

FROG AND TOAD SPAWN

FROG SPAWN: The Amphibian and Reptile Recorder, Keith Fairclough would very much like to know the date you first noticed Frog Spawn in your garden ponds (or elsewhere). A 6-figure map reference would be very helpful and a name of the property. Any other information would also be of interest, for example, first croaking dates; approx. number of frogs in the pond, the maximum number of 'balls' of spawn, and any other behavioural aspects. Some folk find jelly away from the pond, perhaps illustrating that an otter may have grabbed female frogs on their way to the pond. Yes, this does happen in Orkney. It's not common but it is not too unusual either.



Frog spawn in Keith's pond

As many of you will know, TOADS lay their eggs in long chains rather than as blobs of jelly. So please check your ponds for toad spawn, which can sometimes be quite deep, not always near the surface as is the case for frogs. Please email me at keith.fairclough62@btinternet.com Thank You.



OFC members who visited Hoy in glorious sunshine on 30th March were treated to fine views of Mountain Hares in various stages of moult - some still completely white, with others starting to change into summer grey-brown, often starting on their faces. Chris Vasey, in an article in the 2006 OFC bulletin, wrote that this date was about the mid point of their moult, but that some hares may be partially white until the beginning of June.

PS Just a gentle reminder that OFC membership subscriptions are now overdue - please renew asap to ensure you receive this year's copy of the 'Orkney Naturalist' a bit later in the year.

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 April 2024

After what has seemed like a relentlessly windy, rainy, cold and dull winter, we are hopefully heading towards better weather and lots of opportunities to get out and about and enjoy Orkney's flora and fauna. We look forward to seeing you at some of our events. More may be added spontaneously and we'll email you reminders of all events nearer the time. If you want any further information, please feel free to email the named contact or the Secretary at ofcsecretary20@gmail.com.

SOME DATES FOR YOUR 2024 DIARY

NB Please remember that field trips may be cancelled or dates changed depending on weather forecasts, so please keep an eye out for OFC emails with updates.

- **Sunday, 7th April at 2pm - Bag the Bruck** - Join us for our annual beach clean at Orphir Bay. Bags and gloves will be provided, but please bring your own gloves if you can. Wear walking boots/wellies and warm, waterproof clothing. Bring a drink/snack and hand sanitiser if you have it. Please park in the large car park beside the Orkneyinga Saga Centre, Orphir (Grid Ref HY333044). Access to the beach is via the path through the cemetery. Come along for just a short period, or stay for the whole afternoon - any help at all will be very much appreciated. Keep an eye on emails in case this is rescheduled to the following weekend due to weather conditions.
- **Friday, April 19th - An update on the North Isles Landscape Partnership Scheme (talk) 7.30pm at St Magnus Centre** - Alexandra Wright and Tom Wells will give us an update about the natural history projects - habitat improvement and wildflowers - being undertaken through this project.

- **Wednesday, April 24th - An Introduction to Palaeoenvironmental Research on Orkney by the Archaeology Institute UHI (talk followed by lab session) 6.30pm at Orkney College** - Dr Scott Timpany will describe research being undertaken across Orkney and discuss the methods used in identifying pollen, waterlogged and charred plants remains, wood and charcoal analyses that are used to reconstruct environmental change, The talk will be followed by a lab session where you can have hands-on experience of these methods. Hopefully, the event will generate some interesting discussions around the projects, make new connections and potentially lead to new research collaborations. **Please note different venue and start time.**
- **May (date to be agreed) - Removal of invasive *Alchemilla mollis* (Lady's Mantle) from the Keelylang track.** Some practical conservation work to help remove this non-native, highly invasive plant from the attractive, species-rich verges. There will be suitable roles for everyone - full details to follow nearer the time. Contact Jenny - jenny@jtlarch.co.uk for further information.
- **Thursday 16th May - OFC Nature Festival Event - Orphir Bay Circular Walk 2pm - 5pm** Join the Orkney Field Club for a circular walk which includes a variety of habitats; farmland, coastal and woodland. We will see a range of wildlife including birds, flowers, trees and insects. Walk length 2-3 miles along paths and quiet roads. Please wear walking boots or wellies, bring warm waterproof clothing, and perhaps a drink and a snack. Meet at the large car park beside the Orkneyinga Saga Centre, Orphir at 2pm. This is a free event but advance booking is required, contact Graeme- azurehawker@aol.com.

(NB For the whole Orkney Nature Festival programme see - <https://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ORKNEYNATUREFESTIVAL/index.asp>)

- **Monday, June 10th and Wednesday, 12th June (both evenings) - Finstown wildflower meadow.** Early evening walks in a sheep grazed, hilly meadow with abundant wildflowers. Meet at Firth Community Hall car-park at 6pm. Steep hill and gate to climb. No need to book. Contact physiopenny@hotmail.co.uk for further information.

- **15th June - A Bioblitz (venue to be confirmed)** - Join us to seek out and record all the flora and fauna we can find in a set area. This event is suitable for families and any level of skills - experts will be there to help us all and previous ones have been very enjoyable.
- **Wednesday, 19th June** - an evening walk along some Birsay peat tracks. Orkney's bog habitats are home to a huge variety of plants, including some with carnivorous behaviours; relying on insects to supplement the nutrients which are otherwise in short supply. A short, but possibly swampy, walk will aim to identify two key carnivorous species which grow here: sundews and butterworts, and showcase their glorious habitat. Meet at 6pm at the layby overlooking the turbines on Hillside Road.
- **13th July - Exploring Faraclett Head, Rousay** looking at plants, birds etc in this beautiful area. Details to be confirmed and booking essential with John at flawsjohn@gmail.com
- **Sunday 28th July - Flotta**, looking for Six-spot Burnet moths, damselflies and plants at Stanger Head ... and maybe spot some puffins and cetaceans too. Details of boat times etc to follow nearer the time.
- **early August** - a dragonfly walk with Graeme Walker - details of times and venue to be confirmed.
- **17th August - Looking at Lichens** with Roger Davies. Details of times and venue to be confirmed.
- **September** - 'Fungi in Finstown' concentrating on grassland species event. Exact date and venue to be confirmed.
- **September/ October** - a Cetacean watch at Hoxa Head with Steve Sankey. Details to be confirmed.

For more news from Orkney Field Club see our Facebook page at (https://www.facebook.com/OrkneyFieldClub/?locale=en_GB) and our website at (<https://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/fieldclub/index.asp>)