

# erc NEWS

Issue 3, Winter 2005

## Successful funding bid secures new community project

Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre will launch a new project in 2006 to encourage communities to become involved in a region-wide 'Neighbourhood Nature Watch'.

The ERC, through its parent organisation Solway Heritage, has successfully secured a grant of just over £49 000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to run the project which aims to encourage greater participation in wildlife recording and improve access to local wildlife information.

Neighbourhood Nature Watch will run until Summer 2007 and will encourage both locals and visitors to the region to participate in surveys of some key local species. Adders, a local conservation priority species, will be the subject of a major survey, as will nesting Swallows and House Martins. Building on the success of this year's first Dumfries and Galloway Wildlife Recording Conference, a full day long conference will be held in 2006 to enable local recorders and participants in the summer surveys to hear about the early results and to find

out more about other wildlife monitoring work across the region. A new publication, the Wildlife Recording Review, will also summarise the highlights of the 2006 recording work.

A major focus of the work will be to provide better access to the data held by the ERC through the development of the Centre's website. This will involve collating more data onto our central database and making this directly available on the internet.

Mark Pollitt, ERC Manager, is excited about the project. "There's a lot to do and many technical issues to resolve but the benefits to the region will be worth it. The project will enable the ERC to share the information it holds more effectively and encourage all members of the community, including those who have never participated in recording before, to help to gather valuable information about locally important plants and animals."

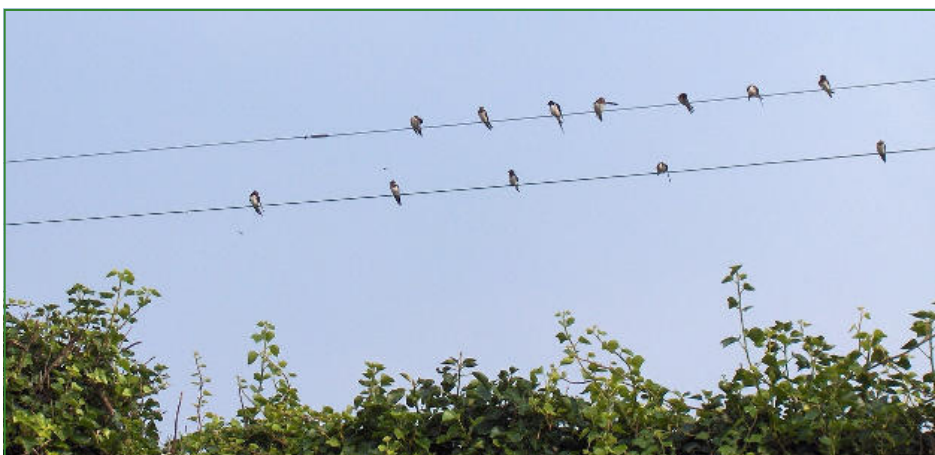
Work on the project will start early in 2006 so watch this space to find out how you can get involved.



Adder *Vipera berus*, the focus of a region-wide survey in 2006

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Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (above) and House Martins *Delichon urbica*, are familiar summer visitors to Dumfries and Galloway. In spring and summer 2006 we will be asking everyone to tell us more about where they nest.

# Free Training Courses for potential 'Mammal Guardians'

Free training courses are being offered to help volunteers find and record Dumfries and Galloway's mammals. Top wildlife experts from organisations around the country, including the Bat Conservation Trust, the Seawatch Foundation and the Environment Agency, will be visiting the region to train local people to become mammal detectives. The courses, which are part of a larger project called Mammal Guardians, are being organised by the Environmental Resources Centre on behalf of the Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership.

Peter Norman, Biodiversity Officer at Dumfries and Galloway Council, explains the purpose of the training courses.

"We have a number of records of wild mammals at sites across the region, but many of these sites have not been checked

for many years. We think that many species such as Otters and Red Squirrels will still be present, but we fear that others, such as water voles may now be locally extinct. In some areas we have no idea of the mammals present at all. However, the trouble with many wild mammals is that they can be difficult to see, so we're looking for volunteers to be trained to search for tracks and signs."

