

TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

NEWSLETTER No. 24

JANUARY 2011

Welcome to the winter edition of the Reserve Newsletter. 2010 left us with snow and ice and the coldest December on record in Scotland and nothing much has changed in January. The effect on wildlife has been devastating as they all scramble for food. One bonus for us is the wonderful tracks left by the animals and below is a favourite of mine.

As we head into 2011 things will get tough for all of us as we head into uncertain times but one thing is for certain, the wildlife and the habitats on the Reserve will still be there for all our enjoyment.

We leave behind the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 but really life goes on and we can all celebrate biodiversity every day in our lives and out in the countryside.

It's business as usual on the Reserve and with new species observed it's a packed Newsletter. The focus will be on volunteers and inside you can read all about this wonderful band of dedicated people who provide as with their time, records and much appreciated by us. Read on inside.

What's coming up very soon? Will you be able to spot the new features on the Reserve? Read on inside.



Roe deer & badger tracks and the soils shaken from the badger's coat.

A NEW RESERVE PLAN – YOUR HELP IS NEEDED !!!

In the next few months we will be writing a new Reserve Management Plan for the next six years we hope to involve everyone who has an interest in the Reserve and we will be looking for your views. [Look in the local press for more information on this over the next few months.](#)

GREENING SCOTLAND

The Scottish Government is working towards a Greener Scotland by improving the natural and built environment and protecting it for present and future generations. Action is being taken to reduce the local and global environmental impact through tackling climate change, moving towards a zero-waste Scotland.

As part of our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint I would ask those who can, to request an electronic copy of the Newsletter. The editions will be reduced in size, saving paper, photocopier use, postage, etc. Please email me if you can. In this edition to make space for the volunteers contributions the news items will be snippet form.

TENTSMUIR NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

NEW TIME LINE TRAIL

It has been an ambition of mine for ten or so years to develop a Time Line trail taking you through some of the wonderful history of the site, from 9000 years ago to the present day. Soon visitors will be able to walk from Morton, along to Tayport Heath on to Tentsmuir Point and hopefully spy the wonderful sculptures and interpretation panels and learn even more about this remarkable place. Our interpretive consultants StudioArc and Rob Robinson along with ourselves are working on this project and the works from various sculptors and manufacturers will be in place from April.

TENTSMUIR POINT

THE DYNAMIC COASTLINE

The erosion and sand movement on the Reserve continues to amaze and stun. Sand from the blow outs near the WWII command post (green building) has reached some 100 metres in land and I wonder what implications this will have on the butterfly transect. The stormy winter seas eroded 5 metres of dune edge in places and now very high tides can reach into the slacks at the southern end.

To the south, adjacent to Reres Wood, the foreshore erosion has been unbelievable - it has to be seen to be believed. WWII and old salmon netting posts have been uncovered and some stand over 2 metres above the foreshore.

MANAGEMENT

The Limousine cattle at both sites were taken back to Scotsraig Farm and were in excellent condition. According to owner Mr Robert Lamont they were pristine clean but that didn't last when they got back to the farm where they were able to roll and lie in the dirt! The grazing management continues to be of great value to ourselves and to Robert.

The new wind generator and solar pump system has endured some of the winter's harsh conditions due mainly to the Cleek Burn icing up. Hopefully the thaw will assist in allowing the Great Slack to flood a little.

The annual maintenance of the sea fences is desperately required as the south sea fence has almost disappeared, battered to pieces during the recent storms and high tides. Bob Ritchie and his team will come in during March to replace the fencing and maintain the north sea fence.

Many other management tasks were undertaken including fence maintenance and hand pulling the many pine seedlings that try and grow in the heath and dunes. The crow and grey squirrel controls will start in early Spring to continue this successful management task.

COMMUNITY INTRODUCTIONS

We had a great day out June raising awareness about outdoor activities on the Reserve to the Asian community from Dundee. On a sunny day 33 women and children who use the International Women's Centre in Dundee had a fantastic day out at Tentsmuir Point. We showed them what we do and the children and some adults enjoyed some of the activities from the Education Pack. It was very humbling and enjoyable experience and enjoyed by all the group, Eve explains more in her article. The picnic or rather the feast was an incredible and what a way to enjoy delicious food.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Schools returned in bigger numbers last year and continue to use Tentsmuir Point. In particular High schools and some students select sand dune succession as their main study and visited regularly over the summer months. Elmwood & Perth Colleges continue to use the site as an excellent location to study conservation management and already we have a nursery, several primary and high schools booked in at the start of Spring.

