

## News from Wildlife Watch

A young member of Wildlife Watch reports:

My name is Rachel and I have been going to Cramond Wildlife Watch since it started last year. I normally go with my brother but you can bring a friend along if you want.

We meet at a large house that is said to be haunted. The house is near the sea and there are wild grounds around it for exploring.

At the meetings we do lots of different activities. We sometimes play games and nearly always create something to take home. I have made a bug hotel from bamboo poles and string. In the winter, we made fat balls for the birds in our gardens with fat, fruit and seeds – it was very stinky! I also created Christmas decorations from nature's small surprises like pine cones. At the last meeting, I planted seeds and they are growing bigger everyday.

We always get the chance to go out and explore nature at each meeting. Sometimes we look for plants, sometimes we look for bugs or signs of larger animals. You should always bring a pair of wellies if it has been raining as it can get pretty muddy.

There's no need to bring anything to eat or drink as we are always treated to a drink and snack after our walk. I have always learned something new by the end of the meeting.

Rachel Hetherington



If you would like more information about *Wildlife Watch*, please get in touch with Donna Mathieson: [dmathieson@swt.org.uk](mailto:dmathieson@swt.org.uk)

## Planning Matters - Summer 2010

### West Lothian

The inaugural meeting of a new West Lothian council-led Local Biodiversity Site (LBS) committee took place recently with the usual informed SWT input. Each of the four councils of the Lothians finally has its own formal Local Nature Conservation System (LNCS) being developed and managed by 'TWIC' – The Wildlife Information Centre (see <http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk>). The situation has returned to full coverage of the Lothians for such local wildlife site systems, as previously when there was an SWT-led system under the name 'Local Wildlife Sites'.

### Edinburgh

The Dreghorn Polo Fields fight to prevent housing development destroying local greenspace and wildlife-friendly green corridors linking the rural surround with the heart of Edinburgh has resurfaced again. Locals as usual are putting up a good response to protect the wildlife habitat in their backyard.

News is just in of a proposal for a mountain-biking track at the South Queensferry Hopetoun Road Wildlife Site - also a long-proposed formal Local Nature Reserve, held up by classic planning blight of proposed land sales at the nearby marina. This will be looked at carefully – LNRs are for people *and* wildlife, and as long as activities that bring people into an LNR don't scare the wildlife away or bury it under man-made materials then it might be compatible.

Tim Duffy, Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary  
Flat 4F2, 34 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 1ED  
Tel/Ans 0131 228 8785

### Midlothian

Proposals have resurfaced for restoring the building and the 'historic landscape' of Mavisbank estate. Consultants hired to confer with interested parties in the proposals wrote asking for any person or organisation interested in the site to come forward. We pointed out that this council-protected Wildlife Site had long been proposed as a formal Local Nature Reserve first, with historic aspects to be enhanced as a second priority. The response was as if they did not expect other serious proposals to be already out there and were not sure they should be consulting people like us. We encourage the consultants to get in touch with us again!

### Lothian Talk

Feedback and contributions to:  
[lothiantalk@qab.org.uk](mailto:lothiantalk@qab.org.uk)



# Lothian Talk

<http://www.swtlothians.org.uk>

Lothians Members Centre Newsletter  
Summer 2010

### Central Forest Development

Thursday 30 September 2010

This talk will describe the work of the Central Scotland Forest Trust and how this links to a vision of motivating and inspiring people to take the lead in their own communities and to make a positive difference to the health and wellbeing of people and place. It will highlight connections between the Trust and government priorities, and use examples of what is happening with an exciting and unique project named 'Communities Along The Carron'.

Christine Bell is a Non-Executive Director of CSFT

### Mammals and Birds of the Cairngorms National Park

Thursday 11 November 2010

The Cairngorms National Park includes a wide variety of habitats between frozen mountain wastes and the relatively balmy valleys of Spey and Dee, giving rise to a correspondingly wide variety of animals and birds. In this talk we take a journey of discovery, beginning with white hares and eagles among the barren Cairngorm summits and ending with the ospreys and otters of Strathspey. In between we meet up with tree-dwelling ducks, threatened cats, tree-climbing badgers and birds with punk hairstyles. The presentation is illustrated with scores of images, sounds and video clips accumulated over many years of wildlife photography, radio broadcasts and television work with BBC Springwatch, Nature's Calendar and similar programmes.

Allan Bantick is Chairman of the Scottish Wildlife Trust

### Red Kite Reintroduction - 20 years On

Thursday 6 December 2010

Having become extinct as a breeding bird in Scotland as a result of human persecution, the red kite has, in a programme begun in 1989, now been reintroduced in four Scottish locations, breeding successfully in the wild with a sustainable and increasing population. It is hoped that eventually the species will recolonise all areas of suitable habitat. The reintroduction project also supports a number of facilities which allow the public to view red kites without fear of disturbance to the birds and provide rural communities with diversification and tourism development opportunities. Red kite reintroduction in the UK is seen as one of the most successful projects of its type anywhere in the world, and the approach is now imitated elsewhere.

