

The Nature Page

Seeing something special every day

BY ROY BAKER

The feathery, hair-like strands in the photograph on the front cover were over one inch long. The picture was taken on a cold frosty morning in January in the woods on the way up to Callander Craggs. The unusual growth was observed on odd pieces of dead branches that had broken off the trees.

By mid-morning the hoar frost had already melted from the trees and the growth looked like some sort of fungus. But on touch it simply dissolved, showing it to be frost. The photo was shown to a fungus expert at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh - his explanation was that it had arisen through the freezing of moisture given off by a fungus's natural processes.

On Saturday 9th February as I begin to write this article, a thrush has been singing for several days, yellow crocus are wide open in the warm sunshine, daffodils are in bud. Yet only two weeks previously, Cornton Road was closed, with deep flood water, and gales prior to that had felled several trees alongside the River Allan and the Forglen Burn. So the occasional sunny day has been a welcome bonus.



Taken on 15th Jan during a cycle ride to Doune via the narrow Carse roads, the photo above shows a favourite view of Inverardoch Mains Farm. The low afternoon sun casts long shadows of the bare trees. In the background are the snow covered hills Stuc a Chroin and Ben Vorlich.

On or beside the Airthrey Loch in the Stirling University Campus there are now three brown Chinese geese.



These domesticated geese were originally bred from wild Chinese swan geese, the male developing a much larger knob on top of his beak than the female, unlike the wild swan goose which has none at all.

One has been around for some time now and I was once much amused to see it marching across the road towards the halls of residence, beak held high, honking loudly and doing the "goose-step"! Does anyone know how or when they arrived?



Ben Ledi just before mist on the left started to sweep in from Loch Venachar

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