

Neilston Pad

25 May 2024

A group of twelve, including insect and plant specialists from both Glasgow and Paisley Nats, gathered in the south-west car park at Neilston Pad. Known locally as 'The Pad', it is an old volcanic plug surrounded by several dams and offers a variety of habitats to explore. The area is used primarily for forestry and we could see that there had been a lot of replanting in the gaps left in 2019 when around 20,000 trees were felled due to *Phytophthora ramorum* in infected Larch.



Studying insects and plants in the open grassland, photo: Andy Wilson

Our outing began with a brief walk through a rather eerie and seemingly lifeless section of the older forest, before breaking out into a green oasis of broadleaved trees and understory. This led out to an area of open grassland where we spent a lot of time examining the wide array of insects, particularly on nettle and buttercups. The day before last had been very wet, but today the sun had come out bringing balmy weather, and a mass of insects. Fortunately, Paul Cobb and Craig Postlethwaite were on hand to help us identify them, including beauties such as the Nettle-tap moth (*Anthophila fabriciana*), a green False Blister Beetle (*Oedemera virescens*) and iridescent Green Dock Beetle (*Gastrophysa viridula*).



Nettle-tap moth (*Anthophila fabriciana*) and a False Blister Beetle (*Oedemera virescens*), photos: Kirsty Menzies

We then headed towards the Craighall Dam where the wetter ground brought a change in vegetation and insect species. There were also some birds of interest on the dam, including a pair of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) with a family of young cygnets. Walking across the marshy ground, carpeted with Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*), clouds of silvery-winged immature damselflies took to the air with a few mature Large Red (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*) and Azure (*Coenagrion puella*) and Common Blue (*Enallagma cyathigerum*) Damselflies adding a dash of colour.



Lunch overlooking Snypes Dam, photo: Kirsty Menzies

We took the more gently sloping path up The Pad, through beech woodland, to reach the flattened heathland plateau and mixed woodland at the top. We stopped there for lunch with an incredible view of the Snypes Dam and East Renfrewshire countryside. Someone noticed pine cones dropping from the tree under which we were sat. The culprits turned out to be a pair of Common Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) which soon grabbed everybody's attention and charmed us with their feeding antics. Then, to cap it all, an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) flew by us, over the Dam.



Female and male Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) in pine tree, photos: Andy Wilson

Reluctantly moving on we walked along the track that fringes the eastern edge of The Pad at the base of the steeply wooded slopes of old oak. It offered delightfully dappled shade and followed an old stone dyke, thick with mosses and a lacy fringe of Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocapnos claviculata*). On reaching the main track that goes around The Pad we headed back to our cars via the verdant wildflower-filled verges of Harelaw Road. In total we recorded a total of 35 bird species and 23 insect species.

Kirsty Menzies

Bird list recorded by Craig Postlethwaite

Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)
Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	Meadow Pipit (<i>Anthus pratensis</i>)
Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)
Blue Tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)	Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)
Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)
Carrion Crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)	Rook (<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>)
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)	Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)
Common Crossbill (<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>)	Sedge Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>)
Duncock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	Song Thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)
Garden Warbler (<i>Sylvia borin</i>)	Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>)
Goldcrest (<i>Regulus regulus</i>)	Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)
Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)	Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)
Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>)
Greenfinch (<i>Chloris chloris</i>)	Whitethroat (<i>Curruca communis</i>)
House Martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)	Willow Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>)
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)
Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)
Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	

Insect list recorded by Paul Cobb, Craig Postlethwaite and Kirsty Menzies

<i>Anthophila fabriciana</i> - Nettle-tap moth	<i>Phaedon tumidulus</i> - Celery Leaf Beetle
<i>Athous haemorrhoidalis</i> - a click beetle	<i>Phyllobius argentatus</i> - a green weevil
<i>Cantharis nigricans</i> - a soldier beetle	<i>Phyllobius glaucus</i> - a weevil
<i>Cantharis pellucida</i> - a soldier beetle	<i>Phyllobius pomaceus</i> - Green Nettle Weevil
<i>Cloeon simile</i> – Lake Olive Mayfly	<i>Phytomyza ranunculi</i> - Buttercup Leaf Mining Fly
<i>Coenagrion puella</i> - Azure Damselfly	<i>Pyrhosoma nymphula</i> - Large Red Damselfly
<i>Empis tessellata</i> - a dagger fly	<i>Rhagio scolopaceus</i> - Downlooker Snipefly
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i> - Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Rhagio tringarius</i> - Marsh Snipefly
<i>Gastrophysa viridula</i> - Green Dock Beetle	<i>Rhagonycha limbata</i> - a soldier beetle
<i>Glyptopterix simpliciella</i> - Cocksfoot moth	<i>Sialis lutaria</i> – an alderfly
<i>Oedemera virescens</i> - False Blister Beetle	<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i> – Silver-ground Carpet moth
<i>Orchestes fagi</i> -Beech leaf-miner weevil	