The first course was held at Thornhill in November 2005. Eighteen enthusiastic volunteers heard talks about all the region's land mammals, how to find and identify them, and what to do with the records. The next day, theory was put into practice in and around Drumlanrig Country Park with small mammal trapping, Otter tracking, Red Squirrel watching and visits to a bat roost and a Badger sett. All participants received a free book on British mammals, and will receive continued support and advice from the Environmental Resources Centre Mammal Advice Line.

Forthcoming courses concentrate on particular groups of mammals, including bats, dolphins and Otters. Details are listed here, or the full programme can be downloaded from [www.dgerc.org.uk](http://www.dgerc.org.uk). All the courses, which normally cost up to two hundred pounds to attend, are being offered free to participants, thanks to funding from the Scottish Executive's Biodiversity Action Grant Scheme. Each will consist of classroom-based studies, followed by tuition on how to find and identify mammals in the countryside. In return we would like you to use your new skills and get involved in recording

mammals in Dumfries and Galloway, which could be anything from recording mammals in your garden, to helping out with whale and dolphin watches. No previous experience is necessary to attend the courses.

Anyone interested in attending should book with Mark or Rebecca at the Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre on 01387 247543 or email [mammals@dgerc.org.uk](mailto:mammals@dgerc.org.uk).

## Mammal Guardians Training Courses

### River Mammals

Friday 12 to Saturday 13 May 2005, Langholm

Otters, Water Voles and Water Shrews live alongside rivers, burns, lochs and ponds in Dumfries and Galloway, but can be difficult to see. Learning how to find them from their tracks, trails and signs will give you the best chance of seeing them in the wild.

Trainer: Rob Strachan (Environment Agency)

### Bats

Saturday 5 August 2006, Gatehouse of Fleet

Dumfries and Galloway has more species of bats than anywhere else in Scotland. Learn about their ecology, how to identify the different species, and how to use a bat detector to find them. During the fieldwork we expect to see several species feeding, and also to see bats in the hand.

Trainer: Anne Youngman (Bat Conservation Trust)

### Whales & Dolphins

Tuesday 29 to Wednesday 30 August 2006, Portpatrick

Learn the identification features to look for when carrying out land-based or boat-based whale and dolphin watches. Also find out how to estimate group size, distinguish calves, juveniles and adults, assess sea state and other key environmental details, and complete recording forms. The fieldwork will consist of a boat trip in search of whales and dolphins, although we can't guarantee sightings.

Trainer: Peter Evans (Seawatch Foundation)



A visit to a badger sett

## DGERC website arrives!

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new DGERC website. It will enable those interested in our work to find out more about us, and allow us to disseminate information about forthcoming events and projects. At the moment the site is very basic and still under development, but includes background information about the Centre, our work and information about

forthcoming projects and events. You can also download recording forms for sending in your records and booking forms for the Mammal Guardians courses. We will try to add further information as soon as we can.

[www.dgerc.org.uk](http://www.dgerc.org.uk)

Keep an eye out for some significant changes in 2006-07 as we develop the website to provide access to records, maps and information on species and habitats of Dumfries and Galloway.

## Leading the way on best practise farming

A pioneering project to demonstrate the best way to manage farmland and enhance biodiversity and water quality is making great progress. Four demonstration farms to showcase environmental works on farms in the Annan & Dee/Ken catchments were chosen for the project which is being led by Dumfries and Galloway Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). The demonstration farms focus on Wetland Management, Farmland Birds, Hedgerows and Trees and Sustainable Farm Drainage. All sites are being monitored during the duration of the project, which is funded by Leader +, Scottish Natural Heritage, FWAG, Entrust, and D&G Council. Partner organisations involved in the project are Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Royal society for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Solway Heritage.

