

Autumn 2014



Lothian Talk

Lothians Members Centre Newsletter

<http://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/local-member-group/lothian/>

What have the peatbogs ever done for us?

As part of our 50th anniversary celebrations we have a special lecture by Clifton Bain, Director IUCN UK peatland programme

Tuesday 16 September, Linlithgow Burgh Halls, at 7.30pm (optional supper at 6pm, see below).

For many people, peat means bags of compost or barren wasteland. The true importance of peatlands is extraordinary as we begin to appreciate their vital role in providing clean water, homes for wildlife and tackling climate change. A healthy peatbog is a wonderful mosaic of colourful mosses with unusual plants and rich in bird song. For centuries we have been damaging these special places without realising we are losing something valuable. In a new enlightened era a global initiative to restore peatlands is now underway with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and other conservation partners helping to lead the way. With the help of Scottish Government funds projects across Scotland, from the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland to the Lothian 'mosses', are bringing life back into these jewels of our countryside.

Informal supper

You are also invited to an informal supper from 6pm in the Star and Garter, beside Linlithgow train station. Please let Averil Stewart know if you want a meal so the hotel can be given numbers. RSVP: 01506 842676 or gaveril.stewart@virgin.net

There are regular trains from Edinburgh to Linlithgow and the X38 bus goes every 20 minutes from Edinburgh (final destination is Stirling).

Can you help?

A volunteer is needed to send welcome letters to new members in Midlothian. Work done at home, takes about an hour a month. Please, can you give that time? For further information contact LMC Membership Secretary, Jill Neufeld on 0131 441 5446.

Can collections

April's collections saw a total of £1,595.51, almost half of that raised in 2013/14 over nine days. Next collections:
Sat 6 Sept, Tesco, Linlithgow
Sat 20 Sep, ASDA, Straiton
Fri 17 Oct, Sainsbury's, Linlithgow
Contact: gaveril.stewart@virgin.net

Winter talks

Thursday 9 October 2014

Handa Island: the highs and lows, Sven Rasmussen

Sven will present a slideshow covering the highlights and low points (and some of the in-between bits) of looking after Handa Island. This talk will give a unique, behind-the-scenes look at what's involved in managing an island reserve in the far north west of Scotland.

Thursday 13 November 2014

Birds of Corstorphine Hill, Ian Moore

Ian is a lifelong birder and former amateur warden in Norfolk and Leicestershire. He is out on Corstorphine Hill several times a day and has accumulated a good knowledge of the annual bird cycle during the past seven years. About 80 species can be seen on the hill during the year.

Thursday 11 December 2014

Wild about Winter, Anna Canning, Floramedica

Plants both edible and medicinal to be found on our doorstep.

Lectures are held at 33 Melville Street, Edinburgh and start at 7.30pm. Admission is free but donations are appreciated.

Disabled access available by prior arrangement, please contact Karen Pearson 07795 066490. Non-members welcome.

New member wanted

The Membership Sub-committee organises trips and lectures and we are looking for a new member. We meet five times a year in Edinburgh to plan the programme. We are hoping our new member will, in time, become minute secretary. If you would like to help contribute to our programme and would be willing to take the minutes at our meetings please email us on swtlothians@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk.

New email communication

The LMC has been given the email addresses members gave when they joined SWT. Now we can email all of you with details of events between issues of Lothian Talk. (This is different to the yahoo group emails, that provide reminders). If you aren't getting emails and would like to join our list contact us on swtlothians@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

Volunteers needed to help manage our Nature Reserves

We would be very pleased to hear from any members in the Lothians who would like to get involved in helping to manage our local Nature Reserves. Although formal responsibility for management of the Lothian Reserves lies with the South East Scotland Area Reserves Manager, Julian Warman, based at HQ, we try to assist by having volunteers who can help with the day-to-day management at all our reserves.

In practice, some of our reserves have active management committees, whereas others have only occasional visits from a local members or, in a couple of cases, no volunteer input at all. Even where we have an active committee at present it would be good to get more people involved.