Remember anyone can look at the second edition of the Education Pack on line and use any of the interesting activities.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

New species for the Reserve continue to be discovered, they include Pomarine skua which was observed by bird expert Stuart MacDonald in September and butterfly and moth expert Duncan Davidson observed a Northern Arches moth in July. This was the only the third time ever and the first in Fife for 15 years. Daphne's butterfly report will give you an enjoyable wildlife insight.

MORTON LOCHS

MANAGEMENT

We discovered the west loch spillway once again had been undermined and the extensive bank erosion reduced our ability to control the loch water levels. Due to the light sandy soil structure we enlisted our colleague hydrologist Andrew McBride who suggested we strengthen the outflow banks by growing and weaving a willow fence type structure. This green engineering project was started and Alex and the volunteer teams have been busy cutting suitable lengths of willow and weaving them on to the banks. We will continue this project in Spring. Meanwhile a temporary dam was constructed to control the water level.

Hand pulling target species mainly ragwort continued on Garpit Moor, and the third heather plot was successfully sown. The young heather plants and seed took off better than expected and this was due to the reduced mixture ratios. This former forest plantation is now well on the way to becoming a heath once more.

Apologies for the poor state of the Morton access road which suffered from the wet and hard packed ice cover over winter. Hopefully the Forestry Commission will regrade the track surface sometime in the Spring.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

The lochs have been frozen solid for months now and the bird sightings have been very low. A number of teal have used the ditches and west loch and heron still pick around the margins. A hobby was observed several times in September and Paul & Ruth Blackburn watched a hobby feed on dragonflies and damselflies from the bird hides.

Rob & Andrew Ford were fortunate to watch a fox walk over the ice and inspect the islands for food. Kingfishers have been observed on many occasions and otter have been less timid and have been watched by many visitors.

The Edinburgh Naturalists Society had a fantastic visit one Saturday morning and Wilma Harper and Joanne Naughton kindly provided this report:

Visit to Morton Lochs & Tentsmuir Point - 25.09.10

Originally planned to take place at The Hermitage, Dunkeld, we relocated here because of a car rally. Well done to Wilma for rearranging it at such short notice, notifying everyone and finding such an excellent venue.

The morning started well with a northerly wind, dry and some sunshine. Whilst watching pink-footed geese overhead, and long-tailed tit and goldcrest in the trees, I heard a noise above, could have been a tree creaking in the breeze. Then I saw some twigs falling and called to the others to stop. My calling must have disturbed them - two red squirrels. A good start.

We set off along the old railway line towards the first hide. En route, and in no particular order, the following were seen/heard: buzzard, swallows, wren, grass of parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), a couple of dead pigmy shrews, field scabious, watermint (*Mentha aquatica*), male red darters sitting sunning themselves on the fencing at the hide, and a few bumblebees (not identified) and hover flies.

We retraced our steps, passing the main loch and on towards the links and dunes. Walking through the forest we passed Japanese larch, Corsican (*Pinus nigra*) and Scots (*Pinus sylvestris*) pine. Both the latter had been attacked by red band needle blight, a fungal disease which attacks the needles leaving them sparse and red-banded. It was thought that Scots pine was resistant, only attacking Corsican pine, but this was evident not to be the case. The disease appeared in the late 90s and has gradually spread northwards. Along the forest trail we saw treecreeper, a pair of goldcrests and a dabchick was heard from the nearby loch.

Because of the dry autumn there wasn't much fungi but worth a mention were: ***Pluteus cervinus* with a rich brown cap and pink gills which feeds on dead wood; *Inocybe geophylla* a white agaric with an umbonate cap with a distinctive mealy smell; and a colour variety of the same species *var. lilacina* with a purple cap and the same smell; *Laccaria laccata* (the Deceiver) chestnut in colour with broadly spaced gills. Out on the sandy links were found lots of Parasol fungi *Lepiota procera*, excellent eating. Late in the afternoon on the coastal heath we also found Chanterelles *Cantherellus cibarius*, a strange habitat, with none of the usual beech or birch.**

