



PAISLEY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Newsletter May 2002

May Meeting

The final indoor meeting of the session will take place in the Museum at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 2nd May. The first part of the evening will be given over to the society's Annual General Meeting (see below). Following the AGM, Richard Sutcliffe will give a talk on 'Scottish Butterflies'. Richard is Curator of Natural History at Glasgow Museum and Art Galleries, and a leading campaigner for butterfly conservation. His talk should provide an ideal introduction or refresher course for a summer of butterfly spotting.

Summer Outings

A card is enclosed with the society's programme of summer outings. In a new departure, we have arranged to join Glasgow Natural History Society on some of their outings. We need to inform GNHS in advance of the numbers planning to join them, so please contact David Mellor if you wish to come on any of these joint outings.

Renfrewshire RSPB Members' Group

There are still a few seats left on the coach to Leighton Moss on Sunday 12th May. The bus will leave Central Way, Paisley at 8 a.m. Contact Ewan Douglas to book a place.

Biodiversity Events

Renfrewshire Council will be running a series of biodiversity awareness-raising events this summer: Friday 21st June has been designated Biodiversity Day, and 31st August – 8th September will be Biodiversity Week. Look out for posters and leaflets detailing events. Anyone willing to contribute to the Local Biodiversity Action Plan should contact Frank Maccallaich, the recently appointed Local Biodiversity Officer, at the Council's Planning Department.

Future of the Society

The Society has had a very difficult year on several counts. Our membership is declining, and now stands at just 50. This might not seem too unhealthy, but the attendance at the indoor meetings has averaged well under twenty, despite circulation of details to our members and to the press. Only four of the nine committee members have managed to contribute to the running of the Society in the past year. We have also had problems with the provision of facilities for our meetings at the Museum, and these have been aggravated by the continuing failure to fill the post of Curator of Natural History, which has now been vacant for nearly three years. A further series of interviews in April failed to lead to an appointment.

I do not intend to stand again as Chair of the Society at the AGM, and none of the other three active committee members is willing to stand for this position. At the last two indoor meetings, I have appealed for volunteers to serve on the new committee, but no one has come forward. So it looks as though there is no longer sufficient interest to sustain the Society in its present form. If this is the case, it is better to acknowledge the fact and take appropriate action rather than continue fighting a losing battle. One option is to dissolve the Society. Another is to redefine its purpose and direction to let it concentrate on field-based activities such as outings and recording, rather than the present programme of indoor meetings. This would possibly lead to a slimmed-down organisation, but probably a healthier one.

We will debate the future of the Society at the AGM, although time for discussion will be limited by the need to leave sufficient time for our speaker. The committee therefore proposes that, unless the matter is resolved in the time available at the AGM, an Extraordinary General Meeting is held in September for this purpose. This will allow us to complete the summer programme and will give us more time to think about the issues.

Bill Gray
Chair.