

# Lothian Talk

<http://lothiansmemberscentre.homestead.com>



Lothians Members Centre Newsletter of the Scottish Wildlife Trust Summer 2009

## More than mushrooms! Thursday 1 October 2009

Autumn is traditionally known as the time to foray for mushrooms, but all year round there are many kinds of fungi in the Lothians performing vital functions in the ecosystem as recyclers of dead and decaying wood. These wood-rotting fungi help tell the history of our woodlands and they can also indicate the nature of a habitat and what other plants and insects may be present. Sam Ranscombe is studying wood-rotting fungi as an apprentice mentored by expert mycologist Roy Watling at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. The apprenticeship is part of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Natural Talent scheme, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which aims to train the next generation of naturalists. Sam will be speaking about her experiences as a mycology apprentice and sharing some of her fungi discoveries in the Lothians.

*Sam is a SWT member and is convenor of Johnston Terrace wildlife reserve with her husband Peter.*

### Lothian Talk

Feedback and contributions are welcome.

Please send them to:

**[lothiantalk@gab.org.uk](mailto:lothiantalk@gab.org.uk)**

The next edition will be published in November.

## Celebrating and protecting Scotland's Seas

Thursday 12 November

By territorial area, Scotland is more than half sea! More than half of Scotland's wildlife lives in the sea, including 40% of the world's grey seals, 28 species of whales and dolphins, internationally important seabird populations and spectacular coral reefs. After many years of campaigning a Marine (Scotland) Bill could hold the key to protect and recover this amazing sealife. Key to its success will be putting the environment first. A robust marine planning system and well managed network of marine protected areas is essential. Come along to this colourful talk to find out more about Scotland's amazing sea life and how to help protect it.

*Calum Duncan is Scottish Conservation Manager of the Marine Conservation Society*

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

## Beginner's Fungi Foray with Sam Ranscombe

Saturday 31 October 2009  
10.30am

Join a beginners' fungi foray at SWT Bawsinch wildlife reserve in Edinburgh led by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Natural Talent mycology apprentice Sam Ranscombe. Sam will help us to explore fungi in the grassland and woodland habitats of Bawsinch wildlife reserve where we will learn how to identify different kinds of fungi and discover why they are important to us and our environment. All ages welcome. Meet at the reserve entrance on Duddingston Road West. Please note there are no public toilets on site and car parking is limited. Duddingston Road West is served by Lothian bus 42.

*For further information please contact Sam on 0131 665 4833.*



## SWT Lothian Members Yahoo Group

Have you ever missed one of the local SWT talks or outings because it slipped your mind? If you have e-mail that need not happen again. Why not sign up to the SWT Lothian Members Group on Yahoo? All subscribers receive an e-mail reminder approximately one week before each event, and, as the group is simply a channel to issue reminders and only the administrator is allowed to post messages, there is no problem with spam. The group currently has 52 members and if you would like to join, you need to sign up to Yahoo Groups at [uk.yahoo.com](http://uk.yahoo.com) (click *Groups* on the left hand side of the page), which is free, and then submit a membership request to the administrator of our group at [groups.yahoo.com/group/swt-lothian](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swt-lothian). You need never miss a meet again!

*Colin Shepherd*

# Planning Matters - Summer 2009

## Midlothian

The proposed wind farm at Auchencorth Moss - to which SWT have objected due to the presence of active bog there - has been reduced from 18 to 14 turbines. An independent survey has been commissioned by local activists and undertaken to properly assess the potential damage to pink-footed geese by the existence there of such a farm and has found cause for concern. This is being discussed with SNH.

We are now receiving electronic e-mail screenings of all planning applications that may affect significant wildlife in Midlothian - following agreement with the council and the Lothian Wildlife Information Centre - alongside the West Lothian and East Lothian screenings that we have been receiving for more than a year. This makes our input into natural heritage planning considerably more efficient for all concerned.

## West Lothian

Three sets of planning proposals for windfarms continue to engage our attention. One scheme, which would be very prominent on Harrows Law, at the extreme western end of the Pentland Hills, has been called in by Scottish Ministers, and news of their decision is awaited. More acceptable from the environmental viewpoint would be the extension into West Lothian of the existing South Lanarkshire windfarm at Blacklaw, close to the hamlet of Climpy near Forth. It seems likely that West Lothian Council will grant permission for this installation shortly. A start has been made on the windfarm at Pates Hill between West Calder and Woolfords. This scheme will in many respects be a model for future proposals, the most important aspect of the proposals from the wildlife angle being the encouragement of different habitats along the existing watercourses, and the detoxification of this former colliery site.