Training days were held last Autumn to introduce these valuable habitats and demonstrate how to protect and improve them. Capital works were then carried out on the farms and in recent weeks walks were held to show how these works had progressed and the effects on the wildlife. Experts were present on the training days and walks to answer queries

The Hedgerow Demonstration Farm has had new hedges planted, old ones coppiced or layed and a small area of trees planted. The



A newly created pond will be a haven for wetland wildlife

Wetlands Demonstration Farm, has had wader scrapes and ponds created, an existing pond restored and buffer zones established to protect wetlands. Trials have taken place on how best to control an invasive grass, *Glyceria*, results of which will be looked at next year. The Farmland Birds Farm, has had plots of different mixes of wild bird cover sown to help feed birds over the winter. We have also planted hedges and trees to provide cover for birds. The Sustainable Farm Drainage Demonstration Farm, is having a pond and wetland created specifically to clean water from the steading ('grey water'). This is innovative work and has been carefully designed by the Scottish Agricultural College in conjunction with SEPA. A visit will be held once the work is in place.

A forum will be held in autumn 2006, open to the public, in which all four farms will be visited and representatives from all the participating organisations will be present to discuss the project and answer any queries.

If you would like more information on this project please call the FWAG office on 01387 760576.

**Wendy Fenton**  
Dumfries and Galloway FWAG



A newly layed hedge on the Hedgerow Demonstration Farm

## Look what the cat dragged in . . .

Records of dead animals can provide valuable information for some species. Whether these be records of road casualties (e.g. Badgers, Red Squirrels and Otters) or of small mammals caught by your cat, they can help to provide valuable information. For some species, road traffic incidents can be a significant cause of mortality, and where records show there is evidence of repeated incidents at a particular blackspot, planners may be able to incorporate measures to reduce accidents in future road alterations. For other species, such as small mammals, records may be difficult to obtain without carrying out

specific trapping. By identifying the victims of your cats activities you can provide useful information on the distribution of small mammals in the region. At least one of the small number of records of Water Shrew in Dumfries and Galloway came from an observant individual who found a dead body on the road, probably a victim of a local cat. Discarded bottles in the countryside often act as lethal traps to mice, voles and shrews and may also be worth checking for unfortunate casualties. If you find any, please respect the environment and take them home and dispose of them appropriately.

If you want to learn more about how to identify small mammals, the Mammal Society are running a course at Mabie Forest on 29 July 2006. The cost is £85. Contact the Mammal Society (020 7350 2200) for more details. Alternatively contact the ERC and we'll keep you informed of any future courses being run in the region.

Some suggested identification guides:

- Mammals of Britain and Europe (Harper Collins Field Guide)
- How to Find and Identify Mammals (Mammal Society)
- Field Studies Council produce excellent laminated fold out sheets covering a wide variety of species groups.



## Would you like to be a better moth-er?

Moths get a bad press! Mention the word 'butterfly' to almost any member of the public and they will immediately conjure up a picture of an insect with beauty, colour and elegance. Yet mention 'moth' and the image generated will be greatly different, usually that of a small, drab, brown, furry thing that flies at night and eats our clothes. Whilst these perceptions are based on elements of truth – most moths do fly at night, some are small and brown, and a few eat clothes – they also hide the magic of a diverse and beautiful group of insects.

The differences between moths and butterflies are not as clear as they might at first appear. Many people think that butterflies are active by day and moths by night, but many species of moths are active during the daytime too. Other features, such as whether they are hairy/furry, whether their antennae are clubbed and how they hold their wings when at rest are similarly thought to separate the two groups, but there are members of each group that break the rules. In fact there is no single difference between the two groups that can be used to clearly



The stunning Elephant Hawk-moth, a common species near suitable patches of willowherb.

define one or the other.

Moths and butterflies are closely related, and are part of the large and diverse insect order Lepidoptera. Around 2500 different species of moth occur in the UK, compared to just 70 or so butterflies. Moths are often divided into two groups – 'macro-moths' which tend to be larger

in size, and 'micro-moths' which comprise most of the smaller moths (but as with the moths and butterflies split there is also considerable overlap between 'macros' and 'micros'). In Dumfries and Galloway around 500 species of macro-moths have been recorded, with perhaps 300 of these regularly, so for someone wishing to explore them for the first time the diversity is not dissimilar to that of birds.

