

# CAITHNESS COUNTRYSIDE VOLUNTEERS

## SEABIRD WORKSHOP, 11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2006

The Caithness Countryside Volunteers is a small group of individuals who dedicate time to promote and undertake environmental projects. The aims of the group are to improve public access into the countryside, enhance wildlife habitats and upgrade countryside facilities. Past projects have included beach cleans, planting schemes, building bird boxes and clearing vegetation from paths.

The East Caithness seabird colonies are recognised of national and international importance for the high numbers which come to breed each year. The cliffs are seldom visited and awareness of these creatures is poor in the county. The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of the fabulous seabird colonies of the East Caithness Coast and to educate the volunteers about their life cycles, number trends and possible threats. An introduction into monitoring was also given.

The Highland Council Rangers brought along a range of stuffed seabirds to complement a power point presentation by Mr Bob Swann who is an independent monitor for Scottish Natural Heritage. The rangers also organised promotion for the workshop and undertook risk assessments and guided walk out to the Brough seabird colony.

After the presentation the group stopped for soup and sandwiches at the Nethercliffe hotel. The group then took cars out to the Castle of Old Wick car park and walked along the cliff edge to view the Brough sea bird colony. Volunteers were issued with binoculars and a telescope was at hand. The volunteers watched the birds and asked questions while behaviour and identification was explained out in the field.

12 people attended the event plus one ranger and presenter. A press release featured in the John O'Groat Journal and local web page, Caithness.org (see attachment). The Moray Firth Partnership funding was also acknowledged in the Caithness Countryside Volunteers programme of events, posters and mentioned during the actual workshop.

Feedback for the attendees was very positive, all feeling they had enjoyed the day and had learnt a great deal.