We moved out onto open, the dunes having formed 4,000 years ago and the oldest part of the Tentsmuir system. We walked along a drainage ditch, where we found the following: puff balls (*Lycoperdon nigresens* or *foetidum*) and sulphur tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*). **At least 80 common darters were seen mostly males, but some were paired, adopting 'the Wheel' (copulation) prior to flying in tandem to lay eggs - the males hovered over the water surface dunking the female repeatedly. There were a few black darters and at least two common hawkers. A few frogs were present, several small coppers and a sexton beetle, *Nicrophorus investigator*. On the banks was found a stand of a declining species hare's foot trefoil *Trifolium arvense* then in fruit. In the ditch purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* was found amongst the reedmace *Typha latifolia* and flags *Iris pseudocorus*, and sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica*. Overhead buzzards were circling and mewing.**

All this before lunch! We had lunch in the main hide, and what a joy whilst munching our sandwiches - an otter right in front of the hide having his lunch too - a large eel, one kingfisher zipping past and later at the other hide another perched on a branch, five greenshanks which flew in after the otter disturbance, approx 50 teal, several dabchicks, redshank, coot, moorhen, and greylag geese.

To end the day, we drove round to Lundin Bridge to explore the Tentsmuir Heath. Walking along the road, there was a lovely flock of peewits, about 50 of them, in a ploughed field. The tree line here was planted in 1937 then more trees planted behind the originals in the 60s. Looking out over the Tay, we saw around 50 wigeon, approx 1,500 eider (predominantly male), a roost of cormorants, and miscellaneous gulls on the water. Finally, by the cars - pied wagtail, skylarks, a wee flock of linnets, and few goldcrests, on the grass just by the cars.

VOLUNTEERS

The volunteers at Tentsmuir NNR as you well know by now are a superb group of people, without them we couldn't possibly carry out the entire species recording, management tasks and many other projects. Several of the volunteers have had some successes: Iain Jamieson was successful in gaining the seasonal Recreational Officer post at Loch Leven NNR which was well merited. Eve Schulte has been Elmwood College student of the year in HNC Conservation Management and recently been nominated for the prestigious "Scottish Land-Based & Aquaculture Learner of the Year Award 2010". Eve kindly wrote the following article which outlined just a few of the great things she has carried out on the NNR and Forest:

Having volunteered at Tentsmuir NNR alongside my HNC in Countryside Management and Conservation for just over a year now it was great to be able to spend more time in and around the Reserve during the summer as part of my work placement.

Just before the school broke off for the holidays, we were kept busy with a number of visits from local primary schools. The teachers had chosen activities from the education pack beforehand and the children enthusiastically participated in scavenger hunts, looking for bugs, beasties and signs of larger animals throughout the reserve. Being picked as the – if not youngest, then fittest member of the team, it was my job to teach the kids a little bit about how dunes are created by playing the sand grain game with them. This involved a lot of shouting and running up and down the beach, pretending to be sand grains at the mercy of wind and water (great fun but totally exhausting).

The Reserve open day in July was a big success with kids and adults alike enjoying activities such as bug hunts, making animal masks and nature bookmarks as well as playing "Butterfly Transformers" and in the process learning about the lifecycle of the butterfly. To finish off, the puppet lab from Edinburgh kept us all spellbound with their fun and educational stories.

Another highlight was the visit of the Asian Women's Network– and not just for the lovely home-made picnic food and friendly conversation they freely shared with the staff members at the end of the visit. The event was designed to introduce women from ethnic minority groups in the Dundee area to the pleasures of the open spaces that can be found right on their doorstep. We had 32 ladies from teenagers to grandmothers plus a number of toddlers who had an amazing time and quite against the normal rules of such visits spend most of their time splashing around in the sea, fully clothed – obviously, to preserve their modesty. The grey seals came swimming in closer and closer for a good look, which in turn lead more squeals of excitement from the women and children. The visit was so successful that it has led to further private visits during the summer.

If it sounds as if we spend the summer mainly partying and having a good time with visitors, that's not quite true. We also continued with our species monitoring programmes, such as the butterfly transect counts, regularly checked the cattle, doing such a sterling job in grass and weed control on the Reserve and generally provided a presence around the Reserve to keep unwanted behaviour from some irresponsible visitors at bay.



For the autumn we have an exiting new project on the go that will see us create living willow hurdles to protect the banks of the outflow from Morton Lochs from erosion. We have already made a start with the help of some volunteers and the enthusiastic participation of a group of 2nd year pupils from Auchmuty High School in Glenrothes.