Anyone who becomes interested in moths will soon become familiar with their wonderful English names. Some are named after the patterns on their wings, such as the Brown-line Bright-eye (and the Bright-line Brown-eye!). The Mother Shipton appears to have the profile of the legendary witch on its wings, whilst the Death's-head Hawk-moth carries a striking yellow pattern on its thorax resembling a death mask or skull. The names of other species like The Uncertain or The Suspected perhaps allude to the difficulty of their identification.

### Getting started

Anyone can start off by trying to identify some of the day-flying species they



Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet, an elegant day-flying moth. It is priority species in the Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan, at the northerly edge of its UK range.

encounter whilst out on a walk. The more obvious species to look out for include Chimney Sweeper, Silver Y, The Magpie and The Cinnabar. But you are likely to find more species flying at night, so if you have an outside light or leave a light on with the curtains open you will often see moths attracted to it. Common species might include Large Yellow Underwing, Common Carpet and July Highflyer. Many species of moth are

the trap can be examined, the moths (most of which are very quiet and still) identified and later released unharmed. Unlike butterflies, moths can be found on the wing throughout the year (even in the middle of winter) so a moth trapper can carry on identifying and recording a wide variety of species all year round.

### Your records are important!

Although the number of people with an interest in moths and moth recording is steadily growing, there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge and there are undoubtedly plenty of interesting discoveries to be made in Dumfries and Galloway. Recent years have seen the discovery of new colonies of Argent and Sable, a scarce day-flying moth, and the presence of the previously unrecorded Crescent Dart along many parts of the Galloway coastline.

So why not branch out and learn about a new species group? There are some excellent field guides now available and quite a few local experts who will help you to confirm your identification as you get started (a digital camera comes in really handy for sharing pictures of things you can't identify!). So get out there, get looking and get recording!

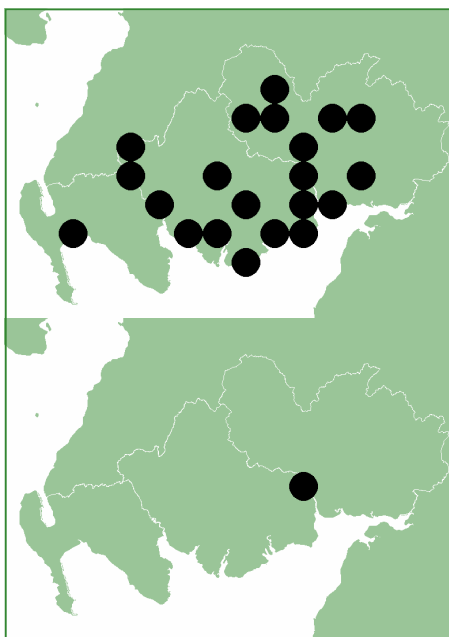


The Peach Blossom, named after the beautiful pink 'petals' on its wings



Lempke's Gold Spot, showing the metallic markings from which its name derives

attracted to scented flowers and a search of *Buddleia* by torchlight after dark will show that a 'butterfly bush' can equally be a 'moth bush'! Other garden plants worth examining include honeysuckle *Lonicera*, and later in the year Ivy *Hedera* – indeed any plant that gives off a strong scent in the evening. You can also create your own artificial attractants by putting out sugary solutions which attract moths to feed (see box). Light is a key attractant to most species of moth and if you really get the bug then it may be worth investing in a light trap. Light traps come in various designs and catch live moths without killing them. Attracted to the light, the moths enter the trap but due to the design they are unable to escape (in the same way as a crab or lobster pot). Instead they settle down to rest in the nooks and crevices of egg boxes placed inside the traps. Come daylight next day



Distribution maps showing records of the widespread Elephant Hawk-moth (top) and locally rare Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet (bottom)

### Find out more

Why not come to a moth trapping event – rangers and wardens at local nature reserves often hold moth trapping events where the trap is set at night and checked next day. See the Ranger Led Walks and Countryside Events 2006 booklet for details, or check out the events calendar on the BRIDGE newsgroup (see back page for details).