## City of Edinburgh

We are pleased to report that the Cala Ventures Ltd proposal for 28 houses and 3 villas on Maybury Road - which in original plans was to be a 'significant area of buffer planting and open space' - has now been withdrawn and is no longer a threat at present.

There is currently a public consultation on a review of all local landscape designations (replacing Areas of Great Landscape Value and Areas of Outstanding Landscape Quality in the next city-wide Local Development Plan). At roughly the same time there is a potentially significant - for urban wildlife and people with access to it - consultation on a draft Open Space Audit for the City.

*Tim Duffy*

*Lothians Members Centre Planning Secretary*

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Edinburgh, EH9 1ED*

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## Highlights of 2008 in the Lothian Reserves

At **Bogburn Lagoons** breeding of water rail and sand martins was a highlight. Barn owls were not seen again around Bawsinch after last year's recorded breeding. At **Hadfast Valley** ringing of birds continued with 31 tree sparrows ringed during the winter 2007/8.

Mammals are often elusive. At **Bogburn Lagoons** several water vole tunnels were located, water shrew was recorded and bank vole added to the reserve list. Natterer's bat was again recorded at **Hermand Birchwood** and lots of bats, presumed to be Daubenton's, were seen at **Milkhall Pond**.

Insect sightings are also reported though largely limited to butterflies and dragonflies. Recorded numbers of northern brown argus butterflies were further down at **East Lammermuir Deans** but this year it is hoped that with better fencing to protect the rock rose numbers may increase. **Bogburn Lagoons** recorded eight species of Odonata: this is probably the best reserve in the Lothians for damselflies and dragonflies. Moth trapping continued at **Hadfast Valley** and seven new species recorded including such wonderfully-named species as True Lover's Knot and Triple Spotted Pug. Last year the wet summer has been reflected in many of the reserve reports particularly affecting butterflies, moths and breeding birds. However wet summers are far from all bad - at **Red Moss** the rain greatly helped to maintain wet conditions on the raised bog with crowberry much more noticeable than in previous years.

With regard to plants, **Linhouse Glen** has proven to be a superb site for orchids - it is well worth a visit although not the easiest of places to access.

**Woodhall Dean** was noted in 2007 as a particularly good site for adders. In 2008 there were four adders seen at one time - apparently around where the work party was having lunch. Whether they were offered a share of the sandwiches is not recorded.

As ever a great deal of voluntary work went on at reserves throughout the year, and thanks should be

*Ken Knowles*

# Visit Reports

## ***Musselburgh Lagoons: Saturday 28 March 2009***

Fourteen of us were led by Nick Aitken, the Ranger, on a cold day with a strong northerly wind, which nevertheless proved to be a rewarding morning.

At our first stop by the pond, we heard chaffinch, and saw blackbird, two wood pigeons, and plenty of crows and rooks. On the water were tufted duck, goldeneye, mergansers displaying, mallard, moorhen, and swans. We moved on to the hide at the first scrape where almost our first sighting was of three shoveler, which excited everyone as they are rarely seen here. There were many teal, some redshank, shelduck, and one black-tailed godwit. Further off a curlew was spotted, but sadly we did not see snipe.

On the seawall the first bird spotted by Nick was at first thought to be a velvet scoter. However, the combined efforts of the best birders in the group led to the deduction that it was more likely a common scoter – not so common in these waters! Further on we saw a good number of velvet scoters, perhaps 12 in all, and several long-tailed ducks.

We moved finally to the river mouth where there were good numbers of oystercatchers, a few gosanders and more mergansers, some wigeon with their yellow topknots showing like gold in a blink of sun. More redshank were seen, as well as bar-tailed godwit, dunlin, turnstone, a grey plover, and several of the more common gulls. A total of 30 species, and many thanks to Nick for such a successful outing.

## ***Aberlady Bay: Saturday 18 April 2009***

Eight of us met up with warden John Harrison at the Aberlady Bay Reserve carpark on an overcast morning. The haar which characterised the preceding few days had dispersed and some glimpses of blue sky were seen later on as the view over the Forth gradually improved.

The tide was well out so there were limited numbers of birds in the inner bay, but we did see redshank, curlew, bar-tailed godwit, shelduck and grey heron. Just after crossing the wooden bridge we heard the evocative liquid descending song of the first of numerous willow warblers, and one was observed in the bushes close to the path. Further on we spotted stonechat, reed bunting, skylark, wheatear, a solitary lapwing and several flocks of linnet as well as some hares and roe deer. Most of the geese had departed to their breeding grounds, but we did see four pink-foots on the salt-marsh and a couple of greylags flew in overhead. It was rather early in the season for many flowers, but John pointed out the tiny white flowers of rue-leaved saxifrage close to the path and quite a number of cowslips were already in bloom.

