



nnw

NEWS

Issue 2, Winter 2007

Neighbourhood Nature Watch going strong...

The Neighbourhood Nature Watch project has really taken off over the past year. With aims to raise awareness of biodiversity in Dumfries and Galloway by involving local communities in wildlife recording, the project has had a fantastic response. The Adder, Swallow and House Martin surveys have been widely contributed to by members of the public - to date we have received over 1300 records! The survey section of the project has produced excellent results (see p2), but we would still like to know if you have seen the species in your area

In October 2006, the Neighbourhood Nature Watch conference, entitled 'Natural Neighbours' took place (see p3). This was a great opportunity for like-minded people to come together and discuss wildlife in the region. The conference covered a range of topics through talks and workshops and gave participants the chance to find out more about the biodiversity in their area.

There are still many exciting aspects of the project to come in 2007, giving local people the opportunity to improve their knowledge of biodiversity in the region. The Wildlife Monitoring Review will be published in the summer, letting people know what recording work had been taking place in 2006 for different species groups and what to look out for in 2007. A revamped website will also 'go live' in July, enabling people to find out which species are in their local area and find out more about wildlife recording.

To find out more information about the survey results, conference and what is still to come in 2007, take a look inside...



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Swallow perched on a wire



© Gemma Fairchild 2005

Close up of an Adder's head



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DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY



environmental resources centre

Adder Survey of Dumfries and Galloway

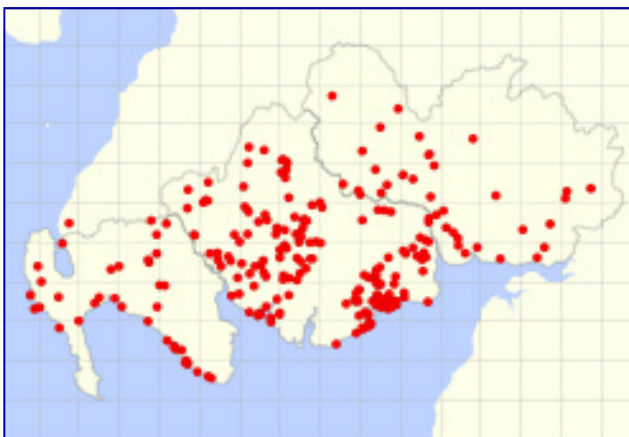
The winter has brought about the end of the 2006 adder season, with individuals beginning their long hibernation into springtime. To date, we have received over 400 records as part of the Neighbourhood Nature Watch Adder survey!!

As you can see from the distribution map, we now have a better idea of the areas where adders are present around Dumfries and Galloway. There have been a lot of records received from Kirkcudbrightshire, with hotspots at the Colvend Coast area around Kippford and inland at Dalbeattie, as well as a number of records from Port William in Wigtownshire.

The majority of records related to sightings of adders basking in the sun or disturbed whilst out walking. A number of people noted that they had seen adders regularly in the past, but not as much in recent years, one recorder commenting that they "used to get many Adders around Sandyhills 20 years

ago, very common...not seen any for about 5 years". However, others hinted that adders are doing well in some areas noting that "...just south of Port William, there have been as many as 35 sighted in a half mile stretch during last summer."

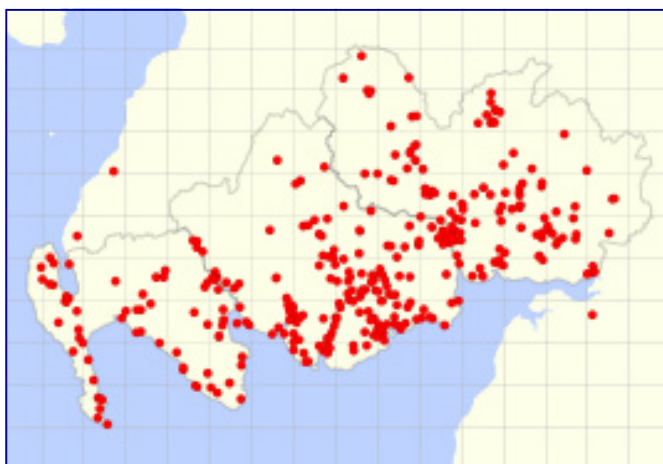
The survey has received a number of historical Adder records, with two records going back as far as 1873, giving an interesting insight into previous distribution and how the species was perceived in the past. These include, in the 1950s, an "Adder hunt arranged to try and reduce the number of adders around Clatteringshaws" in the years before the forest was planted, and childhood memories of an area around Langholm being called "Adder alley".