### Put up your own wine ropes.

You will need: Bottle of cheap red wine (for the moths, not for you!); 1Kg sugar; 1m lengths of thick cord or light rope made from absorbent material (strips of fabric or muslin can also be used)

Heat the wine and stir in and dissolve the sugar. Allow to cool and soak the lengths of rope. Drape the "wine ropes" over low branches, bushes or fences just before dusk and check for moths by torch-light for the first two hours of darkness.

### Sugaring

You will need: 454g Tin of Black Treacle; 1Kg Brown Sugar, (the darker the better); 500ml Brown Ale; Paint brush

Slowly heat the ale in a large pan and simmer for five minutes. Stir in and dissolve the sugar, followed by the treacle and then simmer for two minutes. Allow to cool before decanting into a container. A drop of rum (or even mashed up ripe banana) stirred in just before use is recommended by some but not essential. Paint the mixture at eye level onto 10-20 tree trunks or fence posts just before dusk and check for moths by torch-light for the first two hours of darkness.

### Recommended guides

*Field Guide to the Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Paul Waring

*The Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles* by Bernard Skinner



# Hare loss in the Southern Uplands

Recent research on Mountain Hares in southern Scotland suggests a decline in numbers across many parts of their range. The desktop study commissioned by Southern Upland Partnership and carried out by The Wildlife Partnership in 2005 examined the distribution and status of the Mountain Hare populations in the Southern Uplands. The report also aimed to establish the extent and viability of current populations, and set this in context with historical information.

The Mountain Hare, *Lepus timidus*, is a charismatic species predominantly inhabiting upland heather moors between 300m and 900m. It is a native of the highlands of Scotland and Ireland, but also occurs more outside these areas as a result of introductions in the 1800s and early 1900s. In Dumfries and Galloway, Mountain Hare is listed as a priority species in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, though there is relatively little knowledge of the species numbers and distribution throughout the region.

A large data gathering exercise was undertaken which generated a great deal of information from a wide range of sources covering past and present numbers and distribution. Much of the information was anecdotal or based on research in other parts of the species distribution. Although Mountain Hares still appear to be widespread throughout the Southern Upland area, populations appear to be at a lower level than in the past. Despite this apparent decline in

numbers, it appears that the overall distribution has remained relatively consistent over time.

The report also highlighted places where further study of numbers and distribution would be beneficial to prevent further declines in numbers or contraction of the species' range. In Dumfries and Galloway, the area around the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills was flagged up as a key place for further study.

A copy of the report can be obtained from the Southern Uplands Partnership, Studio 2, Lindean Mill, Galashiels TD1 3PE.

## Have you seen a hare?

If you see either a Brown Hare or Mountain Hare we want to know! Both Brown and Mountain Hares can be distinguished from Rabbits by their larger size, longer ears which have a distinctive black tip and eyes which often appear bulging. The key distinguishing features between Mountain and Brown Hares are:

- the tail (all white in Mountain, but black on top in Brown)
- the body colour (warmer brown in Brown, whilst greyer in Mountain and sometimes white in winter)
- ears (longer in Brown, about twice length of head, shorter in Mountain but still longer than a Rabbit)



Mountain Hare – note the all-white tail

The habitat may also help to give a clue, since Brown Hares (which are much more common in Dumfries and Galloway) tend to inhabit lower ground including farmland, whilst Mountain Hares live predominantly on upland heather moors – but remember, the two may overlap!

Don't forget to include the species name, where you saw it, date and your name with all your records, or better still fill out one of the Mammal recording forms available from the ERC.

