Kinross District Council as the District ranger and quickly established himself in the Botanical Section as Chairman, a position he held until the section's final year in 2022. With a wide botanical knowledge, especially relating to local areas, he could well lead any meeting. He was always welcoming on the excursions and could encourage everyone from beginner onwards to look and read the landscape and pick out the plants.

I joined an excursion when I could and was always welcome, Alistair forever forbearing on my appalling inability to recall a plant name that I should have known, or when misidentifying a species.

He also had some expertise in planning and used that expertise to formulate key responses to planning applications such as Glen Quey quarry, plantations on the Ochils and the Coul Links golf course on the Dornoch Firth. He also contributed much to the Botanical Society of the British Isles.



### **Another survey?**

The Section was contacted last month by a farmer from near Balbeggie who is interested in listing the birds frequenting his planted strips. This could involve several visits, running into future years. If any one is interested in doing this (you wouldn't be alone) then please contact me at [jeffreybanks@btinternet.com](mailto:jeffreybanks@btinternet.com) . A survey could include butterflies; insects have not been one of my strengths.

### **Web Site**

If you haven't looked recently, the web site has been updated so that the Nature Section appears on the header.

