

Scottish Countryside Ranger Association Grampian Training Programme 2012

Introduction

Following a successful 2011 programme, we have been able to keep our course costs low and even reduce some prices! We hope you will continue to support our value-for-money local training events that we have organised to broaden your skills, enhance your knowledge and contribute to your professional development. We are repeating courses that have proved popular, running others on subjects covered previously, but at another level or from a different angle and introducing days on completely new topics, plus giving opportunities for networking. We have tried to incorporate your suggestions as much as possible and if you have any ideas for future events please let us know.

Many thanks and we look forward to seeing you on some of the events!

SCRA Grampian Regional Committee (Jackie Cumberbirch, Annabel Drysdale, Helen Rowe and Toni Watt)

General Information

Reminders and further details of individual events and possibly additional ones will be sent out nearer the time as required. **Most include outdoor sessions, so please come equipped with appropriate clothing (waterproofs etc.) and footwear (stout shoes/boots). Unless otherwise stated, please bring your own lunch.** Tea, coffee and biscuits are normally provided except where there is no indoor venue.

SCRA Membership

Discounts for SCRA members are available on many SCRA Grampian courses (also applicable to volunteers and students) as well as on national SCRA courses. To find out about other SCRA membership benefits, membership categories with rates and how to join visit <http://scra-online.co.uk/join-scra> or email admin@scra-online.co.uk

Booking & Payment Procedure

- 1. Please book by the date stated with the contact given for each event, giving your email address and phone number** (mobile no. if possible, e.g. in case event cancelled at last minute due to weather/illness etc.) - early booking recommended since places are limited. If there are no places left, you can go on a waiting list.
- 2. Once the event contact has reserved your place, please arrange payment where applicable.** Payment in advance is preferred and can be made for multiple courses and/or participants - by purchase order (if used by your organisation), direct invoice request or cheque made payable to 'SCRA Grampian Regional Committee'.

Bank details for BACS payments:
Bank of Scotland, 79 Ellon Road, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen. AB23 8BY
Sort code: 80-05-11
Account no: 00136570
- 3. Please send purchase order/invoice request (email preferred)/cheque c/o: Helen Rowe, SCRA Grampian Treasurer, Burn O' Vat Visitor Centre, Dinnet, Aboyne. AB34 5NB helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk**
Cheques or cash payments brought on the day of the course are also accepted. Receipts for cheques and cash can be emailed on request.
- 4. Please inform the event contact ASAP if you have to cancel your booking** so that your place can be offered to someone else and you can be refunded. If you have to cancel at the last minute due to emergency etc. please phone the event contact if you possibly can. If a course is oversubscribed and you make a last minute cancellation or don't turn up, you may still be charged!

The following organisations also provide local training that may be of interest:

Forest Education Initiative North East Scotland Cluster Group - Development Officer, Doug Gooday – tel: 07786 021782, email: fei.ag@btconnect.com or visit http://www.foresteducation.org/cluster_group/north_east_scotland/

North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC)
tel: 01224 273633, email: nesbrec@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or visit <http://www.nesbrec.org.uk>

Cairngorms National Park Authority
tel: 01479 873535, email: training@cairngorms.co.uk or visit <http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/learn/land-management-training-project/>

Natural Crafts: Tinder Pouch & Birch Bark Matchbox Workshop

Date: Friday 16th March

Time: 9.30am - 5.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Crathes Castle, Banchory. AB31 5QJ (upstairs room above ranger's office – will be signposted!)

Cost: £25 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Friday 9th March

This is a one day workshop during which we will make a leather / suede tinder pouch with a red stag antler ring fastener and a small birch bark container for keeping matches in. You will learn about natural tinders from different fungi and we will waterproof our matches with wax. Each participant will also receive some tinder fungus for their tinder pouch. All materials are included.

Course instructor Willow Lohr has been professionally teaching bushcraft and nature based hand-crafts for the past 8 years. Initially working for Ray Mears, she now works freelance for another prestigious bushcraft company and designs bespoke masterclasses in the subject of bushcraft. Her passion lies with the Neolithic skills, such as hide tanning, ancient natural tinders, cordage, carving, natural foods, felting and fire. She is a qualified Expert Master Beekeeper and lives in a cottage within the Cairngorms National Park with her rare breed sheep and hens. Her broad expertise ranges from mammal tracking to general wilderness living and survival skills. She has travelled on winter expeditions in the Arctic and Northern Maine and is currently preparing for a 200 mile long canoe journey within the Arctic Circle in Alaska.