So if you are interested, even if you have only limited time at present, we would very much like to hear from you. Your involvement might be no more than making regular visits to check for, and report, any problems, or you might like to progress to keeping records of wildlife sightings, carrying out simple surveys, helping with open days, or becoming involved in deciding on, and organising, the management work.

If you are interested please contact Ken Knowles (0131 539 6643). You can also find other volunteering opportunities in this issue of Lothian Talk and advertised on the Scottish WildlifeTrust's website.

Ken Knowles

Planning matters - summer 2014

In Midlothian there has been an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) consultation on proposed infilling of land between Pentland Burn and the A720 city bypass, Old Pentland Road, Edinburgh.

In West Lothian there is an application for erecting three wind turbines, all within the boundary of Drumtassie old workings Local Biodiversity Site. The application accompanying the EIA identifies potential damage to habitats on site, but, typically, appears not to mention its LBS status. The EIA also specifies potential impact on otters. SNH has indicated a licence would probably be issued for appropriate mitigation measures.

In Edinburgh the latest Craighouse Campus planning application (adjacent to the Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve) has been withdrawn following a large number of objections and a new application

will be submitted during the summer. However, it was clarified that the actual development footprint on natural greenspace in the area was not significant and all the major natural heritage features would survive these applications with a considerable number of native trees being planted in proposed new landscaping.

The City of Edinburgh Council Local Biodiversity Site committee, upon which we sit, met to consider adding the 'orchard meadow' to the Local Biodiversity Site designation in the area but it did not quite make the criteria to be consistent with all other such areas in the city.

Nonetheless, it will not be built on and we proposed that some of those proposed new native trees be added to the 'orchard' aspect of the meadow – to give that aspect sustainability – while, of course, maintaining the open 'meadow' aspect of that area so heavily used

and enjoyed by the public.

Planning matters contacts Midlothian and East Lothian

Write to Susan Manson at: mansons@castlesteads.net or by post to Castlesteads, Dalkeith, EH22 2NJ

West Lothian

Write to Dr Cameron Easton at: dr.c.easton@gmail.com or to 1 Bellsburn Avenue, Linlithgow, West Lothian, EH49 7LD.

Susan has been doing sterling work investigating applications and Cameron and I attended the annual Planning workshop organised by the HQ planning officers to boost the confidence and impact of our planning volunteers around Scotland.

Tim Duffy

LMC Planning Secretary
Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED
Tel: 0131 228 8785

Record a raptor public survey

Have you seen a **Buzzard**, **Kestrel** or **Red Kite** in the Lothians and Scottish Borders? If so, The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) would love to hear from you. TWIC is the biological records centre for the Lothians and Scottish Borders and collects and disseminates information about our local wildlife.

The survey asks **what** you saw (the species), **where** you saw it (the grid reference, postcode or address), **when** you saw it (the date) and **who** saw it (your name and contact details). Your records will become

part of TWIC's 2014 public wildlife survey, raising awareness of the distribution of our beautiful birds of prey and providing data that TWIC will use in its day-to-day work to inform planning, site management and research projects. If you want to submit a record you can return a survey postcard (available to download from TWIC's website) or submit your sighting online at www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/raptor_sightings.php where you can also find more information about the survey and each of the three species.



Kestrel Photo: Dean Bricknell

Fundraising cyclists visit 20 Lothian reserves in one day

On 17-18 May, Tim Duffy, Lothians Members Centre Chairman, and Paul Ritchie, the SWT's Director of Finance, cycled between all 20 of the Lothians SWT reserves (around 128 miles). But this is just the start, for they intend to cycle between all 119 SWT reserves in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Trust and to raise funds to support the work of the Trust for the next 50 years.

Many of our convenors attended their reserves for a couple of hours to welcome and encourage the cyclists and to greet other visitors; giving talks about the work volunteers do on their local reserve.

