

Well, I'm afraid I can hardly keep up with the excitement in the wildlife world of Burnturk and Kettlehill area at the moment! I feel the need to rattle out a quick update to let you know everything that is happening, but there is so much, this might be another of my epistles!

So, to start with the major excitement – a rare bird living in Burnturk which has attracted in birdwatchers and twitchers from all over Scotland! It is a Turtle Dove, a beautiful little dove which should be found in the south of England and on the continent. It arrived in my garden on Tuesday morning this week, looking rather dishevelled and exhausted. I thought it was a young pigeon but when it flew off, I realised it was an adult bird, and with the help of binoculars and Margaret Ronaldson's excellent camera skills we were able to confirm its identity.



The last time one appeared in Fife was 11 years ago, and it certainly should not normally be around. This gorgeous little dove, about the same size as our collared dove, has been feeding on seeds in my garden and then sleeping in trees above the village green in Burnturk, attracting the huge cameras and telescopes of dozens of birdwatchers.

It is looking much more rested now, and is well fed, and so it should head off to try to find its way back to wherever it should be before very long.

This morning, I was alerted to something happening close to my house by the unbelievable racket being made by every single crow, jackdaw and magpie in the area. I peeked round the corner of the house to find that a female sparrowhawk had caught a Jackdaw, and was being thoroughly abused for doing so. Over the next 35 minutes or so she proceeded to eat most of the Jackdaw and eventually flew away with the rest of the carcass, leaving behind a pile of feathers, a beak, an eye (horrible!) and a few strands of intestines. Again, the photo below comes from Margaret Ronaldson who took the picture from my bedroom window.



We had our bat watching evening last night, which was attended by about 20 people. After all the wind we have had, it was great to have a calm evening and the bats dutifully poured out from about 9.30 pm. It is great to see how they can use their echo location to dodge round the unexpected people in the garden and there were no collisions or near misses at all. Most people had left by 10.30 pm but for the 5 of us remaining we were treated to an additional entertainment. I noticed an adult bat and a wee bat flying round together - a baby getting flying lessons! And then there were suddenly about a dozen babies practising flying round about us - very tiny and cute, and really quite wobbly at times! We stayed watching them until about 11.15, before we decided to go. I washed the few dishes and went out with the dogs, and when I got back about 50 adult bats had come back and were doing their complete acrobatics round the roost! I stood at the back door immersed in bats until about midnight! At the bat event I asked if anyone was interested in getting up at 4am some morning soon to come and watch the bats returning to the roost, which is a truly spectacular sight, as the full 300+ of them come at the same time and swirl and swish round and round before entering the roost to sleep for the day. I would be prepared to get up and host anyone who would like to do this! If so, please let me know.

Today, I found an adult bat on the wall in the afternoon, clearly not terribly well, or it wouldn't have been out. I currently have it in a tub, wrapped in some kitchen roll and on a hot water bottle, and I will put it back out near the roost entrance shortly and hope it feels well enough to rejoin its colony.



Soprano Pipistrelle bat.

Finally, I really don't want to miss out asking you to look for what I had hoped was going to be the main feature of these wildlife notes, but they have sadly been totally eclipsed by everything else going on! This is a favourite little plant of mine, called Blinks. It grows in the muddy puddles in the track through the woods in Burnturk and I bet almost all of you will have missed it. Since this is quite a photographic set of wildlife notes, I will include 3 pictures of Blinks, one of me looking at it (bottoms up!), one with my finger for scale and one which shows the tiny golden flower in the middle, no larger than a pin prick! But it really is a beautiful little flowering plant, so often completely overlooked. Definitely a case of "blink and you'll miss it"



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