Various pouches



Birch bark containers

Environmental & Ecological Research Sharing Day

Date: Friday 30th March

Time: 10.30am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: James Hutton Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen. AB15 8QH

Cost: £10 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £20 non-members

Contact: Helen Rowe, helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 07787 583976

Book by: Friday 16th March

This day is an opportunity to find out more about the work of the James Hutton Institute and hear about some of their current environmental and ecological research projects first-hand from staff conducting research. A short overview of the roles of SCRA and its members will be given for the benefit of JHI staff, during which participants will be encouraged to share briefly about their own work/interests to demonstrate how research relates to them. The cost includes a light lunch as well as morning and afternoon tea/coffee, giving ample time for networking!

10.30 Arrival and coffee

11.00 Pete Goddard - Introduction to JHI

11.10 Helen Rowe, SCRA – how research can help rangers

Session 1: Species-based research

11.30 Lucy Gilbert “Controlling ticks and the impact of management”

11.45 Andy Taylor “Scotland’s forgotten Kingdom (fungi)”

12.00 Glenn Iason “The subtleties of defining Capercaillie habitat”

12.15 Javier Perez-Barberia “Research to help deer management”

12.30 Lunch

Session 2: From coast to mountain: habitat-based research

13.30 Robin Pakeman “30 years of change on Scottish Machair”

13.45 Jenni Stockan “Ecological indicators of riparian habitats”

14.00 Ruth Mitchell “Moorland to woodland; the MOORCO project”

14.15 Richard Hewison “Native woodland model”

14.30 Nick Littlewood "Grazing impacts on upland biodiversity"

14.45 Tea

Session 3: The bigger picture: Landscape scale projects

15.15 Susan Cooksley “Dee Catchment Partnership”

15.30 Helen Watson “Environmental Change Network”

15.45 Summing up

16.00 Close and depart

Natural Crafts: Antler Bone & Flint Workshop

Date: Friday 20th April

Time: 9.30am - 5.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Crathes Castle, Banchory. AB31 5QJ (upstairs room above ranger's office – will be signposted!)

Cost: £25 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Friday 13th April

This is a one-day workshop of crafting with the very durable materials of antler and bone. We will make small containers with the hollowed-out bones or antlers and make them suitable for salves, matches, trinkets or bone needles! We will also make a bone needle or Maori fish hook using flint as our tool. This workshop offers an opportunity to experience working with this readily available yet little utilised material. Some basic knife skills are required. All tools and materials included.

Course instructor Willow Lohr – for background information see Friday 16th March Natural Crafts workshop.

Freshwater Invertebrates

Date: Monday 23rd April

Time: 10.30am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Castle Fraser, Inverurie. AB51 7LD (public car park)

Cost: £20 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Jackie Cumberbirch, jackie.cumberbirch@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or 07799 658209

Book by: Monday 9th April

This course is led by Mike Davidson who has many years' experience as a freshwater ecologist, helping to improve the quality of our NE rivers and lochs. His other interests include the ecology of those terrestrial invertebrates with no fewer than eight legs!

We will be looking at the range of habitats (natural and artificial) from damp patches in the woods, small streams, through to the large pond at Castle Fraser. We will be exploring the range of invertebrate species and considering their life histories and adaptations to their habitats. We will attempt to identify them live in the field but will also take the opportunity to examine some of them microscopically.

Equipment: It would be helpful if you can bring pond-nets and white trays; hand lenses/bug boxes and some specimen containers. A cooled food flask or two might allow us to keep some live specimens for later examination. Also bring any ID guides you have.

Ants: Identification, Ecology & Education

Date: Thursday 17th May

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Mar Lodge, Braemar. AB35 5YJ (meeting room located in stable block – park in courtyard).