Stopping for lunch at Gullane Point we saw a large raft of common scoter, small numbers of eider duck, some passing gannets and two red-throated divers, one in breeding plumage. The undoubted highlight of the day was a marvellous view of several bottle-nosed dolphins surfacing just out from the Point, which we enjoyed for several minutes. After that anything else would have been an anti-climax, but on the way back John did spot a weasel darting across the path. A memorable day for all: thanks to John for sharing his enthusiasm and expertise with us.

## **Some Important Developments in organising Outdoor Events**

Lothian Members Centre Committee is proposing two innovations in the conduct of outdoor events, which it is hoped will be of benefit to participants.

The Committee is recommending a scale of donations to drivers where car-sharing is involved. It proposes that the cost of a round trip journey is calculated at a rate of 25p per mile divided among all occupants including the driver. So, for example, a round trip of 50 miles would cost £12.50, which would mean if there were three passengers each would contribute £3.12. This is not thought to have insurance implications, though drivers may wish to check with their insurers. It is hoped that if this becomes standard practice it will relieve both driver and passengers of any embarrassment about payment for this convenience.

The second innovation is that event leaders will take basic details of participants on events. The principal reason for this is safety, should there be any kind of accident or should someone take ill. Participants will also be asked to inform the event leader discreetly of any health problems of which the leader should be aware.

The Committee is determined to keep to a minimum any bureaucracy. It is hoped, however, that these changes will enhance the comfort and safety, and so enjoyment, of folk who come along to our activities.

## West Lothian Update

Hopefully all enjoyed the evening strolls at **Hermand Birchwood, West Calder**, on the 9th and 11th June. Young folk would also have found "Watery Worlds", an exploration of pondlife at Almondell and Calderwood Country Park on the 14th June, full of intriguing surprises. Incidentally, we offer our thanks once more to the Country Park rangers for collecting £50 for the Lothians Members' Centre. These regular donations, via the SWT collecting tin kept on the Visitor Centre's counter, are very much appreciated.

The **West Lothian Environmental Award Scheme for Schools** is currently on hold, but we hope that this competition, for the most innovative wildlife-friendly ideas for improving the external spaces of schools, can be revived when the financial situation is less limiting.

**West Lothian Outdoor Access Forum** meetings are well attended by representatives of a wide variety of organisations. The Draft Corepath Plan for the District is quite advanced, and objections lodged by SNH last year have been met wherever feasible. Certain SNH objections have also been dropped.

Tom Inglis

## Could you be our East Lothian Membership Secretary?

WANTED - someone living in East Lothian who would like to join the membership subcommittee which meets 5 times per year. The volunteer would take responsibility for sending out welcome letters about Lothians Members Centre to new SWT members - about 12 each month. Task not too onerous and committee of 7 is lively and productive, dealing with annual events, fund raising and *Lothian Talk*. It meets in Edinburgh. If interested please contact Jill Neufeld, Membership Secretary: [jillneufeld@btinternet.com](mailto:jillneufeld@btinternet.com) or Tel:0131 441 5446



### EDINBURGH'S YOUNG NATURE LOVERS GO WILD!

Calling all *Wildlife Watch* members! Are you nuts about nature? Batty about bats? Barmy about bugs, birds or badgers? Do you want to explore the wildlife around you, find out how you can help it, and make new friends at the same time? Yes? Then Edinburgh Wildlife Watch is the club for you!

**WHO?** Edinburgh Wildlife Watch is a group of young people, aged 8 and above, who love nature and enjoy going on wild adventures to uncover the secrets of our local wildlife. Anyone can join in; you don't have to be an expert!

**WHAT?** We get up to everything from planting trees to pond dipping, badger walks to bat detecting, making bee hotels to helping toads migrate across the road, games, arts and crafts and more!

**WHERE?** Usually at Holyrood Park or the Hermitage of Braid, sometimes we go on special trips to places like Joppa beach, the Botanic Gardens or SWT reserves.

**WHEN?** We meet on the first Saturday of every month, usually from 2-4pm.

**WHY?** Because we care about our wildlife and love learning all about what we can do to help. And most importantly - because it's FUN!!

**HOW DO I JOIN?** For more information ask your parent or guardian to contact Caroline Rance (Group leader) on 07917 832 492, or email [Edinburgh.WildlifeWatch@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Edinburgh.WildlifeWatch@hotmail.co.uk). Booking is essential for all meetings and we charge just £1 per meeting to cover the cost of materials and refreshments.

#### Information for parents:

We want Wildlife Watch to be a safe environment for your children to come and learn about wildlife. All leaders undergo a comprehensive recruitment process, are registered centrally and work within a monitored framework of child welfare and safety procedures. For more information on how Watch groups are run contact the SWT Watch support officer.

Caroline Rance