The event was advertised to 2,283 Lothians members by email (for those for whom we have an approved email address, see page 2 story) and eight newspapers in the Lothians were sent the details. More than 60 extra visits to our Lothian reserves occurred because of this publicity. Attendance was particularly higher for the Red Moss open day (always scheduled for this weekend as part of National Biodiversity Week) where we had a record attendance; nearly double the normal number of visitors (See separate report).

The cycle tour was designed to end at Red Moss and Tim and Paul did get there - tired, but satisfied, albeit at 17.45pm by which time most visitors had gone - the reserve committee members (see photo) kindly waited for them to finish the event in style. Members wishing to support this sponsored



Tim and Paul arrive at Red Moss

cycle ride are encouraged to visit Tim and Paul's JustGiving page at: <http://www.justgiving.com/SWT-50th-Anniversary-Cycle-between-the-120-Scottish-Wildlife-Trust-Nature-Reserves>.

Red Moss openday

The annual Red Moss open day on 18 May saw a record number visitors, with 113 members of the public visiting the reserve and an additional 10 passers-by stopping by the stand for a chat. The pond dipping activity proved particularly popular with some visitors staying for an hour or two to watch as several palmate newts and five adult great diving beetles (another open day record) were found. Other wildlife highlights included sightings of green hairstreak butterfly from the southern board walk and large red damselfly near the pond, all this set against the continuous background singing of willow warblers.

An interview with Eric Brown

Eric has been a SWT member for more than 40 years. He shares his story with us.



How did you first become interested in wildlife?

When I first collected tadpoles as a small boy.

What's your most memorable wildlife moment?

I have been very fortunate in visiting many different countries and particularly remember watching orang-utans in Borneo, fur seals in New Zealand, and turtles laying eggs on a beach in Malaysia. In Scotland I remember the first time I landed on the Bass Rock and walked among the nesting gannets.

How long have you been a member of SWT?

More than 40 years.

What made you decide to join SWT?

Because it was concerned with the conservation of all types of wildlife.

Which role in SWT have you enjoyed the most and why?

I enjoyed my role on the membership committee because it is involved with various aspects of the Trust's work.

Can you tell us about your professional life and whether it had an impact on your SWT activities?

As a retired bank manager I have been able to be involved in financial aspects of the Trust. I was treasurer of the Lothian's branch for about 20 years and also served on the financial committee. I have also acted as a voluntary lecturer, giving talks about the

Trust's work to organisations such as Probus clubs and retirement clubs. Along with the late Charles Pountain, I started can collections. These were originally street collections and later collections in supermarkets, which still continue and provide most of the members centre's income. I have also organised and led outings to reserves, such as Montrose Basin and St Abbs Head.

What concerns you most about the environment today?

The growth of the human population worldwide and its effect on the environment.

What would you hope for the future of SWT?

Although the conservation of particular species such as red squirrels and water voles is important, it is perhaps more important to conserve whole ecosystems by creating significant reserves.

Autumn outdoor events

Thursday 14 August - Bat walk. 8-45pm-10pm, Blackford Pond, Edinburgh

Meet at the gate to Blackford Pond on Cluny Gardens (at the junction with Oswald Road). £3 donation to the Lothian Bat Group is appreciated. Bring a torch and some insect repellent.

There is no need to book in advance.

Saturday 6 September - Birdwatching. 10.30am-1.30pm Musselburgh lagoons

Meet at Goose Green, end of Balcarres Road, near the mouth of the Esk. (OS Landranger 66: NT 347734).

Saturday 11 October - Goose walk. 3pm-6pm, Aberlady

Meet at Aberlady Reserve Car

Park. (OS Landranger 66: NT 472804).

Saturday 25 October - Forest walk. 10.30-12.30, Beecraigs County Park, near Linlithgow.

Meet in Sutherland Building (NT 007746) for a talk and walk on Storm Damage and Forest Management, led by Countryside Ranger Tracey Smith. Cost £3.50.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247) having its registered office at Scottish Wildlife Trust, 110 Commercial Street, Edinburgh, EH4 6NF. It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).

Lothian Talk is printed by Abbey Print of Dalkeith on environmentally-friendly FSC paper (Forestry Stewardship Council).