Cost: £10 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £20 non-members

Contact: Helen Rowe, helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 07787 583976

Book by: Friday 4th May

This course is suitable for anyone with an interest in this fascinating insect family who would like to be able to identify species for recording purposes and/or appropriate land management plus learn more about them for education/interpretation with others. It will be led by Hayley Wiswell, who has an MSc in Entomology and has recently been working as a BTCV Natural Talent Apprentice on Caledonian Pinewood Invertebrates. Her apprenticeship has involved spending significant time doing fieldwork near Braemar, contributing to James Hutton Institute research on wood ants, their interactions with other invertebrates and pine trees. She has also carried out surveys for the rare Narrow-headed Ant and sampling for other invertebrates at NTS Mar Lodge and RSPB Abernethy. Additionally she has been assisting the National Wood Ant Steering Group with developing a communications strategy to raise public and stakeholder awareness.

The day will begin with an indoor presentation introducing ants and their ecology, plus an opportunity to examine specimens under a microscope to aid identification. Then we will go out in the field to search for different ant colonies - Mar Lodge is an excellent location for finding a variety of species. Ideas for interpreting ants to the public will also be shared and a new education pack about wood ants will be available in advance of a public launch in June - participants could consider organising events to coincide with this, for example during National Insect Week, 25th June - 1st July.

Equipment: Please bring a hand lens if you have one (20x magnification best).

Animal Tracks & Signs

Date: Sunday 10th June / Monday 11th June – choose one of these two days; each will be the same, but we are running two days as we can only take 8 people a day to get the most out of it.

Time: 9.30am - 5.00pm

Meeting place: Braeloine Interpretive Centre, Glen Tanar, Aboyne. AB34 5EU

Cost: £20 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Friday 1st June

There are few subjects which are shrouded in mystery as much as the subject of tracking. To be a tracker, it seems, requires for you not only to be an exceptionally patient and gifted person, but also to know the secret signs of animals. It is time to put the hocus-pocus mystery of tracking to bed; it is a skill which can be learned just as any other wilderness skill. Tracking skills are largely forgotten in the UK and yet almost everyone would benefit greatly from understanding and knowing some of these skills. This workshop will show you how and where to look for signs, how to interpret gaits and straddles, and how to recognise different tracks, foot morphology, scats, pellets and other signs. We will look at how our and animals' senses work and function. The day's agenda is subject to weather conditions and animal activity, but there will be a mix of theoretical instruction and practical exercises to actually look for tracks and signs in a local woodland.

Course instructor Willow Lohr – for background information see Friday 16th March Natural Crafts workshop.

We are also hoping to have the expertise of Willow's colleague Steven Hanton who has been working as a bushcraft instructor for Woodsmoke for 5 years. In 2008, Steven's repeated visits to New England to pursue intensive animal tracking study culminated in a two-day formal assessment on his ability to interpret track and sign. The "Tracking Evaluation" process (which was originally developed in Southern Africa by Louis Liebenberg to award credit to Bushmen trackers) is growing and gaining international recognition as an excellent method of evaluating both track and sign interpretation and trailing skills. Steven was privileged to be able to spend time with some of the most gifted and dedicated naturalists in preparation for the evaluation in central Massachusetts, where his ability was reflected in a 94% Level III certificate, assessed and presented to him by Mark Elbroch (internationally renowned tracker and author).

Steven is also a keen canoeist and mountaineer, and while not teaching enjoys exploring the rugged mountains and coastline of Scotland in his hand built cedar-strip canoe. In addition he has a certificate in Bird Biology through Cornell University, is a Level One UKCC canoe coach, a qualified summer mountain leader, and holds wilderness Medical Training's "Advanced Medicine for Remote Foreign Travel" certificate.

Grasses, Sedges & Rushes: how to get to grips with these families, species identification & ecology (1)

Date: Tuesday 26th June

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: St Cyrus National Nature Reserve, Nether Warburton, St Cyrus, Montrose. DD10 0AQ (public car park by visitor centre)

Cost: £10 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £20 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Tuesday 19th June

We are running two grasses, sedges and rushes training days this year at Leith Hall and St Cyrus. Both are stand alone days, but equally by running two close together at very different locations we are hoping that they will act as re-enforcement for each other and participants are welcome to attend both to really get to grips with these families.