Duncan Orr-Ewing is Head of Species and Land Management for RSPB Scotland

### Remember...

**Bat Walk 12 August at 8.30pm**

Meet inside the gate to Blackford Pond on Cluny Gardens at the junction with Oswald Road. A £3 donation would be appreciated.

Lectures start at 7.30 and are held at 33 Melville Street Edinburgh. Admission is free but donations appreciated. Non-members welcome.

### Changes to SWT Publication policy

Readers of Lothian Talk will note that there is no annual Lothians Events Card with the current edition of *Scottish Wildlife*. This is due to a change in publications policy at SWT. Local events are now included in the Events & Activities Calendar which now accompanies each edition of *Scottish Wildlife* and which gives national coverage to local events including outings and lectures.

### ... and an apology.

Some readers may have noticed surprising and possibly off-putting guidance symbols associated with events published in the spring edition of the Events & Activities Calendar covering March to August. This was caused by an editorial error at national level for which SWT apologise, and the Lothians Members' Centre committee pass on this apology to anyone inconvenienced by this misleading 'guidance'.

### CONTACTS:

**Chairman:** Jim Hewlett  
Tel: 01501 785206

**Treasurer:** Christine Johnston  
Tel: 0131 447 2138

**Secretary:** Gordon Swann  
Tel: 0131 334 4769

**Fundraising:** Averil Stewart  
Tel: 01506 842676

**Edinburgh:** Jill Neufeld  
Tel: 0131 441 5446

**West Lothian:** Tom Inglis  
Tel: 01506 883 697

**East Lothian:** Liz Gray  
Tel: 01875 822946

**Midlothian:** Quintin Blane  
Tel: 01968 670017

**Lothian Talk Editor:**  
Quintin Blane

## Forthcoming Events

### FOSSILS and FAMILIES Sunday 5 September 2010

Join in a geological walk to Barns Ness on 5 September.

SWT members are invited to join in an Open Day when guides will be available from 13.00 - 16.00. This is a good event for families to join in.

Barns Ness (NT 715 773) is located 4 km east of Dunbar, next to White Sands. From the A1 turn onto the A1087 at the Cement Works junction east of Dunbar, go past the entrance to the Cement Works and turn right onto a minor road after 400 m, signposted for the Caravan Site. Follow this road to White Sands beach passing the new lake in the quarry on the way. There is plenty of parking and toilets and there is expected to be an exhibition tent at the end of the car park from where walks will start.

A short walk along the shore from White Sands to the Barns Ness lighthouse allows you to discover the most extensive limestone outcrops in central Scotland. There are also sedimentary rocks including sandstone, mudstone and coal, and plenty of fossils, the remains of life that thrived in tropical seas 320 million years ago. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest so hammering is not encouraged. There is the Scottish Fossil Code and participants will be given advice on best practice in the collection, identification, conservation and storage of fossil specimens.

This is a rocky shore with low cliffs so care needs to be taken. Come prepared with suitable footwear and sensible clothing.

### RED KITES

#### Visit to Ardgaty, near Doune - Saturday 6 November 2010

Red kites, which became extinct in Scotland about 130 years ago, have been successfully re-introduced to several parts of Britain. At Lerrocks Farm on Ardgaty Estate near Doune these birds can be observed from a purpose-built hide where food is put out daily, enabling watchers to see their flying acrobatics. Other birds which might also be seen from the hide include peregrines, kestrels, buzzards, sparrowhawks and hen harriers.

We hope to arrange a visit to Ardgaty on the afternoon of Saturday 6 November 2010. Feeding time is in the afternoon so we would expect to arrive at Ardgaty by 1.30pm travelling there by car. The charge for visiting the hide is £4 per person.

If you would like to come on the outing please complete the attached slip and return to Averil Stewart, 29 Highfield Crescent, Linlithgow EH49 7BG no later than 25 September. Those applying will be contacted during October with details of travel arrangements.

#### Red Kites at Ardgaty

To Averil Stewart, 29 Highfield Crescent, Linlithgow EH49 7BG

I /we would like to come on the visit to Ardgaty on Saturday 6 November

NAME/S

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

I/we could offer lifts to

persons

OR I/we would like a lift.