The idea is that the willow stakes will take root and very soon provide the weaving materials to maintain the hurdles. This way we will create a completely natural and sustainable way of erosion protection. We'll keep you updated on the progress.

Daphne MacFarlane Smith who is part of the butterfly monitoring team and an expert in many areas of wildlife, kindly provided this wonderful insight to the world of butterflies and other observations:

TENTSMUIR SOUTH TRANSECT 2004 – 2010

For those unfamiliar with it, Tentsmuir lies at the north east corner of Fife and the transect, on which Gillian Fyfe and I have been recording butterflies since 2004, is one of three with ours being to the south towards Kinshaldy. It is an area of duneland from which 95% of trees/scrub have been removed and is bordered to the west by pine forest and to the east by the North Sea. Much of it is fairly flat and covered with heather (3 species), creeping willow (*Salix repens*) and grasses, including marram and sea lyme grass towards the sea, but some parts are undulating and there are some moist hollows plus areas of deciduous trees and shrubs, including willow and alder, so there is some variation of habitat. It is crossed by a narrow ditch which rarely is full of water but does remain damp.

Following a change to our transect route in 2006, forced upon us by winter storms eroding about 25m of coastline (including dunes, alder trees and the small wooden bridge we used to cross the ditch!), erosion has continued but each March, so far, we have decided we could continue with the 2006 route. However, up to 60% of two of the seven sections, which make up the transect, have at times been smothered by sand and flotsam, carried in by strong winds and high tides. Though it has been quite shocking at times to see that dunes, three metres high, have vanished and mature alder trees fallen, it has also been interesting to observe the resilience of some plant species. Whenever there is a period of comparative stability, marram and sea lyme grass, sand sedge, orache and prickly saltwort (*Salsola kali*) reappear through the sand so it does not remain bare for long.

Hoping to do a transect certainly makes one very aware of the weather! To make transect records comparable with other places, certain conditions have to be met, for instance the temperature should be at least 18C or, if below, there must be at least 60% overall sunshine and the wind should be less than Force 6 on the Beaufort scale, when large branches move and trees sway. Some days in Broughty Ferry, across the River Tay from Tentsmuir, conditions have appeared perfect with warm sunshine and a westerly wind (from which the transect is sheltered by the pine forest) so I have headed off with high hopes of a good result only to find that at the transect it is cloudy with a cold onshore wind! One particular day there was a band of cloud across the sun but blue sky to the north and a northerly wind so I thought the sun would soon appear as I walked round but somehow it never did. After I'd finished the transect, I stood and watched the cloud and realised that as fast as the cloud was being blown southwards new wisps of cloud were forming in the blue sky behind so the 'back edge' of the cloud never moved! Most frustrating!

At first glance, in terms of overall numbers of butterflies counted, 2009 appears to be the best year since we started in 2004 (see Table 1), with a total of 1145 but that result was skewed by the influx of 352 Painted Ladies (the previous maximum being just 4, in 2007) so, discounting them, the highest total was in 2006 with 1009. The total this year (694) was disappointing as it was less than any other year apart from 2004 (350). Strangely for two species – Peacock and Common Blue – 2009 saw the highest ever totals (71 and 89 respectively) but 2010 the lowest for Peacock (21) and second lowest for Common Blue (22).

Also noticeable has been the reduction in numbers of Ringlets from a high of 137 in 2005 to just 40 in 2010 and, since 2006, of Meadow Browns from 152 to 30 and Small Heath from 200 to 75. It is unclear what factors have caused this decline but heavy rain showers during their flight period and loss of grassy areas (due to erosion and sand coverage) cannot have helped.

Table 1 ANNUAL INDEX FIGURES BY YEAR

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Large White	1	1	1				
Small White	1	1	9	1	3	5	13
Green Veined White	11	22	58	27#	30	41#	27#
Orange Tip	5	18	14	14#	6	11	13
Green Hairstreak		10	9	3	1	2	2
Small Copper	113	271	213	197	211	219	293#
Common Blue	13	85	55	28	54	89	22
Red Admiral						1	
Painted Lady	3		1	4		352	
Small Tortoiseshell	1	1	1	3#			2
Peacock	52	58	44	38	38#	71	22
Comma					1		1
SPB Fritillary				15#	19	2#	
Dark Green Fritillary	18	39	78	54#	42	40#	22
Grayling	83	80	83	35#	69	146	134
Meadow Brown	25	108	152	61#	65	50	30
Small Heath	28	90	200	146#	147	52	75
Ringlet	39	137	91	104#	130	64#	40
Total	350	929	1009	726#	816#	1145# (793)	694#

Total in brackets for 2009 is the total without Painted Lady, for comparison.