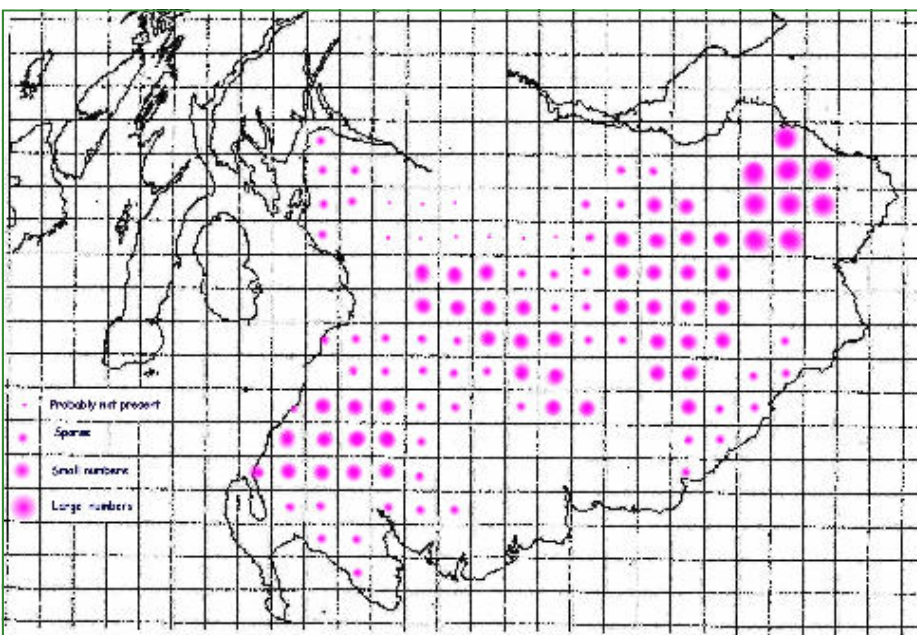
## Travels abroad

At the start of December, I was lucky enough to have the chance to attend a conference in Luxembourg City. 'Collating and Managing Natural Science, Field and Collection Records in Europe' was organised by a number of conservation and natural history organisations from across Europe.

Sustainable development and the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity have been central to all European environmental and economic policy since the signing of the Rio Convention in 1992. The theme of the conference was to introduce field biologists, earth scientists and museum curators across Europe to the software and standards used in the collation of biological and environmental data.

The conference included presentations on the development of 'Recorder'. Recorder is a computer database package designed to store biological records and is used by the ERC and many other Local Records Centres. The ERC will continue to keep abreast of technological advances when software such as Recorder is updated so that we can serve the users of the information we hold as efficiently as possible.

**Rebecca Johnson**  
DGERC Biodiversity Data Officer



Indicative status of Mountain Hares in the Southern Uplands

# Learning about bats . . .

Bats are enigmatic creatures that have been on earth for millions of years. All 17 species of British bats are 'microbats' (fruit bats are examples of 'megabats') and are insectivorous, feeding on night-flying moths, mosquitos, flies and midges. Only eight species of bat are found in Scotland.

Their small size and spectacular flying ability, combined with the fact that they are nocturnal and spend a large chunk of the year in hibernation, make bats difficult to study. This is further compounded by the way they move from roost to roost during the year - find them one week and they may have gone the next! To study them you need to enjoy working in the dark, often in awkward conditions, using strange equipment like nets, head torches and bat detectors.

If you want to visit a bat roost or hibernation site you also need a licence. This is because bats are very vulnerable, although many householders who reluctantly harbour a large bat colony in their roof may have problems understanding this! But the fact that bats live together in this way means that the whole colony can be destroyed with one thoughtless, or malicious, blow. Timber treatments, roof repairs, loft conversion or building renovation, not to mention



attempts to exclude them, are all examples.

Bat colonies are not only at risk in houses however; many species have evolved to use trees for all or part of their year. Some rear their young in holes in trees, some hibernate in them and others rest in them between their dusk and dawn foraging periods. Of course, trees can blow down or limbs break off naturally, or people may decide to fell them as a timber crop or because they are unsightly or in the wrong place. It is easy to picture the devastation to a nursery roost of bats when this happens.