Ian Green is our trainer for both courses, and he is going to show how to identify grasses, sedges and rushes, their ecology, what they tell us about different habitats and their previous management and as indicator species for soil types etc. He will not cover every single species we find but instead try to help us really get to know a selection – depending of course on the progress of the group during the day.

Ian is a self taught botanist so he understands the difficulties of learning about grasses, sedges and rushes, and works as a self employed habitat and botany surveyor.

Grasses, Sedges & Rushes: how to get to grips with these families, species identification & ecology (2)

Date: Thursday 12th July

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Leith Hall, Kennethmont, Huntly. AB54 4NQ (public car park)

Cost: £10 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £20 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Thursday 5th July

See Tuesday 26th June course for more details.

Butterflies & Caterpillars

Date: Thursday 19th July

Time: 10.00am – 3.00pm

Meeting place: St Cyrus National Nature Reserve, Nether Warburton, St Cyrus, Montrose. DD10 0AQ (public car park by visitor centre)

Cost: £5 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £10 non-members

Contact: Annabel Drysdale, Annabel.Drysdale@snh.gov.uk tel: 01358 751330

Book by: Monday 16th July

Big Butterfly Count takes place across the UK between 14th July and 5th August, so join in this introductory workshop and then contribute your records from your local patch! Local lepidopterist Brian Stewart will lead the day and also search for caterpillars, including those of the elusive Small Blue. St Cyrus NNR has a climate more characteristic of the north-east coast of England; the rainfall is relatively low, and there are long periods of spring and summer sunshine, so there is no better place to look for butterflies locally!

Equipment: It would be helpful if participants could bring a butterfly net.

Woodland Spiders

Date: Wednesday 29th August

Time: 10.30am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Crathes Castle, Banchory. AB31 5QJ (classroom)

Cost: £20 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Jackie Cumberbirch, jackie.cumberbirch@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or 07799 658209

Book by: Monday 6th August

This course is led by Mike Davidson, whose interests include the ecology of those terrestrial invertebrates with no fewer than eight legs! He has also many years' experience as a freshwater ecologist.

We will be exploring the wide range of woodland types (conifer plantations, deciduous, riparian and wet woodland) and considering what habitats are available for spiders and how management might affect them. We will attempt to identify some species in the field and will consider their ecology. We will have the opportunity to examine specimens microscopically.

Equipment: Please bring if you can - plastic trays or sheets; pooters (can be supplied) and specimen containers; bug boxes/hand lenses. Sweep nets or beating trays might also be useful, plus any ID guides you have e.g. Collins Field Guide to Spiders.

Geology & Landscape Interpretation

Date: Tuesday 11th September

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: Burn O' Vat Visitor Centre, Muir of Dinnet NNR, Dinnet, Aboyne. AB34 5NB

Cost: £20 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Helen Rowe, helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 07787 583976

Book by: Friday 24th August

This day will include an indoor session and field visits in the local area, learning about the formation of rocks and landscapes and how to interpret them in an easily understandable and fun/interesting way. The course will be delivered by local freelance geologist Peter Craig, who has many years of experience in this field through leading geological excursions and giving talks etc. He has developed educational activity resources for a range of age groups and has been working recently on materials for the general public promoting the geodiversity of Upper Deeside. The course is suitable for beginners and improvers of all levels – please state your prior knowledge/experience of geology and interpretation when booking.

Bogs: Stealing Biscuits, Time & Trees

Date: Sunday 23rd September

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: Laird's Moss, Crathie, Deeside. (Location maps will be sent upon booking)

Cost: £10 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £20 non-members

Contact: Jackie Cumberbirch, jackie.cumberbirch@forestry.gsi.gov.uk or 07799 658209

Book by: Monday 10th September

Botanist and palaeoecologist Dr. Andy McMullen will lead this visit to a beautiful, wooded bog on Deeside that retains a very natural appearance and that may well be as untouched as it appears. After some time spent exploring the habitats and environments within the bog and the plants that both create and express these, we will look at the living 'bog pines' and examine what they might tell us about their past, and potentially, the future. To explore further the bog's capacity for recording history, we will finally take a series of core samples through up to 4m of peat to travel back in time to the bog's beginnings over 10 000 years ago and while we rest, look around us to see what more easily-gained records there are of our environment's history.