Best years for selected species shown in bold type. #Totals that were not whole numbers (averaged counts for weeks missed due to poor weather) have been rounded up and overall totals therefore amended.

We are always keen to get back to the transect to start recording in April and every year there have been one or two Peacocks in the first couple of weeks then a few in May before a gap until the end of July/beginning of August. The number of Peacocks then rises to a peak in the second half of the month before tailing away to the end of September. In April it is lovely to hear skylarks singing and to appreciate the golden colour of moss and grey of Cladonia lichens then by mid-April there is a definite 'buzz' about the place as bumblebees forage for pollen from the creeping willow! Towards the end of the month, the cascading song of Willow Warblers to me heralds the arrival of spring, as does the appearance of violets, dandelions and Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*). Orange Tips, Small Coppers and Green-veined Whites are on the wing with an occasional Small White to add to the 'white' confusion and the caterpillars of Dark Tussock Moth on creeping willow and Garden Tiger can sometimes be seen. The Orange Tips can be around for 3 to 7 weeks with a peak in mid-May (*highest annual total 18 – 2005). Small Coppers are generally seen every week from mid-May to mid-September (unusually one was seen on 19 April in 2009), but there are two peaks in numbers, the first smaller one (up to 17 individuals) towards the end of May and the second during August (up to 91 this year – previously 30-40). (*293 – 2010, previous highest 271 – 2005 following lowest 113 in 2004). Green-veined Whites also have two peaks, one in May (7-10 individuals) and the other in late July/beginning of August (16-21 individuals) (*58 - 2006).

By mid-May the willow catkins are over but green leaves are bursting forth and Tormentil, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Common Vetch provide some colour. Green Hairstreaks generally only occur in the second and third week of May but unusually one was seen on 22 April this year. Sadly, from a high of 10 in 2005, only one or two have been seen in the last three years but it's impossible to know whether the SNH policy of removing invasive species, including birch seedlings and gorse, has had an impact by removing possible 'perches' for the Green Hairstreak males. A visit to the transect at this time can also produce a sighting of Cinnabar moth, Green Tiger beetle, Stonechat or a patch of Cowslips and we start to look for Orange Tip eggs under the flowerheads of Lady's Smock though this year we have become concerned at the lack of these flowers in the northwest section of our transect (the area has become too dry) though it still occurs near the ditch in the southwest.

In June one may see some Common Wintergreen or Northern Marsh Orchid and, in 2007, a Yellow Shell moth was on an alder leaf. This is the time to look out for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries which only appear for a couple of weeks and then, towards the end of the month, Dark Green Fritillaries also occur and continue well into August - even into September in 2008, though by then they are showing their age, being very pale and sometimes ragged. Both these species like to nectar on Marsh Thistle but this has, unfortunately, declined with 'spot-weed killing' which was supposed to be targeted at the invasive Creeping Thistle. We did not confirm any SPBFs until 2007 and they reached a peak of 19 in 2008 but last year only one was seen and this year none. The DGFs peaked in the first week of July in four of the seven years (about a dozen individuals) but were slightly later in 2006 and 2008.

Mid-June the temperature is generally 17C or above, though 16C does occur, and the number of butterfly species to look out for increases with the possible occurrence of Common Blue, Meadow Brown, Small Heath and Ringlet and, by the end of the month, Grayling. Common Blue is generally around in small numbers for about 7 weeks with a peak in mid-July (from 6 to 32 individuals) or slightly later (*89 – 2009; lowest 22 – 2010); Meadow Browns for 6 weeks with a peak about mid-July (12-38 individuals); Small Heath for 9-10 weeks (until the end of August) with a variable peak from the second week of July to the first week in August, (19-47 individuals) and Ringlet for 6 weeks with a peak, in 5 out of 7 years, in week 14 (beginning of July) (11-42 individuals). Grayling occurs for about 8 weeks with a peak varying from mid-July to the beginning of August. Having hit a low of 35 in 2007, it was good to see an increase to 146 last year and 134 this season.