As well as buildings and trees, bats use caves, mines and bridges. To study bats in these situations you often need special skills and equipment. Health and safety must always be considered when studying bats.

Because of their vulnerability, bats have special legal protection through both British law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and European law (EC Habitats Directive). It is not just the bats that are protected - it is illegal to damage or destroy any bat roost. Their foraging sites may be protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

This article can only provide a brief insight into these fascinating mammals. If you would like to find out more about their amazing biology, lifestyle and conservation, please get in touch with the Dumfries and Galloway Bat Group - a friendly, informal group of both conservation professionals and enthusiastic amateurs that surveys and monitors bats in this region. We do need more people to help us in our work.

**Freda Seddon**  
Dumfries and Galloway Bat Group

## Contact the Bat Group

Stuart Spray, Conservation Officer for Forestry Commission Scotland (Ae District)  
01387 247745

Freda Seddon, Secretary, Dumfries and Galloway Bat Group, 01387 811580 or email [fredamargaret@hotmail.com](mailto:fredamargaret@hotmail.com)

## Batty events

15<sup>th</sup> January 2006, Mabie  
The Bat Group is planning a Bat Day to encourage members of the public to find out more about bats. Starting at 1.30pm, at Mabie Forest Rangers' Office, we will show you how to build and repair timber bat boxes, demonstrate tree climbing and introduce you to bat ecology.

Saturday 5 August 2006, Gatehouse of Fleet  
Bat recording training course as part of the 'Mammal Guardians' project (see p2)

Look out for more news on batty events on the BRIDGE newsgroup

## First Wildlife Recording Conference is resounding success

Dumfries and Galloway's first Wildlife Recording Conference was hailed a great success by organisers and participants. Entitled 'Nightjars, Natterjacks and Noctules' the conference was an exploration of Dumfries and Galloway's nocturnal wildlife. Dalbeattie Town Hall provided an excellent venue for the 73 people who attended, and everyone left with greater knowledge and enthusiasm for recording than when they arrived.

We had four excellent speakers on the evening from a variety of backgrounds. Zoe Smolka from Scottish Natural Heritage started off the evening by talking about monitoring Natterjack Toads and Great-Crested Newts. Stuart Spray followed up by giving a presentation on Bats in

Dumfries and Galloway. After a short talk by Mark Pollitt on Glow Worms, Chris Rollie of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) finished the evening by telling us all about Nightjars, Dumfries and Galloway's most mysterious birds.

Local and national groups and organisations also brought along a great variety of displays. Conference attendees enjoyed browsing the displays and finding out how they could get involved in wildlife monitoring.

A key theme from each speaker's talk was how everyone could help and get involved. If you are interested in helping to monitor Glow

Worms, Natterjacks, Great-Crested Newts, bats or Nightjars, please contact the ERC on [info@dgerc.org.uk](mailto:info@dgerc.org.uk) and we can provide more information.



Following the success of our 2005 event and our Heritage Lottery Fund bid (see p1), we will be able to hold a larger and longer conference in 2006. It's a great opportunity for local people to meet with other recorders, both professional and amateur, and to share and learn about the important contribution that is being made to protecting and managing our local wildlife and habitats. See you there!



**Dumfries & Galloway  
Environmental Resources Centre**

Solway Heritage  
Campbell House  
The Crichton  
Bankend Road  
DUMFRIES  
DG1 4ZB  
t 01387 247543  
f 01387 247556  
e info@dgerc.org.uk

**Contacts:**

**Mark Pollitt**

Manager

**Rebecca Johnson**

Biodiversity Data Officer

[www.dgerc.org.uk](http://www.dgerc.org.uk)

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by Rebecca Johnson & Mark Pollitt.

