



## Chairman's Comment

As you will be able to see from this issue of the BCT Update, the last six months have been even more eventful than usual. We have been able to secure funding to purchase Finzean Old School which along with Birse Kirk and Hall bought last summer, give the Trust an impressive property holding in the community.

Further funding has been obtained this spring, which will allow us to extend and maintain the Archive. It is now up to all of us to use and support this marvelous facility, which is a valuable repository of the cultural heritage of Birse parish. Part of this funding has also allowed us to recruit a development officer and a secretary to the Trustees, which will relieve the increased work load on the home team, an inevitable consequence of the continuing success of BCT.

There have been many other activities, the latest, as I write, being the feature on the Finzean School Wood, screened by the Beechgrove Gardens TV programme. I believe that we can all agree that it was a great example of a community effort. Well done to all of those involved.

Do come to the BCT AGM on June 23<sup>rd</sup> to hear more about what BCT has done and plans to do and also, as in the past have an enjoyable and entertaining evening.

*Jim Gordon*  
Chairman



Jim Gordon with the Minister for Energy Steven Timms and local MP Sir Robert Smith at BCT offices in January this year.

## NATURAL HERITAGE GROUP

### Breeding Birds in Birse



The North-East Scotland Breeding Bird Atlas is a five-year project overseen by the Scottish Ornithologist's Club to map the distribution of breeding birds in Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen City. The project relies on volunteers submitting records from 2km x 2km squares known as 'tetrads', of which there are 40 in Birse parish. BCT has been helping to coordinate coverage and collate records in this area since the survey started in 2002, and so far we have records from about 30 tetrads.

The information collected so far shows that the most widespread breeding birds in the parish are the wren, the meadow pipit and the buzzard, each of which have been recorded in 21 tetrads, while the chaffinch and the curlew are close behind, each being found in 19 tetrads. In total, 90 species of birds have been recorded in the parish.

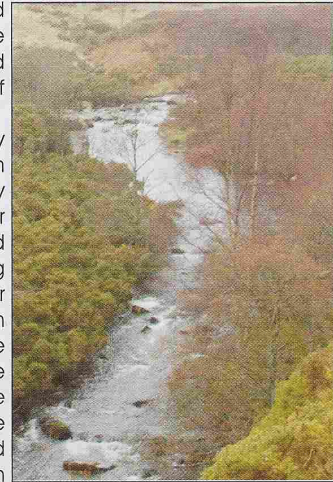
BCT members can help with this project by contributing any records of breeding birds (e.g. nests, fledglings, adult birds carrying food in their beaks). Records of garden birds are especially useful as they are more easily seen by local residents. Any records of rarer species will be completely confidential.

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### Commonly Pinewoods

As part of its response to the fire that destroyed part of the Forest of Birse Commonly pinewoods in 2003, BCT has carried out major work to improve and extend the track up the east side of the Finlets. This now provides an important route by which people and equipment can be moved up the hill in the event of a future fire. BCT has also erected additional fire warning signs along the Forest of Birse road.

At the end of March, BCT successfully completed its first five year Forestry Commission (FC) grant schemes over the Commonly pinewoods and earned praise from the FC for the high standard to which the work involved had been carried out. BCT is currently consulting locally over its proposals for another 5 year programme of work under the new Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme. The proposals include continued deer control to encourage the natural regeneration of the pinewoods, the planting of additional local origin native broadleaves, other habitat improvements and further work on the existing tracks to bring them up to an appropriate standard.



### FCS Partnership

BCT continues to work closely with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) as part of their joint management of Balfour Wood and Slewdrum Forest. Major fellings are currently underway at both these sites to remove non-native conifers from riparian zones. The clearings will improve these habitat and are also opening up impressive views from the woodlands. Another attractive development has been the BCT initiated project with FCS and private land owners that has resulted in over 600 metres of roadside dykes being repaired at Balfour Wood.

The partnership between FCS and BCT has long been regarded by Scottish Ministers and senior FCS staff as a model of its kind (see Updates 5 & 6) and BCT has now been commissioned by FCS to produce a case study of the partnership and the benefits it has produced. This study will, in turn, help BCT in the continuing negotiations over BCT's potential purchase of Slewdrum Forest on behalf of the community.