

STICKING MY NOSE IN

Anne Gascoigne

"In July 1911 having been informed by some labourers who were mowing the hay that they frequently came across the nests of a savage yellow bee which they feared to disturb more than a wasp's nest, I asked them when they next found a nest to let me know. So great was the men's fear of getting stung that they did not dare approach near enough to show me the exact spots, and I found that as soon as I disturbed the nests the workers flew around my head in a most menacing manner; they also had the disagreeable trick of persisting in doing this, following me wherever I went for a minute or two."

Thus Frederick William Lambert Sladen describes his encounter with Moss Carder bees (*Bombus muscorum*) in his classic text The Humblebee published 1912.

Keen to continue my investigations into Common Carders (*B. pascuorum*) I had located an active site under some bushes in the front garden; somewhere I had never searched before. Equipped with laptop and boroscope camera I was set to probe inside the nest in a similar way to which I had in 2021. The usual reaction from incumbent bees was to raise and wave their forelegs at me - then to fly off and not return whilst I was present.

However, as soon as I gently touched this particular nest a volley of bees was discharged and yes, they targeted my head. I attempted to flail them away but one managed to get into my nose and to sting. I dropped the camera and fled across the lawn pursued by bees right into the relative safety of my porch. My nose felt hard and hot, with pain extending up towards my cheek and eye. This continued for about 15 minutes before subsiding to leave the side of my face white and tight-feeling for the next couple of hours.

On returning to retrieve my gadgets there were bees still circling and when I reviewed the film footage I had recorded some very angry bees - and a lot of swearing. Closer inspection of still frames confirmed their darker, richer colour and coupled with the particular location of this nest (away from others and the first time I have found one under this hedge) I believe I had disturbed my first Moss Carder nest. And I fully endorse the sentiments expressed by Sladen 110 years ago...

Orkney Field Club

Founded in 1959
Aim: To encourage the study and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the County.



Orkney Field Club is a Registered Scottish Charity and SCIO No. SCO12459

Newsletter September 2022

The Club hopes to hold a full programme of events over the autumn/winter and to deliver our talks in a 'blended' fashion (ie giving members the choice of either enjoying meeting in-person, as in pre-pandemic times, or joining in via Zoom from your own home); we feel this ensures inclusivity for all our members. Apart from events listed in this newsletter, there may be more arranged at short notice, so please keep an eye out for emails and on our Facebook page. **Unless otherwise stated talks will be at the St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall and will start at 7.30pm**

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (Further details of all these and other events will be circulated by email to all members).

- **Friday, 23rd September - Recording All Species or 'Pan-listing' - a talk in-person and via Zoom)**

Alastair Forsyth describes the challenges - and fun - in finding, identifying and recording all the living things he encounters. Pan-species listing is a way of increasing one's knowledge and appreciation of the sheer diversity and beauty in our complex natural world.

- **Saturday, 1st October - A Berriedale Trip**

An early autumn visit to Orkney's very special native woodland which lies amongst the Hoy hills. We will take the 9.30am boat from Stromness to Moaness, minibus through to Rackwick, walk in along the valley path and then off to explore this fascinating woodland, its trees, fungi, groundflora, birds, lichens and insects, before walking back to Moaness for the 4.30, or 6.30pm boat. Some rough walking and burn crossings will be involved. Numbers limited due to minibus, so booking essential with Jenny-jenny@jtlarch.co.uk, from whom further details can be obtained.

- **October Saturday Bird Walks**, either 1st and 15th, or 8th and 22nd
Mike Gee will share his knowledge and enthusiasm on two bird walks. Details and venues to be confirmed nearer the time.
- **Friday, 21st October - AGM and film (in-person and via Zoom)**
Our annual AGM (would you like to join our committee or volunteer to help with any tasks?), followed by a film. Details to be confirmed.
- **October Moss Identification Workshop**
John Crossley will run an outdoor and indoor mosses identification workshop. Date and venue to be agreed - watch out for further details nearer the time.
- **Friday, 18th November - Can you spot the Beluga? (a talk in-person and via Zoom)**
Local marine mammal expert Ashleigh Kitchener will take us on a wee jaunt across the oceans with all the marine mammal species she's been so fortunate to see during her travels. They'll be familiar species like the harbour porpoise and others not known in the UK. Do your best to spot species, including the beluga!
- **Early January 2023 - Our usual New Year's Walk** - details to be confirmed.

Events by other organisations that may be of interest to members

Monday, 26th September - our Vice-Chair, Mike Gee will host an RSPB birdwatching session at the Loons bird-hide between 10am and 1pm. Everyone is welcome.

Some brief reminders -

- Please remember to submit your natural history records for the year as soon as possible to the relevant recorders. You can find their contact details in your bulletin or on the OFC website.
- If you are considering submitting an article for inclusion in our annual bulletin 'The Orkney Naturalist', the deadline for submission is the end of February 2022. Please feel free to contact the editorial group to discuss any possible submission.

Primula scotica flowering - once, twice, three times? Jenny Taylor

This is the third year that I've continued to monitor fixed quadrats among the *Primula scotica* colonies near Eastalet, West Mainland. So far I've established that some plants flower in either spring or summer, some in both seasons and some twice in summer. However, none of these behaviours appear, so far, to be necessarily a fixed habit for any individual plant. In spring this year I set up a further quadrat, since my randomly selected plots seemed to have been under-representative of the level of spring flowering within the general area. So this plot was chosen at a time when some of the rosettes showed early signs of being in spring flower bud. There are twelve rosettes within the plot, four of which flowered in spring; the same four plants then also flowered in summer alongside six others. Meantime the only two spring flowerers in the other quadrats also flowered again in the summer. In addition one plant in the new plot has flowered three times; it flowered firstly in May with five flowers on a 5cm high scape, secondly in July again with five flowers on a 5cm high scape and finally in September with just one flower on a very short scape. Perhaps it is the case that plants that flower in spring have a relatively high likelihood of flowering in summer too? More work to do yet

During August, moth caterpillars were very much to the fore during OFC walks. Here are a small selection of some of the more colourful ones, from left to right: Grey Dagger; Ling Pug; and Knot Grass. (Pics from Graeme Walker)

