



Free

# LOCH FLEET NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE



## NEWS NO. 3

### Introduction

Although Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve (NNR) seems a quiet and tranquil place, people behind the scenes are very busy trying to make this site even better for wildlife and visitors.

January storms in 2005 helped to increase the natural dead wood element of the pinewood. Several mature Scots pine trees succumbed to the ferocious gales creating a useful wildlife habitat for woodland invertebrates and fungi.

Ospreys fledged three large noisy young from their platform. Twinflower had a terrific year for flowering, and was admired by many.

Ian Paterson (Highland Council Ranger) led some well attended

guided walks which included tales of amazing monster worms on mud lark events, (Ranger - 01549 402 638).

Butterfly monitoring by a small dedicated team, headed by Helen Mainwood (East Sutherland Bird Group), provided valuable data to help assess UK population trends.

It was not all fun and games during 2005, as three separate woodland fires were reported during late summer, causing localised damage to woodland plants and scorching mature pine trees.



*Fire threatened beautiful pinewood.*

Thanks to the vigilance of local people, these fires were quickly spotted. Golspie fire service attended and brought the biggest fire under control. If it was not for the local community and Golspie fire crew, we may not have a pinewood left at all.

## Have you seen a rare tooth fungi?

Tooth fungi are a special group, differing from other fungi by having tiny spikes projecting down from underneath the cap. Most tooth fungi are listed as *UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species*, some of the rarest ones are found in mature pinewoods.



*Brown corky spine fungus - a tooth fungi.*

Many species of fungi have very special associations with other plants. Over 80% of our native trees and shrubs depend on fungi as they break down organic matter on which other vegetation will eventually feed. Tooth fungi tend to have very specific hosts, often Scots pine. This special association is known as mycorrhizal (Greek for 'fungus root').

Most tooth fungi are rare and should not be picked.

*Please let us know if you find tooth fungi at Loch Fleet.*

## A rare tail...!

When Tim Harrison (visitor to Loch Fleet NNR) flew up to Inverness especially to see the trio of rare pine woodland plants at Loch Fleet, he was not aware of what he was going to find!

Tim visited Loch Fleet NNR in mid-June and was thrilled to see the popular plant trio (one-flowered wintergreen, twinflower and creeping ladies' tresses), in full flower.

After being suitably impressed with the rare pine woodland flowers he visited Littleferry links where he was amazed to find the nationally scarce variegated horsetail.



*The rare horsetail - in excellent condition.*

Tim's record is the first known sighting of variegated horsetail at Loch Fleet and adds another rare plant species to the NNR list. It joins the moonwort as one of the fascinating 'mini ferns' on the dune links.



*Moonwort fern - 'out of this world'!*

## Planning for the future...

Scottish Natural Heritage, Sutherland Estates and the Scottish Wildlife Trust together form the 'Loch Fleet NNR partnership'. As part of the process to review and update the Loch Fleet NNR management plan, we have produced ***Loch Fleet NNR: The Reserve Story & Proposals***



These colourful documents provide background information and an up-to-date overview of Loch Fleet NNR.

*Please contact us if you would like a copy of the NNR documents. We would like your views on the proposed management of the NNR (contacts on back page).*

## Improvements at the 'gateway to Loch Fleet'

Dornoch, Rogart & Golspie Community Councils (in liaison with Cambusmore Estate) are involved in a project to upgrade the Mound Car Park at the gateway to Loch Fleet NNR. Intermediate Labour Market (ILM Highland) Ltd. (led by Jimmy Bremner) has undertaken gorse control work, to allow easier wildlife watching from the car park.



*Watch ospreys whilst eating your picnic.*

## Fresh approach and new looks!

SNH recently commissioned a contract to produce an *Interpretation and Promotions Plan* for the NNR.

This plan aims to identify how to make Loch Fleet a better place for people and identify novel ways to provide information to visitors. Conclusions from the plan will also - be incorporated within a public consultation document called the 'Loch Fleet NNR Proposals' which identifies proposed work on the NNR over the next few years.

## All-abilities welcome.

A Disabilities Discrimination Act audit has recently been carried out on existing NNR facilities (paths, kissing gates, etc).

In advance of this audit taking place, Golspie Community Council asked if it was possible to install an all-abilities picnic bench at Loch Fleet NNR. Tom Talbot (SNH - Site Management Officer) completed this work at Littleferry in November 2005.

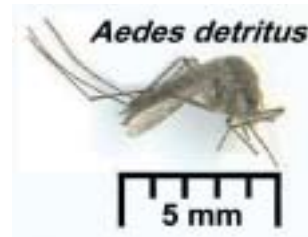


*Please use these new facilities and let us know if we can make them even better.*

## Behind the scenes: NNR Liaison Group.

To assist the smooth running of Loch Fleet NNR, Loch Fleet partnership is lucky in having an active Local Liaison Group. The Group comprises different interests, such as Community Council, Sutherland Plant Recorder, etc. The Loch Fleet NNR Liaison Group provide suggestions and views on many NNR issues, such as outdoor access, interpretation, etc. This year the group met on-site

at Loch Fleet and despite persistent biting mosquitoes, made positive suggestions, such as; one-flowered wintergreen research student and possible twinflower propagation project.



*NNR Mosquito. Photo: Prof. Brian Taylor*

Philip Entwistle (NNR liaison group) identified the biting culprit. Not known to carry malaria, but a persistent biter!

## Loch Fleet NNR map.



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**For further NNR information  
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