

## **TWIC Spring Recorders' Forum, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011, Newtown St Boswells**

TWIC's Spring Recorders' Forum took place in the Scottish Borders Council Chambers in Newtown St Boswells on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March. Almost 40 people attended the forum, to hear talks from the Lothians and Borders Mammal Group, TWIC, the Lothian Bat Group, Scottish Borders' Council Biodiversity Officer, PlantLife Scotland, and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.

First Graeme Wilson, Midlothian Biodiversity Officer, kicked off the day by talking about the newly-formed Lothians and Borders Mammal Group (LaBMaG). He explained that mammals are under-recorded in this region, especially considering their size making some of them quite easy to see, and gave an outline of the group's proposed agenda of activities and talks during the following few months. LaBMaG already has almost 40 members – anyone interested in joining, or finding out more about the group, should email Graeme on [biodiversity@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@midlothian.gov.uk).

Then Imogen German, TWIC's Records' Ecologist, gave a talk on the hedgehog survey of the Lothians and Borders that TWIC are running this year. The survey aims to gather more evidence on the distribution of hedgehogs in the Lothians and Borders, which were designated a UK BAP species in 2007, as well as to involve more people in wildlife recording. People can submit their hedgehog records by sending in postcards or by going to [www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/hedgehogs.php](http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/hedgehogs.php).



*David Dodds presentation on bat recording*

After coffee and cake David Dodds of the Lothians Bat Group talked about bat recording – and how it was not as difficult as people often imagined. He recommended several bat detectors to suit a range of budgets, and then went on to teach people – in a short space of time – how to identify the calls of Pipistrelle, Noctule, Myotis and Brown Long-eared bats. David is happy to give advice on bats, bat detectors and the Lothian bat group (who also go on bat outings in the Borders), his email address is [plecotus@btinternet.com](mailto:plecotus@btinternet.com).

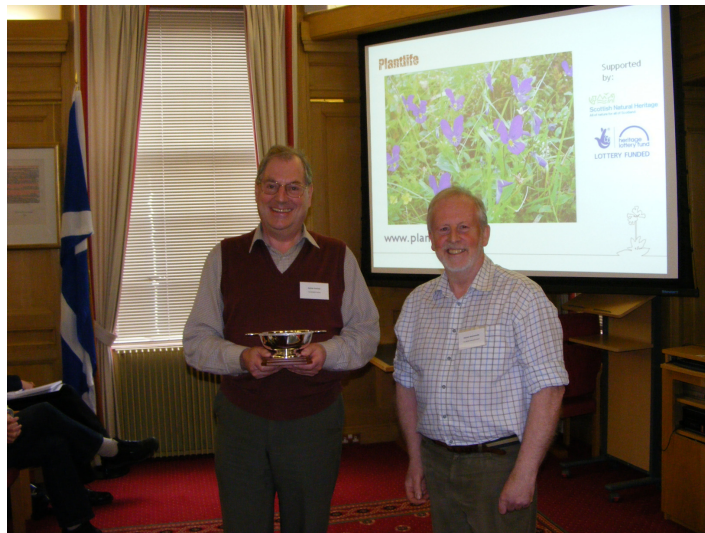
Davie Black of PlantLife Scotland then told everyone of the work of PlantLife and the various surveys that they run. In particular Davie mentioned a project on the monitoring of lichens that PlantLife are running, called "Flora Guardians", to monitor the population of a lichen called Bird-Perch Gristle Lichen (*Ramalina polymorpha*) that grows in rocky sites and is threatened by recreational pressures.

Several of these sites are in the Scottish Borders and Davie asked if anyone would be interested in volunteering to monitor these populations. For more details visit [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk).



*Davie Black talking about Flora Guardians project run by Plantlife Scotland*

Alastair Sommerville, TWIC's director and Chair, announced that TWIC was going to be giving an award in memory of Bob Saville who did so much not only for TWIC but for biological recording. This would be awarded to someone who had contributed to biological recording in a distinctive way, and this year the award went to Adrian Sumner. Adrian was a Director of TWIC since it started up 9 years ago, only retiring in 2010. He has done a great deal of work for the recording of terrestrial molluscs and has inspired many others, not only in the recording of terrestrial molluscs, but of wildlife in general.