Map showing the distribution of Adders in Dumfries and Galloway

The information that has been gathered will be used in conservation planning for this Priority Species. A full survey report will be available in the first Wildlife Monitoring Review for Dumfries and Galloway, to be published in summer 2007.

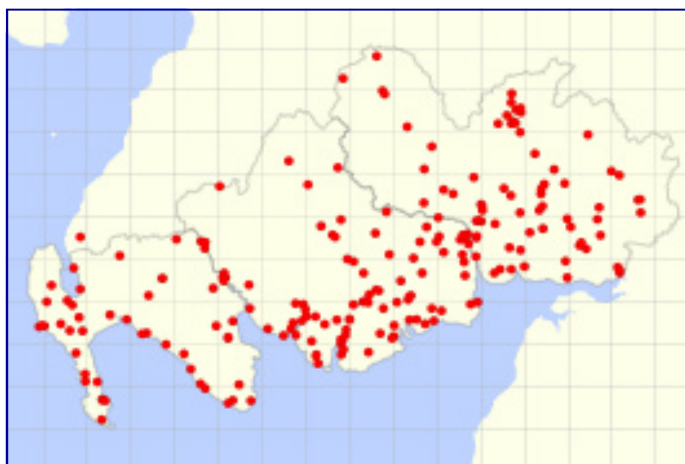
Swallow and House Martin Survey of Dumfries and Galloway



Map showing the distribution of Swallows in Dumfries and Galloway

The Swallow and House Martin season has long ended, with birds and new fledglings having migrated to Africa. We have had a fantastic response to the survey, receiving almost 900 records over the summer months of last year, as well as the participation of three schools.

As you can see from the distribution maps, we now know more about where these two species can be found in Dumfries and Galloway. Swallows have been recorded throughout the region, with 603 records



Map showing the distribution of House Martins in Dumfries and Galloway

being sent in, 225 of which were nesting records. The majority of participants commented that these birds were frequent visitors to their patches. Nests were noted in various places, such as the eaves of barns and houses, with one recorder finding a nest built partially through the crack of an open bedroom window!

The number of House Martin records that were received was also impressive, adding greatly to the records we hold. The species was also recorded region-wide, receiving 290

records, 119 of which reported the presence of nests. As with Swallows, recorders commented that House Martins have returned to nest over a number of years, the most being 30 years, with others recording that it is the first time they have nested in their area. In one case 40 nests were recorded at a building near the Colfin Creamery, outside Portpatrick.

A full survey report will be available in the first Wildlife Monitoring Review for Dumfries and Galloway, to be published in summer 2007.

Wildlife Recording Festival - 'Natural Neighbours'

Dumfries and Galloway's second annual Wildlife Recording Conference was hailed a great success by organisers and participants. Entitled 'Natural Neighbours', in association with the Neighbourhood Nature Watch project, the conference investigated the region's noisiest and more conspicuous wildlife, as well as some of its more elusive residents.

Held at Browne House on the Crichton Campus, this year's longer conference was well attended, with 100 attendees from around the region. In addition, 32 groups, organisations and projects brought displays, giving participants a great chance to see the range of recording opportunities available in our area.

There were some excellent presentations throughout the day, given on a range of topics on some known, and some less well known, species and habitats. Graeme Walker of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) gave a presentation on recording various species of

fungi and was followed by DGERC's Mark Pollitt and Rebecca Johnson who gave an update on the Neighbourhood Nature Watch survey results. The last slot before lunch was occupied by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's Professor Dave Goulson who gave an interesting presentation on declining bumblebee populations.

The afternoon started with workshops, Graeme Walker's fungi walk around the Crichton grounds proving very popular. Mark Pollitt led a workshop on how to support and



Attendees participating in the bumblebee workshop

Galloway Council, gave recorders an opportunity to get involved in the revision of the region's Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

The final session then resumed with Stuart Graham of SNH presenting an informative talk on restoring bog habitat at Kirkconnell Flow and a beautifully illustrated talk by Calum Duncan of the Marine Conservation Society on marine recording in the Solway – focusing on basking sharks and turtles – brought the day to a fitting close.

Feedback for the conference given by attendees was very good, with everyone gaining new ideas and direction for their recording activities. A key theme from the conference was the range of opportunities available in Dumfries and Galloway and how everyone could get involved. If you are interested in recording or getting involved in one of the many groups and organisations that attended the conference, please contact the ERC on info@dgerc.org.uk and we can provide more information.