Please complete and delete as appropriate and send to Averil Stewart before 25 September

### BEGINNERS' FUNGI FORAY with Sam Ranscombe

#### Saturday 30 October 2010

10.00-12.00

Join Sam Ranscombe, former BTCV mycology apprentice, on a beginners' fungi foray at SWT Bawsinch wildlife reserve in Edinburgh. Sam will help us to explore fungi in the grassland and woodland habitats of Bawsinch where we will learn how to identify different fungi and discover why they are important to us and our environment. All ages welcome. Meet at the reserve entrance on Duddingston Road West. Note there are no public toilets on site and parking is limited. Duddingston Road West is served by Lothian bus 42. No need to book. For further information contact Sam on 0131 665 4833. A donation of £3.00 per adult will be appreciated.

The unexpected sighting of a red kite was a highlight of our regular Lothians visit to Aberlady Bay in April.



Photo: Laney Scott

### ABERLADY GOOSEWALK

#### Saturday 9 October 2010 3pm

There can be few more memorable spectacles than the sight and sound of thousands of geese flying in overhead before descending en masse to the safety of their roost at dusk. In a break from tradition, our October visit to Aberlady will take place in the afternoon so that we have a chance to witness this amazing phenomenon.

Goose numbers at Aberlady peak in early to mid October with counts of over twenty thousand before the majority fly further south to winter in places like Norfolk. The geese, mostly pink-footed but with reasonable numbers of greylag and some barnacle and brent, feed on the surrounding farmlands before returning to the saltmarsh in the late afternoon. Just how do you count such vast numbers of birds and how can you tell the difference between species simply by their calls? Aberlady Warden and goose expert John Harrison will enlighten us.

Initially we will walk out through the reserve looking out for overwintering waders, duck and divers, including godwit, dunlin, knot, long-tailed duck, teal, wigeon, red throated divers and others. We may even be lucky enough to spot hunting peregrine, merlin or short eared owl.

Why not make a family outing of it? If you have time before the walk you may wish to pay a visit to Gosford estate or pop into the SOC's Waterston House in Aberlady where there are regular art exhibitions with a natural history theme, in the past featuring work by Laurie Campbell amongst others.

The walk is likely to take between two and half to three hours. You should take warm clothing, waterproofs and good footwear as well as binoculars. We will meet up at the Reserve car park east of Aberlady village at grid ref NT 472804.

## Reserve News: Red Moss of Balerno

In recent years the southern half of the Red Moss boardwalk has been showing its age and SWT conservation teams have repaired sections as the wood has rotted and given way. The boardwalk, constructed in 1993, provides able-bodied and wheelchair access across this important but vulnerable raised bog habitat and learn more about raised bogs from the information boards along the route. Red Moss of Balerno is the only raised bog in Edinburgh. Large areas of lowland raised bog have been lost and damaged by drainage, peat extraction for fuel and horticultural use, and reclamation for agriculture and forestry.

Raised bog originates as a result of a gradual accumulation of peat since the last ice age (about 10,000 years ago) which is up to 6 metres deep in places. The water logging, lack of nutrients and acidic conditions on raised bogs mean they are home to a range of specialist organisms: sphagnum moss, cotton grass and cranberry are particularly well adapted to live in these extreme conditions of wet and acidity, conditions which preserve plant material such as pollen and provide an historical record of the changes in vegetation around Red Moss since the last ice age. By removing trees and damming ditches SWT tries to prevent the peat drying out and being lost.

SWT conservation teams from Armadale, Dalkeith and Galashiels began removing the old boardwalk in April and then constructed a new boardwalk in its place. Where the boardwalk reaches the pond on the western side of the moss a platform has been built for pond dipping. The funds for the replacement of the old boardwalk were provided by WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Limited – Landfill Tax) and Lothians Members' Centre. In addition the section of path between the reserve entrance and the boardwalk will be widened, new information boards provided, dams constructed and woody species removed from the bog surface. The new boardwalk is made of timber treated with preservative so it will hopefully outlast the previous boardwalk which was constructed of untreated timber. SWT hopes to obtain funding so the northern part of the boardwalk can be replaced and built to the same wider specification as the southern section so the entire loop is accessible to more visitors.

*Julian Warman, Reserve Manager Central East, SWT*

Visitor information for Red Moss Reserve and a location map can be viewed on the Lothians Members Centres website:

<http://www.swtlothians.org.uk/reserves.html>.

## So you think you know your Scottish wildlife?

Some brain-teasers from the light-hearted quiz following our AGM in April. Mostly about *places*.

1. If you can sit by his tables and then with a little walking view his maidens what island would you be on?
2. This naval reserve is swift. Which reserve and which county is it in?
3. Which reserve features an abandoned village, a big door and a Puffin Bay?
4. What is the Silver Flowe and which part of the country would you be in if you were visiting it?
5. If you were to encounter the Wailing Widow, what kind of feature would you be viewing?

*Answers next time!*