*Adrian Sumner receiving the Bob Saville Award (Adrian Sumner on the left, Alastair Sommerville on the right)*

Over lunch delegates browsed posters and displays, and had the chance to sign up to some workshops that TWIC were running on dragonflies and Phase 1 surveys. Everyone bought a raffle ticket to raise money for the "Hedgehog Fund" and this was drawn at the end of lunch, with many people going away happy with their bottles of wine, chocolates or bird- and hedgehog-food!

After lunch Andy Tharme talked about the work that Scottish Borders Council are doing on updating the Scottish Borders Phase 1 habitat data. The new Phase 1 data has been mapped by taking aerial photographs, and then converting these to Phase 1 habitats using computer software. 'Ground-truthing' is needed and Andy asked if anyone would do this for their local patch, or areas that they go to carry out fieldwork, or remote sites. There is a Phase 1 refresher course run by TWIC taking place on 8<sup>th</sup> May, at Harestanes for those interested, please email [workshop@wildlifeinformation.co.uk](mailto:workshop@wildlifeinformation.co.uk) for details.

Steve Hannah, TWIC's IT and Data Infrastructure Officer, then gave a very informative talk on what happens with data that you record and send to TWIC by detailing the three main uses of the data by TWIC – screening planning applications for local authorities, producing site reports for ecological consultants, and for the assessment of Local Biodiversity Sites. It was very enlightening for people to hear about the important uses of all the carefully-gathered data they send in, and Steve's presentation sparked off a discussion about data sharing and data flows.

Stephen Welch, the Lothian Bird Recorder for the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, gave the final talk of the day on the progress of the SOC's South East Scotland Bird Atlas. He said that although almost 100% of the minimum coverage of tetrads had been achieved, there was still a lot of work to do on gathering breeding evidence. It was inspiring to hear about all the hard work that the SOC have put in to coordinating efforts at recording birds across so much of the area of Scotland. To find out about the southeast Scotland bird atlas visit the SOC website <http://www.the-soc.org.uk/se-atlas/home.htm>.

The final half hour of the day was devoted to the "Open Mike" session and Laura Coventry, a Lothian-based dragonfly recorder, announced that the British Dragonfly Society have updated their website and now have an online recording page which can be found at [www.dragonflysoc.org.uk](http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk). She also told everyone about the bumblebee walks that the Bumblebee Conservation Trust is running, and to email Leanne Casey [l.m.casey@stir.ac.uk](mailto:l.m.casey@stir.ac.uk) for more details. Sam Ranscombe, Countryside Education Ranger at Buccleuch Heritage Trust then told us about the work that the rangers were doing at Bowhill House and Country Estate near Selkirk and called for volunteers to help with a Bird Race at Bowhill that is taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> May, in which families will be sent out to go and see how many birds they can identify in an hour. Volunteers are needed who are able to identify common birds, and will accompany families and help them to identify the birds that they see. Sam's email is [sranscombe@buccleuch.com](mailto:sranscombe@buccleuch.com) for anyone who thinks they can help out. Graeme Wilson briefly took the stage again to talk about his Midlothian Biodiversity Facebook profile, which had proven very successful, and said that if anyone wanted to publicise any events on there they should get in touch. You can find the profile at [facebook.com/midlothianbiodiversity](https://facebook.com/midlothianbiodiversity). Adrian Sumner then talked about the British Conchological Society and about a field trip that they are holding in Dumfries and Galloway on 21-22<sup>nd</sup> May. Anyone interested is welcome to attend and can find out more, along with Adrian's contact details, on [www.conchsoc.org](http://www.conchsoc.org).

Another successful TWIC Recorders' Forum, and a great kick-off to the recording season.