(See next page for equipment required)

Equipment: bring drinks along with packed lunch. Take extra warm clothing (as we will be relatively static for much of the day) plus waterproofs.

Wellington boots might well be better than walking boots, although seasoned

bog-hoppers should be able to keep dry on tussocks and wee islands within the bog. Please note that the bog surface is rather treacherous in places so a reasonable level of mobility and balance will be needed to avoid your potential disappearance into a pool and entombment as a time-capsule!

Waxcap Fungi Grasslands: waxcap grassland habitats, species identification, their threats, conservation & management

Date: Thursday 27th September

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Haddo House, Methlick, Ellon. AB41 7EQ (public car park)

Cost: £20 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £30 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Thursday 20th September

This course will be run by Liz Holden, an expert on fungi, waxcap grasslands and their associated species. We will be based at Haddo with its internationally important waxcap lawns.

The day will start inside with a talk on waxcap fungi habitat, the difficulties of assessing waxcaps for conservation purposes and the different grassland species – with lots of slides to help us. We will also look at threats to waxcap grasslands, current conservation guidelines and management recommendations. We will then head outside, initially to the waxcap lawns and if there is time, down to the butterfly meadow. We can discuss management on site and weather depending, we can use keys outside or collect specimens and work together back inside. Liz has a good field key for waxcaps that we can try out.

Badger Awareness

Date: Monday 8th October

Time: 9.00am - 5.00pm

Meeting place: NTS Crathes Castle, Banchory AB31 5QJ (conference room upstairs above restaurant in courtyard building)

Cost: £30 SCRA members, volunteers or students / £40 non-members

Contact: Toni Watt twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Monday 1st October

This course will be led by Elaine Rainey, Development Officer from the charity Scottish Badgers. We will commence the day with an illustrated talk covering badger biology and ecology, field signs and surveying, licensing and the law and badger watching. After lunch we will run an outdoor session looking for field signs and discussing the different licensing and crime scenarios in the field. Participants are encouraged to contribute their own experiences in dealing with badger issues. All participants will receive a Certificate of Attendance.

Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve Visit

Date: Tuesday 13th November

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Meeting place: Burn O' Vat Visitor Centre, Muir of Dinnet NNR, Dinnet, Aboyne. AB34 5NB

Cost: FREE

Contact: Helen Rowe, helen.rowe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or 07787 583976

Book by: Tuesday 6th November

This day will be an opportunity to hear about the work undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage on the Muir of Dinnet NNR led by Reserve Manager Catriona Reid. Subjects covered will include their approach to access provision and visitor management plus techniques employed to monitor and conserve habitats/species. It is not a training course as such, but is arranged for participants to be able to compare their experiences in such areas of work and discuss options for tackling particular issues.

The day will commence with an indoor presentation and look at the ongoing refurbishment of interpretation in the visitor centre, followed by outdoor site visits on the reserve.

Natural Crafts: Saami Lappland Herder Bag Workshop

Date: Thursday 22nd & Friday 23rd November - two day workshop,

Time: 9.30am - 5.00pm each day

Meeting place: NTS Crathes Castle, Banchory. AB31 5QJ (upstairs room above ranger's office – will be signposted!)

Cost: £45 SCRA members, volunteers or students, £60 non-members (price is for both days and includes materials)

Contact: Toni Watt, twatt@nts.org.uk or 0844 493 2167 / 0777 3626981

Book by: Monday 12th November

Two days of crafting a beautiful Saami pouch. These bags are still made today by the Saami Reindeer herders of Northern Scandinavia. The pouches are highly individual, made with different panels of fur and leather, decorated and trimmed symbolically with teeth, claws, bones, beads, and antler. They are almost always used for functional, yet highly prized possessions; a sewing kit, fire-making tools, coffee and sugar. You will learn how to make something very unique and beautiful with odd pieces of buckskin and leather, stitch seams with fur welts, braid a medieval cord to fasten the bag, make antler toggles, use glover needles and sinew. All materials are included. Some basic sewing experience required.

Course instructor Willow Lohr – for background information see Friday 16th March Natural Crafts workshop.