In July, Ragwort as well as being a source of nectar for the butterflies, is the food-plant for the orange and black-striped caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth which can quickly strip a plant bare of leaves. During August the heathers (*Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica tetralix* and *Erica cinerea*) become the main nectar source, especially if there is a shortage of Ragwort, and it was while walking through the heather last year that astonishing numbers of Painted Lady were feeding and flying up making an accurate count impossible – as with counting large numbers of birds, I tried to see them in groups – in this case 20s. During the initial influx in June we had seen only 22 (4 + 7 + 11) over the whole transect but during the weeks from 5 August to 18 September successive counts were 1, 90, 202, 27, 18 and, finally, just 1!

By September the heather flowers are fading and with even Small Coppers declining in numbers, we have to face the fact that another season is coming to an end.

In addition to the species mentioned above in most years we have seen a Small Tortoiseshell (in 2007 and 2010 - 2). One Large White was counted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 but there have been none since. Gillian saw a Comma on 28 August 2008 and I saw one on 27 August 2010 - my first ever in Scotland! The only Red Admiral seen on the transect was on 27 September 2009 during the very last week of the season.

The total number of species recorded on the transect is now 18 and it is interesting to note the variation between the species in terms of their 'peak' years though, of the seven years we have been recording, 2006 was definitely 'the best' overall ... so far ...!

Each year brings its own special moments – for me, last year, it was seeing the large number of Painted Lady butterflies and unexpectedly coming across a striking black and white moth, a Wood Tiger. This year it was finding two attractive moths in June and July (not being familiar with many moths, I took photos and had it confirmed later) a Common White Wave and a Blue-bordered Carpet and then, on 5 August, seeing 90 Swallows perched in a large, but now dead, alder tree.

We still approach each week's count with a sense of anticipation as we never quite know what we may see - or hear .. there cannot be many transects from which one can hear Green Woodpeckers and Grey Seals! - roll on 2011!

*highest annual total

WHAT'S ON

The Family Day out was a great success again and the feedback from the visitors and staff was brilliant. Planning and preparation work is already underway for this years event. Look out for news in the next edition.

WALKS & TALKS

Want to know more of what we do, or just want to see the wonderful sights on the Reserve? If you have a few friends or a group who fancy a guided walk or talk about the Reserves, please contact me. If you would like to see how effective the management of the Reserve is, or observe a little more of the hidden secrets and gems, then give me a ring and I will arrange a guided walk or talk.

I look forward to seeing you on the Reserve sometime.

IRRESPONSIBLE VISITORS

Fife Council in conjunction with the Police has launched a new initiative to catch irresponsible dog owners and posters and cards have been distributed in all the towns and villages. Basically anyone can contact them on 08451 550022 and provide information leading to the identification of the dog owner. Let's hope we can help catch the culprits.

BIG THANKS

Many thanks to all who contribute to the Newsletter and the valuable data collected for our flora and fauna records and to the local newspapers for articles. Finally, a very BIG personal **Thank You** to all the Reserve staff, honorary wardens, volunteers and visitors who put in a lot of time and effort, provide wonderful information, wildlife data and images without which we would not produce such great results.

Enjoy your visits to all the sites in the Reserve. Take away only memories and images and leave behind only your footprints.

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PS So "how are Raith Rover doing?" rather splendid actually, so far the season we are top of the league and it has been excellent, with few tears spilt so far!

Be aware of ticks in the UK countryside and elsewhere in Europe. This is a message from all the responsible environmental organisations in the UK who are aware of the rise in the number of ticks in our countryside. All visitors to our countryside should really examine themselves and check for ticks as soon as you can. If you do happen to have one attached remove it as soon as you can. To guard against ticks: Keep trousers tucked into socks and wear light coloured clothing. Examine your body for ticks in the backs of the knees, groin, under the arms and on the scalp. Dog owners should also check their dogs. Stay safe, be aware.

Know the Code Before You Go, its well worth getting a copy of this useful guide from SNH and now there are activity guides you can use for your children. For more information have a look at: www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/educationresources

Useful websites: www.snh.gov.uk, www.nnr-scotland.org.uk and www.tentsmuir.org for information on the Reserve and surrounding area as well as our work in SNH.

Keep up to date on our Facebook page  "Scotland's National Nature Reserves".

Have a look at www.placebookscotland.com and put your own images, stories and poems on this new website, it's yours to use and put all your favourite places on it, including Tentsmuir NNR!