Book your place at the FREE 'Natural Neighbours' Conference
Saturday 28th October 2006
The Crichton, Dumfries

Following on from the success of the first Wildlife Recording Conference in October 2005, a larger, full-day event associated with the Neighbourhood Nature Watch project will be held on **Saturday 28th October 2006 at The Crichton, Dumfries.**

The Conference will investigate Dumfries and Galloway's noisiest and most conspicuous wildlife and some of its more elusive residents.

As well as a series of presentations from a range of speakers, the Conference will have a number of displays by local organisations involved in wildlife and the environment. We will also feed back the results of this year's Alder Survey and Swallow and House Martin Survey of Dumfries and Galloway.

So if you are interested in wildlife recording and what's been going on around Dumfries and Galloway over the past year, or perhaps if you want to get involved but don't know where to start, come and meet with some like-minded people and see what's out there.

If you would like to attend this FREE Conference please contact Rebecca Johnson, Neighbourhood Nature Watch Project Officer on 01387 347343 or rebecca@dgerc.org.uk.

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promote local recording, whilst Dave Goulson and Jessie MacKay (regional moth recorder) gave a joint workshop on bumblebee and moth identification. 'Unlocking the Potential of Greenspaces' saw Nic Coombey of Solway Heritage involve participants in evaluating greenspace at the Crichton, whilst Peter Norman, Biodiversity Officer at Dumfries and



'Natural Neighbours' Conference

Other species you looked out for in 2006...

During the NNW surveys, we asked you to look out for three other species, the Slow Worm, Sand Martin and Swift. We also received a good number of records for these species, which will help us understand their population and distribution in Dumfries and Galloway.

We received:

28 Sand Martin records, which were well distributed throughout the region.

49 Swift records that centred around town and villages in the east of the region, as well as a scattering of records in Kirkcudbrightshire.

Finally, we received **66 Slow Worm** records, with concentrations around Auchencairn, Kippford, Gatehouse of Fleet and north of Newton Stewart.



One of the many displays provided by organisations on the day



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by Lisa Gibson.

Cover image behind NNW text: Adder

If you have seen an Adder, Swallow or House Martin, we still want your records...

You can see from previous pages that we have received a huge number of sightings from the NNW surveys, but we still need more information! Send your sightings in to Lisa Gibson, Project Officer (contact details can be found to the left of this page) .

Remember to include the following useful information:

- Your **name**
- **What** you saw
- **Where** you saw it
- **When** you saw it

Remember, historical sightings can be useful too - no record is too old!

Still to come in 2007...

The Neighbourhood Nature Watch project is far from over; there are some exciting developments still to come...

The development of the Neighbourhood Nature Watch (NNW) website is picking up speed, with the appointment of a web design company to take on the task. The website will make a vast quantity of information about Dumfries and Galloway's wildlife available to anyone online. As well as news and events relating to recording in Dumfries and Galloway, there will also be details on various projects that people can get involved in. The most exciting aspect will be its interactive features, most notably the Searchable Species Database, which will allow users to find out what species are in their local area by clicking on a map. Thousands of records will be available, including those collected from the Adder, Swallow and House Martin surveys. In addition, an online forum will also be available for people to discuss issues surrounding recording and any exciting finds. As before, there will be an online version of the recording form, letting people send in their records via the website.



Work on the Wildlife Recording Review for Dumfries and Galloway is also moving along. The process of contacting possible participants has been completed, with positive results. The review, produced as an A5 booklet, will contain a range of articles about the recording year for various species groups, results and information for various projects (including Neighbourhood Nature Watch), and advice on recording. In addition to the past year's recording, there will be information on three target species for people to look out for in 2007, including the Yellowhammer and the Brown Hare. The review will be available to everyone across the region allowing them to increase their knowledge of recording in Dumfries and Galloway.

Neighbourhood Nature Watch is grateful to the following organisations who have contributed funding and support to the project:



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Thank You!!!!

I would like to say a big thank you on behalf of Rebecca and myself to all the recorders that took part in the Adder, Swallow and House Martin surveys in 2006. Your records will help in the future conservation of these species and I hope that you enjoyed taking part in the project as much as we have.

I would also like to say thanks to the volunteers, Doug Brown, Kenneth Grubb and Ross Muir, who helped to input the data for the Neighbourhood Nature Watch surveys over the summer month. Your dedicated assistance has helped make the project a success.

Lisa Gibson, NNW Project Officer