*Dumfries & Galloway Environmental Resources Centre is a not-for-profit organisation which will further the appreciation, understanding and protection of the natural environment of Dumfries & Galloway by collecting, collating, managing and safeguarding relevant data and providing a focal point through which anyone may access this information.*

*The Centre welcomes any records of wildlife sightings from the region. To be of greatest use, each record should have the following information:*

- ♦ Date
- ♦ Place/location – including a 6-figure grid reference where possible
- ♦ Species – either common or scientific name
- ♦ Count – optional, but often very useful
- ♦ Observer/recorder – your name and contact details

*Records submitted to the Centre will be used for environmental decision-making, education, research and other public benefit uses.*

*More information about the services and information we can supply is available from the Centre staff.*

*The ERC is grateful to the following organisations who have contributed funding or in-kind support for the development of the Centre:*



## Sad loss of local wildlife experts

Sadly, 2005 will be remembered as the year in which Dumfries and Galloway saw the loss of a number of influential and knowledgeable local wildlife experts.

Derek Ratcliffe, nature conservationist and expert field naturalist, passed away in May. Derek was famed for his research on Peregrines which helped to reveal the devastating toll that organochlorine pesticides such as DDT and dieldrin were having on their population. In 1973 he became chief scientist for the Nature Conservancy Council, a position he held until his retirement in 1989. His research produced seminal works which are still today held in the highest esteem amongst fellow scientists and nature conservationists. Above all he had a love of wild places and a particular passion for Galloway, a place to which he returned regularly to revisit the bogs, moors and crags that had captivated him in his teens. Almost 60 years after his early exploratory visits, and only a few days before he died, Derek lodged with HarperCollins the manuscript for his New Naturalist Series book Galloway and the Borders, an eagerly anticipated publication.

Norman and Florence Hammond, a husband and wife team with a passion for the environment and wildlife recording, were tragically killed in a car accident in June. They were two of Dumfries and Galloway's longest serving biological recorders. Norman, 82, and Florence, 78, devoted much of their lives to learning about the wildlife and habitats of the Solway and its coastline. They undertook a huge amount of survey work, not just around their Aspatria home in Cumbria but throughout the whole of the Solway and the Irish Sea, travelling many thousands of miles in the process at their own expense. The topics of their studies ranged from lichens and tiny sea-shore molluscs to the Basking Sharks and turtles that patrol the open waters of the Solway



Norman Hammond – sea-watching off the Cumbrian coast

and the Irish Sea. In recent years Norman had acted as co-ordinator of the Solway Shark Watch and Sea Mammal Survey, gathering information from sightings and helping to understand the movements and ecology of some of the Solway's most interesting yet little studied species.

November saw the death of wildlife artist and ornithologist Donald Watson. Donald was a dedicated observer and recorder, as well as a wonderfully evocative painter, of birds. His work was loved and respected by artists and ornithologists alike, his art capturing birds in their landscapes in a way that reflected the expert knowledge he had of his subjects. Donald was a founder member of the Society of Wildlife Artists and became their first Honorary Member in 2002. Hen Harriers, an undoubted favourite of his, were the subject of many of his paintings and he authored the respected Poyser monograph of this species. He also illustrated many other books, including the landmark Peregrine book written by his great friend Derek Ratcliffe. The published books of his paintings illustrated Donald's ability as to paint with words as well as with a brush. His ornithological knowledge of Dumfries and Galloway was unsurpassed, having acted as county recorder for over 30 years. Thankfully, the legacy of his artworks will continue to adorn the walls of many a Galloway wildlife enthusiast.

### Newsgroup for wildlife recorders

If you have access to the internet and would like to keep up to date with developments at the ERC and with events relating to biological recording in the region, visit the homepage of our online recorder's forum. The group (Biological Recording In the Dumfries and Galloway rEgion – BRIDGE for short) has been established to enable wildlife recorders in Dumfries & Galloway to share their knowledge and interests and to act as a central point for information about events, surveys and activities taking place in the region. Anyone can join, and its free!. As a member you can post and receive messages to and from the group and access shared information on the group's web pages. The calendar of events is available to anyone including non-members. Please contact the ERC if you would like more information.

[www.smartgroups.com/groups/bridge](http://www.smartgroups.com/groups/bridge)